



## **PARIETARIA L.**

**Order:** Rosales Bercht. & J.Presl

**Family:** *Urticaceae* Juss.

**Tribe:** Parietarieae

According to [WFO], 15 accepted species are currently recognized within the *Parietaria* genus. They are all herbs, annual or perennial, sparsely to densely pubescent with hairs on all parts of the plant. Though belonging to the Urticaceae family, they are not endowed with stinging trichomes. [WFO]

## ***PARIETARIA OFFICINALIS L. AND PARIETARIA JUDAICA L.***



*Fig. 1: Parietaria spp. (P. officinalis in the foreground, P. judaica below)*

<i>Primary functionality:</i>	Mercury [Culpeper]
<i>Secondary functionality:</i>	
<i>Nature:</i>	Cold and dry, and also cold and damp in a lesser degree
<i>Taste:</i>	Bland, slightly salty and slightly astringent
<i>Tropism:</i>	Organs of the digestive tract (liver, spleen, intestines), kidneys and urinary tract, prostate and uterus, blood and skin
<i>Humoral actions</i> <sup>1</sup> :	Eliminates excess heat (yellow bile), prepares perverted phlegm and melancholy for expulsion and eliminates them, supplements correct phlegm; dispels tension stagnation and tones the Kidney tension
<i>Tissue states:</i>	Heat excess and stagnation, phlegm excess and stagnation with possible melancholic components, phlegm deficiency, tension stagnation, kidney tension deficiency
<i>Clinical actions:</i>	Antalgic, antiarthritic, antiasthmatic, antigout, antirheumatic, aperient, cooling/refreshing, demulcent (slightly), diuretic, draining (connective tissue), emmenagogue, expectorant,

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<sup>1</sup> See the "Notes on humors" paragraph.

laxative, lithontriptic, purifying, sialagogue, renal trophorestorative, vulnerary

*Used parts:* Aerial parts, roots

## Description

The common name of *pellitory-of-the-wall* refers collectively both to *Parietaria officinalis* L. and to *Parietaria judaica* L. (syn. *Parietaria diffusa* Merlet & W.D.J.Koch, also known as *spreading pellitory*), very similar to each other macroscopically and used almost interchangeably in medicine. [WinstonWeb]

Pellitory-of-the-wall is considered an astersive<sup>2</sup> and astringent plant, whose nature is cold and dry and, to a lesser extent, also cold and damp; according to Galen, in fact, “*it has an astersive and constricting virtue with a certain frigid humidity*” [Giannelli, Mattioli].

It has a long history of use as a diuretic and trophorestorative plant for the kidneys, useful for treating diseases of the urinary tract. [WinstonWeb]

According to Maude Grieve (1931), pellitory-of-the-wall is one of the best remedies for urinary stones, gravel, dropsy, stranguria and other disorders of the urinary system. According to the authoress, its action on urinary stones is probably more marked than that of any other “simple” known to her [Grieve].

In fact, pellitory-of-the-wall has a more complex aperient action, being able to resolve the “*oppilations*” (obstructions) of the liver, spleen and kidneys as well as to cleanse intestine and uterus. [Durante, Mattioli]

Besides being a diuretic and lithontriptic plant, pellitory-of-the-wall is also able to stimulate the drainage of the connective tissue fluids, and to induce the renal expulsion of toxins that may be found in this tissue. In this way, it also promotes the expulsion of those metabolites, among others, which are responsible of any inflammatory or irritative conditions that can even be the cause of dermatological affections. [Iozzi]

Pellitory-of-the-wall is remarkably effective in the treatment of all inflammatory conditions of the urinary tract (cystitis, urethritis, nephritis, pyelitis), and the prostate. [Iozzi, Valnet]

According to Dioscorides, the plant juice can be used as a gargle in case of throat inflammation and, drunk in the amount of three tablespoons<sup>3</sup> it cures “old cough”. In addition, it calms earache when it is instilled into the ears together with Rose Oil. [Mattioli] In popular medicine, the decoction of the leaves was drunk in case of bronchial and pulmonary affections. [Peroni].

Fresh leaves can be chewed as a sialagogue. [Peroni]

Externally, the herb has shown vulnerary, antiseptic and analgesic activities, and it can be used as a topical remedy for female inflammations or toothache and as a vulnerary on wounds and bedsores [Peroni, WinstonWeb]. According to Dioscorides, a plaster made with the plant heals “*the shingles, the burns of the fire; the buttocks abscesses, [...] the tumors, and the inflammation*” (see [Mattioli]).

