

Burdock Root

Arctium lappa L. — gobo, greater burdock; sold as dried root, tea, tincture and "detox" capsule

Burdock root is an excellent vegetable and a poorly evidenced supplement. The most recent reviews of it both state the human trial evidence is essentially absent. It also carries the most specific contamination hazard in this series: commercial burdock root tea has repeatedly been found adulterated with belladonna, producing genuine atropine poisoning.

SUMMARY TABLE

Attribute	Summary
Primary uses	Marketed as a "blood purifier," detoxifier and lymphatic cleanser, and for skin, diabetes and inflammation — none with human trial support. Only tested oral use: adjunct in knee osteoarthritis.
Evidence strength	Very low to none. A 2025 review of burdock in skin disease contains zero RCTs; a 2026 review found no glycemic-control RCTs. The entire human evidence base is one 36-person unblinded trial.
Effective dose	Only human-tested dose: 6 g/day as tea (2 g steeped per 150 mL, three cups daily) for 42 days. Professional monographs state there is insufficient evidence to establish a dose range.
How to take	Simmer/steep cut root as tea, or cook fresh root as a vegetable. Start with a small amount — inulin content reliably causes gas and bloating in the unaccustomed.
Time to effect	The only human trial ran 42 days. No evidence base exists for onset of any other claimed effect.
Serious risks	Anticholinergic poisoning from belladonna-adulterated commercial tea, documented in JAMA (1978) and a toxicology journal (1984); one case involved ~2.28 mg atropine against a 0.3–1.2 mg therapeutic range. Anaphylaxis and acute liver injury (in multi-ingredient detox blends) reported.
Who should avoid it	Pregnant/nursing women; ragweed, chrysanthemum, daisy or chamomile (Asteraceae) allergy; bleeding disorders or anticoagulant use; anyone unable to verify supplier identity testing.
Quality markers	Species verified as <i>Arctium lappa</i> with plant part named; documented botanical identity testing; heavy-metal testing (deep taproot, metal accumulator); single-ingredient rather than a blend.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE ACTUALLY SAYS

As food, 30–50% of dry burdock root is inulin, a fermentable prebiotic fiber, alongside chlorogenic-acid relatives. As a supplement it is sold on an unsubstantiated premise — a "blood purifier" with no measurable purification endpoint. Memorial Sloan Kettering's herb database states plainly there is no evidence supporting its use for cancer, infection, diabetes or other medical conditions.

The entire oral human evidence base is a single 36-person, single-center, unblinded Iranian trial of burdock tea as an osteoarthritis adjunct; most of its favorable results are within-group changes from baseline rather than placebo-controlled treatment effects, which is a meaningfully weaker form of evidence.

THE BELLADONNA PROBLEM

Burdock root and belladonna root are similar enough in appearance to be confused during harvest, and the resulting poisonings are in the peer-reviewed record: a 1978 JAMA case report and a 1984 toxicology journal report of anticholinergic poisoning (blurred vision, urinary retention, dry mouth, bizarre behavior) from commercial burdock tea, one estimated at two-to-seven times a therapeutic atropine dose in a single cup. The vulnerability is structural — loose-leaf botanical root products remain a recurring adulteration vector — rather than historical.

BOTTOM LINE

Burdock root is worth eating and hard to justify supplementing. As a vegetable it is a reasonable prebiotic fiber source with centuries of safe food use; as a capsule or tincture for detoxification, blood sugar or skin conditions, it is supported by nothing. If trying the one tested protocol — 6 g/day as tea for six weeks — source only from a supplier with documented botanical

identity testing, and treat anticholinergic symptoms after drinking it as a medical emergency, not a "detox reaction."

SOURCES

1. "Immunopharmacological potential of *Arctium lappa* in immune-mediated skin diseases." *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, 2025.
2. "Antihyperglycemic potential of *Arctium lappa*." *Foods*, 2026;15(4):794.
3. Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. "Burdock" — About Herbs.
4. Bryson PD, et al. "Burdock Root Tea Poisoning." *JAMA*, 1978;239(20):2157.
5. Rhoads PM, et al. "Anticholinergic poisonings...burdock root tea." *J. Toxicol. Clin. Toxicol.*, 1984.
6. Maghsoumi-Norouzabad L, et al. "Burdock root tea...knee osteoarthritis." *Int. J. Rheum. Dis.*, 2016.

DISCLAIMER, FDA NOTICE & COPYRIGHT — Prepared September 6, 2026

This report is for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute medical, nutritional, or other professional advice. No reader relationship, including a doctor-patient relationship, is created by your use of this content.

FDA Disclosure: These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

The benefits described are based on published clinical research using specific standardized extracts at clinical doses. Results with other formulations, brands, or dosages may differ, and individual results may vary. The publisher has not independently verified manufacturer claims for any commercial product and is not a licensed healthcare provider, dietitian, or pharmacist.

Supplements may interact with certain medications and may not be appropriate for everyone. The interaction and contraindication information referenced in this report is not exhaustive. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional — and get a full medication review from your physician or pharmacist — before starting any new supplement, especially if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, have a pre-existing medical condition, or are taking prescription medications.

This report reflects research available as of its publication date and may not incorporate more recent findings; the publisher has no obligation to update it. It addresses ingredients as regulated under U.S. law and may not reflect requirements in other jurisdictions. Some ingredients discussed may be subject to additional state-specific warnings (for example, California's Proposition 65) not reproduced here.

Use of the information in this report is at your own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, the publisher disclaims all liability for any loss, injury, or damage arising from your use of, or reliance on, this content.

Copyright 2026 Tabby Cat Enterprises, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed for Consumer Educational Purposes Only.