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Volume Eight:

Wood Betony (Stachys betonica)
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- **Common Name:** Wood Betony
- **Latin Name:** *Stachys betonica, Stachys officinalis, Betonica officinalis*. These are all different names assigned to the same exact plant, so you might find it under these various names.
- **Family:** Lamiaceae (mint family)
- **Parts Used:** leaves, aerial parts in flower
- **Geographical Data (IE where it grows naturally):** It is a native to western Europe, but can be grown in most temperate environments quite easily.
The 5 Keys of Wood Betony

Tastes
The taste of Wood Betony is noticeably mild and somewhat bland in my opinion. But upon deeper observation of the flavor profile, it does yield a mild bitter impression, a slight sweetness, astringency, and mild aromatic property. This gentle flavor indicates Wood Betony’s influence upon the digestive apparatus, its nutritive properties (especially for the nerves), a tonic astringent quality, and in general, its overall mild properties. Though make note, although the properties of Wood Betony are relatively gentle, this does not mean its medicine is not powerful! As you will see, this classic European remedy has a very rich tradition of usage that is nothing short of profound.

Primary Actions
• Vulnerary/Astringent: The tonic astringent properties of Wood Betony make it a highly beneficial wound healing agent as a gentle first aid medicine for general cuts, scrapes and wounds. Considering that the intestinal lining is also epithelial tissue (IE skin), any vulnerary medicine can be seen as a possible beneficial remedy for all manner of “wounds” in the digestive system, such as ulcers and leaky gut. We will explore in much more detail the profound influence of Wood Betony upon the digestive system.

• Nervine Relaxant and Trophorestorative: This is in my opinion one of the most important properties of Wood Betony. It has an ever so slightly relaxant effect upon the nervous system, easing mild states of unease, tension and anxiety, while at the same time providing a deeper level of nourishment and strength to the nerves. This is a unique property of Wood Betony that is deeply intertwined to its effects on digestion and its core essential pattern. It’s nervine effects are generally considered mild, but noticeable especially over longer periods of usage.

• Bitter Tonic: As mentioned under the taste, the bitter properties are pretty mild. Actually I consider it one of the most mild of the bitters. Nonetheless it is there and as such has an overall stimulant effect upon digestion through increasing secretions of the liver, gallbladder, pancreas, stomach, small and large intestine. This makes it a useful remedy to consider in digestive formulations, especially whenever a nervine action would be of benefit as well. I consider it another one of our great bitter nervines, alongside with Blue Vervain (Verbena bastata), Hops (Humulus lupulus), and it’s other Lamiaceae relatives: Skullcap (Scutellaria lateriflora), Bugleweed (Lycopus virginicus), Motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca), and Lavender (Lavandula angustifolia). This is one of the most critical remedies specific for weakness in the digestive system as a whole, predominantly due to weakness in the autonomic nerve functions which govern gastric secretions and coordination.

• Carminative: Due to its mild volatile oil content, Wood Betony does display carminative properties to dispel wind, cramping and tension in the digestive tract. This places it in the unique category of herbs that are both bitter as well as carminative, which is not necessarily a super common pattern in herbal medicines. What’s nice about Woot Betony's combination of carminative and bitter tonic properties is that they are both mild, which is
actually the strength of this plant - sometimes you don’t need a super strong bitter or carminative, but something on the gentler side. I always say that it is preferable to achieve your desired result with a milder plant over a stronger plant, as this helps to preserve a person’s vital force.

- **Anti-Spasmodic:** Wood Betony does have a mild antispasmodic property, likely due to its nervine relaxant and carminative properties. This dynamic is primarily achieved through the digestive system, calming any cramping, bloating, gas, and colic. While it’s not exactly the first remedy I would consider for strong cramping situations, it does indeed exert a mild relaxant effect upon the smooth muscles, and even skeletal muscles- the latter being most specific for the neck and shoulders. It has been used for tension in the respiratory system, uterine cramping, vascular tension associated with high blood pressure and headaches, and even the tension associated with gall stones and kidney stones.

- **Expectorant:** Traditional texts refer to Wood Betony as a mild expectorant for the respiratory system, specifically when the cough is brought on by the influence of cold in the environment, weather, or turning of seasons. This property is likely due to the presence of the gently warming aromatic essential oils. It’s usually not one of the first remedies I think of as an expectorant, but the property is there, so I am mentioning it here.

**Affinities**

- **Physical Organs, Systems and Tissues:** These are the primary organs, systems and tissues Wood Betony has an affinity for. I will briefly mention these affinities as they relate to the actions listed above. More detail will be gone into the specific effects this remedy has on these organs systems and tissues later on when we explore clinical patterns and uses.

  - **Nervous System:** I would say this is Wood Betony’s primary physiological affinity, as it exerts a systemic relaxant effect, as well as a nourishing trophorestorative effect. Because the nervous system innervates so many other organ systems, this affinity has the potential to influence a wide variety of areas of the body.

  - **Digestive System (stomach, small intestine, liver, and gallbladder):** The bitter properties lends a mild influence upon the liver and gallbladder and the carminative & astringent actions influence the stomach and small intestine. This is likely one of the most important remedies for the stomach itself, and I would argue the digestive system as a whole, specifically in regards to its connection to the gut-brain, or the solar nerve plexus. In fact, we could essentially summarize its primary affinity to the solar plexus as a whole, which encompasses the primary and secondary digestive organs.

  - **Skin:** The astringency makes it a useful vulnerary for use in a wide variety of wounds on the skin. It’s important here to remember that by skin I am referring to the outer skin as well as the inner skin that lines the digestive tract.

  - **Uterus:** There is a mild uterine stimulant property to the plant, though I wouldn’t say quite strong enough to mention it as an emmenagogue. It is said to increase the tone of
the uterus, strengthen nervous innervation, and circulation. That being said, many
authors do suggest its avoidance during pregnancy for this reason.

**Head, Brain, & Psychology:** Wood Betony exerts a strong influence upon the nervous
system which translates into an effect upon our psychological patterning. This remedy
is a classic for headaches and other afflictions of the head, as well as some very
common psychological patterns that are deeply connected with digestive functioning,
which we will discuss in more detail later.

**The Spirit:** Of course all herbs have some sort of spiritual affinity, or specific
teachings that they offer when we engage with them on a deeper level. That being said,
Wood Betony is a specific herb that has some classic attributions to the human spirit,
many of which are very applicable in our modern western culture.

