

Medicinal Plants and their Constituents in the Treatment of *Acne vulgaris*

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Abstract: Acne is a chronic inflammatory skin disorder that involves the pilosebaceous unit. It is a common universal disease affecting about 85% of teenagers. The disfiguring dermatosis of acne can destroy self-confidence, causing significant emotional distress. Topical and systemic therapies are available as a conventional acne treatment, including comedolytic agents, antibiotics, and various anti-inflammatory drugs. Interest in medicinal herbs has been progressively increasing due to antibiotic resistance in acne-causing bacteria, side effects, and sometimes high cost of conventional treatment. This review provides up-to-date evidence on medicinal plants and the phytoconstituents used in acne treatment. The data presented in this review were gathered from several databases, including Pubmed, Wiley Online Library, Elsevier, and Web of Science, using keywords such as; *Acne vulgaris*, *Cutibacterium acnes* (formerly *Propionibacterium acnes*), skin diseases, medicinal plants, active constituents, complementary and alternative medicines. The present manuscript provides an updated review of the most reported active constituents with anti-acne properties. Among these classes were the phenolic compounds, exemplified by anthraquinones, flavonoids, tannins, alkaloids, certain terpenes and oxygenated terpenes present in the essential oils of many medicinal plants.

Keywords: *Acne vulgaris*; *Cutibacterium acnes*; *Propionibacterium acnes*; *Staphylococcus epidermidis*; skin diseases; medicinal plants; essential oils; antimicrobial activity; antibiotic resistance.

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1. Introduction

Acne vulgaris is a disfiguring prolonged inflammatory disorder of the pilosebaceous units. The psychological impacts of acne include loss of self-confidence, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal and work-related difficulties. The clinical presentation of acne comprises black and whiteheads (comedones), pinheads (papules), pustules, nodules, and pitted or hypertrophic scars [1]. The face, shoulders, upper chest, and back may be affected [2].

Acne vulgaris is mainly attributed to the increased production of androgens present in males and females during puberty. Accordingly, the pilosebaceous units produce more sebum, followed by follicular hyperkeratinization and plugging of the hair follicles. Thus, sebum cannot reach the skin surface, which encourages anaerobic bacteria, including *Cutibacterium acnes* (formerly *Propionibacterium acnes*), to grow in the plugged follicle. These bacteria trigger an inflammatory response in the skin, manifested as heat, swelling, redness, and pus [3].

The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) reported in 2010 that *Acne vulgaris* was the eighth most common skin disease, with an estimated global prevalence (for all ages) of 9.38% [4]. It affects more than 85% of teenagers, and boys most frequently have severe forms of the disease [5]. More than 100 million US dollars are spent on over-the-counter acne products [6]. Acne is a multifactorial disease affected by interacting factors, and the main risk factors are summarized in figure 1 [7].

