

לְצִיפּוֹרְנֵי חַתּוּל – Pot Marigold – Calendula

Vibrant, Heart-Comforting, Sunshine Flower in the Dark of Winter

During the peak of winter, when the trees stand bare, the bright calendula plants open their vibrant yellow flowers. These petals seem to concentrate all the little glimpses of sunshine throughout the winter and reflect them back to us. The flowers open in the morning and close when the sun goes down, as it states, *"It hath pleasant, bright and shining yellow flowers, which do close at the setting downe of the sunne, and do spread and open againe at the sunne rising"* (Dodoens-Lyte, *A Niewe Herball*, 1578).



You'll find different varieties of calendula: some have yellow flowers, others bright orange with single or double layers of petals. The brightest orange petals have the highest concentration of active medicinal properties. Four kinds of calendula grow wild in Israel- as a loving gift of G-d to brighten our dark days. Indeed, it is known that calendula-flower tea comforts the heart and spirits. Thus, Culpepper writes, *"The flowers are much used in broths and drinks as a comforter of the heart and spirits, and to expel any malignant or pestilential quality which might annoy them."* The seeds have the form of cats' claws. Therefore, the Hebrew name is צִיפּוֹרְנֵי חַתּוּל / *tzipornei chatul* – cat's claw. The name 'Calendula' comes from the Latin word 'calendae,' meaning 'little calendar,' because the ancient Romans found that the flowers started blooming on the first day of every month during the season.. Calendula was well known to the old herbalists as a garden-flower and for use in cooking and medicine.

Moves Stagnations with Warming, Grateful Energy

Calendula's sunny disposition engenders gentle immune boosting properties for protection against the damp, cold of winter. As a common potherb, it was often used in soups and stews. In addition, it is a main ingredient in herbal infusions and cosmetics. Calendula has a medicinal affinity for moving stagnations. It isolates what doesn't belong, and then helps bring about healthy circulation, thus warming the body. On an emotional level, calendula offers us an opportunity to move what has stagnated in our lives. It helps us warm and dry the emotional-energetic pools we've ignored or not quite noticed. Calendula helps us nurture potential. It offers us an opportunity to reclaim our boundaries while making full use of the energy we already possess. Calendula's flowers follow the sun, gathering in those gentle, fiery, nourishing energies. They coax us into a brighter disposition by giving us a glimpse of the sunny possibilities, even when we're feeling mired in the dark of winter. Calendula inspires us to harness the positive energies in our lives and to use them to make ourselves and our work blossom. A hardy plant, calendula is able to live in a wide variety of climates and soils. It is self-seeding and thrives on minimal care. In this way, it teaches us to be easygoing and self-sufficient in any situation. It shows us that abundance is available to all of us, regardless of our economic status, as long as we choose to focus on the bright, nourishing elements in our lives. Like the happy calendula, we too have all we need to flourish.

Excellent Healer for Various Skin Conditions

Calendula is one of the best herbs for treating skin problems. It helps soothe sore, inflamed and itchy skin conditions. When I first came to live in Israel in 1979, calendula ointment helped me heal the cracked skin on my fingers. The petals make a nourishing cream for the skin. Due to its antiseptic properties, it may be used safely wherever there is skin inflammation. Calendula was used in the USA to bandage the wounded during the civil war. It has great anti-inflammatory and vulnerary action, making calendula ointment helpful with:

1. Skin dryness or chapping – It moisturizes dry skin and helps severely chapped or split skin.
2. Inflammation – It works well on sprained muscles or bruises. Its anti-inflammatory action helps lessen swelling from injury. Calendula oil also helps treat spider veins, varicose veins, leg ulcers and chilblains.
3. Baby care – The oil helps relieve diaper rash, and sore nipples
4. Minor cuts and wounds – Its antiseptic and antimicrobial properties help speed up the healing of wounds and minor cuts. It relieves insect bites, acne and bed sores. The romans used calendula to treat scorpion bites!
5. Skin issues – Eczema, psoriasis, burns, dermatitis and other skin problems can be soothed using calendula oil. Calendula oil's antifungal action is also great for helping treat athlete's foot, ringworm and jock itch. Bath salts with added calendula flowers is stimulating to the skin. As a first aid treatment for minor burns and bee stings, rub calendula flowers on the affected part.

