

Bearberry (Uva-Ursi) – Urinary Tract Cleanser, Antimicrobial & Earth-Aligned Protector

Botanical Profile

- Latin Name: *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*
- Alternative Names: Uva-ursi, Kinnikinnick, Bear's Grape
- Plant Family: Ericaceae (Heath family)
- Parts Used: Leaves (dried)
- Origin: Native to northern Europe, Asia, and North America

Bearberry, also known as Uva-ursi, is a small evergreen shrub that thrives in cold, wild landscapes and brings a cooling, cleansing influence to the urinary system. Rich in astringent and antimicrobial compounds, Bearberry leaf has long been used for infections of the bladder and urinary tract. At Peridotflow Wellness Centre, we see Bearberry as a vigilant forest guardian—earthy, resilient, and powerfully purifying when boundaries are overrun.

Supports Urinary Tract Health and Bladder Infections

Bearberry leaf is most renowned for its effectiveness in treating urinary tract infections (UTIs), especially those that recur or resist conventional treatment. Its primary compound, arbutin, transforms in the body to release hydroquinone, a natural antimicrobial that targets bacteria in the bladder. It also soothes irritation and helps clear infection-related discomfort.

Acts as a Powerful Astringent and Anti-inflammatory

Bearberry has a strong drying and toning action on mucous membranes, making it helpful for inflammation of the urinary tract, bladder, and urethra. It can reduce excessive mucus and calm irritated tissues. This makes it useful not only for infections but also for interstitial cystitis and urinary burning.

Cools and Clears Damp-Heat Conditions

Energetically, Bearberry is cooling and drying—ideal for conditions marked by damp-heat such as infection, irritation, or burning urination. Its earthy nature draws energy down and out, helping the body dispel heat, toxins, and emotional tension held in the lower chakras. It is often included in cleansing and elimination blends.

Restores Boundary and Strength in the Lower Body

Bearberry's firm, bitter energy helps rebuild integrity in the pelvic region. For those who feel emotionally or energetically 'leaky'—especially from chronic infection or trauma—Bearberry

restores inner strength. It also offers deep protection and energetic containment for those working with root or sacral healing.

Useful in Mild Incontinence or Weakened Urinary Tone

Its toning action extends to the bladder walls and pelvic tissues, helping to support those with stress incontinence or mild leakage. By firming the urinary system, Bearberry strengthens the boundary between inside and out—a valuable property both physically and emotionally.

Folklore & History

Native American tribes valued Bearberry for urinary tract infections and mixed it with other herbs in ceremonial smoking blends (Kinnikinnick). Its name comes from bears' fondness for the berries, and it has long been considered a plant of resilience, cleansing, and sacred protection. In European folk medicine, it was used for bladder issues and as an underworld guide during times of transformation.

Traditional Usage

Bearberry is traditionally used in tincture or tea form for acute or recurrent UTIs, bladder irritation, and urinary heat. It should be combined with demulcents like Marshmallow or Cornsilk and used for short periods (5–7 days at a time).

Herbal Actions

Antimicrobial, Astringent, Urinary Antiseptic, Anti-inflammatory, Tonic, Diuretic

Energetics & Tissue States

Temperature: Cooling

Moisture: Drying

Tissue States: Damp, Hot, Lax, Atrophic

Active Compounds

- Arbutin – converts to hydroquinone (antimicrobial)
- Tannins – strong astringency
- Flavonoids – antioxidant and anti-inflammatory
- Ursolic acid – antimicrobial and astringent

Dosage & Preparation

- Tincture: 2–4 ml up to 3x daily (short-term use only)
- Tea: 1 tsp dried leaf per cup, simmer gently 10 mins; strain
- Best taken with demulcents and lots of water; alkalise urine for best effect (avoid acidic foods)

Safety & Contraindications

- Not for use in pregnancy or breastfeeding
- Not for long-term use (limit to 5–7 days at a time)
- Avoid in kidney disease or if taking acetaminophen
- Urine must be alkaline for efficacy; avoid with cranberry or vitamin C

Herbal Pairings

- Marshmallow Root – for demulcent urinary soothing
- Cornsilk – gentle diuretic and comfort
- Couchgrass – for urinary inflammation
- Yarrow – astringent with anti-inflammatory effects
- Goldenrod – antiseptic, supports kidney & bladder health

Peridotflow Perspective

Bearberry is the firm hand of the forest—cool, clear, and grounded. She teaches us to set strong boundaries and cleanse what does not belong within. A protector of the root, she walks with those navigating infection, trauma, or energetic vulnerability in the pelvic basin. We honour Bearberry for her unapologetic clarity, reminding us that healing often begins at the base.