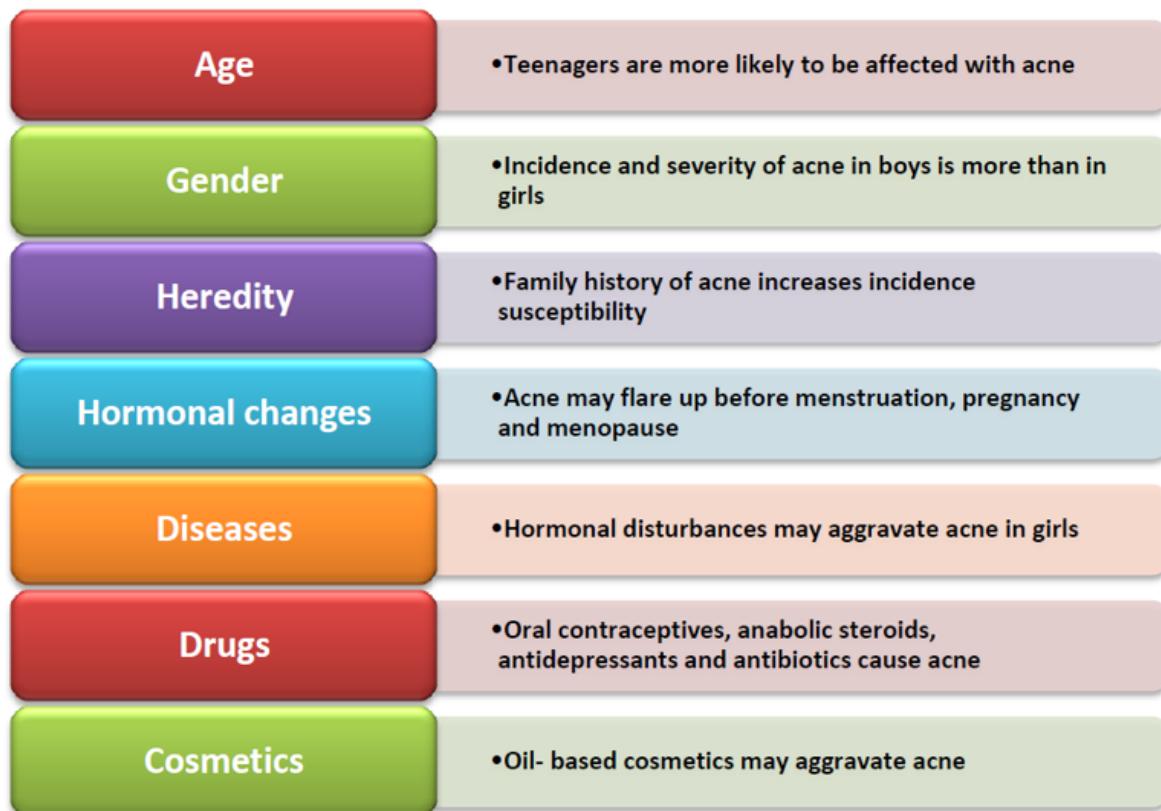


Figure 1. Predisposing factors of *Acne vulgaris*.

Acne treatment aims to control existing lesions, prevent permanent scarring as far as possible, limit the duration of the disorder, minimize morbidity and guard against the formation of new acne lesions. Anti-acne drugs may act by normalization of follicular keratinization, thus suppressing sebum production. Others exert antibacterial action against *Cutibacterium acnes*, alleviating inflammation and, through the antioxidant effect, reducing oxidation of sebum, which favors the growth of *C. acnes*. Conventional acne treatment involves topical alone or in combination with systemic therapies in severe cases. Topically used agents include comedolytic agents, antibiotics, and various anti-inflammatory drugs. Systemically used agents include retinoids, antibiotics, zinc, and hormones [8]. Topical treatment is the standard for most patients with comedo-papular acne; however, local and systemic treatments are needed for pustulocystic scarring acne [9]. Drawbacks of conventional therapy include increased antibiotic resistance in acne-causing bacteria (*C. acnes* and *S. epidermidis*) [9]. Moreover, the increased incidence of pregnant women exposed to oral tretinoin, a known teratogen [10], and the poor safety profile of systemic retinoid therapy [9,11].

Herbal therapy of acne has been encouraged due to the advantages of better patient tolerance, long history of use, fewer side effects, and being relatively more cost-effective. Many herbs with a history of use in traditional cultures have entered the growing ‘cosmeceuticals’ market. The efficacy of herbs used in acne treatment is due to their

antibacterial activity and their influence on sebum activity, inflammation, and hyperkeratinization associated with acne. This review aspires to provide up-to-date evidence on medicinal plants and the phytoconstituents used in acne treatment.

2. Materials and Methods

The data presented in this review were assembled from several databases, including PubMed, Wiley Online Library, Elsevier and Web of Science Core Collection, and digital search platforms. The search terms were *Acne vulgaris*, acne, anti-acne, *C. acnes*, skin diseases, medicinal plants, herbal medicines, phytotherapy, Ayurveda, Unani, and Chinese traditional medicine. Additionally, the reference lists of articles were reviewed for additional relevant studies.

3. Results and Discussion

Many efforts have been made to study medicinal herbs' anti-acne activity and investigate the phytoconstituents responsible for that activity. The following part compiles the medicinal plants used in acne treatment, classified according to the class of their active constituents.

3.1. Phenolic compounds.

Phenolic and polyphenolic constituents contribute to vital processes of plant physiology. Phenolic compounds demonstrate activity against *C. acnes* via their antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anti-inflammatory properties, thus exhibiting an anti-acne effect. Table 1 summarizes studies on herbs containing anti-acne phenolic compounds and their mode of anti-acne action.

Table 1. Herbs containing anti-acne phenolic constituents.

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Aloe barbadensis Miller</i>	Aloe vera	Leaf gel	Applied topically to treat skin ailments, seborrheic dermatitis, psoriasis Vulgaris, genital herpes, skin burns, and <i>Acne vulgaris</i>	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial, Anti-acne effect in vivo	Aloin and emodin	[12-17]
<i>Aloe ferox Mill.</i>	Bitter aloe Cape aloe	Leaves and roots	Applied topically or ingested to treat eczema, dermatitis, and acne	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	Aloe-emodin, aloin A, Aloesin	[18-20]
<i>Arctium lappa L.</i>	Edible burdock	Root, seed	Topical remedy for skin problems such as eczema, acne, and psoriasis	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	Lappaol F, and diarctigenin	[21-23]
<i>Artocarpus hirsutus Lam.</i>	Wild jack	Stem bark	Skin diseases including hydrocele, pimple, heal sores, cracks in the skin	Antimicrobial	Pyranocycloartobiloxa-nthone A, and artonine E	[24]
<i>Artocarpus integer (Thunb.) Merr.</i>	Cempedak	Root	Skin diseases as antimicrobial	Antimicrobial	Artocarpin ,cudraflavone C and artocarpanone	[25]
<i>Berberis vulgaris L.</i>	Barberry	Root, fruit	Eliminate inflammation orally and topically. It's used to treat skin diseases	Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne (in vivo)	Anthocyanins,Flavonoid	[26-30]
<i>Caesalpinia sappan L.</i>	Brazil or sappan wood	Heartwood	Skin diseases Anti-acne	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory	Brazilin, sappanchalcone, protosappanin a, protosappanin c, protosappanin d, protosappanin e, sappanone b	[31,32]
<i>Camellia sinensis L.</i>	Green Tea	Leaves	Protection and moisturization of the skin and hair	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne in vivo, Antioxidant, 5 α-reductase inhibitory	Epigallocatechin-3-gallate EGCG, EC, GCG, ECG, EGC, and GA,	[33-39]

