

# Blue Vervain (*Verbena Hastata*) Handout

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## Botanical Information

**Family**-Verbenaceae

**Genus**-*Verbena*

**Species**-*hastata*

## Notes

1. *Verbena* implies a sacred plant or one used in ritual
2. *Hastata* describes the shape of a leaf, usually narrowing toward the tip of the leaf (spear-shaped) with the lobes spreading out from the base. The leaves of *V. hastata* are not particularly hastate.

**Common name**-Blue vervain

## Plant characteristics

1. Herbaceous biennial or short-lived perennial
2. The hairiness varies widely depending on where it is growing, from pubescent (hairy) to nearly glabrous (without any hairs)

## Habitat

1. Blue vervain generally grows in full sun in wet areas including, fields, meadows, prairies, and swamps
2. It is native throughout much of the US and southern Canada in the habitats described above

## Related Plants

1. *Verbena officinalis*-Vervain is native to Europe and occasionally naturalized in the US.
2. The inflorescences of *Verbena* species are generally in spikes and racemes
3. *Verbena macdougalii*-a western species is sometimes used similarly
4. *Verbena urticifolia*-a common species in the Northeast is not regularly used as a medicinal species
5. There are other *Verbena* species in various regions in the US that are used medicinally.
6. *Glandularia* species are closely related (sometimes called 'Mock vervains')
  - Most of these were formerly in the genus *Verbena*, but were moved to *Glandularia* based on technical differences.
  - Some of the species can be recognized by their flat-topped inflorescences
  - Some herbalists use these similarly to Blue vervain

## **Plant Part Used**

1. Leaf
2. Inflorescence
3. Stems (when thin)

## **Wildcrafting/Ecology**

1. All of the *Verbena* and *Glandularia* species are native (except for *Verbena officinalis*), so it is possible to overharvest them
2. Practice restraint and ethical wildcrafting guidelines when gathering these plants
3. Before gathering, make sure they are plentiful in your region
  - Find a good-sized stand where you won't impact the environment by gathering them
4. Gather the plants when they are in bud or in flower ('anthesis' in botany terms)
5. Do not disrupt wetland or other habitats where these plants grow
6. Unless it is very common, only gather a few plants from any one area
7. Look for Blue vervain around the edges of wetlands such as ponds, creeks, marshes and swamps.
8. While the leaves and flowering tops are the main medicinal plant part, it can be beneficial to gather the whole plant from the base rather than stripping pieces off individual plants, which leaves the plants more prone to disease.

## **Plant Processing**

1. Dehydrator
  - Set at 95°F to avoid browning.
1. Drying on a tarp or similar
  - Try to dry quickly in a sunny indoor space
  - This helps them maintain their color

## **Cultivation**

1. Blue vervain can be cultivated from seed either in gardens or near a wetland such as a pond or stream
2. Blue vervain will self-sow

## **Notes on Purchasing**

1. When found in the marketplace, the quality is often poor

## **Primary Herb for**

1. Safe, non-sedating, nervine tonic
2. Anxiety
3. Tightly-wound nerves

4. Feeling overwhelmed
5. Inability to relax
6. Insomnia due to overactive thoughts

### **Medicinal Preparations**

1. Fresh and dry plants are both medicinal
2. Glycerite
3. Tea
4. Tincture

### **Therapeutic Categories**

1. Anxiolytic (helps with anxiety)
2. Nervine (nerve tonic)
3. Sleep aid

### **Medicinal Uses**

1. Blue vervain is primarily a nervous system tonic, helping with anxiety, overthinking and feeling overwhelmed
2. The below descriptions are written to give a sense who may benefit from Blue vervain, but they are only guidelines and illustrations
  - Other people may find Blue vervain helpful even if they do not fit these profiles
3. Blue vervain is generally well-tolerated and non-sedating
4. It may be helpful when taken regularly as a nerve tonic
5. It can also be taken as needed for anxiety and associated symptoms
6. Dividing anxiety into two subtypes
  - Non-Blue vervain type: When anxious, thoughts become very scattered or one's mind may go blank, making it difficult to make any decisions.
  - Blue vervain type: when anxious, as when plans change abruptly, they may become very controlling and tell everyone what to do. While decisive, this type may find it difficult to listen to anyone else's ideas.
7. Useful by itself as well as in combination with other plants
8. Helpful for folks with tightly-wound nerves with an inability to relax
9. The feeling of 'frayed nerves' or being 'stressed out'
10. Finding it difficult to be a good listener due to having too many thoughts occupying all the brain space
11. Difficulty falling asleep due to rampant ideas, list-making, and plotting revenge
12. For those who have contingency plans for their contingency plans for their contingency plans
13. For habitual list makers that only feel satisfied when they have crossed everything off their daily list...only to start a new one.

14. Not appreciating what is around due to being constantly pre-occupied with one's own thoughts
15. Reminder, Blue vervain is only one part of an emotional and psychological, strategy
  - It is also important to do whatever brings personal comfort such as having friends to talk with, deep breaths, taking walks and finding the ways that help you relax

## **Combination-Categories**

1. Anxiolytics
2. Nervines
3. Sleep Aids

## **Combinations-Plants**

### **Nerve tonics**

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Anemone-Anemone species                   | 6. Passionflower-Passiflora incarnata |
| 2. California poppy-Eschscholzia californica | 7. Rose-Rosa species                  |
| 3. Damiana-Turnera diffusa                   | 8. Skullcap-Scutellaria lateriflora   |
| 4. Lobelia-Lobelia inflata                   | 9. Tulsi-Ocimum tenuiflorum           |
| 5. Motherwort-Leonurus cardiaca              | 10. Wild oats-Avena sativa            |

### **Sedatives and Sleep Aids**

1. Hops-Humulus lupulus
2. Kava kava-Piper methysticum
3. Skullcap-Scutellaria lateriflora
4. Valerian-Valeriana officinalis

## **Medicine Making**

1. Tincture-fresh
  - 1:3 80%
2. Tincture dry
  - 1:4 50%

## **Dosage**

### **Tea**

1. Blue vervain is bitter, so it is helpful to pair it with better tasting nervine plants such as Tulsi and Rose.
2. Infuse tea by pouring 1 quart of hot water over approximately 1 ounce of tea and letting it steep for about 10 minutes.
3. Rose honey can be added for its medicinal value and of course, its flavor.

### **Tincture**

1. As a long-term tonic, it is usually mixed with other nervines and taken 2-4 times a day.
2. If the tincture is only Blue vervain or with other non-sedating nervines
  - 1-2 ml (1/2-1 dropperful) per dosage
3. If mixed with stronger sedative herbs, a smaller dose may be a better daytime choice depending on one's sensitivity to the herbs.
4. If the tincture is being taken for acute anxiety
  - A stronger dose of 2-4 ml (1 to 2 dropperfuls) can be taken as often as needed.

### **Note**

When taken as a tonic, there may not be any initial noticeable changes, but within days to weeks, an individual may feel a positive shift in their anxiety levels.

### **Safety**

1. Blue vervain appears safe with few adverse effects for most people
2. The most common negative effect is that it is not helpful