

Medicinal plant offers relief and healing to many wounds

Dear Dr. Meinig:

Recently I severely burned my hand at a friend's house. She immediately cut a leaf from an Aloe plant that she had in her kitchen and smeared some of the gel from the inside of the leaf on the burn. The pain disappeared as if by magic and the burn healed without even blistering. What can you tell me about this plant?

S.R.

Dear S.R.:

The Aloe Vera plant is often called the Burn Plant, but others say it is the First-aid Plant, the Medicine Plant or the Miracle Plant. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved its use in minor first-aid situations but has not done so for medical ailments. However, because of its long history of over 4000 years, it has been used for countless numbers of body afflictions.

Most species of this plant are originally natives of South Africa. It was recorded as a popular trade item in Ancient Rome and Greece. Aloe Vera is usually pronounced "ah-low-veer-a" but the correct pronunciation of the genus name is "ah-low-ee-vec-rah."

The author of the famed Greek Herbal, Dioscorides, during the first century A.D., reported on its use for healing wounds, insomnia, stomach disorders, constipation, hemorrhoids, itching, headache, loss of hair, mouth and gum



Dr. George

By George Meinig, DDS

diseases, kidney ailments, blistering, skin care, sunburn and blemishes.

Many firms now grow and produce salves, lotions, gels and shampoos from the Aloe plant. One such company lists over 70 ailments they say are helped by the use of the herb.

Generally it is claimed that no side affects are experienced in its use. Keep in mind that most such statements are made in the absence of scientific testing that could reveal more accurately the true nature of its chemical activity in the body. For this reason, those who use this product internally over long periods on a regular daily basis should pay close attention to any signs or symptoms that might occur.

I am not implying that I know of any problems but it is so easy to be carried away with enthusiasm when a substance

has proved successful in the past.

Dentists rather frequently burn their fingers on hit instruments and wax. It may be of interest to know that I have grown the plant, in a flower pot, in my office and home and have numbers of times cut a leaf and used the gel directly on burns, and other wounds. It was also helpful in treating a severe case of poison oak. Vitamin E cream or oil is also good for these cases.

Aloe Vera plants are readily available from nursery and garden stores or may be started from cuttings. For those not familiar with the plant, it looks like a type of cactus but it really is from the lily family. The lanced shaped leaves are quite thick and heavy. To obtain its medicinal ingredients a leaf is broken off at its base and the skin slip up the length exposing the gel. The gel is scooped or squeezed out and applied directly to the wound.

One can examine the healing properties of the Aloe first hand by cutting a leaf in half. In but a few moments the cut ends develop a rubberlike coating over the wound and a short time later the leaf will be found to have completely healed.

The Aloe Vera proves to be astringent, coagulating, pain inhibiting and growth stimulating. Some of its healing powers are felt to be antibiotic in action but most feel that it is the enzymes in the gel that are responsible for its medicinal value.

Readers that would like more information about this helpful plant should drop a line to the Aloe Vera Research Institute, 5103 Sequoia, Cypress, CA 90630.