

Red Raspberry leaf, *Rubus idaeus*, Rosaceae family  
Sarah Heany

"I encourage mothers to use raspberry tea throughout the pregnancy and more heavily in third trimester. (If you have heard the crazy rumor being spread online about raspberry causing miscarriage, I would be happy to address that, because it is false.) It does wonders for their tissue elasticity among other things, and those mothers rarely have any tears."

"So if frequency of use is the criteria, the top 3 would have to be raspberry, comfrey, and nettle. I guess you could credit them with improving the mothers' conditions so that the more medicinal herbs are needed with less frequency!" –Lorri Carr, CPM



**Red Raspberry leaf, *Rubus idaeus*** (cultivated variety), ***Rubus strigosus*** (wild variety), **Rosaceae family**

Rubus derives from the latin, Ruber, meaning red.

The species name *idaeus* refers to its occurrence on Mount Ida near Troy in northwest Turkey, where the ancient Greeks were most familiar with it.

**Folklore and History:**

Historically, this plant has been used by Native Americans for hundreds of years as a women's tonic, as well as a nutritive tea.

In the 1940's, in the United States and Europe, several articles were published in noted medical journals that praised the usefulness of raspberries effects on the uterus during pregnancy and birth.<sup>3</sup> During this decade, red raspberry became famous in these areas.

**Parts used:**

Primarily Leaf, often the whole plant<sup>3</sup> (for this paper, I am not including the berries)

**Identification:**

Pale green leaves with serrated edges.

"In its first year, a new, unbranched stem ("primocane") grows vigorously to its full height of 1.5-2.5 m, bearing large pinnately compound leaves with five or seven

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leaflets, but usually no flowers.

In its second year (as a "floricane"), a stem does not grow taller, but produces several side shoots, which bear smaller leaves with three or five leaflets. The flowers are produced in late spring on short racemes on the tips of these side shoots, each flower about 1 cm diameter with five white petals. The fruit is red, edible, and sweet but tart-flavoured, produced in summer or early autumn" -wikipedia



**Habitat:**

Native plants to north America<sup>2</sup> as well as Europe and parts of Asia. This plant prefers a temperate climate, full sun, little wind, and rich soil able to hold moisture. In the wild, raspberry will also grow less densely under forests, and more thickly in open areas.

**Collection:**

Collect the leaves during the growing season<sup>4</sup>  
Slowly dry with good ventilation<sup>4</sup>

**Constituents:**

- Volatile oil<sup>4,5</sup>
- Pectin<sup>4,5</sup>
- Citric acid<sup>4,5</sup>
- Malic acid<sup>4,5</sup>
- Fragarine (alkaloid)<sup>3,9</sup>
- Tannins<sup>2,3,5</sup>

**Nutrients:**

- Calcium<sup>3,9</sup>
- Iron<sup>3</sup>
- Phosphorus<sup>9</sup>
- Magnesium
- Potassium
- Vitamin A<sup>9</sup>



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Vitamin B<sub>1</sub><sup>9</sup>

**Actions:**

Astringent<sup>1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9</sup>  
Tonic refrigerant<sup>4</sup>  
Uterine tonic<sup>1,2,3,4,7,8,9</sup>  
Uterine relaxant<sup>3</sup>  
Uterine stimulant<sup>3</sup>  
Nutritive<sup>3,5,8,9</sup>  
Women's tonic<sup>1,3,4,9</sup>

**Energetics:**

Yin<sup>7</sup>  
Neutral,<sup>7</sup> sweet and sour<sup>7</sup>  
Benefits liver and kidney's<sup>7</sup>

**Indications:**

For Women's Health

As a uterine tonic, uterine relaxant, uterine stimulant as well as for its nutritive properties, Red Raspberry leaf has a variety of benefits for women's health. Rosemary Gladstar recommends it be taken as a daily tonic for women<sup>2,3</sup>. Drink 1-2 cups a day as a tonic for women.

Drank as a tea or taken as a tincture over the course of the menstrual cycle (or when taken in higher doses during menses), it can help alleviate dysmenorrhea<sup>8</sup>. Its astringent action can help curb excessive menstrual flow<sup>2,3,7</sup> and when taken over an extended period of time (3 cups daily for 1-3+ months), can prevent excessive bleeding.

The astringent properties are useful when treating vaginal infections, such as Chlamydia.<sup>1</sup> For this type of situation, a concurrent treatment for the condition is recommended while drinking the tea or tincture daily throughout the regime (3-4 cups daily or 30-40 drops 3-4 times daily).

Because it is a nutritive and uterine tonic, it has been used during issues of infertility<sup>1</sup> and chronic pelvic pain<sup>8,9</sup> while also addressing any other underlying issues.

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"I put raspberry in my tinctures for fertility, for anti-miscarriage (and it works), and for pregnancy, and recommend raspberry tea throughout gestation, with more intake near term to increase tissue elasticity." –Lorri Carr

During Pregnancy<sup>2,3,4,5,7,8,9</sup>

Many midwives recommend this herb be taken, as a daily tea, during their clients' pregnancy to prevent miscarriage, to prevent preterm and postterm births, to tone the uterus as well as to prevent hemorrhage during birth. This herb can also be taken in capsule form at a dose of 4-8 gm daily. In some cases during labor, a woman may prefer to take the capsule of the dried herb or to chew on red raspberry leaf tea ice cubes. Mothering magazine is calling red raspberry leaf tea, "A wonderful tonic that helps to prepare the uterus for birth, relaxing and relieving cramps, it is so effective that many women actually report pain-free or virtually pain-free labors thanks to red raspberry leaf tea."