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<sup>2</sup> Able to both clean and dry.

<sup>3</sup> The original text mentions a “*ciato*”, an old Italian unit of measurement that corresponds to slightly less than 5 cl, or roughly to 3 tablespoons.

The poultice obtained by pounding the fresh plant can be used for the treatment of boils, and the ointment prepared by mixing the cooked herb with lard or other fats is effective in case of burns, gout, fistulas and especially in the case of hemorrhoids. [Grieve, Peroni]

## **Properties**

### ***Temperature and taste***

Pellitory-of-the-wall is cold and dry and, to a lesser degree, also cold and humid [Giannelli]. According to Galen, “*it has an astersive and constricting virtue with a certain frigid humidity*” (see [Mattioli])

Its taste is bland (due to mucilage), slightly saline (due to the contained salts, among which particularly important is potassium nitrate, which can even be extracted from the plant) and slightly astringent. It is also weakly aromatic (coumarins are mainly perceived).

### ***Signature***

Primary signature: Mercury. [Culpeper]

### ***Tissue phases***

*P. officinalis*: 5 (necrosis), 6 (disorganization). Its profile is hyper- $\gamma$  and hypo- $\gamma$ -euglobulinic, and this indicates a chronicity in the pathology. [Dewit-Leunis]

## **Actions and indications**

### ***Humoral actions***

Inspid (due to mucilage), styptic and saline plant, it is refreshing (and therefore eliminates excess heat), prepares the perverse phlegm and melancholy for expulsion and subsequently expels them. It eliminates both accumulated and thickened phlegm, but simultaneously supplements correct phlegm (demulcent action). It dispels tension stagnation (spasmolytic, pain reliever) and tonifies Kidneys tension (Kidney trophorestorative).

### ***Tropism***

The tropism of pellitory-of-the-wall is complex: the plant, in fact, acts on the digestive organs (liver, spleen, intestine), on the kidneys and urinary tract, on the prostate and uterus, as well as on the blood and, secondarily, on the skin.

### ***Clinical action***

Pellitory-of-the-wall is antalgic, antiarthritic, antiasthmatic, antigout, antirheumatic, aperient, cooling/refreshing, demulcent (slightly), diuretic, draining (connective tissue), emmenagogue,

expectorant, laxative, lithontriptic, purifying, sialagogue, renal trophorestorative, vulnerary. [Durante, Grieve, Iozzi, Mattioli, Peroni, SchwabelIndia, WinstonWeb]

### *Principal actions:*

- Aperient [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli, Grieve, SchwabelIndia]:
  - Resolves obstructions of the liver, spleen and kidneys [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante]
    - Liter.: *“The decoction of the herb opens the oppilations of the liver, spleen, & kidneys”* [Durante].
  - Laxative [Durante, Grieve, SchwabelIndia]
  - Diuretic [Durante, Mattioli, Grieve, Peroni, SchwabelIndia, WinstonWeb]
    - Liter.: *“The juice of the leaves, and of the stems drunk in the amount of three ounces, admirably causes urine; the herb heated on a hot tile, and sprinkled with Malvasia, and applied to the pubis helps to provoke the urine, and the stones.”* [Mattioli].
  - Emmenagogue [Durante, Giannelli]
- Depurative [Peroni], draining of connective tissue [Iozzi]
- Kidney trophorestorative [WinstonWeb]
- Sialagogue (fresh leaves chewed) [Peroni]
- Antalgic, antispasmodic [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli, Peroni]
- Antirheumatic [Dewit-Leunis, Iozzi, Peroni]
  - Liter.: *“It is also helpfully used in enemas, which are made for colic pains, and pains of the matrix. The juice kept warm in the mouth mitigates the pain of the teeth.”* [Mattioli]
  - Liter.: *“relieves uterine, colic, & kidney pains.”* [Durante]
  - Liter.: *“Drunk in the amounts of three ounces for eight or ten days, twice a day, it opens the oppilation of the liver, & the spleen, causes the urine, & the menstruation: mitigates the pain of the matrix”* [Durante]
  - Liter.: *“mitigate pain in the back, sides, or bowels, proceeding from wind, stoppage of urine, the gravel, or stone”* [Culpeper-Sibley]

### ***Specific indications***

#### *General*

- Rheumatism [Dewit-Leunis, Peroni, WinstonWeb]

#### *Liver and gallbladder*

- Jaundice [Peroni]

- Gallstones [Valnet]

