



**Latin Name:** *Aloe Vera*

Other Names: *Barbados Aloe, Medicine Plant, Lily of the Desert*

**Aloe Vera** is a true gift from nature. It has been one of the most widely utilized and sought after plants throughout history. Many ancient works, including the Bible, refer to the use of Aloe. The Bible mentions removing Christ from the cross and wrapping his body in aloes and myrrh (John 19:39). We find Aloe Vera appearing in every phase of history, with many testimonials to its great medicinal values.

Some scientists agree, and historical evidence suggests, that the Aloe Vera plant originated in the warm, dry climates of Africa. However, because the plant is readily adaptable, and because man has been so eager to carry it with him from place to place, it now can be found in many warm lands, including throughout the Southwest United States, Texas and Florida.

Although Aloe Vera is a tropical plant, the root can survive freezing air temperatures, so long as the ground is not frozen and the root destroyed. The plant need not be destroyed for damage to occur. The leaves may be damaged and vital nutrients may be lost at air temperatures of forty degrees Fahrenheit. Such damage may be severe at thirty-five degrees. Conversely, the plant can grow at temperatures as great as 104 F. It will survive temperatures higher still, and can withstand even severe drought. Nonetheless, it will thrive in humid jungles, so long as the root itself does not stand in water and drown.

While it has not yet won the full endorsement of the medical community, serious examination continues for Aloe's unexamined possibilities as a powerful normalizing agent. It took early man thousands of years to develop what we know today as the modern understanding of plants, of what can and cannot be consumed, of what will be of benefit and what will harm. It is important to remember that this is the common history of all our knowledge of the world. Most of our marketed medicines are distillations, combinations, reproductions or variations of substances found in nature. Some of these substances were recommended by our forefathers long before their value was demonstrated and understood by scientific method. We should dismiss none of our common heritage of knowledge without real thought and serious investigation. The exploration of our world is far from complete.

According to Stanford University of California and the University of Tennessee researchers and other scientists, substances reported to occur in Aloe Vera gel include polysaccharides containing glucose, mannose, tannins, steroids, organic acids, antibiotic principles, glucuronic acid, enzymes, oxidase, catalase, and amylase), trace sugar, calcium oxalate, a protein containing

18 amino acids, “wound healing hormones”, biogenic stimulators, saponin, vitamins, and minerals: chloride, sulfate, iron , calcium, copper, sodium, potassium, manganese, magnesium, silicon, and phosphatide esters.

### **Benefits of Aloe Vera**

- Enhances immune system performance
- Repairs and detoxifies digestive tract
- Help improve allergic reactions
- Lubricate joints and reduces inflammation
- Makes cells more resistant to and helps with conditions such as fungus, bacteria and viruses
- Increases absorption of vitamins and minerals
- Normalizes blood sugar
- Effective for wounds, cuts, scrapes, burns
- Soothes skin injured by irritations and insect bites
- Moisturizes and softens the skin
- May help with constipation, diarrhea and other autoimmune problems
- Protects from the sun
- Has been used for different health problems such as boils and other skin conditions
- Good for the tonsils, gums and all mouth irritations
- Eases hemorrhoids
- Has been used for nuclear and other radiation burns
- May help restore hair growth

### **Historical Uses of Aloe Vera**

One of the first documented users of Aloe Vera was Cleopatra, who lived from 68 to 30 B.C. She is said to have used the gel on her skin as protection from the sun, and believed the gel helped to keep her skin young-looking. In fact, the Egyptians used Aloe Vera in their embalming of bodies, among other uses.

About the year 6 B.C., Dioscorides, a Greek physician, discovered Aloe Vera was effective in helping with a wide range of ailments, from kidney problems and constipation, to severe burns of the skin. Dioscorides gained most of his knowledge about Aloe Vera from traveling with the Roman armies. He first wrote of it in his ‘*De Materia Medica*’ in AD 41-68. His commentary uses Aloe Vera for boils, healing the foreskin, soothing dry itchy skin, ulcerated genitals, tonsils, gum and throat irritations, bruising, and to stop bleeding wounds. Pliny the Elder, a physician from 23-79 A.D., confirmed in his ‘*Natural History*’ the discoveries of Dioscorides. Some additional uses that Pliny found for Aloe Vera included the healing of leprosy sores and it reduced perspiration as our first anti-perspirant. Two thousand years ago Pliny and Dioscorides saw a difference in the quality of different Aloe Vera plants and their processing before use.

We also find the Aloe Vera plant painted on the Egyptian vases of the archaic epoch. The “Egyptian book of remedies” on the famous Ebers papyrus (15th century A.D.) also mentions Aloe Vera among health formulas having already existed 3,000 years before our times.

In the Hindu culture, the Aloe Vera plant retains an important place among the sacred plants of the **Atharva Veda where it is named “the silent healer“**. The Mahometans of Egypt thought of Aloe Vera as a religious symbol, and they believed that the holy symbol hanging in the doorway would protect them from slanderous and evil influence. The Egyptians used the Aloe Vera to make papyrus like scrolls for tuberculosis and is useful for respiratory problems. In ancient Egypt when a Pharaoh died, the funeral ceremony was by invitation only with a price tag included: a pound of Aloes. Egyptians used the odorous mixture of Aloe and myrrh for embalming and also placed it with the burial clothes. A man’s wealth and esteem for the king were estimated by the number of pounds of Aloes he brought.

The aged people of Mesopotamia, a country located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in present day Iraq used the Aloe Vera to hold off the evil spirits from their residences. During the Crusades, the Knights of Templar created a drink of palm wine, Aloe pulp and hemp, which was named ‘the Elixir of Jerusalem’ and they believed that it added years to their health and life.

The island of Socotra which lies near the Horn of Africa, became known for its Aloe Vera plantations as early as 500 BC. The Aloe produced was used for trade to other countries such as Tibet, India and China. Aristotle convinced Alexander the Great to overtake the Isle of Socotra for their Aloe supply containing aloin. The Hindu people thought that Aloe Vera grew in the Garden of Eden and praised it for it’s life-giving benefits. In China the juice of Aloes was used to help rashes. The Russians called Aloe Vera ‘the Elixir of Longevity’. The Native American Indians used Aloe for its emollient and rejuvenating powers.

Aloe Vera had traveled to Persia and India by 600 BC by Arab traders. The Arabs called Aloe the ‘**Desert Lily**’ for its internal and external uses. They discovered a way to separate the inner gel and the sap from the outer rind. With their bare feet they crushed the leaves, then they put the pulp into the goatskin bags. The bags were then set in the sun to dry and the Aloe would become a powder.

In the 7th century the Chinese Materia Medicas wrote of using the Aloe Vera for sinusitis and other skin conditions. “In the 15th century, a time which heralded a massive explosion in exploration by the then leading maritime powers, namely, Spain, Portugal, Holland, France and Britain, it was the Jesuit priests of Spain who were instrumental in bringing Aloe Vera back to the New World as they called it.” Many give the Spanish credit for bringing Aloe Vera not only to the New World but passing it on to Central America, West Indies, California, Florida, and Texas.

The Aloe Vera planted along the route leading to the Valley of the Kings and that around the pyramids, accompanied the Pharaoh during his passage to the beyond. They believed it would feed and care for him on his journey in eternity. When it came into flower, it was the sign that the Pharaoh had reached the “other bank”. The priests used the Aloe Vera plant during the funeral rituals by incorporating it in the embalming formula under the name of “the plant of immortality”.[Edit](#)