

Agrimonia

English (common) agrimony = *A. eupatoria*, fragrant agrimony = *A. procera*

Botanical name *Agrimonia eupatoria* L., *A. procera* Wallr.

Pharmaceutical name *Agrimoniae herba*

Part dried aerial parts

Mandarin *A. eupatoria* is not used in Chinese medicine; xiān hè cǎo (仙鹤草) is the aerial parts of *A. pilosa* Ledeb.

Family Rosaceae

A hardy perennial, up to 1 m tall. Leaves are dark green above and grayish and downy below, with basal leaves in a rosette and smaller leaves up the stem. Yellow flowers in terminal spikes. Both flowers and leaves have a faint characteristic lemony scent when crushed. Fruits are small clinging burrs, which can stick to clothing. Native to the Northern hemisphere, its natural habitat is woods and fields.



Temperature neutral

Tastes sour-astringent, sl. bitter

Organs IN, ST, SP, LR, GB, KI, BL

Actions, uses, and herb pairs

Chinese actions (Western actions)	Western uses	Pair examples (disorders)
I. tonify Spleen, astringe Intestines (bitter tonic, astringent, anti-inflammatory)	malabsorption and malnutrition due to intestinal hyperpermeability (leaky-gut syndrome), gastroenteritis diabetic hyperglycemia + malabsorption	<i>Agrimonia + Gentiana</i> leaky gut and weak digestion <i>Agrimonia + Urtica</i> diabetic hyperglycemia
II. astringe Intestines, reduce diarrhea and bleeding (astringent, antihemorrhagic, antidiarrheal)	diarrhea, mucous colitis, diarrhea with bleeding	<i>Agrimonia + Urtica</i> mucous colitis <i>Agrimonia + Plantago</i> blood in stools
III. tonify and regulate Liver (hepatic tonic, hepatoprotective, cholagogue)	hepatic weakness and congestion, with jaundice, cholecystitis, or hepatitis B	<i>Agrimonia + Silybum</i> weak digestion and reduced hepatic function
IV. move Stagnant Qi and clear Damp and Phlegm in Kidney-Bladder (anti-inflammatory, antidiarrheal, alterative)	urinary incontinence, urinary tract inflammation, urinary dribbling, gout, porphyria	<i>Agrimonia + Equisetum</i> (urinary incontinence) <i>Agrimonia + Thuja</i> (urinary tract inflammation)

USE OF DIFFERENT TYPES AND PLANT PARTS

Felter and Lloyd² described the use of the whole plant of *Agrimonia eupatoria*,

and Ellingwood³ referred to the use of the pulverized leaves. Moore uses the whole plant of *A. striata* or *A. gryposepala*⁴.

Traditional use in China

xiān hè cǎo, the aerial parts of *A. pilosa* Ledeb., is used to¹:

- reduce bleeding in epistaxis, hemoptysis, bleeding gums,

hematemesis, melena, hematuria, and abnormal uterine bleeding

- reduce diarrhea
- kill parasites in malaria, and topically for trichomonas vaginitis

Traditional use in the West

CULPEPER (1651)⁵

Liver

- for those whose livers are annoyed either by heat or by cold
- the liver forms the blood, the blood nourishes the body, and agrimony strengthens the liver
- opens and cleanses the liver (and) treats jaundice

Intestines very beneficial to the bowels, healing all inward wounds; for stopping bloody diarrhea

Kidneys and bladder for treating those (people) with foul, troubled, or bloody urine; for treating gout

Other

- treats tertian or quartan agues (malaria)
- (topically) for sores and ulcers

FELTER AND LLOYD (1898)²

Mucous membranes a mild tonic, alterative, and astringent; reduces excess mucous (secretion) and gives tone to mucous membranes

Urinary system for chronic genito-urinary catarrhal states; for muddy, ill-smelling urine and dirty-looking skin; for renal congestion; for cystitis, nephritis; for cough with dribbling or expulsion of urine; for urinary gravel

Specific for deep-seated and colicky pain in the lumbar region with uneasy sensations reaching from the kidneys to the hips and umbilicus (renal colic).

Comparison with a similar herb

AGRIMONIA AND POTENTILLA ERECTA

Similarities Both are astringent, antihemorrhagic, bitter herbs, that can treat diarrhea, colitis, and intestinal bleeding.

Differences

Potentilla erecta

- has a higher tannin content (15-20%) than Agrimonia (3-13%), and is a stronger astringent and antihemorrhagic than Agrimonia
- is generally used short-term, for more severe acute cases of diarrhea or bleeding, while Agrimonia is used longer-term for children's diarrhea, and for milder or more chronic cases of diarrhea and intestinal bleeding
- is more effective than Agrimonia for treating bleeding hemorrhoids or prolapsed anus

Agrimonia In contrast to *Potentilla*, *Agrimonia* is also used as:

- mild astringent and mucous membrane tonic for:
 - 'leaky-gut syndrome' and malabsorption

- mucous colitis
- urinary tract catarrh
- mild bitter tonic for digestive weakness
- mild bitter tonic for hepatic weakness

Constituents and pharmacology

TYPES OF CONSTITUENTS⁶

- **tannins** (3-13% in *A. eupatoria*)
- **flavonoids** (ca. 1.9%) mainly hyperoside (0.37%), also rutin, isoquercitrin, quercitrin, luteolin, apigenin
- **triterpenoids** ursolic acid (0.6%)
- **phenylpropanoids** (phenolic acids) including chlorogenic, caffeic, and ellagic acids
- **minerals** (ca. 7% in *A. eupatoria*) with relatively high silica content

ACTIONS SUPPORTED BY RESEARCH

The following actions have been reported for *Agrimonia* plant material or for its isolated constituents:

antiviral (to hepatitis B)⁷, anti-inflammatory⁸, antioxidant⁸, hepatoprotective⁹, cholagogic⁶, uricosuric⁶, for cutaneous porphyria⁶, antihyperglycemic¹⁰, antiplatelet¹¹, and antitumor¹²

ACTIONS LINKED TO A CONSTITUENT

- **anti-inflammatory** polyphenols (suggested)¹³
- **hepatoprotective** luteolin (flavonoid)¹⁴, agrimonolide (ellagic acid glycoside = an isocoumarin)⁹
- **antitumor** agrimoniin (tannin)¹²

Dose and dispensing

DRIED HERB 2-4 g of dried herb, as powder or as infusion, three times per day (BHP)¹⁵.

TINCTURE 2-5 ml of 1:5 tincture in 25% alcohol, three times per day (JR).

LIQUID EXTRACT 1-3 ml of 1:1 liquid extract in 25% alcohol, three times per day (BHC2)⁶.

INITIAL DOSE Can start at the standard dose (JR).

DURATION No restriction (JR).

Cautions

GENERAL CONTRAINDICATIONS None known (BHC2).

Please read discussion on safety concerns with tannin-containing herbs in *Potentilla* chapter in 'Combining'¹⁶.

CHINESE CONTRAINDICATIONS *A. eupatoria* is not used in Chinese medicine.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION No data available (JR).

SIDE EFFECTS None known (BHC2).

OVERDOSE No data available (JR).

DRUG INTERACTIONS None reported (Comm. E)¹⁷.