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Carthamus tinctorius L.</i>	Safflower	Flower	Used to heal old wounds. Moisturer in skin crèmes and lotions	Anti-acne in vivo, Antioxidant	Flavonoids	[40-42]
<i>Casuarina equisetifolia L.</i>	Ironwood	Bark	Astringent, lotion for swelling	Anti-acne In vivo, Antioxidant activity	Catechin, ellagic acid, gallic acid, querectin and lupeol, coumaroyl triterpenes, d-gallocatechin and tannins	[43-45]
<i>Curcuma longa L.</i>	Turmeric	Rhizome	Alleviating skin inflammation, used as a paste for skin eruptions and infections	Anti-acne In vivo, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Curcumin, demethoxycurcumin, bisdemethoxycurcumin	[14,31,46-48]
<i>Eisenia bicyclis (Kjellman) Setchell</i>	Sea oak	-	-	Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	Phlorotannin: fucofuroeckol-A	[49,50]
<i>Embelia ribes Burm F.</i>	Vidanga	Fruit	Dyeing hairs, good pimple remover, treating Acne, treating carbuncle infections, treating vitiligo and leucoderma	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Anti-lipase	Tanninspara-benzoquinone: embelin	[51-54]
<i>Emblica officinalis L.</i>	Amla or indian gooseberry	Fruit	Acne and other skin disorders	Anti-acne In vivo, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Gallic acid, methylgallate, corilagin, furosin, and geraniin	[55-59]
<i>Epimedium brevicornum Maxim</i>	Horny goat weed	Herb		Antimicrobial	Icariin (flavonol)	[60]
<i>Eucalyptus maculata Hook.</i>	Eucalyptus	Leaf	Wounds, ulcers of the skin	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	2', 6'-dihydroxy-3'-methyl-4'-methoxy-dihydrochalcone, eucalyptin and 8-desmethyl-eucalyptin,	[61,62]
<i>Excoecaria cochinchinensis Lour.</i>	Chinese Croton, jungle fire	Leaf	-	Antimicrobial	Phenolic compounds, gallic acid	[63]
<i>Grevillea flanaganii H. Bolus</i>	Kei bottlebrush	Leaf	-	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	(3S)-4-hydroxyphenethyl 3-hydroxy-5-phenylpentanoate, 2',4',6' trihydroxydihydrochalcone, 2',6',4-trihydroxy-4'-methoxydihydrochalcone, 2',6"-dihydroxy-4'-methoxydihydrochalcone, 5,7-dihydroxyflavanone [(2S)-pinocembrin], 2',6"-dihydroxy-4',4-dimethoxydihydrochalcone, (2R,3 R)-3,,5,7-trihydroxy-3-O-acetylflavanone	[64]
<i>Garcinia mangostana L.</i>	Mangosteen	Fruit rind	Eczema, hyperkeratosis, and other skin disorders such as psoriasis and wounds	Antimicrobial, Anti-acne In vivo	Alpha-mangostin	[65,66]
<i>Intsia palembanica Miq.</i>	Merbau	Wood	Skin whitening activity	Anti-lipase	Fustin, ampelopsin & 4'-dehydroxyrobinol	[67]
<i>Iris ensata Thunb.</i>	Irsa Irsa	Root	Cosmetic preparations for skin roughness and aging	Anti-acne effect In vivo, Antioxidant	Flavonoids and phenolics	[15,68-70]
<i>Kaempferia pandurata (Roxb.)</i>	Fingerroot Chinese ginger	Rhizome	-	Antimicrobial	Panduratin A and isopanduratin A	[71]
<i>Lavendula stoechas L.</i>	French lavender	Flower	Various inflammatory diseases	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Caffeic acid, quercetin, lutelin, rosmarinic acid	[72-76]
<i>Lens culinaris Medik.</i>	Lentil	Seed	Topically applied for the treatment of skin infections and burns as traditional medicine	Anti-acne In vivo, Anti-inflammatory Antioxidant	Flavonoids and condensed tannins	[77-79]
<i>Magnolia sp.</i>		Stem bark	-	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory	Honokiol and magnolol,	[80]
<i>Mangifera indica L.</i>	Mango	Seed Kernel	Decoction of the kernel has been used to treat infectious wounds, ulcers	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Gallic acid	[81]
<i>Morus alba L.</i>	white mulberry	Cortex Stem		Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Polyphenols	[82-85]
<i>Morus nigra L.</i>	Black Mulberry	Fruit		Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Tannin, flavonoids	[86]

