

Barley grass is one of the green grasses - the only vegetation on the earth that can supply sole nutritional support from birth to old age. Barley has served as a food staple in most cultures. The use of barley for food and medicinal purposes dates to antiquity. Agronomists place this ancient cereal grass as being cultivated as early as 7000 BC. Roman gladiators ate barley for strength and stamina. In the West, it was first known for the barley grain it produces.

Astounding amounts of vitamins and minerals are found in green barley leaves. The leaves have an ability to absorb nutrients from the soil. When barley leaves are 12-14 inches high, they contain many vitamins, minerals, and proteins necessary for the human diet, plus chlorophyll. These are easily assimilated throughout the digestive tract, giving our bodies instant access to vital nutrients. These include potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron, copper, phosphorus, manganese, zinc, beta carotene, B1, B2, B6, C, folic acid, and pantothenic acid. Indeed, green barley juice contains 11 times the calcium in cows' milk, nearly 5 times the iron in spinach, 7 times the vitamin C in oranges, and 80 mg of vitamin B12 per hundred grams.

Barley also contains a -glucan, a fiber also found in oat bran and reported to reduce cholesterol levels. The root contains the alkaloid hordenine which stimulates peripheral blood circulation and has been used as a bronchodilator for bronchitis. Barley bran, like wheat bran may be effective in protecting against the risk of cancer.

Part Used: Grain, left when barley hull is removed.

Common Use: Barley is widely cultivated grain used as a food and in the brewing process. It is an additive for human and animal cereal foods. It also makes a flavorful flour for use in baking breads and muffins.

Care: It is a very hardy plant and can be grown under a greater variety of climatic conditions than any other grain, and a polar variety is grown within the Arctic Circle in Europe.