

Valerian – Deep Relaxant, Sleep Ally & Nervous System Restorer

Botanical Profile

- Latin Name: *Valeriana officinalis*
- Alternative Names: Garden Heliotrope, All-Heal
- Plant Family: Caprifoliaceae (Honeysuckle family)
- Parts Used: Root and rhizome
- Origin: Native to Europe and Western Asia

Valerian is a grounding and earthy herb long treasured for its ability to calm the mind, relax the muscles, and promote deep rest. Used across Europe since ancient times, it is one of the most well-known nervines and sleep remedies in Western herbalism. At Peridotflow Wellness Centre, we view Valerian as a deeply anchoring plant—a root that brings the nervous system back to earth, back to stillness, and back to self.

Promotes Deep, Restorative Sleep

Valerian is widely used to support sleep onset and depth without the grogginess of pharmaceutical sedatives. It helps to calm mental chatter and reduce nighttime tension, encouraging the body to enter its natural sleep rhythm. It is especially useful for people whose insomnia is rooted in anxiety, tension, or physical restlessness.

Relieves Anxiety and Nervous Tension

Valerian works on the central nervous system to calm excitability, reduce over-stimulation, and ease feelings of panic. It is beneficial during periods of emotional stress, shock, or mental overwhelm. Its grounding nature makes it especially supportive for Vata-type nervousness or mental scattering.

Eases Muscular Tension and Spasms

Valerian acts as a smooth muscle relaxant, helping to ease cramping, tension, and tightness. It is often used in cases of menstrual cramps, muscle spasms, tension headaches, or after physical exertion. Its sedative and antispasmodic properties make it a key herb for physical as well as emotional unwinding.

Supports Withdrawal and Nervous Exhaustion

Valerian can support those coming off of stimulants, sedatives, or substances that strain the nervous system. It helps restore balance after burnout and encourages parasympathetic (rest-and-digest) dominance. Used in gentle tapering or recovery formulas to ease withdrawal symptoms and agitation.

Balances Heart and Mood in Times of Distress

Although subtle, Valerian has an effect on heart rate variability, helping to slow a racing pulse and calm the energetic heart. This makes it helpful during grief, fear, or emotional overwhelm when the body cannot settle. It is often combined with other nervines and adaptogens for deep emotional support.

Folklore & History

In ancient Greece and Rome, Valerian was known as 'Phu' for its strong smell, but was revered as an all-heal herb. It was used by Hippocrates and Galen for insomnia and trembling. In Medieval times, it was believed to protect against evil spirits and lightning. It has also been a staple in love potions and dream pillows, linking it with both protection and passion in folklore.

Traditional Usage

Traditionally used as a tea, tincture, or powdered capsule. Often combined with Skullcap, Passionflower, or Lemon Balm for synergistic effects. Used by traditional herbalists for anxiety, sleep disorders, stress, and chronic pain linked to nervous system imbalance.

Herbal Actions

Nervine, Sedative, Antispasmodic, Hypnotic, Anxiolytic, Muscle Relaxant

Energetics & Tissue States

Temperature: Warming (some sources consider slightly cooling)

Moisture: Moistening

Tissue States: Excited, Tense, Dry, Deficient

Active Compounds

- Valerenic acids – sedative, GABA-enhancing
- Iridoids – calming, mildly bitter
- Volatile oils – relaxant, antispasmodic
- Flavonoids – antioxidant, circulatory

Dosage & Preparation

- Tincture: 1–3 ml up to 2x daily, or 30–60 minutes before bed
- Tea: 1 tsp dried root per cup, steep covered for 10–15 minutes

- Capsules: 300–500 mg extract, typically in evening
- Best used for short- to medium-term support during acute stress

Safety & Contraindications

- Avoid combining with sedatives or alcohol
- May cause vivid dreams or grogginess in some individuals
- Not for use during pregnancy
- Rarely, may have a stimulating effect (especially in Pitta types)

Herbal Pairings

- Skullcap – for nervous tension and withdrawal
- Passionflower – for anxiety and circular thoughts
- Lemon Balm – to uplift and soothe
- Hops – for deeper sedation
- Chamomile – to soften and ground

Peridotflow Perspective

Valerian is a root of return—return to the body, to rest, to softness. At Peridotflow, we use her to help those who live in overdrive, who carry tension in their jaw, neck, or chest, or who struggle to find rest in our overstimulated world. She teaches us to lay down our burdens and let the nervous system soften back into safety and peace.