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Myristica fragrans</i> (Houtt.)	Nutmeg	Seed	-	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory	(+)-Erythro- Δ^8 -7S,8R-dihydroxy-3,3,5'-trimethoxy-8-O-4'-neolignan (+)-Erythro- Δ^8 -7-hydroxy-3,4,3',5'-tetramethoxy-8-O-4-neolignan Erythro- Δ^8 -7-acetoxy-3,4,3',5'-tetramethoxy-8-O-4'-neolignan	[87]
<i>Olea europaea</i> Linn.	Common Olive	Leave	Gentle care and treatment of the skin	Anti-acne effect In vivo, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Flavonoids including luteolin and apigenin derivatives.	[15,88-90]
<i>Plumbago indica</i> L.	Scarlett Leadwort	Root	It is used for wound healing, tinea versicolor, and ringworm	Antimicrobial	Plumbagin, 3,3'-biplumbagin and elliptinone.	[91]
<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i> Sieb. et Zucc	Japanese knotweed	Rhizome	-	Antimicrobial, Anti-acne effect In vivo	Resveratrol	[60,92]
<i>Psidium guajava</i> L.	Guava	Leaf	Oral antibacterial drugs to manage surgical, skin, and soft tissue infections	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Quercetin quercetin-3-O-glucopyranoside Morin	[93-95]
<i>Punica granatum</i> L.	Pomegranate	Fruit peel	Inflammation-related diseases	Anti-bacterial, Anti-lipase, Anti-inflammatory	Punicalagin, punicalin, strictinin a, granatin b	[17,96]
<i>Pulsatilla koreana</i> (Yabe ex Nakai) Nakai ex T. Mori	Korean Pasque Flower	Root	Skin-whitening effect	Antimicrobial	Pulsquinone, hydropulsquinone, and structurally related 1,4-quinone derivatives	[97]
<i>Quercus acutissima</i> Carr.	Sawtooth oak	Cortex	Skin disorders	5 α -reductase inhibitor	Tetragalloyl glucose, pentagalloyl glucose, eugeniin, 1-desgalloyl eugeniin, casuarinin, castalagin, stenophyllanin C, (-)-epicatechin gallate, and (-)-epigallocatechin gallate	[98]
<i>Rheum ribes</i> L.	Rhubarb	Root	Strong astringent in China to treat inflammation-related	Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	Rhein, emodin, chrysophanol	[99-101]
<i>Rhinacanthus nasutus</i> L.	snake jasmine	Leaf	Treatment of Tinea versicolor, ringworm, pruritic rash, abscess pain, and skin diseases	Antimicrobial	Rhinacanthins-rich extract	[102]
<i>Rubia cordifolia</i> L.	Common Madder	Root	Skin diseases associated with edema and oozing	Anti-acne In vivo antimicrobial activity	Anthraquinone	[77,103]
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> L.	Rosemary	Herb	Reduce swelling and puffiness of the skin. Burns	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Rosmarinic acid	[104-106]
<i>Schisandra chinensis</i> Turkz. (Baill.)	Magnolia-Vine	Fruits	Skin diseases, such as atopic dermatitis, photoaging, and hair loss	Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	Lignans: schisandrin A, schisandrin B, and schisandrin C	[107]
<i>Scutellaria baicalensis</i> Georgi.	Asian skullcap,	Root	Skin disorders	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne in vivo	Baicalein, oroxylin A, wogonin, 7-O-methylwogonin, skullcapflavone II, 5,7,4'-trihydroxy-8-methoxyflavone, viscidulin II, and ganhuangnin	[108-112]
<i>Terminalia chebula</i> Retz.	Chebulic myrobalan	Fruit	Skin disease, wound healer	Antimicrobial, Anti-lipase, Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne effect in vivo	Chebulagic acid	[14,53,113-115]
<i>Terminalia arjuna</i> (Roxb.) Wight & Arn.	Arjun	Stem bark	Wound healing, acne	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, anti-acne effect in vivo	Flavonoids	[14,116-118]
<i>Terminalia laxiflora</i> (Engl. & Diels)	Heartwood	Wood	Alleviate rheumatic pain, moisturize skin and cause general body relaxation in addition to other cosmetic and medicinal uses	Antimicrobial, Anti-lipase, Antioxidant	Ellagic acid, flavogallonic acid dilactone, terchebulin and gallic acid	[119]

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Roscoe	Ginger	Rhizome	Dermatitis	Antioxidant, Anti-acne in vivo, Anti-inflammatory	Gingerols and shogaols	[48,56,120-124]

3.2. Terpenoids and steroids

Terpenoids represent the largest and most diverse group of naturally occurring plant secondary metabolites. The role of terpenoids in acne may be due to their antibacterial activity against *Cutibacterium acnes*, anti-oxidant or anti-inflammatory activity. Table 2 summarizes herbs containing anti-acne terpenoids, steroids, and their reported mode of action.

