

רותם המדבר – White Broom – Retama Raetam

My White Broom Rebirth

Gardening is a constant battle. “The strongest survive!” Three years ago, my white broom plant was suffering in the shade of the humongous pine tree. Now its main branches broke off, but I won’t give up. Neither will my white broom with Hashem’s help!” The essential energy of this plant is its fiery resilient power. I had my gardening helper cut off the broken broom branches and weed around the new shoot adding compost to encourage its growth. It reminds me of the famous quote, “For the righteous shall fall seven times and rise...” (*Mishlei* 24:16). When we walk in Hashem’s ways, we always receive another chance as we learned from *Pesach Sheni* last week. Pesach Sheni takes place exactly one month after the Pesach Seder night. The purpose of this ‘half-holiday of second chances’ was to offer a second chance for those who were unable to bring the Pesach sacrifice in time. Today, Pesach Sheni is a day to pray to Hashem for insight and resilience to actualize our second chances. He generously gives us second chances not only to heal the past, but also to elevate it. So, I pray for my white broom sapling to grow strong and filled with fragrant flowers so I can better share all its Torah teaching reflecting its myriad blossoms to my students.



Medicinal Properties of White Broom Buds

I have never tried ingesting white broom neither in salad or drunk tea made from them, but the desert Bedouins teach us that its flowers and fruits are edible. They use them as medicine for treatment of backache, stomachache, infertility, temporary paralysis of the limbs, joint pain, infected skin lesions, toothache, sprains and fractures. The blossoms made an ointment to cure the gout, and Henry VIII used to drink a water made from the flowers against surfeit perhaps caused by overeating. These effects may be due to the diuretic and cathartic properties of broom tops. They are used in the form of decoction and infusion, as a feeble diuretic, generally in edema complaints of cardiac origin. The action is due to the Scoparin contained, whose action on the renal mucous membrane is similar to that of Buchu and Uva-Ursi. The young, herbaceous tips of the flowering branches are collected in early spring, generally in April/May, as they contain most alkaloid at the close of the winter. They are used officially both in the fresh and dried state. A compound decoction of broom is recommended in herbal medicine as of much benefit in bladder and kidney affections, as well as in chronic edema. In 1606 Dodoens Herbal recommended a decoction of the tops in dropsy (edema) and for ‘stoppages of the liver.’ Likewise, Gerard (c. 1545–1612) teaches: “The decoction of the twigs and tops of broom doth cleanse and open the liver, milt and kidnies.” Culpepper considered the decoction of broom to be good not only for dropsy, but also for black jaundice, ague, gout, sciatica and various pains of the hips and joints. The seeds have similar properties to the tops, and have also been employed medicinally, though they are not any longer used officially. They have served as a substitute for coffee. Bruised broom seeds were formerly used infused in rectified spirit, allowed to stand two weeks and then strained. A tablespoonful in a glass of peppermint water was taken daily for liver complaints and malaria.

I’m keeping this article short as I refer you to my prior Torah article about white broom, from my Nature in the Torah writing.

[Learn from Weeping White Broom how to Keep the Spark of Steadfast Emunah Alive Within and more.](#)

Hands On

Infusion of broom was introduced in the British Pharmacopoeia of 1898. The infusion is made from 1 oz. of the dried tops to a pint of boiling water, steeping for fifteen minutes and then straining. It is taken in wineglassful doses frequently.

Broom Decoction Formula

The following compound broom decoction formula is recommended in herbal medicine as of much benefit in bladder and kidney ailments as well as in chronic edema.

2 cups of water

1 oz. (2 Tablespoons) dried broom tops

½ oz. (1 Tablespoon) dried dandelion roots

½ oz. (1 Tablespoon) bruised juniper berries

1. Place dried broom and dandelion in a small pot. Add to 2 cups of water.
2. Simmer the decoction until water is reduced to half (1 cup).
3. During the last 15 min add the bruised juniper berries.
4. Cool and strain the decoction.
5. Add a small quantity of cayenne.
6. Take a wineglassful of this decoction three or four times a day.

Gerard's Broom Pickles

Broom buds were evidently a favorite delicacy, for they appeared on three separate tables at the Coronation feast of James II. The flowers served the double purpose of an appetizer and a corrective.

1. Gather the young flower buds at the end of April or May
2. Lay them in pickle or salt according to your favorite pickle recipe
3. Use for salads as capers and eat them with no less delight