

AT HOME WITH HERBS



AN INTRODUCTION TO USING 45 COMMON HERBS
AND SPICES FOR HEALTH, COOKING,
GARDENING AND SKINCARE

Nikki Darrell

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The secret of health for both mind and body is not to mourn for the past, worry about the future, or anticipate troubles, but to live in the present moment wisely and earnestly.

Buddha

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Chapter 1



MAKING MEDICINE

Food Medicine

One of the simplest and oldest ways of using herbs is to eat them as food. Hippocrates said let your food be your medicine and your medicine be your food; well, we can really do this with herbs. Dieting on herbs is a most excellent form of preventative medicine, a way of connecting properly with our environment, making ourselves more aligned with nature, part of nature. Herbs are full of all sorts of nutriment which are anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, immune system and tissue building, cleansing and tonic to the blood, clearing for the liver and much more besides. Studies are emerging that show that forage foods, and including good quantities of herbs and spices in the diet are preventative and curative for most of the ills of Western culture such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, chronic inflammatory disease in general. Kids love the frisson of preparing food from 'weeds' and wild plants. Many of our most valuable native and naturalized plants can be included in the diet easily and are much easier to grow than the cultivars that we tend to eat; they are fresher, in season, totally local and really flavoursome. For inspiration explore the recipes in the monographs at the end of the book.

Teas, tisanes or infusions are probably the next oldest way of using herbs, and definitely one of the easiest ways of using them. They are generally prepared from leaves, flowers, aerial parts and some seeds, either fresh or dried; they can also be prepared from powders of harder plant parts such as roots, barks and seeds. Teas will mainly extract the water-soluble components of the plant. If you are using an aromatic (one containing essential oil) plant use a teapot, or place a sauce over the cup whilst infusing. Always use freshly boiled water. Some plants are used as a substitute for tea and up to 5 cups can be safely consumed in a day. However, I would recommend that if being used in this way a maximum number per day would be 3-4 for any single herb, and to use a variety of herbs from day to day, or during the day rather than just one (unless you are dieting with a particular plant to get to know it better). Some herbs are much stronger in their action, not really suited for recreation use, and should be taken less times in the day.

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The standard way to prepare a tea is to use 1 tsp dried herb or 2 tsp fresh herb (or mixture of herbs) for a one cup dose; pour on boiling water and allow to infuse for 5-10 minutes. If you are preparing a pot use 20g dried herb or 30g fresh herb to 500 ml water. Infusions can be stored in a covered container in the fridge for up to 24 hours. They may also be made in a thermos flask and stored in this for 24 hours. Not everyone like 'bits' of herb floating in their tea so there are several ways of avoiding this:

- Strain them off with a tea strainer
- Use a stainless steel tea ball, available in healthfood shops or speciality tea shops
- Use a bombilla (a perforated straw made from bamboo or silver and used by Argentinian cowboys for drinking their mate tea (some speciality tea shops have these)
- Make your tea in a cafetière. There are one cup sizes of these or larger. If you do this reserve the cafetière for making herb teas to avoid a faint coffee taint to the taste of your tea
- There are also tea pots with inbuilt strainers that you place the herbs into sold in tea and coffee shops

Do not add milk as this may bind some of the active constituents. Try to take without sweetening to get the best benefits of the taste stimulation of the nerves in the mouth, but if necessary add a small amount of honey or apple juice concentrate.

Cold infusions are used for herbs containing large amounts of mucilage e.g. *Althea officinalis*, linseed, psyllium. Aromatic herbs, those containing significant amounts of essential oil, are sometimes also extracted by cold infusion; soaking in cold water for 12 hours, this can be good if a cooling effect is being sought as in making cold *Tilia* infusion to calm hot flushes.

Teas can be prepared from a single species or you can experiment with blending herbs together in a tea; there are some examples in the monographs but this can be an extremely creative process and encourages us to work with taste, smell and the appearance of the tea.