**Energetics**

**Temperature, Moisture and Tone:** With Wood Betony, we once again come to some
contradictions in various texts in regards to its energetics- specifically with the temperature.
This makes sense, as we have seen above it contains both bitter and carminative properties, the
latter of which is warming and prior is generally considered cooling. What is one to do? I
would postulate that perhaps some people got more bitter Wood Betony and described it as
cooling, and others got more aromatic Wood Betony with more essential oils and described it
as being on the more warming side. These differences could be due to the environment where
the plant was growing, the timing in which it was harvested, or the type of preparation that
was being assessed.

It’s also worth considering what aspect of energetics one is observing. I’ve noticed that a lot of
authors will say that a plant is warming energetically, even though it’s temperature dynamics
might be cooling, because it is a stimulant- meaning it will stimulate a particular organ, system
or tissue into a greater level of activity. Nettles is a great example of this- it’s quite cooling, but
yet is a stimulant. Echinacea is like that too.

So perhaps some authors describe Wood Betony as warming because it indeed stimulates
certain organs into a greater level of activity, most notably the liver, gall bladder, stomach and
digestive system as a whole. But it could also potentially be described as cooling because it
tends to calm and settle the nervous system, relax tension throughout the organism, and has
an overall grounding effect- all of which some could see as cooling.

In my personal experience with this plant (which I would say is pretty extensive... I’ve used it
a lot!), I would say that it’s energetic effects upon temperature are particularly mild- though I
would lean closer to the warming side of the plant. If we looked at a 1-4 degree system of
energetics, I would say Wood Betony is like 1/2 degree warming- like super mild! In this way I
think you can give this remedy to just about anyone and it’s not going to cause any major
issues in terms of aggravating temperature energetics. Again the mixed bitter and carminative
properties balance each other out, and I would say the relative ratio of these 2 tastes/actions
will determine the temperature energetics of the plant- the more bitter the more cooling, the
more aromatic the more warming.
In regards to its effects upon moisture, this part of the equation is much more clear: Wood Betony is drying. This is due to its astringency, the bitter tonic (thus draining), and warming carminative properties. Honestly, most herbs are drying, so Wood Betony is not particularly unique here. That being said, it is something that is worth being aware of, especially when treating people with a stronger vata type constitution. This leads to a tricky situation because vatas are the primary constitution that Wood Betony is absolutely wonderful for— we just have to watch out for overly drying them out.

The effect of this remedy upon tissue tone is quite unique, in the sense that it is both tonic/ astringent as well as relaxant. This means that it will increase the tension and tone in tissue that are overly loose and lax, as well as relax tissue that are too tense and tight. Hence the energetic actions of relaxant and tonic are in opposition to one another, not stimulant and relaxant. But how is one to remedy these seemingly contradictory properties in one plant?

The way I tend to think of it is to differentiate the different tissues, organs and affinities the plant has. Indeed it is astringent and tonic, but specifically for the skin and the digestive system, making it useful as a vulnerary for wounds and for the treatment of relaxation of the mucous membranes in the gut (IE leaky gut syndrome). Yet the relaxant properties come through via its effects upon the nervous system and the muscles, both of which control a wide variety of other organs of the body.

This is a useful thing to consider whenever you find contradictions in plant properties- look to the different sites of action of the plant and make note if it is doing different things in different parts of the body- that will usually alleviate these contradictions. As mentioned, it’s also helpful to look at potential differences based on harvesting times, environmental conditions, as well as preparations.

Thus, we have a net energetic profile of Wood Betony being ever so slightly warming, drying, relaxant, tonic, as well as with some stimulant properties- most notably within the digestive system.

**Effects upon Doshas:** It’s important here to reiterate that Wood Betony is generally considered a mild remedy. This is not to say that it isn’t powerful and effective, just that its energetic properties are not as likely to push someone in one particular direction energetically. It’s effects upon pitta I find to be quite beneficial, even though it is slightly warming. Because the pitta constitution tends to be on the over-driven side and can tend to push themselves too hard, in general a remedy like Wood Betony can be quite beneficial to help keep them calm. The drying effects can be beneficial for their excessive dampness in the form of oils, especially via its effects on the liver and gallbladder.

Its effects on the vata dosha I find to be most beneficial though. We will explore why this is so in more detail later, but for now its important to know that the overall movement of Wood Betony tends to be downward, helping to ground and anchor the vital force more deeply in the body and more specifically the solar plexus. Its effects upon the nerves is especially soothing for a nervous and ungrounded vata, as well as its regulatory influence upon digestion.
and relaxing properties for tension The main potential contraindication with applying this remedy to vata is the drying influence, so be cautious there.

From a humoral perspective, we might think Wood Betony is especially good for the kapha dosha, since it is mildly warming and drying. While this is true, it’s not always remedy I think of super strongly for this constitution, primarily because Wood Betony is specific for people that are disconnected from the body and tend to have an overall “up and out” movement of their vital force. The bitter/carminative and astringent properties can be of great benefit for kapha, especially in the case of the digestive system.

**Effects upon Tissue States:** In Matthew Wood’s The Earthwise Herbal, he places Wood Betony under the dry/atrophy tissue state, indicating its usefulness in treating overall weakness and deficiency. That being said, we noted above that it is primarily a drying remedy, so we might assume that it is working more on the atrophy side of this tissue state. Specifically I would say this is likely being applied to weakness or atrophy of the digestive organs (stomach, small intestine, liver, and gall bladder), as well as the nervous system. When the digestive system is impaired and deficient, there is a lack of absorption and nutrition to the tissues which ultimately leads to the atrophy tissue state. Thus by resetting the enteric brain and re-coordinating the digestive system, a greater amount of nutrition is able to get into the body and build up a weakened constitution.

That being said, I would also add that I believe Wood Betony is a particularly beneficial remedy for the wind/tension tissue state- which is primarily how I personally have used it for myself and many, many clients. Here we see its application for nervous tension, anxiety, musculoskeletal cramping, and an overall sense of ungroundedness. I tend to think of Wood Betony being beneficial for when wind is taking the vital force and dispersing it up and out through the organism, depleting the vital energy center in the solar plexus.

