



Chickweed

Stellaria media



<u>Family Name:</u>	Caryophyllaceae
<u>Common Name:</u>	Chickweed
<u>Description:</u>	A common annual herb, often considered as a weed. It has sprawling succulent brittle stems and grows in dense low vibrant green mats. The otherwise smooth stalk has a single line of hairs. The green pointed but generally oval leaves grow in opposite pairs and the plant is studded with many small starry white flowers with five petals so deeply cleft that it looks like ten. The narrow sepals of the same length complete the star formation. The fruit are found on elongated drooping stalks and produce tiny yellow-orange seeds. Chickweed readily self sows and will grow through out the year. It prefers cool, shady and damp spots, and grows best during autumn and spring. Frost resistant and drought tender.
<u>Parts Used:</u>	The fresh whole herb for salads, tinctures and infused oils.
<u>Constituents:</u>	Saponins, coumarins, flavonoids, carboxyl acids and triterpenoids. Rich in vitamins, B complex (including B12), C (150-350 mg per 100gms), D and minerals including iron, copper, calcium, sodium, manganese, phosphorus, zinc, magnesium and silica.
<u>Actions:</u>	Nutritive, antiscorbutic, refrigerant, antirheumatic, alterative, demulcent, anti-inflammatory. Externally it is antipruritic, vulnerary and emollient.
<u>Indications:</u>	Chickweed is a highly nutritious mineral rich food source. The saponins increase permeability of mucous membranes increasing the absorption of nutrients. Chickweed soothes the whole digestive tract and nourishes the glandular and lymphatic systems for thyroid problems, swollen glands and cysts. Chickweed is used externally as a poultice, salve or oil for itches, wounds, ulcers, abscesses, pimples, boils and other skin eruptions or injury. May be used as an eyewash or poultice for conjunctivitis. Use hot chickweed baths or soaks for arthritis, rheumatism, stiff neck, sore back or itching.
<u>Historically:</u>	Seeds have been found in Neolithic burial sites. Used as an ancient pot herb. Traditionally fed to domestic birds and fowl. Chickens, hogs and rabbits love its succulent foliage and seeds, but it is said that sheep and goats won't touch it. Chickweed elixir is said to bring peace of mind and raises consciousness, thereby allowing sound choices to be made. It stimulates libido and increases fertility.

References: Waikato Centre For Herbal Medicine Course Notes
Herbalpedia 2007

Prepared by Irene Ellis
For The Herb Federation of New Zealand's Herb Awareness Week 9th - 16th March 2008
Inquires to HFNZ, PO Box 42, Katikati
Website: www.herbs.org.nz