Table 2. Herbs containing anti-acne terpenoid constituents.

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Boswellia serrata</i> Roxb.	Indian olibanum tree	Kundur Oleo-Gum-Resin	Skin and blood diseases	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory	Beta-boswellic acid 3-acetyl-beta-boswellic acid, 11-keto-beta-boswellic acid, 3-acetyl-11-keto-beta-boswellic acid	[15,125-128]
<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> Blume	Ceylon cinnamon	Bark	Inflammatory disorders	Antimicrobial Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory	Cinnamaldehyde and eugenol	[129-131]
<i>Citrus aurantium</i> L.	Bitter Orange	Peel		anti-inflammatory Antimicrobial	Farnesol	[132]
<i>Citrus reticulata</i> Blanco	Mandarin	Peel	Reduce cellulite, stretch marks, scars	Antimicrobial	D-Limonene	[133]
<i>Commiphora mukul</i> Hook.	Guggul	Oleo-gum resin of the stem bark	Inflammatory diseases	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Triterpenes, myrrhanol A, myrrhanone A	[134-136]
<i>Eriobotrya Japonica</i> (Thunb.) Lindl.	Loquat	Leaf	Inflammatory disorders	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory	Triterpenoids: ursolic acid, oleanolic acid, methyl corosolate, maslinic acid, corosolic acid, pomolic acid, tormentic acid, euscaphic acid	[105,137,138]
<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> Labill.	Blue Eucalyptus	Leaf	Wounds, ulcers of the skin	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-lipogenic	1,8-Cineole γ -terpinene, α -pinene, ρ -cymene	[139-141]
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> L.	Liquorice	Rhizome	Anti-inflammatory	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Hormone balancing	Glycyrrhizic acid	[10,17,33,105, 142-144]
<i>Hemidesmus indicus</i> R. Br.	Indian sarsaparilla	Root	Depurative and tonic that is used to treat patients with chronic skin disease	Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Terpenoids	[14,46,145-148]
<i>Lavendula stoechas</i> L.	French lavender	Flower	Various inflammatory diseases.	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Camphor, fenchone	[72-76]
<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i> L.	Chamomile	Leaf, flower head	Anti-inflammatory and antiseptic	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-androgen Anti-inflammatory	Bis-abolol oxide A, camazulene, o-cimene, α -farnesene, spathulenol	[98,149,150]
<i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i> (Maiden & Betche)	Tea tree	Leaf	Topical application to treat bruises, insect bites, and skin infections	Anti-acne in vivo, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Terpinen-4-ol, α -terpineol, α -pinene	[151-156]
<i>Momordica charantia</i> L.	Bitter melon	Fruit leaf	Applied locally in case of chronic skin diseases and to treat burns, boils, and rashes	Anti-inflammatory	Phytol and lutein from fruit B-ionone from leaves	[157,158]
<i>Nostoc commune</i> Vauch	Star jelly		-	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory	Nostocionone, nostocionone derivative	[159]
<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> L.	Sweet Basil	Leaf	Wounds, acne, and vitiligo	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Neral, citral, α -humulene, β -caryophyllene, linalool, and germacrene-d	[160-163]
<i>Olea europaea</i> L.	Common Olive	Leaf	Gentle care and treatment of the skin	Anti-inflammatory Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Iridoid monoterpenes including oleuropein, oleurosides, triterpenes; oleanolic and maslinic acid	[15,88-90]