I would also say that because it is a nice gentle astringent remedy, it can be used for treating the damp/relaxation tissue state- especially when afflicting the intestinal tract as is commonly seen with leaky gut syndrome.

**Prabhava/Specific Indications**

- **Pulse and Tongue Indications:** From the research I have done, there are no primary indications on the pulse and the tongue the point to the specific use of Wood Betony. Though we may generally look for the wiry tight pulse and a quivering tongue as general indicators for the wind/tension tissue state.

- **Psychological Picture:** This is really where we start to see Wood Betony shine. These psychological indications were first mentioned by Matthew Wood in his epic tome The Book of Herbal Wisdom. I have confirmed these indications through giving this remedy a lot of people over the years and seeing it work first hand. They have also been confirmed by herbalist jim mcdonald.

I would say the main psychological indication for the use of Wood Betony is when someone complains of the nebulous state of being “ungrounded.” I’ve never really understood this...
concept fully, as it’s technically impossible for us to be ungrounded, as our feet are always on the Earth (unless your way up in a building or something).

What I think people really mean when they say they are ungrounded is that they are lacking psychological presence to the current moment they are in. There is a certain movement of ones consciousness that goes up and out, spiraling out of control, the winds of the mind blowing this way and that with thoughts being scattered about. There is a lack of direction and focus to ones awareness and thinking. I have often thought of this indication when looking at the leaves of the plant, which to me resemble clouds- relating the remedy to the Ether Element in a way.

This pattern of “ungroundedness” is discussed by Matthew Wood as having its root being in a disconnect or a lack of strength within the solar plexus, which is the foundation of the gut level instincts, the willpower, and sense of self. People with a weak solar plexus oftentimes feel disconnected from themselves, feel disempowered, and lack a strength of character, all of which can translate onto the physical level as a lack of digestive power and ability to assimilate nutrients. This leads to the atrophy tissue state and an overall weakening of the constitution as a whole.

So people that tend to respond well to Wood Betony feel spacey, ungrounded, and like their energy is constantly moving “up and out.” This leads to a wide variety of applications, from people that smoke too much Cannabis or take too many entheogenic drugs/plants, do too much kundalini yoga (or at least do it improperly), to folks that focus on “ascension” based spiritual practices or even have had alien abduction experiences. In general, there tends to be a basic disconnect between their vital force and that of the Earth- a pretty major issue in our modern world!

Because the remedy strengthens the solar plexus as a whole, I tend to like to use it for people that feel inadequate, weak, disempowered, lack confidence and willpower, and that they don’t have any personal power that can influence themselves, others, or the world at large in a positive way. There is a certain fear underlying the Wood Betony person. While I wouldn’t say the plant abolishes the fear, I would say that by strengthening the solar plexus it helps people to have the courage and strength to face their fears.

On a bit of a deeper level, Wood Betony has a rich historical use for assisting people that experience the ill effects of witchcraft, demonic possession, and other types of supernatural problems. In this way it is considered one of the most superior protection medicines, and throughout the medieval period was commonly used with St. John’s Wort (Hypericum perforatum) for this purpose. While I don’t know if the plant has the ability to pull a demon out of someone’s body, what I have seen is that people that fear of these types of things, or have too much of a focus on otherworldly forces adversely affecting their lives, Wood Betony helps them to “tighten up their boundaries” so to speak, draw their energy down and in and return to themselves. It also helps them to have the strength and courage to be filled up with their own true nature so there just isn’t room for that other stuff to get in.
That all being said, I have directly witnessed myself these types of supernatural problems and believe these issues need to be dealt with by experienced traditional medicine people (not a new age shaman) that know how to work with these malevolent forces. Nonetheless, our medicinal plants can certainly help with some of the side effects of these issues, and support the person as a whole to improve their lives.

**Clinical Patterns and Uses**

1. **Solar Plexus Deficiency:** Honestly I believe the wholeness of Wood Betony could be summarized within this one clinical pattern- for it is the root which radiates out into the rest of the properties and common uses of this remedy. But for the sake of detail I will mention some of the other ways this plant is used as a medicine. It’s worth mentioning here that this pattern in Wood Betony is something I learned from Matthew Wood both through my extensive attendance to his workshops as well as through his wonderful chapter on this plant in The Book of Herbal Wisdom. In order to understand this property of the plant, it’s useful to understand a little bit more about what the solar plexus is all about, on the physiological, energetic and psycho-spiritual levels.

The solar plexus is one of the larger nerve plexuses located between the sternum and the naval. On a physiological level it is responsible for the coordination of the digestive system, achieved through the parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system. From the churning of the stomach and opening of the sphincters and valves, to the secretion of gastric juices and sequential peristaltic contractions of the smooth muscles, the solar plexus oversees the proper timing of all of the digestive processes. In this way it is seen as the essence of the digestive faculty, and when this nerve plexus becomes damaged, deficient or simply weak, the entire process of digestion and absorption becomes impinged.

The importance of this process is recognized by a wide variety of medical traditions from around the world. The Ayurvedic tradition notes that the digestive system is the seat of agni, or our metabolic fire, which transforms foods into nutrients that nourish all of the tissues of the body. Each cell also contains agni which utilizes those nutrients and expels the waste products. But, agni is not only digestive fire, but our perceptual fire, and represents the minds ability to assimilate experiences and transform them into understanding and wisdom. This is but one energetic link between the gut and our perception and cognition- an important facet of Wood Betony’s unique medicinal gift. When agni becomes weak, we are prone to the accumulation of ama, or toxins- both in the body on a physiological level, and within the mind and perception on a psychological level.

This same theory is reflected in our North American herbal tradition by the theory of Samuel Thomson, who called the gut the root of the vital force which he likened to a stove that radiates and distributes heat and vitality throughout the organism. When this fire becomes weak and deficient, we accumulate canker, a thick congealed sticky substance which “clogs the stovepipe” or the channels of the body- blocking this flow of vitality and thus health. This is a 100% match to agni and ama theory in Ayurveda.
In terms of the chakra system, the solar plexus is related to the *manipura chakra*. The 3rd chakra is related to the Fire Element, and has to do with our personal power, our will, and confidence in ourselves. Through *manipura* we establish a relationship to ourselves, our ego, and when healthy this egocentric self is in alignment with the “higher self” which is located in the heart (each chakra is said to be aligned and illumined by the one directly above it).

