

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

### USE OF DIFFERENT TYPES AND PLANT PARTS

Felter and Lloyd<sup>2</sup> described the use of the whole plant of *Agrimonia eupatoria*,

and Ellingwood<sup>3</sup> referred to the use of the pulverized leaves. Moore uses the whole plant of *A. striata* or *A. gryposepala*<sup>4</sup>.

## Traditional use in China

xiān hè cǎo, the aerial parts of *A. pilosa* Ledeb., is used to<sup>1</sup>:

- 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)<sup>5</sup>

### 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)<sup>2</sup>

**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 RECTA

**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 CONSTITUENTS<sup>6</sup>

- **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)<sup>7</sup>, anti-inflammatory<sup>8</sup>, antioxidant<sup>8</sup>, hepatoprotective<sup>9</sup>, cholagogic<sup>6</sup>, uricosuric<sup>6</sup>, for cutaneous porphyria<sup>6</sup>, antihyperglycemic<sup>10</sup>, antiplatelet<sup>11</sup>, and antitumor<sup>12</sup>

ACTIONS LINKED TO A CONSTITUENT

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

## Dose and dispensing

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

**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)<sup>6</sup>.

**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'<sup>16</sup>.

**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)<sup>17</sup>.