

Eyebright

Red Eyebright, Euphrasy

Euphrasia officinalis (collective of species including *E. rostkoviana*, *brevipila*, *stricta*)

Scrophulariaceae

Part used: Aerial parts, herb

Botanical description: A small downy annual saprophytic plant. It has a square stem up to 30 cm tall. The leaves are opposite and ovate. The two lipped flowers are red, purple or white and grow in axillary spikes. It is native to Europe, Western Asia and naturalized in the USA. Grows in meadows, pasture and grassy areas, including by seashores. It is difficult to cultivate since it is saprophytic to grasses but seed is available and some have succeeded in growing it from seed. It is harvested during the flowering period, usually May–October.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Astringent. The flowers are thought to resemble a healthy eye, according to the Doctrine of Signatures. Reputed by some to encourage clear sightedness on all levels and to give the ability to see fairies. The botanical name is derived from the Greek word euphrosyne, meaning gladness.

Constituents: Glycosides (aucubin), Saponins, Flavonoids, Lignans, Phenolic acids Tannins, Resin, Volatile oils

Actions:

- Anti-catarrhal
- Astringent
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-bacterial
- Antispasmodic

Traditional/current uses:

- Eye lotion
- Nasal catarrh, rhinitis, sinusitis, ear problems, conjunctivitis, hay fever, colds, measles
- Mouth wash for throat and mouth inflammation
- Tones the mucus membranes
- A bitter liver tonic
- Dries up fluid mucus, not suitable for dry congestion