Decoctions are used to prepare harder plant parts such as roots, barks, twigs, berries and seeds that need a stronger extraction method. Decocting is simply simmering in boiling water. The plant material, whether fresh or dried, should be cut or broken into small pieces before simmering to allow maximum extraction. The herbs are placed in a pan, covered with cold water and brought to the boil. They are then simmered for 20 -30 minutes. In Chinese herbal practice the herbs are traditionally decocted until the water volume is reduced by two third, whilst in European herbal medicine the tradition is to reduce by one third for internal use, and two thirds for external use.

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Use 20 g dried herbs or 40 g fresh herb in 750 ml cold water, reduced to about 500 ml by simmering; sufficient for 3-4 doses. The standard dose is 3-4 cups per day (about 500 ml) and decoctions may be stored in a similar way to infusions.

Herbal juices can be purchased, or prepared with a suitable juicer at home. You need to use a wheat grass juicer, rather than the juicers sold for making fruit and vegetable juices. They need to be prepared fresh, or frozen if stored for more than 24 hours. This can be done in ice cube trays. The standard dose for juices is 5-10 ml 2-3 times per day.

Syrups are sometimes prepared as a way of disguising unpalatable herbs for children (of all ages), as a way of preserving herbs, and are particularly useful for sore throats and coughs. Syrups are made by adding 500 ml of prepared infusion (infused for 15 minutes) or decoction (simmered for 30 minutes) to 500 g honey, sugar (use the most whole form you can find such as rappadura), or apple juice concentrate. The liquid and sweetener are gently heated together until the sugar/honey is dissolved and the consistency is syrupy. The mixture is then removed from the heat and cooled. The syrup can then be stored in sterilised jars or bottles with corks. Be aware that they do sometimes ferment and explode, so store with caution! They can be stored for about 6 months (preferably in the fridge), and the standard dose is 5-10 ml 3 times a day. Two classics are elderberry syrup to boost the immune system, and as a gentle laxative at higher doses, and thyme/licorice as a cough remedy (see monographs for recipes). Syrups can also be used as cordial drinks in the winter and used as a food poured over ice cream, stewed fruit, fruit pies and crumbles and other foods..

Herbal vinegars/vinegar tinctures are sometimes used. They are used when minerals are being extracted, or where alcohol is being avoided. The herb is macerated in organic cider vinegar (or other local organic vinegar, depending where you are preparing them).

200g dried herb Or 300g fresh herb, chopped
1 litre organic cider vinegar

Place herbs into a clean jar (sterilize with boiling water, Milton fluid, in a baby bottle sterilizer or a microwave). Pour on the vinegar, ensuring that the herb is covered. Close the jar tightly and label with the date and contents. Shake thoroughly for 1-2 minutes to ensure that the herb is thoroughly soaked in the vinegar. Shake every day for 1-2 minutes for 14 days.

The easiest way to extract the vinegar is by using a wine press. Pour the mixture into the press and collect the liquids in a jug. Press down the material until no more can be extracted. If you do not have a wine press, strain the material through a jelly bag or muslin bag, then squeeze thoroughly, wearing food preparation gloves to

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prevent contamination. If you are preparing smaller quantities for home use then place a muslin square in a potato ricer and pour through then fold the muslin over and press down, it makes a great mini herb press.

Pour the pressed vinegar into sterilized jars or bottles and close firmly. Label the bottles clearly with the date and name of the preparation. Vinegars should keep for up to 3 years if stored in a cool, dark place. They can be used medicinally, to flavour food and as cleaning products (e.g. mopping floors, cleaning glass etc.). For medicinal use, the standard dose is 5 ml 3 times daily in a little water or fruit juice for a healthy adult. Medicinal vinegars are particularly useful for extracting mineral rich herbs. Some claim that this method is no good for extracting essential oil rich herbs but I have not found that to be the case.

Macerated or infused oils are made by soaking the herb in a cold pressed unrefined vegetable oil (almond, olive, sunflower are commonly used) for several weeks to obtain a cold infusion or by gently heating to about 60o C over a water bath for about three hours for a hot infusion. Once the maceration process is complete the oil is put through a press to complete the extraction and remove the spent herb. This process extracts the fat-soluble components of the herb for use in massage oils, liniments, creams and ointments. If a stronger preparation is required then the process is sometimes repeated with a fresh batch of herb. They will keep for up to a year if stored in a cool dry place.

