



## THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDICINAL ALTHAEA

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Introduction *Althaea officinalis*, commonly known as marshmallow plant or “qoqi o‘t” in Uzbek, is a medicinal herb that has been used since ancient times for its therapeutic properties. Belonging to the Malvaceae family, the marshmallow plant grows in damp areas and is well-known for its soothing effects on the respiratory, digestive, and skin systems. In this paper, we explore the pharmacological importance of *Althaea*, its historical and modern medicinal uses, and its potential applications in contemporary herbal medicine.

**Botanical Characteristics of *Althaea officinalis*** *Althaea officinalis* is a perennial herbaceous plant that can reach up to 1.5 meters in height. It has soft, velvety leaves and pale pink or white flowers. The plant prefers moist, marshy environments, hence the name “marshmallow.” All parts of the plant are used in medicine, particularly the roots, which are rich in mucilage—a sticky substance that provides most of the plant’s medicinal benefits. Mucilage acts as a demulcent, forming a protective layer on mucous membranes. This botanical feature makes marshmallow root ideal for treating irritation in the throat, stomach, and intestines.

**Traditional and Modern Uses** Historically, marshmallow was used by ancient Egyptians and Greeks to treat sore throats, wounds, and digestive issues. In traditional Eastern medicine, marshmallow root was boiled in water to create a soothing syrup for coughs and inflammation. Modern herbalists continue to use marshmallow for similar purposes:

- Respiratory relief:** To ease coughs, bronchitis, and throat irritation.
- Digestive aid:** To treat gastritis, ulcers, and colitis.
- Dermatological uses:** To reduce inflammation in skin conditions such as eczema and dermatitis.

Moreover, *Althaea* is found in many over-the-counter herbal teas and lozenges due to its natural anti-inflammatory and emollient effects.

**Pharmacological Properties and Research Findings** Scientific



studies have validated many of marshmallow's traditional uses. Key components of Althaea include: Mucilage polysaccharides – provide a coating effect, reduce inflammation. Flavonoids and tannins – exhibit antioxidant and antimicrobial effects. Pectins and phenolic acids – contribute to wound healing and immune support. Research published in Phytomedicine journal indicates that marshmallow extract significantly reduces irritation in the throat and improves wound healing. Clinical trials are ongoing to explore its full range of biological activities, including its potential to regulate immune responses and act as a mild diuretic. Conclusion The marshmallow plant, *Althaea officinalis*, remains an important component of natural medicine. Its historical legacy, combined with modern scientific evidence, proves its effectiveness in treating various health conditions, particularly those involving inflammation and irritation. As interest in herbal remedies continues to grow, *Althaea* stands out as a promising and gentle therapeutic option. Further research and clinical use can help integrate this valuable plant into broader medical practice.