

# Lady's Mantle: A Woman's Best Friend

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**Common Name:** Lady's Mantle

**Botanical Name:** *Alchemilla xanthochlora*  
(Formerly *Alchemilla vulgaris*)

**Family:** ROSACEAE

The meticulously folded leaves of Lady's Mantle and their ability to gather 'heavenly water' overnight made this delightful *Rosacea* plant the darling of past alchemists. They would gather the dew-like droplets in the early morning hours to use in their magical recipes for eternal youth and wisdom. These droplets are in fact water that the plant absorbs from the earth and transpires purified via the tips of its leaves, offering it back to the sky. These were seen as a symbol for the transformative magical powers of the plant, and so, the alchemists beloved Lady's Mantle was given the botanical genus name *Alchemilla*.

The current species name *xanthochlora* refers to the Latin xantho = yellow and chlora = greenish looking, which describes the rather unassuming-looking but delightfully sweet tasting blossoms of the plant. *Xanthochlora* has replaced the earlier species name *vulgaris* which referred to the fact that Lady's Mantle has the uncanny ability to establish itself wherever it (and not the gardener!) sees fit. Lady's Mantle is native to Europe and Asia and grows well in New Zealand.

## Harvest

Lady's Mantle is one of the most important women's healing herbs and was gathered in earlier times during a descending or waning moon (a harvesting exception!) to stop women's blood loss and heal wounds. It is no surprise that the ancient herbalists assigned its protection to a female goddess. In pre-Christian times it was Freja's herb, the ancient



PHOTO: Jacqueline Brown © 2009

ABOVE: Lady's Mantle (*A. xanthochlora*) is Native to Europe and Asia, but grows well in New Zealand

German goddess of love and fertility. After the introduction of Christianity it was assigned to Mother Mary, the leaves were said to resemble the protecting cloak of the new patroness. Astrologically Lady's Mantle was assigned to the planet Venus as documented by Culpepper in the 17th century.

Lady's Mantle is best harvested in blossom from late spring to midsummer. The healthy green leaves and blossoms (best without the stems) are gathered and dried in a shady clean place with good air circulation. For the manufacture of a tincture the leaves are processed fresh. It has a lovely sweet taste and can be taken on its own or in a herbal combination.

## Herbal Therapeutics: 500 years ago

The medical doctor Tabernaemontanus in the 16th century said that it has an 'agreeable temperature' which is neither too hot nor too cold and has the astringent medicinal properties to 'consolidate' and 'dry' both internally and externally. He recommends Lady's Mantle for women's complaints and the care of wounds from a variety of causes as follows:

### Women's Complaints

Healing of undue discharge (Fluor genitalis - internal application as well as for bathing in or syringing the cervix and vagina with a strong Lady's Mantle tea), to promote fertility (taken internally as a tea), in incontinence after birth and to recover from birth (bathing and as a tea) and when "the mother (cervix) is too slippery and too wide open so that the semen flows away from it making conception impossible". The language of Renaissance doctors is indeed straightforward and unpretentious. Concerned with female welfare after multiple births he recommends not only drinking the tea but also bathing the "secret woman's place" with the tea to make her "like a virgin

again". If her breasts are starting to sag he recommends topical applications of linen soaked in Lady's Mantle tea so that they regain their firm texture. Hallelujah! But before our 21st century feminist sensibilities suspect him of being secretly more concerned with marital bliss than with women's health, we may want to remember that women in those days tended to have a steady succession of pregnancies, putting significant strain on those "secret places" which could lead to medical problems such as the aforementioned incontinence. And, without the holding capacity of a modern bra for those constant feeding stations, a woman would understandably have longed for ways to carry herself around more comfortably.

### Wound Care

Tabernaemontanus further describes Lady's Mantle as an important herb for the cleansing and healing of topical and internal wounds (ulcers, festering wounds and shot wounds), to diffuse internal blood clots, for ulcers and inflammation in the mouth and throat, bruised or broken body parts and in cases of diarrhea. The pulped leaves, he says, can be applied directly or via a linen cloth soaked in the juice of the leaves.