### *Urinary system*

- Kidney and bladder stones [Culpeper-Sibley, Grieve, Mattioli, Peroni, SchwabeIndia, WinstonWeb], gravel [Grieve]
- Painful urination [WinstonWeb], stranguria [Culpeper-Sibley, Grieve, SchwabeIndia]
  - Liter.: *“The herb together with watercress, boiled in wine & applied to the bladder causes the urine, & mitigates colic pain: despite any oppilation.”* [Durante]
- Kidney infections (urinary tract) [WinstonWeb]
- Pains of the urinary tract (mitigate spasms) [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Giannelli, Mattioli]
- Dropsy [Culpeper-Sibley, Grieve, SchwabeIndia]

### *Respiratory system*

- Bronchial and pulmonary troubles in general [Culpeper-Sibley, Peroni].
- Asthma [Culpeper-Sibley, Peroni]
- Dry cough, chronic cough [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli]
  - Liter.: *“Drunk in the amount of three tablepoons<sup>4</sup>, it cures old cough”* [Mattioli]
  - Liter.: *“Its decoction made in wine, or in water tempered with honey, and sugar, heals old or dry cough. The herb powdered, given to cattle to drink, is useful against their cough, & difficulty in breathing.”* [Durante]

### *Sex organs*

- MALE: prostate inflammation [Iozzi]
- FEMALE: dysmenorrhea [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli].

### *External use*

- As a vulnerary on wounds (especially the recent ones) [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli, Peroni, WinstonWeb], bedsores [WinstonWeb] or bruised ligaments, tendons and muscles [Culpeper-Sibley]
  - Liter.: *“the fresh [plant] half pounded, and tied over the wound for three continuous days, heals it so well, that no other medicine is needed.”* [Mattioli; simil. Durante]
  - Liter.: *“With bean curd, mallow, & flour cooked in olive oil, & wine, it heals torn nerves, & cut muscles.”* [Durante]

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<sup>4</sup> See note 3.

- Liter.: *“A poultice made hereof with mallows, and boiled in wine, mixed with wheat, bran, bean-flowers, and some oil, being applied warm to any bruised sinew, tendon, or muscle, doth, in a very short time, restore it to its original strength.”* [Culpeper-Sibley]
- Inflammation of the female genitals [Peroni].
- Toothache (juice heated and held in the mouth) [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli, Peroni]
- Shingles (Dioscoride) [Durante, Mattioli].
- Burnings and scaldings [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli].
- Pus collections, more or less delimited; anal fistulas; boils [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Grieve, Mattioli]; as a poultice or ointment [Grieve, Mattioli]
  - Liter.: *“heals all the phlegmons<sup>5</sup> in their beginning, and likewise during their growth, up to the state, and especially the hot ones. Which it also does in the start of boils, and other tumors smeared on it. The juice distilled in the ears is useful for the purulent pains of those.”* [Mattioli]
  - Liter.: *“In the form of an ointment he tells us it is capital for piles and a remedy for gout and fistula.”* [Grieve]
- Swelling and inflammation [Durante, Mattioli]
- To soothe for the hemorrhoids or gout pains (as a liniment made with juice mixed with lard or other fat, or prepared by cooking the plant in such fats) [Culpeper-Sibley, Grieve]
- Inflammation and ulcers of the throat (plant juice or decoction used as a gargle) [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli]
  - Liter.: *“The juice gargled with honey, heals inflammation, & ulcers of throat.”* [Durante]
- Earache (juice of the plant instilled into the ears alone or together with Rose oil) [Culpeper-Sibley, Durante, Mattioli]
- Tinnitus (juice of the plant instilled into the ears) [Culpeper-Sibley]

### **Used parts and collection**

The leaves are the part most often used; they are typically harvested from May to October and dried quickly in the shade [Peroni]. Gabriele Peroni also points out the use of roots, to be harvested in spring and autumn. [Peroni]

### **Preparation and dosage**

The leaves can be used as a poultice. The juice of the fresh plant, transformed into a fluid syrup, stimulates the kidneys in the same way as the infusion of the dry plant [Grieve]. According to Castore Durante, *“three ounces of the juice drunk admirably causes urine: but it must be clarified”* [Durante].

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<sup>5</sup> Acute inflammations of the lax and cellulo-adipose tissues interposed between the various anatomical planes or around the various organs.

The water distilled from the plant has roughly the same properties as the fresh plant: “*The WATER distilled from it, is valid for all the aforementioned things*”. [Durante]

Pellitory-of-the-wall can be used dry for decoctions and infusions, or fresh for tinctures.

