

HERBAL APOTHECARY

HERBAL ACTIONS  
GLOSSARY

Created with Good Intentions  
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**Adaptogenic** - A substance that increases the body's resistance or adaptation to physical, environmental, emotional or biological stressors and promotes normal physiological function.

**Adrenal Tonic** - A substance that improves the tone, histology and function of the adrenal glands (especially the cortex).

**Alterative** - See Depurative

**Analgesic** - A substance that relieves pain.

**Anaphrodisiac** - A substance that reduces libido (usually in males).

**Anodyne** - See Analgesic.

**Antacid** - A substance that counteracts or neutralises acidity in the gastrointestinal tract.

**Anthelmintic** - A substance that kills or assists in the expulsion of intestinal worms.

**Antiallergic** - A substance that tones down the allergic response, often by stabilising mast cells.

**Antiandrogenic** - A substance that inhibits or modifies the action of androgens (male sex hormones).

**Antianaemic** - A substance that prevents or corrects anaemia (that is a reduction in the number of circulating red blood cells or in the quantity of haemoglobin).

**Antiarrhythmic** - A substance that prevents or is effective against arrhythmias (that are any variation from the normal rhythm or rate of the heart beat).

**Antiasthmatic** - A substance that prevents or relieves asthma attacks.

**Antibacterial** - A substance that inhibits the growth of bacteria (bacteriostatic) or destroys bacteria (bactericidal).

**Anticariogenic** - A substance that reduces the incidence of dental caries (tooth decay).

**Anticatarrhal** - A substance that reduces the formation of catarrh or phlegm (pathological mucus secretion).

**Anticoagulant** - A substance that reduces the rate of blood coagulation.

**Anticonvulsant** - A substance that tends to prevent or arrest seizures (convulsions).

**Antidepressant** - A substance that alleviates depression.

**Antidiabetic** - See also Hypoglycaemic.  
A substance that alleviates diabetes or the effects of diabetes.

**Antidiarrhoeal** - A substance that alleviates diarrhoea.

**Antiecchymotic** - A substance that prevents or alleviates bruising.

**Antiemetic** - A substance that reduces nausea and vomiting.

**Antifibrotic** - A substance that reduces the excessive formulation of fibrous connective tissue, eg in scleroderma.

**Antifungal** - A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys fungi.

**Antihaemorrhagic** - A substance that reduces or stops bleeding when taken internally.

**Antihyperhidrotic** - A substance that reduces excessive sweating.

**Anti-Inflammatory** - See also Antiallergic, Antirheumatic, Antiedematous, Immune depressant). A substance that reduces inflammation.

**Antilithic** - A substance that reduces the formation of calculi (stones) in the urinary tract.

**Antimicrobial** - See also Antibacterial, Antifungal, Antiparasitic, Antiviral, Antiprotozoal). A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys micro-organisms.

**Antiobesity** - A substance that assists in the reduction of body weight.

**Antioedematous** - A substance that prevents or alleviates oedema (fluid retention).

**Antioxidant** - A substance that protects against oxidation and free radical damage.

**Anti-PAF** - A substance that inhibits the activity of platelet activating factor (PAF). (PAF is a potent inflammatory agent and inducer of systemic anaphylactic symptoms).

**Antiparasitic** - A substance that inhibits the activity of or kills parasites, especially protozoa.

**Antiplatelet** - A substance that reduces platelet aggregation (and hence prolongs bleeding time and may prevent thrombus formation).

**Antiprostatic** - A substance that reduces symptoms from the prostate gland.

**Antiprotozoal** - A substance that kills protozoa or inhibits their growth and activity.

**Antipruritic** - A substance that relieves or prevents itching.

**Antipsoriatic** A substance that tends to relieve the symptoms of psoriasis  
**Antipyretic** - A substance that reduces or prevents fever.

**Antirheumatic** - A substance that prevents or relieves rheumatic symptoms.

**Antiseptic** - See Antimicrobial

**Antispasmodic** - See Spasmolytic

**Antithyroid** - A substance that reduces the activity of the thyroid gland.

**Antitumour** - A substance that has activity against a malignant tumour.

**Antitussive** - A substance that reduces the amount of severity of coughing.

**Antiulcer** - A substance that prevents or relieves ulceration (usually in the gastrointestinal tract).

**Antiuraemic** - A substance that reduces the levels of urea in the blood (especially in kidney failure)

**Antiviral** - A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys viruses  
A substance that alleviates anxiety.

**Aperient** - See Cathartic.

**Aphrodisiac** - A substance that stimulates sexual desire or libido

**Aromatic Digestive** - A substance that is generally pleasant tasting and/or smelling that assists digestion. They are warming to the body and are also known as warming digestive tonics.

**Astringent** - A substance that causes constriction of mucous membranes and exposed tissues, usually by precipitating proteins. This has the effect of producing a barrier on the mucus or exposed surfaces.

