Prickly Ash

(Zanthoxylum clava-herculis)

Citrus Family – Rutaceae

Prickly ash is an aromatic, small tree with spreading branches and stout spines on the trunk. Also known as the toothache tree, the toothed projections on the trunk fits with the "Doctrine of Signatures" which states that herbs that have parts that resemble parts of the body can be used to treat those parts. In this case, the bark has a numbing effect on the gums and stimulates the salivary glands. The leaves are compound with 5-13 leaflets, often with paired spines at the base. When crushed they emit a citrus smell. Small, yellow-green flowers develop in branched clusters at the ends of twigs in the spring. Biting into the flower buds is similar to biting into the peel of an orange.

Parts Used
inner bark, fruit follicles

Taste
The taste is pungent and warming. It is stimulating and diffusive (Wood, 2011).

Constituents
Prickly ash bark contains the alkaloid chelerythyrine with antibacterial and and anti-inflammatory activity (Foster and Duke, 2000). It also contains coumarins, resins, and tannins (Hoffman, 2003).

Traditional Uses
Prickly ash has traditionally been used to treat toothache, as well as rheumatic conditions, Raynaud's disease and to stimulate the circulatory system (Foster and Duke, 2000).

Wildlife Uses
Host plant for the giant swallowtail butterfly.

References
Foster, S. and Duke, J. (2000). *A field guide to medicinal plants and herbs*. Houghton Mifflin Company:New York, NY.

Hoffman, D. (2003). *Medical herbalism: The science and practice of herbal medicine*. Healing Arts Press: Rochester, VT.

Wood, M. (2011). *The earthwise herbal: A complete guide to old world medicinal plants*. North Atlantic Books: Berkeley, CA.

HERBAL SEASONING

Zest!!!

a spicy blend of black pepper, turmeric, and prickly ash

1 oz. black peppercorns
½ oz. turmeric
⅛ oz. prickly ash seed follicles
Grind herbs to a powder using a coffee grinder, blender, or food chopper.
Sprinkle on eggs, vegetables, meat, and fish for a spicy, tingling flavor.