

# Chumash Treatments for Arthritis

## Part 2

by James D. Adams and Cecilia Garcia



California jimson weed, *Datura wrightii*.



Nettles, *Urtica dioica*.

This is a continuation of an article on arthritis. The purpose of these 2 articles is to teach what the Chumash know about arthritis treatment. This should help all people suffering from arthritis to learn how to treat their pain and decrease their doses of NSAIDs and steroids in order to decrease toxicity from these drugs.

California jimson weed, *Datura wrightii*, can be made into a sun tea. Brew about 6 leaves or flowers as a sun tea in 2 quarts of water for 3 days in the sun. The tea is heated to body temperature and used as a soak for the feet or hands. California jimson weed contains scopolamine that crosses the skin, relaxes the muscles, and relieves pain.

Scopolamine is not an NSAID and is a good pain reliever. The feet or hands are soaked for about half an hour once a day to provide pain relief throughout the body. Scopolamine, when used in excess, can inhibit breathing. It is very important to use California jimson weed as described here without varying from the instructions.

California bay, *Umbellularia californica*, is a powerful pain reliever. A hand full of leaves can be steeped in a hot bath during a 15-minute bath. The leaves contain monoterpenoids, such as methyleugenol, that are not NSAIDs and provide aroma therapy and pain relief.

California sage brush, *Artemisia californica*, is used against arthritis pain. A handful of sage brush, about a quarter of a pound, can be put into a quart of rubbing alcohol or tequila with six crushed avocado seeds. Allow this to extract for 6 weeks in the dark. The solution can be applied to the skin or sprayed on the skin to relieve pain, swelling, and muscle cramps. **Do not drink this preparation since it contains thujone that can be toxic to the kidneys when taken internally.** California sage brush contains several monoterpenoids, such as cineole, that are not NSAIDs and are powerful pain relievers. These pain relievers are absorbed across the skin and provide rapid, safe pain therapy.

Nettles, *Urtica dioica*, can be used for severe arthritis pain. This involves

carefully collecting a 2-foot section of the stem, with a gloved hand. The stem is then used to pat against the painful area. This causes about half an hour of extreme pain from the nettle sting. However, the painful area will be numb for the next 2 or 3 days. This treatment is used only for severe pain.

Massage is essential therapy for arthritis. Massage should be gentle and comforting. The purpose of this therapy is to help relax muscles, clear lactic acid from the muscles, and comfort the person. Massage should last about 15-30 minutes and should be followed by rest.

### About the Authors

Cecilia Garcia is a Chumash Healer. James Adams is an Associate Professor in the USC School of Pharmacy. Cecilia Garcia and James Adams have written a second edition of their book, *Healing with Medicinal Plants of the West – Cultural and Scientific Basis for their Use*, that is available (\$14.95 + tax and shipping) at [www.abeduspress.com](http://www.abeduspress.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