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Origanum vulgare L.</i>	Oregano	Leaf	-	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory	Thymol	[164,165]
<i>Picrorrhiza kurroa Royle ex Benth</i>	Kutki	Rhizome	<i>Acne vulgaris</i> and acne rosacea associated with acneiform postulation	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Picroside-I and picroside-II	[166-168]
<i>Pinus densiflora (Sieb. Et Zucc)</i>	Japanese red pine	Cones	Cosmetic formulation With anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and anti-proliferative-effects on cancer cells	Antimicrobial	9 Labdane-type diterpenes	[169]
<i>Prumnopitys andina Poepp. Ex Endl.</i>	Chilean plum yew	Stem bark		Antimicrobial	Abietane diterpene, 2-acetoxyferruginol	[170]
<i>Psidium guajava L.</i>	Guava	Leaf	Oral antibacterial drugs to manage surgical, skin, and soft tissue infections	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	α -pinene	[93,94]
<i>Psoralea corylifolia L.</i>	Buguchi	Fruit	The inflammatory diseases, mucomembranous disorders, dermatitis, and edematous conditions of the skin	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Bakuchiol, α meroterpene	[171-173]
<i>Rabdosia rosthornii (Diels) Hara</i>	Isodon	Leaves	Pyrexia, edema and abdominal distention	Antimicrobial	Ent-kaurene diterpenoids, namely, rosthornins A-D	[174]
<i>Rosa damascena Mill.</i>	Damask rose	Flower	Toner for oily skin, prone to acne	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Geraniols, β -citronellol nonadecane nerol	[72,175-177]
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis L.</i>	Rosemary	Herb	Reduce swelling and puffiness of the skin, burns	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Carnosol, carnosic acid, and rosmarinic acid	[104-106]
<i>Salviae multiorrhizae Bunge</i>	Danshen	Root	Acne, psoriasis, eczema, and other skin conditions	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial 5 α reductase inhibition	Diterpene quinone (tanshinone) cryptotanshinone	[40,178-180]
<i>Sapindus mukorossi Gaertn</i>	Indian soapberry	Fruit pericarp	Whitening and freckle-removing ability when used as a face wash	Antimicrobial Lipase and tyrosinase inhibitor	Four oleanane-type triterpenoid saponin. Sapindoside A and B	[181,182]
<i>Solanum melongena L.</i>	Eggplant	Fruit		Suppressed lipogenesis, Follicular dyskeratosis normalization, Anti-inflammatory	Lupeol	[183]
<i>Sophora flavescens Ait.</i>	Shrubby sophora	Radix	Eczema, inflammatory disorders, ulcers and skin burns	Antimicrobial, 5 α reductase inhibition	Lupeol	[184,185]
<i>Syzygium aromaticum L.</i>	Clove	Flower buds	Antimicrobial	Anti-inflammatory	Eugenol eugenyl acetate, β -caryophyllene	[186]
<i>Syzygium jambos L.</i>	Rose apple	Leaf	Acne	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Anacardic acid analogue, ursolic acid	[187]
<i>Vetiveria zizanoides L.</i>	Vetiver grass	Root	Sense of heat and dermatoses	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Valerenol valerenal β -Cadinene	[188-191]
<i>Withania somnifera L.</i>	Ashwagandha	Root	Skin diseases	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Glycowithanolides identified as sitoindosides VII-X and withaferin A	[14,192-194]

3.3. Alkaloids.

Alkaloids are a major class of phytoconstituents and have been well studied for acne treatment (Table 3). Berberine has been reported to exhibit antimicrobial activity against *Cutibacterium acnes*, *Staphylococcus* spp., and decrease lipogenesis by sebaceous glands in hamsters [195].

Table 3. Herbs containing anti-acne alkaloids.

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Achillea millefolium</i> L.	Yarrow	Flowering tops	Acute eczema, burn, bruise, wounds, ulcerations, varicose ulcers, cracks, breast fissure, abscess, impetigo, tinea, leucorrhea	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	An Alkamide: N-(21-hydroxy-21-(piperidin-1-yl) henicos-17, 19-diy-1-yl) acetamide.	[10,196,197]
<i>Berberis vulgaris</i> L.	Barberry	Root, fruit	Topically used for skin diseases	Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne in vivo	Berberine	[26-30]
<i>Coptis chinensis</i> HuangLian	Chinese goldthread	Root	Severe skin and inflammation-related diseases	Anti-lipogenic, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Berberine	[142,198-200]
<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i> L.	Goldenseal	Root	Wounds, and local inflammation	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Berberine	[201-203]
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i> (Pursh) Nutt.	Oregon grape	Root	Various skin inflammatory conditions, psoriasis	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory	Protoberberine, berberine and jatrorrhizine	[204-206]

3.4. Fatty acids.

Sebum secretion is one of the main factors of acne pathogenesis. Quantitative and qualitative alterations have been observed in sebum from acne patients. The C16:0/C16:1 ratio in the skin surface triglycerides and wax esters is higher in acne patients. It has been suggested that the desaturation of fatty acids may play a major role in sebogenesis and acne onset. It has been reported that linoleic acid is effective in acne treatment. In a double-blind placebo-controlled randomized cross-over study, topically applied linoleic acid significantly affected the size of follicular casts and microcomedones [207,208]. Therefore, plants containing linoleic acid may be used in acne treatment. Table 4 summarizes herbs containing fatty acids and their reported mode of action.

Table 4. Herbs containing anti-acne fatty acids.

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Olea europaea</i> Linn.	Common olive	Oil	Gentle care and treatment of the skin	Anti-acne effect in vivo Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Glycerides of oleic, linoleic, palmitic, and stearic acids	[15,88-90]
<i>Papaver somniferum</i> L.	Poppy seeds	Seeds	Reduce skin inflammation scalp infections and promotes overall skin and hair health	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Triglycerides, including linoleic, oleic, and palmitic acids	[129,209,210]
<i>Prunus japonica</i> Thunb.	Japanese bush cherry	Seed		Antimicrobial	Linoleic acid	[211]

3.5. Miscellaneous constituents.

Some plants have been studied for their anti-acne activity due to their antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, anti-androgen, and antioxidant activities. Their constituents belong to different chemical classes; these herbs are summarized in table 5; all these have anti-acne activities due to various constituents.

Table 5. Herbs containing miscellaneous anti-acne constituents.

