

Guidelines 4: Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) Preparation

By nature fungi belong to the soil. Here they fulfil an important function in the breakdown and stabilisation of humus. There are times however most notably when warm summer rainfall follows a full moon that these fungal processes of the soil ascend into the region around the growing plant. Moist, warm weather in the days immediately following full moon are most likely to encourage mildews and the development of blight and other fungi. The horsetail preparation is used to counteract this tendency, and drive the fungus processes back into the soil where they belong. Equisetum or horsetail is very rich in silica as might be expected given its brittle hexagonal form and silica has a strong connection with light. This makes it an ideal antidote to the darkness loving fungus world.



Common horsetail *Equisetum arvense*, is a common wayside plant that thrives on rough ground which has been deeply disturbed. It occurs most notably where the soil has been inverted such as along ditch sides or where construction work has occurred. It also grows in cultivated places and prefers moist locations. This is the variety generally used medicinally and is the **correct variety for the preparation.**

There are two other commonly occurring varieties of horsetail. Neither of these are suitable for use.

Marsh Horsetail (*Equisetum palustris*) also grows in moist places but is much taller than the common horsetail. It can be distinguished by its hollow stem.



Shady Horsetail (*Equisetum pratense*) grows in woods and along hedgerows in drier places. It can be distinguished by its fine sub-divided needle-like leaves. The needle-like leaves of common horsetail do not sub-divide to any great extent.



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Collection

The green shoots of horsetail are cut off at ground level and dried quickly in a dry place out of full sun light. They should be picked before midsummer to ensure the best quality. Second and third cuts can however still provide a herb of reasonable quality. Being brittle the leaves dry rapidly but can also spoil if left in thick piles. Once dried, the herb can be kept in a suitable paper bag or other container until ready for use.

To Prepare

For small areas and to treat specific crops 25g of dried herb (1 unit) will be enough to produce a gallon of ready-to-spray brew. This will also be enough to spray about an acre. If you have your own supply, there is no harm in using more.

The dried herb should be added to a pan containing rain water (25g per litre) and brought slowly to the boil. It should simmer gently for twenty to thirty minutes and be left to stand for 24 hours. The liquid should be strained into a bottle or barrel and then either used immediately or kept cool until needed. Prior to use it should be diluted 1:5 with rain water and stirred for 20 minutes in the manner described for the horn manure and horn silica preparations.

Ferment

An alternative way to make it is to take 25g by weight of dried horsetail, simmer it in 2-3 litres of rain water and then leave to stand in an earthenware crock in a cool dark place for about three weeks. During this time it will ferment and develop a characteristic smell. It should then be strained and stored in a glass container until needed (for 6 months or more). This ferment is stronger, can be diluted 1:10 and will be effective on twice the area. The ferment solution is particularly effective for

treating the soil.

Spraying

It should be sprayed on both the soil and the plants using a mist sprayer (as with horn silica). A prophylactic spray is very helpful during moist changeable weather when conditions are conducive to fungus growth. It is often sprayed in late autumn or early spring in areas especially prone to fungal growth. The period leading up to full moon is a good time to apply it as a prophylactic spray.

To treat plants that are already affected by fungus it is important to ensure that both leaf surfaces are sprayed. Spraying should be repeated at ten day intervals. For such repeat spraying a more dilute solution can be used 1:10 or even up to 1:50. The solution however should still retain its greenish yellow or brown colour and smell of *Equisetum*. In severe cases the more concentrated solution can be sprayed on and around the affected plants for three days in succession at exactly the same time of day

Particular applications

Equisetum can be added to fruit tree paste and applied in ponds and areas prone to fungal problems.

Equisetum brew can be added to the water prior to stirring horn silica and then sprayed out together.

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References

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