Labor

As mentioned above, the use of raspberry leaf tea during pregnancy benefits the labor. I also came across a forum thread on mothering magazine that recommends a brew of hot hot raspberry leaf tea to be drunk as time for delivery approaches to make it painless. The brew being suggested came from W.H. Box's book, *Dragged to Light*. Directions are to pour one pint of boiling water over one ounce of raspberry leaves, steep covered for 30 minutes. Strain and drink the whole thing as hot as possible. There were some accompanying testimonies of women trying this and it producing a fast and painless birth.<sup>10</sup>

Postpartum recovery

Drinking red raspberry leaf tea during labor (1-3+ cups, depending on the length of labor and the woman's ability to drink) has been used to prevent hemorrhage as well as assist with uterine contractions for the birth of the placenta.<sup>3,4</sup> Its uterine tonic effects help to speed recovery and strengthen the uterus as well as improves milk production.<sup>3,4</sup>

As a nutritive tonic for women, in combination with other herbs such as nettles and alfalfa, it is helpful in alleviating postpartum

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depression<sup>1</sup> (especially for women who did hemorrhage and are recovering).

Menopausal<sup>1</sup>

Amanda Crawford recommends it as one part (of a three part) reproductive tonic that does not alter hormones but that does alleviate symptoms of perimenopause. The other two parts would include a nutritive herb and a nervine herb. 2-3 cups daily or 30 drops 2-3 times daily.

Other uses

Up to \*6 cups of raspberry tea (or up to 30 drops 6 times a day) can be drank per day for more acute conditions such as,

Insomnia<sup>9</sup>

Diarrhea<sup>2,3,4,7,9</sup>

Dysentery<sup>3</sup>

Leukorrhea<sup>4,5</sup>

Stomach ulcers<sup>7</sup>

\* During pregnancy this high of a dose is not recommended.

For issues with the mouth, a mouth rinse can be prepared with the tea or the tincture (tincture won't taste as good). Swish and spit 3-6 times a day.

Mouth ulcers<sup>4,5</sup>

Bleeding gums and inflammation<sup>4,5</sup>

Sore throat<sup>2,4,5</sup> use the tea as a gargle 3-6 times a day.

**Contraindications:**

None<sup>2,3,5,8</sup>

May cause mildly loose stools.<sup>2</sup>

In researching the controversy of red raspberry leaf use during pregnancy, I found very little useful information. What I did find were references to potential concerns for causing uterine contractions and therefore miscarriage in early pregnancy. For this reason, some care providers recommend waiting to take red raspberry leaf tea until the second trimester of pregnancy. Midwives that I have spoken with don't seem to be at all concerned about this and recommend a lower dose in early pregnancy (1-2 cups a day) and increasing the dose as pregnancy advances (2-3 cups per day in 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> trimester).

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"There was a rumor started on the internet, and from what I could discover it was about some herbal blend that was blamed for some miscarriages, and one of the ingredients was red raspberry leaf. There were 3 or 4 other ingredients in it that I would never give during pregnancy, and would be likely suspects in the miscarriages, but they blamed the least likely cause – the raspberry." –Lorri Carr

**Combinations:**

Often is combined with nettle<sup>9</sup> and alfalfa<sup>9</sup> in a women's tonic as well as during pregnancy and postpartum.

Here is an herbal tea formula from Aviva Jill Romm's, *The Natural Pregnancy Book*.

Nourishment Tea

- 2 parts raspberry leaf
- 2 parts nettle
- 1 part oat straw
- ½ part alfalfa
- ½ part rose hips
- ¼ part red clover
- ¼ part spearmint leaf



To prepare infusion, put a heaping ¼ cup of herb mixture in a quart size jar. Add boiling water to fill the jar, cover and let steep 30 minutes up to 2 hours. Strain, sweeten and drink up to 4 cups daily.

**Preparation and Dosage:**



Leaf hot Infusion:

Pour a cup of boiling water of 2 tsp. of dried leaf. Let infuse 10-15 minutes.<sup>4</sup>

Drink 1 cup 2-3 times a day (during pregnancy<sup>2</sup>),<sup>1</sup> or more as desired (up to 6 cups for more acute conditions such as diarrhea or sore throats due to cold<sup>2</sup>).<sup>4</sup>



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Can be prepared into ice cubes and then broken into smaller chips for sucking on during labor<sup>1</sup> (assists with uterine coordination).

Leaf cold Infusion:

Steep 2 tsp in 1 cup of cold water for 4-8+ hours.<sup>8</sup>

Can be drank in same dosages as hot infusion.

Leaf Tincture:

1:5 with 35%-50% alcohol

Take 2-4 ml 3 times a day<sup>4,5</sup> OR 4-8 ml (3/4-1tsp) three times per day.<sup>2,8</sup>

Leaf Capsules:

4-8 g 1<sup>5</sup>-3<sup>8</sup> times a day

## References

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