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
<i>Achyranthes aspera</i> L.	Prickly chaff flower	Seeds	<i>Acne vulgaris</i> , eruptions of the skin, boils, scabies, and other skin diseases	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-androgen	Oleanolic acid glycosides, Betaine, achyranthine, hemiacetone, ecdysterone, achyranthes saponins A, B, C, D	[212-215]
<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	Onion	Fruit	Topically for reducing the appearance of scars	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Thiosulfonates: MeS(O)S 1-propenyl (E,Z); n-PrS(O)S	[216,217]

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
					1-propenyl-(E); n-PrS(O)S 1-propenyl-(Z); trans-zwiebelane; n-PrS(O)CHEtSS-1propenyl; 1-propenylS(O)CHEtSS1-propenyl	
<i>Anemarrhena asphodeloides</i> Bunge	Jimō	Rhizome	Anti-inflammatory	5α-reductase inhibitor, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Timosaponin BIII (TBIII) and trans-hinokiresinol (<i>t</i> -HL)	[218-221]
<i>Andrographis paniculata</i> (Burm.f.) Nees	Chiraita	Leaf	Skin infections	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-androgen	Andrographolide (labdane diterpenoid) and echiodinin (polyphenol)	[214,222-226]
<i>Astragalus sarcocolla</i> Dymock.	Anzroot	Manna	Abscesses and curing wounds	Anti-acne effect In vivo	Flavonoids, saponins (astragalosides), polysaccharides, triterpenes, glycosides, fatty acids	[15,214,227]
<i>Azadirachta indica</i> A.Juss.	Neem	Leaf	Acne, psoriasis, eczema, ringworm, and even stubborn warts	Anti-acne In vivo, Anti-inflammatory, Antimicrobial	Azadirachtin, nimbin, nimbidin, nimbolide, and limonoids quercetin and -β-sitosterol	[228-231]
<i>Calendula officinalis</i> L.	Calendula	Flower heads	Bruised or damaged skin. Also traditionally used for the care of varicose veins.	Antioxidant, Antimicrobial, Anti-fibrotic, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Triterpenoids, flavonoids, coumarins, quinones, volatile oil, carotenoids	[232-236]
<i>Cassia alata</i> L.	Candle bush	Leaf	Skin diseases like eczema, including rough skin, blisters, inflammation, itchiness, and bleeding	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-acne in vivo	Flavones, flavonols, flavonoids glycosides, alatinon, alanonol and β-sitosterol-β-d-glucoside	[228,237-239]
<i>Codonopsis pilosula</i> (Franch.) Nannf.	Dangshen	Root	Tonic	Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory	Polyacetylenes, phenylpropanoids, alkaloids triterpenoids	[240-242]
<i>Cyperus rotundus</i> L.	Nagarmootha	Rhizome	Dermatitis and other skin disorders.	Anti-acne In vivo, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Alkaloids, furochromones, glycerol, fatty oils, linolenic acid, myristic acid, nootkatone, starch, saponins, sesquiterpenes, cyperol sitosterol, stearic acid, terpenoids, polyphenol, and valencene	[243-245]
<i>Glehnia littoralis</i> Fr. Schmidtex ex Miq.	Beach silvertop	Root	-	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory	Coumarins, coumarin glycosides and polyacetylenes	[246-249]
<i>Humulus lupulus</i> L.	Hop	Flower	Healing wounds and skin infections	Antimicrobial, Antioxidant	Xanthohumol, lupulones & humulones	[250]
<i>Impatiens balsamina</i> L.	Rose balsam	Leaf	Warts and snakebite	Antimicrobial	Flavonoids like kaempferol and quercetin lawsone, lawsone methyl ether, and methylene-3,30-bilawsone	[251,252]
<i>Juglans regia</i> L.	Walnut	Walnut seed husk	Externally, the seeds are pulverized into a paste and applied as a poultice to areas of dermatitis and eczema	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	Hydrolysable tannins and naphtoquinones, naphthalenones, α-tetralones, and α-tetralone dimers, hydroxybenzoic acids, hydroxycinnamic acids, flavonoids, diarylheptanoids, ceramides, alkanes, steroids, triterpenoids, sesquiterpenes, and neolignans	[253-255]
<i>Mitchella repens</i> L.	Partridge berry	Leaf	Astringent skin wash.	Hormone-balancing herbs	NA	[10]
<i>Myrtus communis</i> L.	Myrtle	Leaf	Topical disinfectant, astringent, vaginal douch, and mouth gargles	Antimicrobial	5-Acetoxy-4-hydroxy-4-isobutyl-2,2,6,6-tetramethylcyclohexan-1,3-dione, β-sitosterol, isomyrtucommulone-B, endoperoxide-G-3-hormone, gallic acid, myricetin-3-O-	[47]

