

Media contacts:
Saint Louis Zoo (314) 781-0900
Janet Powell, ext. 233; Christy Childs, ext. 239

(314) 781-0900
fax (314) 647-7969

www.stlzoo.org

Jeffrey P. Bonner, Ph.D.
President & CEO

MEDICINAL PLANT GARDEN **Saint Louis Zoo's Orthwein Animal Nutrition Center**

Five plots in this garden show different examples of how animals use wild plants to heal themselves:

Reproductive effects -- Many plants play a key role in animal breeding.

Certain species of tropical hornbills switch to high-fat fruits just before mating season, possibly helping to trigger reproduction.

Various butterflies rely on the alkaloids in certain plants to produce reproductive hormones.

Digestive tract effects -- Eating rough grasses can help with digestive problems.

House cats chew on grass to help them vomit up hair balls or clean their gut of intestinal parasites.

Skin care -- Many animals rub various plants onto their fur, skin or feathers to relieve or cure skin ailments.

Have you ever used Aloe vera extract on an itch or burn?

Anti-parasitic effects -- Birds often weave fresh plant matter into their nests to "fumigate" against parasites.

Some birds of prey do this only when their eggs are due to hatch, thereby protecting their chicks.

Well-being -- Plants are the source of many natural painkillers. *Salicin* from willow bark is the origin of aspirin.

Small wonder that chimpanzees in Africa suck on similar plants to relieve headaches and other body pain.