Hot method

250g dried or 500g fresh herb

750ml cold pressed virgin and preferably organic vegetable oil (olive oil is the most stable for heating).

Mix the chopped herbs and oil together in a pyrex bowl and place over a pan of boiling water. Cover and simmer gently for 2-3 hours. May also be placed in a slow cooker. Remove from the heat and allow to cool, then pour into a wine press as described for the vinegars, or through a bag. Collect the strained oil in a sterile jug and pour into sterile bottles. Label with date and contents. Store in a cool dark place for up to 1 year.

Cold method

Loosely pack a sterile jar with fresh or dried herb. Herbs with a high water content such as calendula, chickweed, basil or comfrey are best prepared with dried herb, or by the hot method to prevent them going rancid. St. John's wort is best prepared by the cold method. Place the jar on a sunny windowsill or in the hot press and leave for 2-6 weeks. Strain as described for vinegars. Label and stored as described above.

Infused oils may be used for culinary purposes, as massage oils or as the base to prepare ointments and creams.

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Tonic wines have traditionally been prepared as digestifs or aperitifs

100g dried or fresh carminative herbs and 25 g bitter herbs are added to 1 litre of wine and infused by the process described for infused vinegar., but leave for 2-6 weeks. The standard dose is 70 ml before the main meal of the day.

Tinctures are made by soaking, or macerating, the herb in a mixture of alcohol and water for several weeks to dissolve the active constituents. The alcohol facilitates the extraction and also preserves the plant extract for up to 5 years. To prepare them you need a wine press, or very strong hands. Normally one part of herb is added to 5 parts alcohol if dried herb is used, or 1 part to 2 for fresh herbs, but there are some exceptions to these rules and there are as many approaches to tincture making as there are people doing it; Judith Hoad, a traditional herbalist from Donegal, just packs her tincturing jars with herb material and pours over enough vodka to cover them before leaving to macerate whilst other people do very exact measuring of factors such as the water content of the herb, the precise % of alcohol needed and make the whole process extremely scientific or alchemic-it depends what rocks your boat. The % strength of the alcohol solution depends on the plant being extracted and it's constituents; for example if resins are the main constituents (*Commiphora molmol*, Myrrh) then 90% is used, if volatile oils are the main constituents 45% is used and if water soluble constituents are the ones being extracted then 25% is used; having said that Stephen Harrod Buhner recommends 50% alcohol for most plants, whilst in Ireland the strongest proof alcohol the ordinary consumer purchase is 40% so many people just work with that. Some people have developed a whole new creative art around tincturing, for example Joe Nasr uses tincturing or decocting or the preparation of aromatic waters as the first step in tincturing and believes that heat potentiates the process. Probably the best starting place is to use 1:5 parts of dried herb or 1:2 of fresh, use 25% alcohol for plants that contain mainly water soluble constituents and 40% for those requiring more alcohol for extraction. From that starting point you can become as creative as you want to; it is all supposed to be fun, creative and a conversation with the process.

The standard maximum dose for most tinctures is 5 ml 2-3 times per day, but some have a substantially lower dose rate so double check this for any species that you are working with. Also, often a much lower dose is all that is needed, so it makes sense to start with a smaller dose and work up if in doubt.

Some books suggest that if one wishes to remove the alcohol from the tincture dose it can be added to a small wine glassful of boiling water and left to stand for 5 minutes. Unfortunately this will also remove any volatile compounds and does not remove all the alcohol either. If alcohol is to be avoided then it is better to use an alternative preparation, such as an infusion, decoction, vinegar tincture, aromatic water, capsule or juice.

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Fluid extracts are normally prepared by percolation of herbs in an alcohol solution at 1:1; they are significantly stronger than tinctures and used where a higher therapeutic dose is needed. They require specialized equipment to prepare them and are more in the territory of the total enthusiast as regards making at home.

