

# Rhubarb Root – Bitter Digestive, Gentle Laxative & Liver Ally

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## Botanical Profile

- Latin Name: *Rheum palmatum* / *Rheum officinale*
- Alternative Names: Chinese Rhubarb, Turkey Rhubarb
- Plant Family: Polygonaceae (Buckwheat family)
- Parts Used: Root (dried)
- Origin: Native to China and Tibet; used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for thousands of years

Rhubarb Root is a powerful yet balanced herb used to stimulate digestion, cleanse the bowel, and encourage bile flow. Known for its dual action—mildly laxative in small doses and purgative in large—it brings harmony to digestive elimination. At Peridotflow Wellness Centre, we honour Rhubarb Root for its bittersweet wisdom, clearing stagnation without force, and guiding the body into digestive balance with discernment and strength.

## **Stimulates Healthy Bowel Elimination**

Rhubarb Root gently encourages peristalsis, supporting regular bowel movements without dependence. Its anthraquinones activate the colon, helping to relieve sluggish elimination and mild constipation. Unlike harsher laxatives, it also astringes and tones the colon lining, helping to prevent weakness over time.

## **Promotes Digestive Enzyme Secretion and Appetite**

A classic bitter tonic, Rhubarb Root stimulates the secretion of saliva, gastric juices, and bile. This promotes efficient digestion and supports a healthy appetite—especially helpful for those who experience bloating, indigestion, or sluggish liver activity. Its bittersweet nature aligns digestion with natural hunger and satiety cycles.

## **Supports Liver Detoxification and Bile Flow**

Traditionally used to promote healthy liver function, Rhubarb Root increases bile flow and supports gentle liver cleansing. This action aids in hormone clearance, fat digestion, and overall detoxification, especially when paired with Dandelion or Yellow Dock.

## **Balances Gut Microbiota and Eases Dysbiosis**

Rhubarb Root exhibits antimicrobial properties that may support a healthier gut terrain. By reducing harmful bacteria and encouraging bowel movement, it creates conditions more conducive to balanced flora and gut health. This makes it a valuable herb in protocols addressing overgrowth, stagnation, or intestinal imbalance.

## Cools Inflammation in the Gut and Beyond

Despite its stimulating qualities, Rhubarb Root also has anti-inflammatory properties. It can soothe gut inflammation and is used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to cool internal heat, including fevers and heat-related skin eruptions.

## Folklore & History

Rhubarb Root has a long and celebrated history in Chinese, Arabic, and European medicine. Used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for over 2,000 years, it was prized for its ability to purge, cleanse, and harmonise the bowels and blood. In European history, it became one of the most expensive and sought-after herbs of the Middle Ages, traded along the Silk Road and treasured as a powerful cathartic remedy.

## Traditional Usage

Used in small amounts as a bitter digestive and in larger doses as a cathartic laxative. Traditionally included in digestive bitters, cleansing blends, and constitutional tonics to restore balance to digestion, liver, and bowels. Best taken in short cycles or low doses unless guided by a practitioner.

## Herbal Actions

Laxative (mild to strong), Bitter, Astringent, Cholagogue, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory

## Energetics & Tissue States

Temperature: Cooling

Moisture: Drying

Tissue States: Damp/Stagnant, Lax, Hot

## Active Compounds

- Anthraquinones (rhein, emodin) – stimulate bowel motility
- Tannins – astringent, toning
- Stilbenes – antioxidant
- Flavonoids – anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial

## Dosage & Preparation

- Decoction: 1/2 tsp root per cup, simmer 10–15 minutes
- Tincture: 1–2 ml up to 2x daily as a bitter; up to 4 ml for stronger effect

- Use short-term only unless guided
- Best taken early in the day and not before bedtime

### **Safety & Contraindications**

- Not for use in pregnancy or breastfeeding
- Avoid long-term use or in cases of chronic bowel inflammation (IBD)
- Contraindicated with diarrhea, dehydration, or electrolyte imbalance
- May interact with medications that affect the liver or electrolyte balance

### **Herbal Pairings**

- Dandelion Root – for gentle liver and bowel synergy
- Yellow Dock – for mineral-rich detox support
- Ginger – to balance cold energetics
- Fennel – to ease cramping and gas
- Licorice – to soothe and protect gut lining

### **Peridotflow Perspective**

Rhubarb Root is a wise and discerning plant teacher—firm when needed, yet precise in its action. She helps us let go of what is no longer needed—waste, stagnation, inflammation—and opens the path for clarity and flow. At Peridotflow, she is part of deep-clearing protocols that honour the rhythm of release and the necessity of space for the new to emerge.