**Bitter Tonic** - Also known as a Bitter. See also Gastric stimulant. A substance that is bitter tasting and stimulates the upper gastrointestinal tract via the bitter- sensitive taste buds of the mouth and/or by direct interaction with gastrointestinal tissue. Bitters have a promoting effect on all components of upper digestive function, namely the stomach, liver and pancreas. In addition to appetite and digestion they improve general health and immune function.

**Bladder Tonic** - A substance that improves the tone and function of the bladder and reduced postvoid residual urine.

**Bronchospasmolytic** - A substance that reduces spasm in the lower respiratory tract.

**Cancer Preventative** - See also Antitumour. A substance that prevents the incidence of cancer.

**Cardioprotective** - A substance that protects cardiac tissue against hypoxia (oxygen deficiency) and decreases the risk of heart damage.

**Cardiotonic** - A substance that improves the force of contraction of the heart.

**Carminative** - A substance that relieves flatulence and soothes intestinal spasm and pain, usually by relaxing intestinal muscle and sphincters. They are also added to herbal formulations to ease the intestinal spasm or pain that may be caused by laxative herbs.

**Cathartic** - A substance that assists or induces evacuation of the bowel and has a strong laxative action. They are also known as purgatives.

**Cholagogue** - A substance that increases the release of stored bile from the gall bladder.

**Choleretic** - A substance that increases the production of bile by the liver.

**Circulatory Stimulant** - A substance that improves blood flow through peripheral body tissues. Circulatory stimulants are warming and they support vitality in the body tissues.

**CNS Stimulant** - A substance that stimulates the central nervous system, increasing alertness.

**Cognition Enhancing** - A substance that facilitates learning, memory or concentration.

**Collagen Stabilising** - A substance that stabilises collagen and protects collagen from degradation. Connective tissue tone is thereby improved.

**Counterirritant** - A substance that produces a superficial inflammation of the skin in order to relieve a deeper inflammation, eg in muscles, joints and ligaments.

**Demulcent** - A substance that has a soothing effect on mucous membranes, for example, within the respiratory, digestive and urinary tracts.

**Depurative** - A substance that improves detoxification and aids elimination to reduce the accumulation of metabolic waste products within the body. They were formerly known as alteratives or blood purifiers and are largely used to treat chronic skin and musculoskeletal disorders.

**Diaphoretic** - A substance that controls a fever, often by promoting sweating. They are also known as sudorifics.

**Diuretic** - A substance that increases urinary output.

**Diuretic Depurative** - A substance that assists detoxification of the body by the kidneys.

**Dopaminergic Agonist** - A substance that binds to and activates dopamine receptors.

**Emetic** - A substance that causes vomiting.

**Emmenagogue** - A substance that initiates and promotes the menstrual flow. Several of these herbs are also regarded as abortifacients.

**Emollient** - A substance used to soothe, soften or protect skin.

**Expectorant** - A substance that improves the clearing of excess mucus from the lungs by either altering the production and viscosity of mucus or improving the cough reflex.

**Febrifuge** - See Antipyretic.

**Female Tonic** - A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the female reproductive system.

**Galactagogue** - A substance that increases breast milk production.

**Gastric Stimulant** - See also Bitter tonic. A substance that stimulates the function of the stomach.

**General Body Tonic** - See *Tonic*

**Haemostatic** - See *Styptic*

**Healing Promoter** - A substance that promotes the healing of tissue.

**Hepatic (Hepatic Tonic)** - A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the liver. This term is vague and other more specific terms are preferable.

**Hepatoprotective** - A substance that protects the hepatocytes (liver cells) against toxic damage.

**Hepatotropho-restorative** - A substance that restores the integrity of liver tissue.

**Hypnotic** - A substance that induces drowsiness and sleep. They are also known as soporifics.

**Hypocholesterolaemic** - See also *Hypolipidaemic*. A substance that reduces the level of cholesterol in the blood.

**Hypoglycaemic** - A substance that reduces the level of glucose in the blood.

**Hypolipidaemic** - A substance that reduces the lipid level (cholesterol and triglycerides) of blood.

**Hypotensive** - See also Peripheral vasodilator. A substance that reduces blood pressure.

**Immune Depressant** - A substance that reduces immune function and is used particularly where part of the immune system is overactive.

**Immune Enhancing** - A substance that enhances immune function.

**Immune Modulating** - A substance that modulates and balances the activity of the immune system.

**Laxative** - A substance that facilitates evacuation of the bowel.

**Local Anaesthetic** - A substance that removes sensation or pain when applied locally.

**Lymphatic** - A substance that assists detoxification by its effect on lymphatic tissue and often also improves immune function. They are often used when the lymph glands (nodes) are enlarged or tender.

**Male Tonic** - A substance that improved the tone, vigour and function of the male reproductive system.

**Metabolic Stimulant** - A substance that boosts basal metabolic rate.

**Mucolytic** - A substance that helps break up and disperse sticky mucus in the respiratory tract.

**Mucoprotective** - A substance that protects the mucous membranes, especially in the context of the gastric lining.

**Mucous Membrane Tonic** - A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the mucous membranes (particularly of the respiratory tract).

