

**A multi-talented
plant with a very
good reputation**

ALOE VERA



Can you believe there is actually a non-genetically-engineered, all-natural plant that you can eat, drink, and use as skin lotion, which speeds up healing and, in addition, makes a lovely decoration for your home?

Do you think this is a crop grown by man or an entirely new plant? Wrong. It is real and has been around for centuries BC! Known by many different names, in China it was called the “harmonic remedy,” the Florida Seminole tribe referred to it as the “fountain of youth,” whereas in Egypt it was known as the “plant of immortality.” Today, it is called by its scientific name, Aloe Vera.

A plant with a history

Because of its regenerating and healing properties, the Aloe gel was thought to provide beauty, health and immortality. Cleopatra used this healthy elixir mixed with donkey milk for daily skin and body care. After conquering the Aloe-rich island of Socotora, Alexander the Great also allowed his battle-wounded soldiers to be treated with this wonder gel. Even though the word Aloe may have a Hawaiian ring to it, there is actually no connection. It even has its origin on the other side of the globe, specifically in the Arabian Peninsula. Its common name derives from the Arab word *alloe*, which means “shiny and bitter substance.”

It is also referred to as *sábila*, a distorted form of *Çabila*, the Arab word for “thorny plant.” Christopher Columbus brought it to the Americas when he discovered the continent, as his crew used this plant as medicine. Back then, Spain already had considerable populations of this plant, probably as a remnant of the Muslim invasion.

Now, what sort of plant is Aloe Vera? At first sight, we might think it belongs to the cactus family, as it forms a rosette of large, fleshy, thick leaves atop a short stem about 30 to 40 cm long (very long and even branched in certain species). The leaves are usually lanceolate-shaped (about 50 to 70 cm in height), ending in a sharp point with thorny ridges. Colour ranges from grey to shiny green, sometimes presenting stripes or flecks. The Aloe Vera flower is yellow or red; it can be un-branched or branched or arranged in dense clusters.



“It is a member of the garlic, onion and asparagus family, all of which are recognized for certain medicinal properties. By the way, the Chinese were the first ones to use Aloe in healing medicines”

It is a scientifically proven fact that, out of about the 300 species of Aloe, four types present greater medicinal value: Aloe *Barbadensis* Miller, Aloe *Perryi* Baker, Aloe *Ferox* and Aloe *Arborescens*. However, **Aloe *Barbadensis* Miller** offers the most therapeutic properties. But before going into which properties it does offer, we need to understand why Aloe products are not so economical.

Manufacturing is a complex process.

The leaves of this multi-talented plant are machine filleted, and transparent gel is squeezed off them through a very special process. The liquid thus obtained cannot be left in the open untreated for more than two hours, as it may oxidize and lose many of its properties. This is the reason why the curdled juice thus extracted is subjected to a patented cold-stabilization process, and treated under strict supervision without chemical additives.

The obtained substance offers more than 250 properties. It contains vitamins B1, B2, B3, and B6, vitamins C and E, and minerals such as calcium, magnesium, iron, potassium, as well as other components. The Aloe Vera juice or gel heals cuts, provides relief for sun burns, strengthens the immunologic system, serves as a detoxifier, keeps cholesterol levels under control, aids bone growth, stimulates digestion or is used for cosmetic correction purposes.

“ Aloe Vera has a reputation as a small home drugstore ”

Successful results in cancer treatment

With the aid of modern medicine, new applications have been recently discovered in the treatment of cancer, tumours or ulcers, with amazing results: it relieves pain, considerably extends life expectancy, slows tumour growth down, and serves as a mood-booster for patients. Because Aloe Vera stimulates defences, prescribed medication has stronger effects, thus allowing patients' medication to be dosed down. However, Aloe Vera should never replace prescribed medication; its results require patience.

What are its other talents?

Its various daily uses can be classified into external and internal use: it is one of the most-widely used plants in skin care as, in addition to moisturizing and smoothing skin, it also acts as a great cell regenera-

tor, healer, and toner, and offers high skin-penetration levels (it soaks through the epidermis, the dermis and hypodermis, ejecting bacteria and pore-clogging fat deposits). Besides, such regeneration slows down the skin ageing process, thus helping reduce skin spots, premature wrinkling and acne. Aloe also strengthens hair and acts on dandruff, fighting potential Seborrheic Dermatitis caused by stress. There are also its other applications known since olden times –listed in the beginning.

Moreover, if drunk, Aloe Vera juice acts as cleanser, cleansing the intestines, freeing the body of all sorts of clogging toxins and fats. In addition to these applications, it is used by dentists to reduce gum swelling, and by ophthalmologists for inflammation relief. The gel is even used as a dietary supplement in several beverages, as well as in refreshments such as cocktails.

Summing up: It did not take long for the pharmaceutical business and industry to profit from these advantages. No wonder then, Aloe Vera is the plant of health and beauty, and one of great powers!

In Spain, Aloe Vera products can be found in pharmacies, parapharmacy outlets, natural product stores, health food stores and beauty salons, and through direct distributors. Prices are €4.00 and above. You should consult a doctor before using it in complex cases

