

Herbal Properties Glossary

Adaptogen

A non-toxic compound that increases resistance to physical, chemical, and emotional stresses.

These compounds seem only to be activated when one is under stress. They then work to increase the activity of natural killer cells and other immune cells. They also increase the efficiency with which oxygen is delivered to individual cells, and thus strengthen the whole body. These compounds also have a broad effect on the glandular system. Blood sugar and pressure are said to be normalized and adrenal and thyroid hormones are stimulated.[\[1\]](#)

Alterative

A substance used to change (alter) existing nutritive and excretory processes to regulate body functions.

Analgesic

A substance that relieves pain when taken orally.

Anodyne

A substance that that relieves pain when applied externally.

Anthelmintic (Vermifuge)

An agent that destroys or causes the expulsion of parasitic intestinal worms.

Antiabortive

A substance that is used to help avoid miscarriages.

Antiasthmatic

A substance that relaxes the bronchials and aids free breathing.

Antibiotic

A substance used to kill or stop growth of harmful micro-organisms (literally “against-life”). Kills both harmful and helpful micro-organisms.

Anticatarrhal

A substance which reduces inflammation of the mucous membranes.

Antidepressant

A substance that prevents or relieves depression.

Antihydropic

A substance used to remove excess body fluid.

Anti-inflammatory

A substance that prevents or reduces inflammation.

Antipyretic (Febrifuge)

An agent that reduces fever.

Antioxidant

A substance that prevents cell damage and other changes caused by oxidation.

Antiseptic

A substance capable of preventing, combating, and neutralize toxic microorganisms by inhibiting their growth.

Antispasmodic

Substances used to prevent, calm, or relieve muscle spasms, cramps, or coughing.

Antisymphilic

A substance used to allay venereal diseases, particularly syphilis.

Antitussive

A substance capable of relieving or suppressing coughing.

Aphrodisiac

A substance used to correct problems of impotency and to strengthen sexual function.

Astringent

A substance that draws together or constricts body tissues and is effective in stopping the flow of blood or other secretions.

Bactericide

An agent that destroys bacteria.

Blood Purifier

A substance that cleanses and purifies the blood.

Bronchodilator

A substance that widens the air passages of the lungs and eases breathing by relaxing bronchial passages.

Calmative

An agent used to calm the nervous system.

Cardiac

A substance used to strengthen the heart.

Carminative

An agent that induces the expulsion of gas from the digestive system.

Catalyzer

A substance that increases the rate of a chemical or bio-chemical reaction.

Cathartic

Substances used to stimulate purging from the bowel.

Cell Proliferant

Agents used to promote rapid new cell growth and healing.

Cholagogue

A substance used to increase flow of bile from the gall bladder into the duodenum.

Choleretic

A substance that stimulates the secretion of bile by the liver.

Demulcent

Substances that are soothing and provide coating to irritated or inflamed internal areas.

Depurant

Blood purifiers that cleanse or purify by stimulating eliminative processes.

Diaphoretic (Sudorific)

A substance that stimulates or increases perspiration.

Digestive (or Digestant)

Nutritional products that contain enzymes, amino acids, or probiotics to aid digestion of food.

Discutient

An agent that dissolves and removes tumors and other abnormal cellular growth.

Diuretic

A substance that tends to increase the flow of urine.

Emetic

A substance used to induce vomiting.

Emmenagogue

A substance that encourage or promotes suppressed menstrual flow.

Emollient

A substance applied externally to soften and soothe the skin or internally to soothe inflamed or irritated mucous membranes.

Estrogenic

Hormones produced by the ovaries during the female reproductive period, or herbs that support the body's production of those hormones.

Expectorant

A substance that promotes the expulsion of mucus from the respiratory tract.

Febrifuge (antipyretic)

An agent that reduces fever.

Fungicidal

A substance that destroys or inhibits the growth of fungi.

Galactagogue

A substance that promotes the secretion of milk from the nursing mother.

Hemostatic

A substance that arrests bleeding or hemorrhage.

Hepatic or Hepatonic

A substance that strengthens and tones the liver and stimulates the secretive functions of the liver.

Hormonal

Herbs that contain the properties of hormones.

Hyperactivity

Excessive activity or agitation.

Hyperglycemic

A substance that increases the concentration of glucose in the blood.

Hypertensive

A substance that increases blood pressure.

Hypoglycemic

a substance that lowers the concentration of glucose in the blood.

Hypotensive

A substance that decreases blood pressure.

Immunostimulant

A substance that increases the immune response in order to induce resistance to infection.

Laxative

A substance that stimulates evacuation of the bowels.

Lithotriptic

A substance that helps dissolve and eliminate urinary and gall bladder stones.

Lymphatic

A substance used to stimulate and cleanse the lymphatic system.

Mucilage

A substance that has mucilaginous properties used to soothe inflamed parts.

Mucilaginous

Herbs that have an adhesive, coating, expansive property and contain soothing qualities for healing.

Nervin

A substance that acts as a tonic to the nerves.

Nutritive

a substance that supplies a substantial amount of nutrients and aid in building and toning the body.

Parasiticide

A substance kills parasites.

Parturifacient

An agent that facilitates childbirth.

Pectoral

A substance that has the power to ease coughing and promotes expectoration.

Peristaltic

A substance that stimulates the natural waves of contraction of the muscles of the intestinal walls, helping move food through the digestive tract.

Probiotics

“Friendly” bacteria that inhabit the healthy digestive system to process food and produce vital nutritional elements used by the body.

Purgative

Substances used to cause purging from the bowels. Usually used in combination with other herbs to control their action.

Relaxant (Sedative)

A substance that has a soothing, calming, or tranquilizing effect, and has the property of lessening excitement, irritation, or pain.

Resolvent

A substance that reduces inflammation or swelling.

Revulsive

A substance that causes counter-irritation to reduce inflammation or increases the blood supply to the affected area.

Rubefacient

A substance that reddens the skin.

Sedative (Relaxant)

A substance that has a soothing, calming, or tranquilizing effect, and has the property of lessening excitement, irritation, or pain.

Sialagogue

An agent that increases and promotes the flow of saliva to aid digestion.

Stimulant

An agent which increases energy and functional activity of the body.

Stomachic

An agent that strengthens, tones, or stimulates the stomach and increase the appetite.

Styptic

A substance that has an astringent effect which helps control bleeding.

Sudorific (Diaphoretic)

A substance that stimulates or increases perspiration.

Tonic

A substance that that invigorates and stimulates tone and energy of the body.

Vasoconstrictor

An agent that causes constriction of blood vessels.

Vasodilator

An agent that causes dilation of blood vessels.

Vermicide

An agent that kills parasites or worms.

Vermifuge (Anthelmintic)

An agent that destroys or causes the expulsion of parasitic intestinal worms.

Vulnerary

An agent used in healing or treating wounds.

Sources:

Keith, Velma J. and Monteen Gordon. *The How to Herb Book*. Pleasant Grove, UT: Mayfield Publications, 1984.
Pedersen, Mark. *Nutritional Herbology*. Bountiful, UT: Pedersen Publishing, 1987.

[1] Pedersen, p. 158. [\[RETURN\]](#)

Source: <http://www.theherbdoc.com/consumerEducation/Herbology/Classification.htm>