Herb	Common names	Part used	Traditional uses	Reported biological activities	Active constituents	Ref.
					α -l-rhamnoside, myricetin-3-O- β -d-glucoside, myricetin-3-O- β -d-galactoside-6''-O-gallate	
<i>Phelodendron chinense</i> Schneid. or <i>Phelodendron amurense</i> Rupr.	Cortex Phelodendri	Cortex	Acne	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne In vivo	Alkaloids (berberine, palmatine, and jatrorrhizine), isoquinoline alkaloid, limonoids, phenolic acid, quinic acid, lignans, and quercetin	[105,256-259]
<i>Rauwolfia serpentina</i> L. Benth. ex Kurz.	Indian Snakeroot	Root	Acne and skin diseases	Anti-acne activity	Alkaloids (reserpine, ajmaline, serpentine), phenolics, flavonoids	[260,261]
<i>Rhodomyrtus tomentosa</i> (Aiton.)	Australia Murta	Leaf	Abscesses, skin-whitening, anti-aging and skin beautifying agents.	Antimicrobial, Anti-acne in-vivo	Rhodomyrtone	[262,263]
<i>Salmania malabarica</i> Schott	Shalmali	Aerial parts	Various skin troubles, especially paste of thorns, work out on <i>Acne vulgaris</i>	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant	β - Sitosterol, β - sitosterol glycoside, hentriacontane, hentriacontanol, quercetin and kaempferol	[264-266]
<i>Sargassum macrocarpum</i> C.Agardh	Marine brown alga			Antimicrobial	Sargafurran	[267]
<i>Saussurea lappa</i> Clarke	Costus or Kuth root	Root	Inflammatory skin diseases	Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne in vivo	Costunolide, dehydrocostus lactone, cynaropirin, lappadilactone, germacrenes	[238,268-270]
<i>Serenoa repens</i> (W. Bartram)	Saw palmetto	Fruit	-	Anti-androgen, Anti-inflammatory, Anti-acne In vivo	Flavonoid, phosphoglycerides plant sterols and fatty acids, mainly lauric acid	[271-273]
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> (Weber) ex Wigg	Dandelion	Leaf and root	Boils, blisters	Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antimicrobial	Butyrolactones, butanoates namely taraxiroside A-F	[274-278]
<i>Tinospora cordifolia</i> (Willd.) Hook.f.and Thoms.	Heartleaf moonseed	Root	Skin diseases	Anti-acne In vivo, Antioxidant	Alkaloids, terpenoids, lignans, steroids	[279,280]
<i>Verbena spp.</i>	Vervain	Flower top	Inflammatory disorders, skinburns, abrasions	Antimicrobial, Anti-lipase, Antioxidant, Anti-inflammatory	NA	[281-283]
<i>Vitex agnus castus</i> L.	Chasteberry	Fruit	Mild skin rash; increased acne	Anti-acne	Sabinene, 1, 8-cineole, α -pinene. flavonoids (casticin, luteolin, apigenin) iridoid glycosides (agnuside and aucubin diterpenes (vitexilactone, rotundifuran, vitetritofolin D) diterpene lactam (vitex lactam A), and fatty acids (linoleic and oleic acid)	[5,284,285]
<i>Vitex negundo</i> L.	Chinese chaste- tree	Leaves	Skin diseases	Anti-acne In vivo, Antimicrobial, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Anti-androgen	Negundoside, agnuside, vitegnoside, 7,8 dimethyl herbacetin 3-rhamnoside, flavonoids, volatile constituents: viridiflorol, β -caryophyllene, sabinene, 4-terpineol, γ -terpinene, caryophyllene oxide, 1-octen-3-ol, globulol	[286-290]

4. Conclusion

Conventional treatment of acne has been used for a long time. The extensive use of antibiotics led to the emergence of resistance in acne-related pathogens. Isotretinoin is effective in all stages of acne pathogenesis, yet it demonstrates various adverse effects and is teratogenic. Moreover, the high cost of conventional treatment of acne presents another drawback. Herbal

medicine has been used effectively since ancient times in acne treatment. The efficacy of such herbs is not only due to their anti-bacterial activity but also their influence on androgenicity, increased sebum activity, inflammation, and hyperkeratinization associated with acne.

Based on the above data, it could be deduced that the class of phenolic constituents demonstrated the highest anti-acne potential among the investigated phytoconstituents. The terpenoids followed this class, demonstrating promising activity against acne and acting by different mechanisms. As for the alkaloids, berberine was the most prominent from various plants with an anti-acne effect.

Many herbs with a history of use in traditional cultures have entered the growing ‘cosmeceuticals’ market due to the advantages of better patient tolerance, long history of use, fewer side effects, and being relatively more cost-effective. Herbal extracts may be used alone or as adjuvants. Novel drug delivery systems such as microemulsion, liposomal, and nano-formulations can improve the drug delivery of herbal extracts or oil to reduce their associated side effects. This creates extensive interest in developing such formulations, thus flourishing the pharmaceutical industry.

The present review provides extensive and updated research on the anti-acne properties of medicinal plants and their phytoconstituents. This work provides a useful bibliography for further preclinical and clinical investigations and encourages the pharmaceutical industry to invest in the natural treatment of acne projects.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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