Thus when *manipura* becomes deficient, there tends to be a lack of confidence, presence, rootedness in the self, willpower, and self-determination to use our choices to consciously create the life that we want to live. Ultimately one becomes more sensitive to the worlds around them, both visible and invisible, creating a greater tendency to be afflicted by malevolent spiritual influences. This center is all about the action that we take in the world, and having those actions be in service to not only the self, but the greater good of humanity, and being strong in oneself so that we are filled up with who we truly are- so there isn’t room for the “other stuff” to get in.

With all of this in mind, we can start to see and understand the constellation of issues that arise when the solar plexus becomes deficient and weak, all of which Wood Betony is remedial for. What I would like to do here is illustrate the process that tends to unfold from a weakness in this all important part of the body.

First and foremost, we will tend to see digestive insufficiency. This can manifest in a wide variety of ways, from basic GI symptoms like gas, bloating, constipation, or diarrhea, to more serious issues like leaky gut syndrome and disbiosis. There may be lack of bile secretion or production from the gallbladder and liver, or perhaps uncoordinated secretions of bile leading to alternating constipation and diarrhea. Sphincters may not open and close at the proper timing, peristalsis may not occur effectively, and in general the cells of the GI are less active and responsive to do their job properly. We may also see changes in appetite, lack of hunger for breakfast, or random food cravings. Because of its astringent property, it is a wonderful remedy to consider for ulcers and leaky gut syndrome. The combination of bitter and carminative qualities make it a good all around digestive agent as well.

In short, digestion is impaired, but in a sort of general or subtle manner. Because the root is in the nervous system, there may be present different types of psychological symptoms juxtaposed to the digestive symptoms- such as depression, anxiety, nervousness, insomnia, and tension, along with the patterns mentioned above with general solar plexus or *manipura* weakness- lack of confidence, personal power, will, and strength of character. It is well researched now that issues in the gut definitely affect the health of our brain- I mean we have more serotonin in our gut than we do our brain!

Because digestion is impaired, there is a tendency to a lack of absorption and utilization of nutrients from the food. Naturally this tends to lead to a degree of micro or macro nutrient deficiencies, and constitutional weakness- what we might refer to as the atrophy tissue state. The entire system becomes weakened from a baseline lack of nutrition, which is made worse from a baseline nervous tension and inability to cope with the stressors of life. Whenever we are tense, it tends to constrict the circulation of blood as well as the

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Materia Medica Monthly  Issue #8- Wood Betony  10
musculoskeletal system—so now we have impeded blood flow further reducing cellular
nutrition as well as physical tension in the muscles. This leads to a downward cycle that
feeds on itself, each issue leading to the next and looping back to the beginning.

To summarize, this leads to a relatively clear constitutional picture or pattern of which
Wood Betony is highly well suited for. We have general digestive symptoms present, with
an overall thin, weak and deficient constitution, coldness in the periphery, brain fog and/or
headaches from lack of cerebral circulation, musculoskeletal tension, ungroundedness,
lack of confidence/willpower, potential liver stagnation/tension, and nervous debility— or
what the old docs called “neurasthenia.” This overall pattern covers issues associated with
the stomach, small intestine, liver and gallbladder. All of these things ultimately boil down
to weakness in the solar plexus, which Wood Betony corrects in a gentle yet profound
way. The best way to think of this remedy is that it brings the vital force from the top
of the head and down into the solar plexus.

Hopefully you can see how this processes moves from one stage to the next and how it all
stems from a singular root in the solar plexus. As you can see, this core pattern can result
in a wide variety of physical and psychological complaints, hence Wood Betony was
considered a panacea amongst the ancient authors. Below I will discuss a few of the other
patterns of symptoms where you might consider using this plant, but it becomes a specific
when it is within the context of underlying solar plexus weakness.

I also want to mention here that many of these issues are also commonly attributed to the
food intolerance pattern which obviously Wood Betony cannot correct. Weakness in the
solar plexus and the nervous systems link to the gut is very typical in the client with food
intolerance, as the intolerant food triggers an immunological and neurological response
which in the long term weakens the solar plexus.

2. Nervous Exhaustion, Pain and Physical Tension: This is one of the main ways I find
myself using this plant. While it is not necessarily a strong nerve sedative and certainly
not hypnotic, it is quite beneficial for gently easing off excess tension in the nervous
system as well as bringing in a nutritive quality of the nerves. In this regard I consider it a
wonderful nervine trophorestorative, and oftentimes find myself adding it to formulas with
other herbs in this category such as Milky Oats seed (*Avena sativa*) and Skullcap
(*Scutellaria lateriflora*).

I have used this remedy frequently when there is a lot of nervousness, anxiety, and tension
in a persons psychology and physiology. They feel shaky, spacey, ungrounded— like all of
their energy is moving up and out— with is a lack of psychological presence to their
demeanor and how they interact with the world. It helps to bring their energy down and
in back to the solar plexus, back to their gut level instincts. It is mild enough that it can be
used throughout the day with no sleepy side effects, which is great. For these purposes I
often like to combine it with other gentle aromatic or bitter nervines in the mint family,
such as Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*), Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*), Motherwort
(*Leonurus cardiaca*), and Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*). It is also worth mentioning here that Wood
Betony is commonly used for hypertension, especially when associated with nervous system agitation.

When the nervous system is all tensed up, it tends to reflex into the musculoskeletal system. This is due to the fact that all muscle fibers are innervated by nerve fibers—so when the nerves are over-firing and tense, the muscles tend to follow suit. This can lead to a greater propensity towards cramping, but also overall tension in the muscles. Where I have found Wood Betony to be really wonderful is the tension in the neck and shoulders that is common with liver tension or fire rising type patterns. Some call it the “students medicine,” for busy stressed out people in school hunched over books all day long and thinking too much.

Lastly we could place Wood Betony in our category of herbs that are considered specifics for nerve pain. Nerve pain is unlike any other kind of pain. It is not a dull ache-y kind of sensation, but rather is sharp, shooting, and traces a very specific pathway through the body. As we have seen the general pattern of the Wood Betony person tends to dissociate or check out from their body, with the energy moving up and out, the specific indication for using Wood Betony for nerve pain would be when there is a tendency for someone to disconnect from their body, or the pain sends them into a hysterical frenzied state. Our other major nerve pain remedies include St. John’s Wort (Hypericum perforatum), Prickly Ash (Zanthoxylum americanum), and Kava-Kava (Piper methysticum).