Powdered herbs are an alternative to the liquid forms listed above for internal use. Once a herb is powdered it is more susceptible to oxidation due to the fact that a larger surface area is exposed to the air. This means that powders need to be kept in air tight containers and used before they lose their potency. Powders are a great way to use herbs for adding into food; they can be sprinkled on soups or other foods, added to smoothies, or used to prepare infusions. They can also be used to pack capsules. Capsule fillers are available from various sources online. Capsules suitable for vegans and vegetarians are also available from several suppliers. The standard dose is 2-3 00 capsules twice a day - these contain about 250 mg of herb. The equivalent amount of powdered herb could also be sprinkled on food.

Powders are also used in some external preparations, such as poultices, ointments and creams; these forms of preparations are described below.

Poultices are made with a mixture of fresh, dried or powdered herbs, simmered or simply steeped in the minimum quantity of water for two minutes and applied externally. Marshmallow root powder, green clay, or linseed can be added to give a better texture and for their own drawing qualities, especially for infected wounds, ulcers or boils. Poultices are also used for nerve and muscle pain, sprains and broken bones - in these cases a small pinch of ginger or a couple of drops of ginger oil may be added to 'potentise' the action. Poultices may also be used for mastitis or engorged breasts- either cold cabbage leaves or warm calendula. Try to ensure that only sufficient water is present when simmering or soaking in hot water to form a firm texture without having to squeeze off any liquid; apply some oil to the area being treated to prevent the poultice sticking and the herbs are applied as hot as possible, taking care not to scald the skin. The herbs are laid on lint and covered with gauze, then the poultice is applied gauze side to skin and bandaged in place. It may be left for between 30 minutes and 24 hours, depending on what is being treated.

Compresses are the application of a soft cloth or clean flannel/towel, soaked in an appropriate infusion, decoction or diluted tincture, either hot or cold, depending on what is being treated.

Aromatic waters are also known as hydrosols, hydrolats, distillates, floral waters or flower waters. They are the water phase of steam distillation, saturated with water-soluble volatile components such as alcohols and acids. These have their own therapeutic properties and are widely used on the Continent. Aromatic waters can be prepared from that do not contain any essential oil too; in France and other

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countries on the Continent many rural households will have a small still for preparing this sort of medicine to use at home. Hydrosols are used internally at a similar standard dose to tinctures; they can also be used externally as skin washes, and as ingredients in creams or compresses. They are also used in cooking. **Note** that mixing distilled water and essential oils does not produce the same product.

True essential oils are only produced by distillation, and differ from the **essence** produced in the plant in that some of the constituents will be altered in the process. If the process is carried out correctly this can enhance the therapeutic value of the essential oil e.g. Chamazulene is produced during the distillation of German Chamomile. This is a very important anti-inflammatory substance with a deep blue colour, which is not present in the herb. Conversely bad distillation can cause the production of undesirable components e.g. skin irritant molecules in terpene rich oils. However, therapists may also use essences, produced by cold expression (the preferred method of preparation for oils from citrus rinds), **absolutes** obtained by enfleurage or solvent extraction (though many feel that these should only be used in perfumery), **resinoids** produced by solvent extraction or distillation, **phytols**-a relatively new product produced by a specialised method of extraction, or CO₂ extracts which are more specifically used in the food and flavouring industries.

Ointments/salves/balms are oil-based mixtures which help to protect the skin and only contain oily ingredients. They can be thickened with any wax, including paraffin wax, but beeswax is preferable as it has its own therapeutic properties. Use the unbleached beeswax. If beeswax is not available use cocoa butter or another plant wax/or fat. Previously duck or goose fat and pig lard have been used and would be deemed to have their own therapeutic benefits. Ointments stay on the skin for a long time, so they are useful for forming barriers to protect the skin. They are also healing and soothing. Good for nappy rash, and for protecting the lips. They are also useful for dry areas such as knees, heels, feet and elbows.

