

## Historical and Science-Based Contemporary Uses of Pipsissewa

By Heidi Berkovitz, BA Ed., LMBT, Clinical Herbalist & Educator



(Berkovitz, H. 2009)

*Chimaphila* spp. (*umbellata* & *maculata*). L. NUTT. Aka: Pipsissewa is a Native American name meaning to “break into little pieces. The latin name, *Chimaphila* is derived from two Greek words ‘winter’ and ‘to love’, making sense that that several of its common names include the words ‘wintergreen’.

Here in North America, this perennial evergreen loves to grow in dry coniferous and hardwood forests. It’s quite abundant throughout the Appalachian Mountains, where I lived for many years. I had the privilege of getting to know and work with Pipsissewa, and still use it today in urinary tract and kidney formulas.

Throughout time and around the globe, traditional uses of Pipsissewa consistently point to its use as an effective diuretic, astringent, tonic and alterative herb with an affinity for the kidneys and urinary tract. According to the Appalachian Plant Monographs prepared by Tai Sofia Institute, Pipsissewa has a rich history of use by both settlers and Native Americans to treat rheumatism, kidney, liver and skin disorders.

In Southern Appalachia, *C.maculata* was often used in place of its Northern Appalachian relative, *C.umbellata*. *C.maculata* shares *C.umbellata*'s diuretic, astringent and tonic properties while also possessing a wide range of application from skin eruptions to cancer.

Native Americans used the leaf infusion to heal blisters and as an eye wash for dry, irritated eyes. The leaves were smoked as a tobacco substitute (similar to uva ursi, which is used in Native American Kinnikinnick smoke blends). As a matter of fact, Pipsissewa is often referenced as an excellent "substitute for uva-ursi and less obnoxious." \* (Grieve 1931)

A variety of Northern American Indians, along with eclectic physicians and settlers used Pipsissewa to treat tubercular infections, rheumatism, kidney disorders such as strangury (UTI), dropsy (edema) and chronic cystitis, head colds, stomach problems, sore eyes, gonorrhea, and if drunk regularly used to cure cancers.

Therapeutic indications for modern day use of Pipsissewa include acute and chronic cystitis, prostatitis, urethritis, edema, kidney weakness, urinary calculi, benign prostatic

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hyperplasia (BPH) , chronic mild nephritis, bleeding wounds, skin eruptions, rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

The following modern day studies based the proprietary formula Eviprostat, which contains *C. umbellata*, indicate Pipsissewa's therapeutic applications for BPH, edema and prostatitis:

- Antioxidant- Used in Japan and Europe for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and “ was shown to suppress markers in rats with surgically induces bladder outlet obstruction.” (Oka, Fukui, et al., 2009)
- Anti-inflammatory - suppressed edema and pro-inflammatory cytokines, reduced bladder weight of rats with either nonbacterial prostatitis or carageenan-induced paw edema methods. (Tsunemori et al., 2011)
- Clinical Studies - A 2008 study based on both regular and double strength was conducted on 92 patients with BPH. Benefits were comparable to conventional BPH agents and were considerably well tolerated. (Tamaki et al., 2008)

It's evident that Pipsissewa proves to be consistently effective, in both history and present day use, as powerful herb supporting kidney and urinary tract issues in both men and women.

Resources:

- 1) Berkovitz, H. (2009). *Chimaphila umbellata*.

2) Grieve, M. (1971). *A Modern Herbal Volume II I-Z*. New York, NY: Dover Publications  
[Unaltered republication from 1931 Harcourt, Brace & Company]

3) Pengelly, A., & Bennett, K.,(2011). *Appalachian plant monographs: Chimaphila umbellata (L.) NUTT. Pipsissewa*. Retrieved from <http://www.frostburg.edu/fs/assets/File/ACES/chimaphila%20umbellata%20-%20final.pdf>

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