3. **Headache and Head Injuries:** Likely one of the most popular uses of Wood Betony is in the treatment of headaches and migraines. I have found it useful for tension based headaches, with throbbing pounding pain and visible veins in the temples. Through its relaxant action it helps to reduce tension in the vasculature so the blood flows more smoothly throughout the vessels. It can also be remedial for deficiency type headaches due to reduced blood flow to the brain via its promotion of cerebral circulation and opening up of the arterial blood supply to the head. Herbalist Jim Mcdonald mentions: “I have noted several instances when, in addition to its more immediate effects, regular daily use of Wood Betony as a simple has decreased the frequency and intensity of chronic headaches until their occurrence was drastically reduced or even eliminated altogether.”

I would argue the this property is due to its restorative effects not only on the nervous system, but also by reducing systemic and liver tension, as well as restoring the “neural gut” and increasing cerebral circulation. Jim continues, “Betony clearly relaxes tension in the head: the tension of muscles, of blood vessels, of thoughts and of emotions. It doesn’t simply act physically, but seems to change the way we process energy in the both head and mind in a manner that resolves the conditions of tension and congestion that prevent the free and relaxed flow of the vital force.” I will note here that he likes to combine it with Black Cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa) and Jamaican Dogwood (Piscidia erythrina) for headaches and migraines.

There are also traditional usages of Wood Betony for a wide variety of traumas to the head. This includes concussions, MTBI’s (Minor Traumatic Brain Injuries), or seemingly “no-biggie” bumps to the head. If someone sustains a head injury and afterwards never felt
quite the same- difficulty concentrating, dizziness, vertigo, ringing in the ears, foggy thinking, headaches, or feelings of dissociation- it is likely the best remedy to consider. Matthew Wood notes some traditional literature, “It is also a traditional and important medicine for head injuries. Aeemilius Macer (eleventh century) says it is good for a “fractured skull.” Rychard Banckes (1525) goes so far as to describe how it is good when the cranial bone is pushed into the brain. This may seem like the unsophisticated musings of absurd old herbalists, but it is well to remember that people can survive terrible head wounds- like gunshots and so on- if the wound is kept clean.”

From a spiritual perspective, some people would say that during traumatic experiences (such as a head injury) the soul momentarily departs the body, or splits off and remains in that time and space in order to protect itself- commonly referred to as a “soul loss.” The person never quite feels themselves afterwards. I believe Wood Betony helps to reintegrate the soul more deeply into the body. This can even be shown in how Wood Betony can help bring someone back from a state of unconsciousness.

On this note, Matthew shares an interesting case study. “A friend called me in a state of great concern. Her three-year-old nephew had been operated on for a congenital heart condition. The operation went fine, except that he did not regain consciousness. After five days, the surgeons thought he probably would not revive. The next morning my friend applied Bach Rescue Remedy and Wood Betony. He immediately reacted; within three days he was back to full cerebral function.” All I can say to that is wow!!

This is another reflection of how Wood Betony helps to bring the vital force down from the top of the head into the solar plexus, anchoring the soul and consciousness into the physical body. The plant itself actually holds this signature, with the leaves being tightly clumped close to the Earth and the flowers shooting straight up and out into the sky.

4. **Cognitive Difficulty:** This one juxtaposes nicely with the last clinical pattern. Wood Betony is a wonderful remedy to enhance cognitive function, short term memory, and sharpen our perceptual faculties. In modern day herbalism, this would be called a “nootropic,” and as such could be lumped in with other herbs with similar properties, such as Ginkgo (Ginkgo biloba), Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis), Gotu Kola (Centella asiatica), and Bacopa (Bacopa monnieri).

This property is achieved through it’s ability to on the one hand reduce excessive nervous tension and calm the nerves as well as increasing circulation to the head and brain. Thus I see it working on both sides of cognitive difficulty. It’s important to ask the question “why is someone having a hard time concentrating or remembering things?” On the one side we have people with burned out nervous systems, they are stressed, tired, frazzled or spaced out and can’t focus on what’s right in front of them. On the other side we have the dynamic of brain fog, where it feels like there’s cotton balls in the brain, a dense fog hard to see through, and an overall groggy sensation in the brain. This is more due to a deficiency in circulation to the brain- a common symptom people experience in their elder years. This is another reason it is considered a great students herb.
I would also add here that I consider Wood Betony a great remedy for periodic states of melancholy or depression. As I mentioned under the St. John’s Wort monograph, I never consider an herb to be an anti-depressant, as depression can be a complex issue with multiple facets and factors contributing to it. Nonetheless, Wood Betony can prove to be a supportive remedy here for the cognitive difficulty that often accompanies depression, as well as nourishing the nervous system which is critical from an herbal perspective of treatment. But again we want to look at the specific picture. Wood Betony will tend to help a person with mild depression/melancholy when it tends to lead to them wanting to check out or dissociate from their reality, they lose all confidence in themselves, and have a hard time feeling grounded in themselves. Once again here we see it pairs nicely with St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)- a remedy that keeps coming up again and again, Milky Oats (*Avena sativa*), Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), Damiana (*Turnera diffusa*), and other aromatics and nerve tonics.

5. **Psycho-Spiritual Issues:** Lastly we come to the psycho-spiritual aspect of Wood Betony. A lot of the psychological dynamics associated with this remedy were mentioned earlier under the solar plexus section, as well as the psychological indications under prabahava. But what I didn’t mention is the fact that Wood Betony was one of the major herbal remedies used throughout the Renaissance and folk traditions for complaints associated with witchcraft, hexes, curses, or even the less dramatic ill effects of jealousy, hatred, envy, or what in central and South America is called “mal ojo” or the evil eye.

Let’s face it, if someone has a problem with you and is constantly thinking bad thoughts about you, sending negative energy your way (whether consciously or unconsciously) it **has an effect.** While in our modern world it is rare for people to hire someone with knowledge of the dark arts to witch someone, it does still happen, and sometimes people can succumb to psychological, physiological, and spiritual issues due to these subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) attacks.

