

PLANTS, FLOWERS & TREES

"AND EVERYTHING INBETWEEN"



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Plants that remain green through winter can be called evergreens. Several genera contain species known as wintergreen: *Chimaphila*, *Gaultheria*, *Polygala*, *Pyrola*, and *Trientalis*. Nonetheless, the plant most frequently called wintergreen in horticulture and in herbal medicine circles is *Gaultheria procumbens*.

There are very few edible berries that hold their firmness and endures as well all through the winter, as WinterGreen. It is native in much of eastern North America, and is cultivated way beyond, wherever conditions permit. Mostly it is prized as an ornamental; relatively few people use it as an edible, or medicinally.

Wintergreen is a perennial herb with a creeping stem that sends up erect branches, finely-toothed, ovate leaves of pale green when young, and then leathery, dark green when mature. The shrubby evergreen also bears bell-shaped white or pink flowers that bloom from May through September, followed by scarlet fruits, and the plant reaches about six inches in height. It is rather ornamental and may be found growing in forests or on mountains, thriving in acid soil in partial shade. Wintergreen is so named because it remains "ever" green in the deepest part of winter and provides important winter nourishment for deer, partridge and other native fauna.

Native American tribes brewed a tea of Wintergreen as one of their many herbal treatments for rheumatism, as well as a pain reliever for headache, fever, sore throat and various aches and pains. Many tribes also employed it as an aid to breathing by increasing lung capacity while hunting or carrying heavy loads, and the Montagnais of Canada drank Wintergreen tea to treat paralysis. Early American patriots used Wintergreen tea as a substitute for tea during the American Revolution and later adopted it as a remedy for headaches, muscle aches and colds. Wintergreen should not be used by people who are allergic to aspirin.

In spring the young leaves are very glossy, bronzy-colored, and tender. At this time they are fun to nibble raw or add to mixed salads. Very soon they become too tough to chew. But they still can be used to make a tea, or just to scratch and sniff. Traditionally, in September the leaves were harvested to use to distill the oil from. In winter the leaves often turn partly reddish or purple, at least in colder climates.

Remember here: When playing around with natural herbs and remedies, extreme caution should be used. Severe allergic reactions and illness can be the results from improper use.



WinterGreen plant in the Winter months



WinterGreen plant and Flowers in the Springtime