

Chumash treatments to aid weight loss

By James D Adams and Cecilia Garcia

Winter time is the time when people go hungry. In the old days, people gained weight in the fall because they knew they would lose as much as 20 or 30 pounds during the winter, when food was scarce. They had two useful appetite suppressors to help them through these times, *Gnaphalium californicum* and *Nicotiana quadrivalvis*.

Today, many people want to lose weight and turn to a variety of expensive weight loss products. The Chumash remedies are still available and are free. However, these remedies must be used correctly. It is probably best to lose 20 pounds, take a break, and lose more weight later.

California everlasting, *gordo lobo* in Spanish, *Gnaphalium californicum* is a useful appetite suppressor. This annual plant is referred to by healers as sweet tobacco, begins to grow in February and can be found even during the summer. It must be collected and dried. Three dried leaves are added to a mug of water, 1.5 cups, and heated to a simmer, then stopped. The tea is allowed to steep for a few minutes before the tea is drunk about 30 minutes before dinner, without sweetener or other additives. This makes a mild tasting tea, with a mild orange smell and almost no color. This plant contains flavonoids, some of which may have appetite suppressing activity. Of course, drinking a mug of warm water before dinner will decrease appetite. However, this mild tea seems to have an ability to decrease appetite beyond the effect of drinking water. This tea is safe to use daily, at dinner time, to control appetite. Do not use more than 3 or 4 leaves to make the tea.

California tree tobacco, *Nicotiana glauca*, was brought to California, from Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina, in the late 1700s by Spanish missionaries. It now grows abundantly in many US locations. Some California Indians refer to this plant as coyote tobacco. In the old days, native California tobacco was used, *Nicotiana quadrivalvis*, *Nicotiana attenuata* and other species. However, native tobacco is now difficult to find. Tree tobacco is perennial and is usually abundantly available. Gather one or two leaves. Cut them into one inch squares. Put the squares in a plastic bag for storage in the freezer. About 30 minutes before dinner, put a square into a mug of water, 1.5 cups, and heat until it simmers. Remove it from the heat and steep for a few minutes. Remove the leaf square and drink the tea without sweetener or additives. This makes a mild tea, with a mild peanut butter smell and almost no color. This tea should be used no more than four times each week at dinner time. Tree tobacco contains nicotine, a very powerful appetite suppressor. Anabasine, an alkaloid similar to nicotine, is also found in the plant. Nicotine is addictive if used in excess, do not exceed the recommended dose. Both nicotine and anabasine cause seizures if used in excess. If the tea is made too strong, nicotine toxicity occurs, involving sweating, nausea and GI distress. If toxicity occurs, use less tobacco. The California Indians have used tobacco tea for thousands of years to suppress appetite. If it is used correctly, there is no addiction or toxicity.

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Nicotiana glauca, California tree tobacco