Some signs that something like this might be present in ones life would be: frequent bad luck, nightmares and unpleasant visions, constant worse case scenario thinking, a sensation of being blocked from achieving life goals or dreams, inexplicable physical problems, ghostly experiences, supernatural influences, sensations of darkness and evil etc. Basically, there can be an overall sensation and feeling that “something is just not right” and there often is no explanation for it. I want to say that **these things are very real.**

Wood Betony was considered one of the top herbs for protection and to drive away “wycked spirits” in the old days, alongside with (yet again) St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). As we have seen in the overall pattern and symptom constellation on which this remedy operates upon, it is specific for when the vital force is going up and out too much, with a lack of presence within ones own body and self. There tends to be a bit of a blurring between the fine line that divides the visible and the invisible worlds, leaving one opened up and vulnerable to influences from malevolent forces.
Wood Betony helps with these issues by assisting in the consciousness and soul to more fully incarnate in the physical body and strengthening the solar plexus or our place of power. Matthew Wood describes it well “A few years after seeing this person I was interested to read that Wood Betony was the principal remedy used in the Middle Ages to exorcise demons. I could well understand this. It works, not by artificially removing “demons,” like an exorcist in a movie or on a revivalist stage, but by strengthening and grounding the patient so that they are not threatened by distortions in thinking that may result from weak instincts and mental lapses. Their energy field is stronger and they repel these evil powers.”

One way I like to translate that is that the remedy helps you to be filled up with who you truly are, so that there just isn’t space for the bad stuff to get in and have its way with you. In this regard it helps to “strengthen your boundaries” and not be quite so opened up to the invisible world- which isn’t all butterflies, love and light- for all light casts and shadow and within that darkness dwells spiritual forces that do not always have our best in mind.

This is a remedy I have used for people that have had really bad experiences with psychedelic drugs or entheogenic plants. There’s a lot of folks out there using these powerful medicines outside of the traditional context of ceremony, and in that way can be opening themselves up to forces they cannot comprehend or understand. Others do strive to work with them within ceremonial environments, but unfortunately more often than not people leading these ceremonies might have underlying agendas, lack personal integrity, or simply don’t know what they are doing. Having good intentions is not enough when it comes to these medicines. Do you want a surgeon operating on someone to just have good intentions? NO WAY!! We want them to know what they are doing.

So it is the same with our medicine people- they are spiritual surgeons- and oftentimes go through decades of training and initiation to know how to be a good clean vessel for these powerful medicines to work through. If that channel isn’t clean and pure, something else might leak through and effect the people there trying to heal themselves. The result can range from disastrous and life threatening, to simply some sticky energy needing to be cleaned off. Either way, a remedy like Wood Betony is great for folks that “never felt the same” after an experience like this to help them tone up the boundaries and return to themselves more fully.

6. Other Minor Uses: I would also mention here a few other less common uses of Wood Betony. I didn’t mention many of these because I consider them peripheral actions and uses, many of which can likely be better achieved with other remedies- but if Wood Betony is all you have it is worth a shot! As an emmenagogue it can be used to help promote the downward bearing motion of menses. Culpeper mentions that it can be used as an expectorant: “The powder mixed with pure honey is no less available for all sorts of coughs or colds, wheezing, or shortness of breath, distillations of thin rheums upon the lungs, which causeth consumptions.” This would be translated to tension in the respiratory system along with thin mucous.

**Pharmacological Data**

Materia Medica Monthly  Issue #8- Wood Betony  15
Primary Constituents: Volatile oils, bitter principles (betolide, iridoids), tannins (rosmarinic acid, caffeic acid derivatives), alkaloids (betonicine, stachydrine), flavonoids, choline, coumarins

Mechanisms of Action: The volatile oils are responsible for the warming effects of Wood Betony, as well as its carminative and stimulant actions upon circulation and digestion. Many volatile oils also have a general affinity for the nervous system. The bitter principles (betolide and iridoids) obviously are responsible for the bitter tonic effects, and thus the plants influence on digestion, the liver and gall bladder. The alkaloids have been shown to have cholangogue effects (likely from being bitter as many alkaloids are) as well as having a slight inflammation modulating property. The tannins bring about its astringent and vulnerary properties, as well as some inflammation modulating properties (specifically the rosmarinic acid and caffeic acid derivatives).

Contraindications and Safety
Contraindications: Because it does have a slight stimulant effect on the uterus it is generally suggested to avoid its use in pregnancy.

Energetic/constitutional side effects: As mentioned earlier, Wood Betony does have a constitutional drying effect via its astringency and bitter/carminative properties. Thus it may benefit to exercise some caution if a client is overly dry in their constitution. Again though this is a mild plant and as such is less likely to shift ones constitution in any direction too strongly.

Herb-Drug Interactions: There are no known interactions between Wood Betony and any prescription medications.

Preparations and Dosage
Tincture: A remedy like Wood Betony, with its mixture of volatile oils which are soluble in high alcohol and its bitter principles which are more water soluble, it is important to get your alcohol ratio just right to yield the best extract. Obviously lower alcohol tinctures will tend to be a bit more bitter and higher alcohol tinctures will tend to be a bit more aromatic. I prefer to use fresh plant materials for pretty much every herb I work with, which generally lends to using a higher percentage alcohol to take into consideration the innate water content of fresh plants. I wouldn’t say Wood Betony is a particularly watery plant, so I generally like to use somewhere between 50-60% alcohol for extraction. I have found this yields a very nice dark colored tincture that is equally bitter and carminative-indicating an ideal extract.

Again I like to do my tinctures as strong as possible, and am usually able to achieve anywhere between a 1:2-1:4 ratio of grams of herb : milliliters of menstruum. This can be taken in dosage ranging from 1-3 drops 3x a day, to up to 5 mL 3x a day, the latter being a more phytotherapy approach, the prior being a more homeopathic/Matt Wood dose.

Infusion: I actually really like this plant as an infusion. Even though it is considered bitter, I don’t find it to be so strong that it is unpleasant to drink. Infusions are best here to preserve the volatile constituents. I usually like to use about 1 tbsp per 8 oz of water… ish.
I honestly rarely measure teas, I just eyeball it- at least for personal use. Always make sure you cover it with a lid though! Infusions can be used internally as well as topically as a fomentation, wash or soak for wounds and skin ulcerations. Both fresh and dried material works well for infusions.