### **Contraindications and side effects**

N/A

### **Homeopathy (Pariet)**

The *Parietaria* genus was not subject to any homeopathic proving. Only Jan Scholten and Henry Clarke report some information originally published by Robert Thomas Cooper.

#### **Mind**

Pariah, outcast.

Dreaming of another world.

Dream: nightmare, being buried alive in the midst of ruins.

#### **Body**

Nose: hayfever; allergy.

Throat: sore; wheezing.

Lungs: dry cough, shortness of breath.

Rectum: pains of piles.

Urinary: renal calculus, kidney stones, stone, gravel in kidney or bladder.

Female: labour pains, menses absent, scanty.

Skin: hard, dry; ulcers, fistulas. [Clarke, Scholten]



## NOTES

### Notes on humors

According to the Hippocratic-Galenic medicine, four humors rule the human body:

- *Bile* (or *Yellow Bile*), corresponding to the Fire element, responsible for all the caloric activities of the human body, both in a physiological sense (e.g., body heat) and in a pathological sense (fever, inflammation, etc.);
- *Blood*, corresponding to the Air element and to the physical blood;
- *Phlegm* (also called *Pituita* or *Lymph*), corresponding to the Water element, responsible for everything that is fluid in the body (body fluids, lymph, blood plasma, synovial fluid, cerebrospinal fluid, etc.)<sup>6</sup>;
- *Melancholia* (also called *Black Bile*), corresponding to the Earth element, responsible for everything that is hard and structured (bones, teeth, but also growths, polyps, stones, tumors, etc.).

Heat and body fluids are governed by Yellow Bile and Phlegm respectively. When there are no further specifications, the terms “heat” and “fluids” can be used, in this text, to indicate the corresponding humor.

The functioning of the whole body is governed by the mixing (*crasia*) of such humors: if the ratio between the humors is proper (we speak of *eucrasia*), the body functions at its best and the health is guaranteed; if they are blended improperly (we speak of *discrasia*), illness results.

A humor is defined *correct* when both its “quantity” and its “quality” are proper; when it prevails over the others, generating dyscrasia, it is said that it is *superabundant*, and when its quality is not appropriate it is said that it is *corrupt*. We say in general that a humor is *perverse* when it is overabundant or corrupt. In this text, in order to facilitate comparisons between different systems of medicine, we resort to an extension with respect to the classical conception and define a humor as “perverse”:

- when its “quantity” is not optimal, that is, it is excessive (superabundant humor) or deficient (deficient humor) with respect to the condition of eucrasia (the classical theory allows only excess; deficiency is due to the prevalence of another humor with opposite qualities), or
- when its “quality” is different from the physiologically appropriate one (corrupt humor)<sup>7</sup>.

An excess of heat in the body can overheat and “cook” the humors, altering their characteristics. Phlegm thickens and becomes more viscous, giving rise to the so-called *thickened Phlegm*. If the excess heat is important or lasts for a long time, all humors can end up “burning” (in

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<sup>6</sup> In this sense, it is conceptually different from the *Phlegm* of Chinese medicine, which corresponds specifically to the *thickened Phlegm* of humoral medicine when it is located in the upper part of the organism.

<sup>7</sup> Melancholia, for example, can be in excess with respect to the physiological condition of eucrasia (generating excessive structures) or in deficit (generating deficient constructions), but it can also be generated by the combustion of humors by heat (see below); in the latter case, it is always perverse (therefore it is perverse in quality rather than in quantity). In classical humoral medicine these three conditions are usually not so sharply distinguished from each other.

this case we call them *adust humors*). When burned, humors always produce Melancholia. Unani-Tibb medicine provides four types of perverse melancholia produced by the combustion of humors: *malankholia damvi*, produced by the combustion of Blood; *malankholia safravi*, produced by the combustion of Yellow Bile; *malankholia balghami*, produced by the combustion of Phlegm (generally due to fermentation) and *malankholia saudawi*, produced by the combustion of “correct” Melancholia.

Phlegm is cold in the first degree and damp in the second and is a mobile and flowing humor. When coldness becomes excessive, however, the Phlegm can thicken and become viscous (cold indeed makes viscous), producing once again *thickened Phlegm*.

Phlegm itself, when it accumulates and stagnates for any reason (for example due to a lack of heat or an excess of Tension, see below), generates, by “compression”, secondary heat that can condense the humor and make it viscous.

