

Prickly Ash – Circulatory Tonic, Vital Mover & Awakener of Stagnant Spaces

Botanical Profile

- Latin Name: *Zanthoxylum americanum* / *Zanthoxylum clava-herculis*
- Alternative Names: Toothache Tree, Northern Prickly Ash, Szechuan Pepper (related)
- Plant Family: Rutaceae (Citrus family)
- Parts Used: Bark and berries (dried)
- Origin: Native to North America; closely related species found in Asia

Prickly Ash is a potent herbal mover—warming, stimulating, and highly effective at waking up sluggish circulation and deeply stuck energy. At Peridotflow Wellness Centre, we honour this spicy bark for its ability to bring vitality to the surface, especially when numbness, cold, or stagnation takes hold. It stokes the inner fire, wakes the senses, and helps move what has been long frozen—physically, emotionally, or energetically.

Stimulates and Enhances Circulation

Prickly Ash increases blood flow to the periphery, helping improve cold hands and feet, poor circulation, and systemic sluggishness. It encourages nutrient delivery and waste clearance, acting as a natural vasodilator and circulatory tonic. Particularly useful in stagnant conditions and convalescence.

Alleviates Numbness, Neuralgia and Nerve Pain

With its warming and tingling qualities, Prickly Ash is a classic choice for nerve-related issues. It may reduce numbness, tingling, or dull nerve pain, supporting conditions like sciatica, Raynaud's, and low sensory tone. It has an affinity for revitalising the nervous pathways when sensation is dull or absent.

Supports Digestive Fire and Reduces Bloating

As a warming bitter, Prickly Ash stimulates the digestive system, aiding in the breakdown of food, improving bile flow, and reducing gas or bloating. It is particularly helpful in cold, stagnant digestion or when there's low appetite and sluggish metabolism.

Aids in Detoxification and Lymphatic Movement

By stimulating circulation and lymphatic flow, Prickly Ash helps move metabolic waste through the body. It's beneficial for chronic congestion, lymph stagnation, and as part of long-term detox and vitality protocols.

Revitalises Low Energy and Promotes Inner Warmth

This bark acts like a spark—reigniting internal fire where burnout, coldness, or emotional numbness have dulled the system. Used in small amounts, it gently awakens without overstimulation, bringing courage and clarity back to the system.

Folklore & History

Prickly Ash was used traditionally by many Native American nations and early North American herbalists as a toothache remedy (numbing and antimicrobial), circulatory stimulant, and tonic for vitality. It gained popularity in Eclectic medicine for its warming and nervine actions. Symbolically, the tree's thorns reflect protection and fierce restoration—a medicine for reclaiming strength.

Traditional Usage

Used as a tincture or decoction, Prickly Ash bark is traditionally combined with warming or alterative herbs. Valued in sluggish conditions, nerve pain, and as an adjunct to immune or detoxification formulas. Often paired with Cayenne, Ginger, or Myrrh.

Herbal Actions

Circulatory Stimulant, Nervine, Alterative, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Sialogogue, Antispasmodic

Energetics & Tissue States

Temperature: Warming

Moisture: Slightly Drying

Tissue States: Cold, Stagnant, Damp, Atrophic

Active Compounds

- Alkaloids (including berberine-type) – Alterative and immune
- Tannins – Astringent
- Volatile oils – Stimulant, warming
- Resinous and acrid constituents – Circulatory activation

Dosage & Preparation

- Tincture: 1–2 ml up to 3x daily
- Decoction: Simmer 1 tsp bark in water for 10–15 minutes; take 1–2x daily

- Use in small amounts, blended with other herbs
- Excellent in formulas for circulation, lymph, or chronic depletion

Safety & Contraindications

- Avoid high doses—too much may cause GI irritation
- Not recommended during pregnancy
- May aggravate heat in Pitta conditions
- Use caution with hot or inflammatory constitutions

Herbal Pairings

- Ginger – for deep warmth and digestion
- Myrrh – for lymphatic stagnation
- Cleavers – for moving lymph gently
- Devil’s Claw – for nerve inflammation and joint pain
- Schisandra – for liver and vitality support

Peridotflow Perspective

Prickly Ash is the spark in the hearth—the flint that brings warmth to long-dormant embers. At Peridotflow, we reach for this fierce ally when things have gone cold—circulation, spirit, or purpose. She doesn’t just move blood—she rekindles courage, sensation, and the will to act. Ideal for grounding and warming those lost in freeze, burnout, or stagnation.