Prohibited Calendula Superstitions

פֶּרַר וִיקְרָא פְּרָקִי יֵט פְּסוּקִי כִּי לֹא תֵאָכְלוּ עַל הַדָּם לֹא תִנְחָשׁוּ וְלֹא תַעֲוִיבוּ:

“You shall not practice divination or soothsaying” (*Vayikra* 19:26).

From here, we learn that superstitious beliefs whereby events can be interpreted as omens or portents for the future are prohibited in the Torah. The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 65b) gives the following examples of this prohibition: Someone who says that he will have a bad day if bread falls from his mouth while he is eating or if his walking stick falls from his hand. Here are some examples of prohibited superstitions associated with calendula: Believing that holding a calendula plant will grant a vision of anyone who has stolen anything from the bearer. An old love spell dictates to collect soil that a prospective partner has stepped on and pot it up with a calendula plant. The health of the calendula plant was believed to indicate the health of the relationship. Carrying calendula petals into court was supposed to insure favorable legal proceedings and bring good luck in money matters, especially, in games of chance. Placing a green flannel bag filled with golden calendula flowers beneath one's pillow, is believed to cause one to dream of winning numbers and winning names.

Additional Medicinal Properties of Calendula

Most people think of calendula as an herb with mainly external healing qualities, yet the versatile calendula has many internal uses as well. Its vibrant edible flowers are used in culinary recipes, as well as in medicinal preparations, dyes and spa products. Calendula treats digestive inflammation and ulcers. It contains a triterpene glycoside called calendulozide B that exerts a marked anti-ulcerous and sedative action. As an acholagogue, calendula aids in the relief of gall-bladder problems, indigestion and colitis. As an emmenagogue it has a reputation of helping delayed menstruation and painful periods. It also relieves symptoms of menopause. An infusion of the freshly-gathered flowers treats fevers, as it gently promotes perspiration.

Culinary Calendula Cuisine

Fresh calendula petals can be chopped into salads and added to grain dishes. They give flavor to soups and stews and serve as a garnish on fruit and veggie platters. I decorated my children's birthday cakes with bright calendula petals. Make calendula jelly using apple juice as a base. Grind dry petals to a powder and use as a substitute for expensive saffron or turmeric. You won't get the flavor of these spices, but the color will be beautiful. Put whole flowers in white wine vinegar. The petals, with their slightly aromatic bitterness are used in fish and meat soups, salads, and as a coloring for various dishes, especially yellow rice.

Useful Garden Flower & Yellow dye

Pot marigold makes an attractive cut flower and can be grown in the vegetable garden to help with insect control. A nice yellow dye has also been extracted from the flower, by boiling. An infusion of the petals can be used as a rinse to lighten and brighten hair. It is a great flower for dried bouquets and dried petals can also be added to potpourris.

Hands On:

You can create a homemade calendula oil infusion to soothe the skin using dried calendula petals and a carrier oil. Olive oil, almond oil or grapeseed oil are some great options. You can use the homemade calendula oil as an after-bath body oil, salve, baby oil, lotion or home remedy for dry skin, inflamed areas, or rashes. The oil will become a nice golden orange color.

Dried Calendula Flowers

1. Pinch flower heads off stems and pull off petals.
2. Dry them on a cloth or paper towels, as they tend to stick to a metal drying rack or screening.
3. Store in a tight lidded, moisture proof container to keep the color and flavor.

Infused Calendula Oil

There are two methods to infuse the oil:

Cold Infusion Method – This is the preferred technique because it protects the delicate calendula from heat damage.

1. Put the desired amount of dried calendula petals into a clean, dry glass jar.
2. Fill the jar with your carrier oil of choice to cover the petals by one inch (2 cm).
3. Place in a sunny place to infuse for three-four weeks.
4. Drain the petals from the oil and store the oil in a container with a lid for up to one year.

Hot Infusion Method – This method is much quicker than the cold infusion method but won't have the same strength due to heat damage.

1. Fill a clean, dry glass jar ¼ full with dried calendula petals.
2. Fill the jar with your carrier oil of choice to cover the petals by one inch.
3. Place the petals and the oil in a small saucepan or slow cooker. Heat on low for four hours, stirring occasionally.
4. Let cool. Drain the petals from the oil and store the oil in a container with a lid for up to one year.