- **Powder in Honey**: This is a preparation that Culpeper liked to use specifically for treating the respiratory and female reproductive systems. He doesn’t give specific ratios, but I would say simply combining enough powder with honey to make a paste and taking it in 1/2-1 tsp doses would be a good place to start. The honey will balance any drying properties of the Wood Betony which makes it a nice constitutional balancing delivery mechanism.

- **Fresh Leaf Poultice**: Like Plantain, Wood Betony has a similar drawing power when used as a spit poultice or crushing the fresh leaves into a paste. It has traditional uses here for splinters, objects stuck in the skin, and especially poisonous snake bites. I would assume it would be effective for spider bites too.

### Formulation Strategies

#### Solar Plexus Pair
Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 50%
St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) 50%

Obviously this should be the first simple formula since I mentioned it so many times throughout this monograph. This is a super dynamic duo here, with effects upon the nervous system, the liver and gallbladder, digestion, and of course resetting the neural gut, or the solar plexus. This classic pair was said to be the best for spiritual protection as well. I’ve used this base pair for nerve restoration formulas, strengthening the solar plexus, spiritual protection and nerve pain.

#### Nerve Tonic Pair
Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 50%
Milky Oats seed (*Avena sativa*) 50%

This simple pair is a great place to start for a basic nerve tonic formula, especially with the addition of Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)- our other major nerve trophorestorative in western herbalism. I’ve used this simple pair to stave off headaches associated with caffeine withdrawal and it worked quite well- though only at the acute onset.

#### Nerve Tonic Formula #1
Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 25%
Milky Oats seed (*Avena sativa*) 25%
Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) 25%
Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*) 15%
Damiana (*Turnera diffusa*) 10%
Here we have a more complex formula for nourishing the nervous system, lead by our primary triplet. Including Lemon Balm and Damiana brings in some volatile essential oil containing plants that help to bring these other nerve tonics deeper into the nervous system. Wood Betony, Milky Oats, and Skullcap have a little bit more of a “heavier” quality to them, and including aromatics like Damiana and Lemon Balm helps to “lift up” the lead triplet and volatilize it into the nervous system. This is a great 5 herb formula for melancholy and depression as well.

**Nerve Tonic Formula #2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood Betony (Stachys betonica)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skullcap (Scutellaria lateriflora)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotu Kola (Centella asiatica)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose flower (Rosa spp.)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This formula comes from Darcy Blue. I like this formula as it brings in a stronger nootropic quality with Gotu Kola to enhance the cognitive attributes of Wood Betony. The Roses help to orient the mind with the heart, and while not many people think of Rose this way, I do consider it a slight nervine simply by virtue that it helps to anchor our minds more into the heart. The more we live in the heart, the more calm we are (generally) and this is a great addition to Wood Betony.

**Mild Bitter Nervine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood Betony (Stachys betonica)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamomile (Matricaria recutita)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here we see 2 gentle nervine remedies with bitter tonic properties to support digestion. This is a nice pair as the Wood Betony is slightly warming and the Chamomile is slightly cooling, making it a unique constitutionally balanced bitter pair. This is useful since most bitters are cooling- it’s always good to know the small handful of bitters that are also warming due to mixed aromatic properties.

**Mild Carminative Nervine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood Betony (Stachys betonica)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catnip (Nepeta cataria)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here we see Catnip being added to Wood Betony to bring out more of the carminative and nervine effects. Both of these remedies are warming. I always like to think about nervine herbs and their relative effects on digestion in regards to carminative or bitter. This is a good way to classify this category of herbs.

**Digestive Nervine Formula**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood Betony (Stachys betonica)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skullcap (Scutellaria lateriflora)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamomile (Matricaria recutita)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catnip (Nepeta cataria)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemon Balm (Melissa officinalis)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Taking the above 2 simple pairs of a bitter and carminative nervine, we can put them together into a more complex formula. Here we have 3 bitters with Wood Betony, Skullcap and Chamomile, and 4 carminatives with Wood Betony, Chamomile, Catnip and Lemon Balm, providing a nice broad spectrum of digestive support. But remember these are all also nervous system remedies, and will provide a nice gentle nervine relaxant/sedative effect. This will overall strengthen the parasympathetic nervous system, digestion, and the solar plexus as a whole.

Gut Repair Formula

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 20%
Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) 20%
Plantain (*Plantago major*) 20%
Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) 10%
Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) 10%
Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) 10%
Marshmallow (*Althea officinalis*) 10%

This formula is bringing out more of the astringent properties of Wood Betony, which it is added to a base pair of Calendula and Plantain for gut restoration. It of course combines nicely with Calendula and Chamomile as a bitter tonic, and with Chamomile, Fennel and Peppermint as a carminative. We have 2 nervines with Wood Betony and Chamomile, and the whole thing is balanced out with some Marshmallow root to alleviate the net drying effect of the other herbs present. This formula is best done as an infusion.

Stuck Liver Chi Formula

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 30%
Dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinale*) 30%
Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) 15%
Peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*) 15%
Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) 10%

This could be considered a liver relaxant formula. When digestion is impaired, it is common for the liver to get a little stuck as well, for it is less able to deal with the metabolic waste products of the body as well as what is crossing the gut wall (especially when there’s leaky gut). A tense liver is prone to headaches, neck and shoulder tension, which this formula would be great for. It’s nicely cooling as well, ideal if there is any “liver fire rising” from that tension. This pattern is essentially too much vital force that is trapped within the system and looking for a way out. I like to think of a formula like this as “unkinking the hose” so the vitality can flow more easily throughout the system.

Ulcer Formula

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 20%
Gotu Kola (*Centella asiatica*) 20%
Plantain (*Plantago major*) 20%
Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) 20%
Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) 20%

Here we see a formula of herbs commonly used to treat stomach ulcers. The first 4 herbs are all tonic/astringent remedies for the mucosal membranes, strengthening connective tissues and healing the damaged membrane. Goldenseal is considered a specific for perforated membranes, Plantain for all manner of wounds, Gotu Kola as a connective tissue tonic, and Wood Betony as an astringent. The Plantain and Licorice will provide some nice demulcent properties as well to soothe any inflammation and pain associated.