## **Mucous Membrane**

**Trophorestorative** - A substance that restores the integrity of mucous membranes, eg in the respiratory and digestive tracts.

**Nervine Tonic (Nervine)** - A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the nervous system. Nervine tonics relax and energise the nervous system.

**Neuroprotective** - A substance that helps prevent damage to the brain or spinal cord from ischaemia, stroke, convulsions or trauma.

**Nootropic** - See Cognition enhancing. Nutrient - A substance that has a nutritive effect in the body.

**Orexigenic** - A substance that stimulates appetite.

**Oestrogen Modulating** - In the context of use of herbs, a substance that acts by subtle, poorly-understood mechanisms to promote oestrogen production and/or effects in the body. The activity may involve interaction with secondary oestrogen receptors such as those in the hypothalamus. They are used to balance hormonal effects, promote fertility and alleviate menopausal symptoms.

**Ovarian Tonic** - A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the ovaries.

**Oxytocic** - A substance that causes contraction of the uterine muscle in association with giving birth.

**Parturifacient** - A substance that induces labour and assists in the efficient delivery of the foetus and placenta.

**Partus Preparator** - A substance taken in preparation for labour and childbirth. Treatment usually begins in the second trimester.

**Peripheral Vasodilator** - A substance that dilates or widens the peripheral blood vessels and thereby improves circulation to peripheral tissues and may assist in reducing blood pressure.

**Progesterogenic** - A substance that promotes the effect or production of progesterone.

**Prolactin Inhibitor** - A substance that inhibits the secretion of prolactin.

**Pungent** - A hot-tasting substance that acts upon a common group of nerve cell receptors having the effect of warming the body and improving digestion and circulation.

**Purgative** - See Cathartic

**Refrigerant** - A substance that has cooling properties, particularly when applied to the skin.

**Rubefacient** - See Counterirritant. Rubefacients are mild counterirritants.

**Sedative (Mild)** - A substance that reduces activity, particularly in the nervous system and decreases nervous tension. It may alleviate pain, anxiety or spasm and induce sleep.

**Sexual Tonic** - A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the sexual organs.

**Sialagogue** - A substance that increases the secretion of the salivary glands.

**Skeletal Muscle Relaxant** - A substance that relaxes skeletal muscle tone.

**Spasmolytic** - A substance that reduces or relieves smooth muscle spasm (involuntary contractions).

**Stimulant** - A substance that heightens the function of an organ or system, eg a central nervous stimulant increases the activity of the central nervous system, particularly behavioural alertness, agitation, or excitation. The term has a second, more subtle meaning derived from the Thomsonian system (an early branch of herbal therapy in the USA): a substance capable of increasing the action or energy of the living body.

**Styptic** - A substance that stops bleeding when applied locally.

**Thymoleptic** - See also Antidepressant. A substance that elevates mood.

**Thyroid Stimulant** - A substance that enhances the activity of the thyroid gland.

**Tissue Perfusion Enhancing** - A substance that enhances the flow of nutrients into a tissue.

**Tonic** - Also known as General body tonic. See also other specific body tonics. A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the whole body. Tonics can give a boost in energy.

**Trophorestorative** - A substance that has a healing and restorative action on a specific organ or tissue.

**TSH Antagonist** - A substance that blocks the activity of TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone).

**Urinary Antiseptic** - A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys micro-organisms within the urinary tract.



**Urinary Demulcent** - A substance that has a soothing effect on mucous membranes of the urinary tract.

**Uterine Antihemorrhagic** - A substance that reduces the menstrual flow when taken internally.

**Uterine Sedative** - A substance that reduces the activity of the uterine muscle.

**Uterine Tonic** - A substance that increases the tone of the uterine muscle.

**Vasoconstrictor** - A substance that constricts or narrows the blood vessels.

**Vasodilator** - A substance that dilates or widens the blood vessels.

**Vasoprotective** - A substance that protects the integrity of the blood vessels, especially the fine and more delicate ones.

**Venotonic** - A substance that improves the tone and function of the veins.

**Vermifuge** - See Anthelmintic

**Vulnerary** - See also Antiulcer, Astringent, Demulcent. Promotes the healing of wounds when applied locally.

### *You did it!*

You learnt all about the therapeutic benefits of herbs through their unique actions. Understanding how herbs work means knowing the wide range of actions they can have in the body. It's important to keep in mind that a single herb can have numerous actions, and they should never be pigeon-holed into only doing one thing. Often their actions are synchronised and work together in a way that will benefit the body as a whole system and on multiple levels.

So now you have all this good knowledge - Let's invest in YOUR health today, before the small things become bigger things.

Book your consultation at  
[www.thefeelgoodsociety.com.au](http://www.thefeelgoodsociety.com.au)

*Colony Sizzi*