They also keep heat and water in so are good for rheumatic aches, dehydrated skin and conditions made worse by cold weather. Do not use them if the skin is hot, inflamed or weepy.

300 ml infused oil or base oil

25 g beeswax; shredded or in beads.

Warm the ingredients together in a bain marie just to the point where the waxes melt. Add essential oils if desired and pour into clean jars. Label and leave to set in the fridge. **Plaisters** are made by spreading the ointment onto clean bandage, while it is still at the consistency of soft butter. Cover the bandage with a layer of cling film or oilcloth and roll up to store. Place in an airtight container in the fridge, or a cool, dry place. Label with the ingredients and date. They are a convenient way of applying ointment to aching joints etc.

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All these preparations should be used within 9-12 months.

Creams are lighter than ointments, as they contain water and oil in an emulsion. Creams are more cooling than ointments and are absorbed more quickly. They are more suitable for hot, inflamed and weepy skin conditions. They are also useful for applying to warm areas of the body such as the groin. The ones described below are water in oil emulsions, which are good for moisturising. Oil in water emulsions are more difficult to make at home. A basic cream can be made with:

Basic recipe

50 ml oil
15 g beeswax
50 ml water/ infusion/decoction/ floral water

Coconut oil cream

50 g virgin coconut oil
20 g almond oil
25 g floral water/infusion
20 drops essential oil

Cream method: Make sure ingredients are weighed accurately in a clean scales, otherwise consistency will be affected. If beeswax is being used then shred finely before weighing or use beads. Put oily and fatty ingredients into a stainless steel or pyrex bowl (oils, beeswax, cocoa butter etc.). . Liquid lecithin can be added to the oily ingredients to help emulsification. Place the bowl into a bain marie and stir the fatty ingredients to facilitate melting then remove from the heat. Measure out the watery ingredients - floral waters, spring water, decoction, infusion or tincture. The best way to form an emulsion is to use an electric egg beater on its' lowest speed. Alternatively, use an egg whisk or a balloon whisk. Add the water slowly (a few drops at a time, increasing to a small stream), until it is all incorporated - like making mayonnaise. When all the water has been added stop beating at once, too much beating can make the cream separate. If adding essential oils, stir in carefully. The cream can then be put into jars and left in the fridge until set. Make sure to label jars with ingredients and date. The cream can also be divided into several jars and different essential oils added to the individual jars.

Formulae can be multiplied up to make larger batches of cream. Once the technique has been mastered you can also play around with the proportions to make lighter or firmer creams - enjoy.

To increase the shelf life, part of the oily ingredients can be substituted with wheatgerm oil, or with vitamin E oil. The base oil can also be varied to give a different quality of cream. Essential oils that are particularly good for preserving the creams are lavender, tea tree or benzoin. Grapefruit seed extract can also be

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added as a preservative. None of these are as effective as the preservatives that are used in commercial creams, but they will give a longer shelf life. Storing in the fridge will also lengthen shelf life. Also, rather than dipping fingers into the jars use a spatula or spoon to dispense the cream.

Incense and smudge have been used for thousands of years. The preparation of blends of aromatic plants to be used in healing (as simple as fumigating to prevent disease or for more complex reasons) and for spiritual practice and ritual is a beautiful art.

Blends may be created for a specific ceremony (births, birthdays, weddings, funerals), for rituals – to clear the space, create a sacred space, to aid prayer and meditation, for fumigation of houses or animal housing, for the treatment of maladies (physical, emotional or spiritual) and for the pure pleasure of perfuming a space. Incense was traditionally used outside or in large communal places or worship so the traditional preparations can be a little overwhelming in a small space and can create a lot of smoke (beware of setting off fire alarms).

Ingredients used can include:

- Resins
- Aromatic woods (many of these have become endangered so you may wish to replace with native species such as willow and oak))
- Spices
- Dried leaves and flowers
- Essential oils
- Raisins soaked in wine
- Beeswax
- There are a huge variety of possible ingredients (for example cocoa powder adds a seriously delicious note)

Equipment: Pestle and mortar Coffee grinder for herbs and spices Labels and storage jars

Quite simply, you assemble your chosen ingredients, grind them and blend them together then place in a jar. It is better to allow the ingredients to meld and mature together for at least 7 days before using as a sort of 'alchemic' process occurs between the ingredients.

