

Bladderwrack

Latin name: Fucus vesiculosus

Family: Fucaceae (Icelandic: Bóluþang)

Parts used: entire seaweed

Constituents: Phenols, polysaccharides (fucoidan), iodine, vitamins and minerals.

Actions: general nourishing, stimulates metabolism and thyroid gland.

Preparation/dosage: as a tincture (1:5, 25%) 4-8ml three times per day. As an infusion, 1-2 teaspoons of dried bladderwrack in a cup three times per day. Also used externally as a compress, or in an ointment.

Commonly found on stony beaches throughout Iceland. Typically harvested in the early summer. Traditionally used in Iceland as a fertilizer for potatoes and vegetables. Rich in minerals, ideal for adding to soups; newly formed fronds are best for eating. Iodine was formerly extracted from bladderwrack.

Contraindications: large doses may adversely affect the thyroid resulting in hyper- or hypothyroidism. It is contraindicated in cases of hyperthyroidism and where medication is being taken for thyroid disease. Not recommended for pregnant women, women who are breastfeeding or for children younger than 12 years old. Long term use can interfere with the absorption of iron and may also affect the absorption of salt and potassium from the gastrointestinal tract causing diarrhea. Bladderwrack also absorbs heavy metals so should not be collected form areas where the ocean is polluted.

Bladderwrack Tea:

Gently simmer a handful of Fucus for 15 minutes in enough water to cover. Strain and enjoy. OR Fill a jar a quarter full (only) with dried bladderwrack, add boiling water to completely fill the jar; cap and steep overnight. Next morning: strain (give the seaweed to the nearest patch of earth), warm and enjoy, seasoned to your taste. Old wives say a cup or two of Fucus tea for no more than three months will melt excess pounds away, you may resume, if desired, after a break of six weeks.

From: Weed, Susun, *Wise Woman Herbal: Healing Wise*, Ash Tree Publishing, Woodstock, New York, 1989, pp.229.

Other resources:

Larch Hanson, The Seaweed Man/Maine Seaweed, <http://theseaweedman.com>

Róbertsdóttir, Anna Rósa, *Icelandic Herbs and Their Medicinal Uses*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, 2016, pp. 30-31.