Furthermore, in nature stagnant dampness favors fermentation and putrefactive processes, especially when there is concomitant heat. Also in the human body an accumulation or stagnation of Phlegm may cause the onset of fermentation or putrefaction (phenomena that today’s medicine generically indicates as *infections*), which are certainly supported by the natural heat of the body and by any secondary heat generated by compression of the Phlegm. Moreover, the fermentation and putrefaction generate further secondary heat<sup>8</sup>. All these phenomena are characterized by the coexistence of perverse dampness and heat, even if, to be more precise, they should be described as due to the presence of pathological dampness associated with a certain degree of perverse heat (it is therefore more correct to think of them as due to “heated” humidity rather than moist heat). From a clinical point of view, the disorders characterized by this humoral picture include the phenomena known as *putrefaction*<sup>9</sup> which are manifested by the emission or collection of purulent material, often even hardened (e.g., abscesses)<sup>10</sup>.

The conditions described so far (thickened phlegm, adust humors, putrefaction) are perverse not due to an incorrect quantity of the humors, but because of their “bad” quality.

### ***Tension***

In this text, for the exclusive purpose of simplifying any comparisons between different systems of medicine (for example, Chinese and humoral), we add the pseudo-humor *Tension*<sup>11</sup>, which is responsible for the “functionality” of the whole body or its parts (e.g., the organs). In this sense, it corresponds to the *Qi* of Chinese medicine but also to other concepts, such as that of the *Four Virtues* (attractive, retentive, alterative and expulsive) of organs according to Galen (see for example [Giannelli]) and it can also be related to the *vasoconstriction* and *vasorelaxation* conditions of Physiomedicalism and to Matthew Wood’s *Constriction* and *Relaxation* tissue states [Wood].

Tension, defined as a *pseudo*-humor because it is not contemplated by the classical humoral theory, can be thought of as formally derived from Fire to which a sort of “constraint”,

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8 The fermentation and putrefaction processes are generally exothermic or generate a “hot” response from the human body..

9 Corresponding to the *toxic heat* of Chinese medicine. This condition also includes diseases characterized by macular or maculopapular eruptions (e.g., exanthematous diseases).

10 The conditions known as *Dampness/Heat* in Chinese medicine (which include, for example, problems often related to the urinary tract or gallbladder, some cases of jaundice, etc.) also fall within this picture.

11 Name borrowed from Matthew Wood’s tissue states model [Wood].

“limitation”, or “obstacle” has been applied. Like Fire, in fact, it is a form of “energy”, mobile in itself and activating; but whereas Fire tends to move only upwards and centrifugally, thus expanding indefinitely, the movement of Tension is more “structured” and so to speak “oriented” towards specific, defined forms and modalities. We can therefore see it as a kind of Fire to which a structuration (element of “terrestrial” nature) has been applied.

We can resort to an image taken from everyday life as an example. If we pour water on the fire, the latter goes out and the water disperses or evaporates. If we place a hard (i.e., cold and dry) element above the fire (for example, a terracotta or metal container) which prevents the water to directly “mix” with the fire, we are able to let the water heat up without dispersing, and to use it warm for specific purposes (for example, to cook food). By applying a cold and dry “obstacle” (the container) to the fire, we “functionalize” the heat that otherwise would disperse or make the water disperse or evaporate.

Tension can therefore be described, in a humoral sense, as derived from a sort of “functionalization” of Fire by a factor (a principle rather than a material cause) of a cold and dry nature. For this reason Tension is hot and dry, with a lower degree of heat than Fire (because of the cooling due to functionalization).

Even Tension can be correct or perverse and, in the latter case, it can be perverse both in quantity (excess or deficit of Tension) and in quality (think for example of the *Qi ni*, or *counterflow Qi*, of Chinese medicine). Given the correspondence, described above, of Tension with Qi, the various manifestations of perverse Tension will typically have a more or less specific correspondence in Chinese medicine (for example, “Tension deficiency” corresponds to “Qi deficiency”). In general, Tension imbalances correspond to Qi imbalances and/or to “Wind” (intended as a pathogenic manifestation).

An imbalance in Tension can also affect other humors, potentially making them perverse. For example, an excess or a stasis (stagnation) of Tension can prevent the body fluids from being moved correctly, generating stagnation of Phlegm and/or Blood; Tension stagnation can generate “compression” which in turn can produce heat (Chinese medicine speaks, for example, of “implosion of stagnant Qi” which generates Fire, understood here not as the element but as a specific manifestation of heat).

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