### Active Constituents

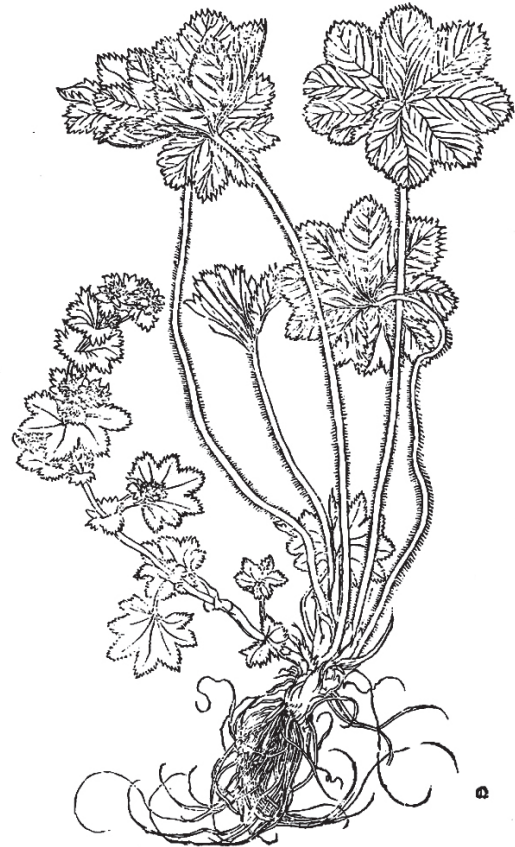
Modern research confirms that Lady's Mantle contains active constituents that explain the old applications of this medicinal plant: tannins, bitters, lecithin, saponins, volatile oils and traces of salicylic acid and phytosterols. The plant has astringent, vulnerary, anti-inflammatory, styptic, blood cleansing and calming properties.

### Modern Clinical Applications

Whilst Lady's Mantle is still used today for wound healing, the main application in clinical practice is as a key uterine tonic with cleansing, strengthening and restorative properties. It has a regulating and nourishing action on the whole female reproductive tract. It is used to prevent and treat women's complaints such as reproductive infections and inflammation (Fluor genitalis of different aetiologies), to rebuild the protective vaginal flora after antibiotic treatment in sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), to reduce heavy and painful periods (including those experienced by some women in the perimenopausal phase), to regulate the cycle (often together with yarrow), to prime the endometrium for an easier conception, to strengthen the uterus for preventing miscarriages and most importantly to build uterine tone for a swift birth. This latter application is possibly what Lady's Mantle is most known for today. It also helps with uterine involution after birth and supports the cleansing and healing of possible reproductive injuries as a consequence of birth. As a bonus, it promotes milk production in breastfeeding mothers and its calming effect makes for a good sleep.

Traditionally, women were taught to take a course of Lady's Mantle tea at the turn of every season to 'tune' the delicate reproductive system and safeguard a 'woman's happiness'. Based on its wide ranging tonifying actions Lady's Mantle is an important ingredient in women's health teas, in hormone balancing teas as well as pregnancy

and breastfeeding teas. Thus we can conclude that Lady's Mantle is a woman's best friend. This benevolent plant will accompany her through all the physiological stages of her life and be of invaluable service in keeping her healthy and happy. ❀



*Sandra is the founder and managing director of ARTEMIS Herbal Medicine. She is dedicated to offering a professional range of certified organic, health enhancing remedies based on traditional principles. Wholesale enquiries from Medical Herbalists welcome.*

*In her blog ([www.artemis.co.nz/blog](http://www.artemis.co.nz/blog)) she shares her journey in the translation of the Renaissance Material Medica from 1588 and describes the old herbal knowledge in modern context.*

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