**Foggy Brain Formula**

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 33%
Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) 33%
Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) 33%

°This formula comes from Matthew Wood. What a great triplet. Here we see 3 common nootropic remedies which help to increase cerebral circulation and oxygenation to the brain. It is also a wonderful nervous system tonic when the nerves are depressed and lacking in stimulation. This formula would also likely be quite effective at reducing blood pressure, as Ginkgo thins the blood, Rosemary removes damp accumulation in the cardiovascular system, and Wood Betony calms the nerves and dilates the blood vessels. A good simple formula for the elderly and students alike!

**Headache Pair**

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 50%
Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*) 50%

I have used this pair countless times to treat the onset of a headache, and it does work quite well. This is specific for a tension type headache, especially if there is too much stuck energy in the liver- for the Blue Vervain is distinctly (and sometimes nauseatingly) bitter. Both remedies are excellent for relaxing tension in the neck and shoulders as well, sometimes that alone will help prevent the headache onset. I typically dose it relatively frequently, 5 drops or so every hour, but larger doses can certainly be given.

**Headache Triplet**

Wood Betony (*Stachys betonica*) 33%
Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) 33%
Jamaican Dogwood (*Piscidia erythrina*) 33%

° This triplet comes from Jim McDonald. This is a great formula build off a classic pair used by the Physiomedicalist T.J. Lyle which is Wood Betony and Black Cohosh. Both of these remedies are great relaxants both for the nerves as well as the muscles, helping to relax tension in the blood vessels which reduces blood flow into the brain. Jamaican Dogwood is a wonderful anodyne remedy used for all manner of pain, and has distinctly sedative effects on the herbs and a sort of “deadening” action on the pain response.

**Headache Formula**
Wood Betony (Stachys betonica) 30%
Blue Vervain (Verbena hastata) 30%
Jamaican Dogwood (Piscidia erythrina) 15%
Black Cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa) 15%
Lavender (Lavendula angustifolia) 10%

Here we see a more complex formula for headaches combining my standard pair with mcdonald’s triplet, with a final touch of Lavender at the end there. I like the Lavender for it works nicely with the Wood Betony and Blue Vervain to relax constriction in the liver.

### Energetic Architecture

**Ruling Planet:** The Moon and/or Jupiter. Even though Wood Betony is an ever so slightly warming remedy, I still like to classify it under the Moon. This can be seen through its actions and affinities for the stomach, the uterus, brain and mucous membranes of the body— all of which are ruled by the Moon, as well as its overall calming and nourishing properties for the nervous system. The bitter and astringent properties of Wood Betony lends its drying properties which are particularly useful in damp type conditions which the Moon governs. I tend to think of the fact that it corrects the entire digestive coordination and rhythm, through acting on the nerves in gut, enhancing our absorption of nutrients— all things of which are governed by the Moon.

In medical astrology, the Moon is commonly associated with psychiatric type issues such as hysteria, frenzy, and even more intense conditions such as schizophrenia and lunacy. Note the old terms “lunacy” and “lunatic” are rooted in the word “luna,” a term used to denote the Moon. All of these issues are often attributed to a lack of boundary between this world and the next, of the vital force extending up and out, or being opened up to malicious influences from the invisible reality. As we have seen, Wood Betony effectively cinches up these boundaries (funny that’s its a physical astringent too) and helps the vital force to anchor itself down and in.

In the Qabalah, the Moon is associated with the sephiroth Yesod, which has been referred to as the “treasure house of illusions,” and is oftentimes equated with the astral body of people and getting lost in the realm of visions and dreams. This seems like a fitting correspondence for an herb that helps people to find balance between the visible and invisible realities, and to get back from stuck in the “other side.”

Now I need to mention here that literally every resource I have come across in regards to planetary correspondences to this plant say that it is an herb of Jupiter. Yet, as goes with my main problem with most planetary classifications, no one actually explains **why** they place Wood Betony under Jupiter. In fact, I would argue that most people don’t even think of it and just copy and paste what other people have said.

I guess I can see some Jupiter correspondences to Wood Betony. It does have a slight influence upon the liver (which Jupiter rules), and does have some uplifting properties on consciousness, and I suppose because Jupiter rules metabolism and Wood Betony influences the body’s capacity to fatten up a bit by enhancing digestion. But the spirit of
Jupiter is that it expands and radiates up and out, and Wood Betony tends to anchor us down and in. Perhaps it is a sympathetic description of the nature of the person that it is remedial for, as their energy tends to be expanding and radiating outwards too much, and they tend to be boundariless like Jupiter!

The other facet of Jupiter that does relate to Wood Betony would be the fact that it is ever so gently warming, whereas the Sun is significantly warm and Mars is hot, Jupiter tends to be just, comfortably warm. There is a certain comfort associated with this planet that some would describe as expansive and yet relaxed and calm. I would say that describes the nature of Wood Betony nicely- as it certainly does promote a calm disposition through its nervine effects, as well as moderated level of expansiveness- just not to the extent of feeling ungrounded!

I like to think of Wood Betony’s fellow Lamiaceae (mint family) relative Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*) and how it is also ruled by Jupiter, and how these 2 remedies do have a slightly similar quality of energy in regards to how they gently promote a calm disposition that also tends to be uplifted, optimistic, and positive.

- **Ruling Element:** Earth. I place Wood Betony under the Earth Element, primary because it is such a grounding remedy in the way it anchors the vital force deeply within the physical body. We see the Earth signature in the plant in how the leaves grow so close to the ground in tight clumps. To me those leaves look like little clouds, which to me shows how the plant helps to bring the Air Element into the Earth- IE anchoring the mind and consciousness down and in. On a physiological note, the tonic/astringent properties are associated with the Earth Element in the way it helps to increase the strength and tone of tissues that have become weakened and atrophied.

- **Ruling Principle:** Mercury. Lastly I like to think of Wood Betony under the rulership of the Mercury Principle, which is related to the Mutable mode of astrology and vata dosha of Ayurveda. As we have seen, Wood Betony is a primo remedy for the vata constitution through its nerve tonic effects and grounding dynamics (vata rules the nerves). It also highly indicated for the less vital, weak and deficient vata types.

I also see the Mercury correspondence in the growth dynamics of the plant- as it has the clump of leaves close to the Earth and yet the tall upward reaching flowering stalks. This indicates a sort of bridging between Heaven and Earth, of connecting 2 diametrically opposite worlds- which is in essence what the Mercury Principle represents. This signature is also revealed through its actions on anchoring the soul down into the body, and balancing the visible and invisible worlds within someone’s perception.