Smudge is usually made from one dried herb, although combinations may be used. It is either used in the loose leaf form or the herbs are bound into bundles when harvested and carefully dried. They need to be thoroughly dried to ensure that they do not go mouldy.

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Salts

One can make bath salts using sea salt or Epsom salts with the addition of essential oils. For each teaspoon (5 ml) of salt add 2-3 drops of your chosen essential oils.

Finishing salts are mixtures of sea salt and ground herbs used to season soups and stews or to sprinkle on roasted vegetables or whenever you are looking for extra savour in a meal. A ratio of 1-2 parts salt to 3 parts ground herbs works well. Many variations can be made such as a Cajun blend, Herbs de Provence, or blends inspired by other cuisines such as Thai, Chinese, Mexican or Indian cooking.

One can also make blends of herbs and salt to use as foot soaks to help detoxify the body and draw out excess dampness and phlegm.

Flower essences

Flower essences are another form that can be prepared in many ways. The traditional way is to sit with the plant and listen to what its medicine is and then take a flower/ leaf/ fruit and place it in a bowl of spring water in the sun for several hours in an undisturbed place. The plant material is then removed with twigs or chopsticks and the water is preserved by adding a spirituous liquid (vodka/brandy/eau de vie, whisky) to it. Cathy Skipper adds a third of spirit to two thirds water when making these preparations in the Beaujolais region but I tend to use two thirds spirit to one third water due to the high humidity in Ireland. We also have a challenge of getting several hours of sunlight here so sometimes it is necessary to adapt the method by placing the water and flowers into a closed jar and palcing it for several hours outside in whatever weather prevails. Moon essences can be made at night by the light of the moon. It is generally felt that it is ok to pick the flowers by hand but avoid putting fingers into the water. One can also use a hot method if there is no sun, placing the bowl into a bain marie. Some people do not place the plant material into the water; they sit with the plant and then just focus intention into the water; this method has been used to prepare animal essences and flower essences.

Here is an example from a workshop: In the evening I was drawn to make a moon essence from the Potentilla Abbotswood as it was in full bloom with the nearly full moon behind it; it was left out in the moonlight and through the dawn. For me it spoke of the reclamation of trust, innocence, chastity and virginity. It spoke of how true confidence does not come from EGO but from knowing ourselves and stepping into authenticity, trusting that the Universe is benevolent, abundant and supportive and flows (the moon and it's effect on water and emotions seemed appropriate for this). We do not need to take, we need to ask to receive for our needs and trust that they will be met. Going with the flow, consciously, with clear intention.

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Baths

Bathing with herbs has a long tradition. In Ireland there are still several places that offer seaweed baths for health. Herbal baths can be used for many purposes. Foot bath are really good for detoxifying the system and stimulating the circulation. Hand baths can be valuable for arthritic hands. Full body baths can be great for delivering a good dose of herbs transdermally (through the skin). Our skin is permeable to many of the plants constituents and they get straight into the general circulation. Sitz baths are used to treat the bowel, kidneys, reproductive organs and congestion in the abdomen and pelvis and problems with the hips. For a sitz bath one needs two containers that are large enough to sit in; one contains hot water with the herbs or oils added, the other contains cool water. One sits first in the hot water and herbs with the feet in the cool water so that the circulation and the medicine are drawn into the lower trunk for about 10 minutes. Then one sits in the cool water with the feet in the hot water for 10 minutes to draw the circulation to the extremities. This can be repeated several times. Baths can be prepared with infusions, decoctions or essential oils and salt or Epsom salts may also be used.

There are many other forms in which herbs can be used; these ones are easy enough to prepare and fun to make at home. The books listed below give other formulae and recipes and there are some excellent recipes available online.

Dosages: A note on internal doses; the doses above relate to a normal, 'healthy' adult. In pregnancy and during breastfeeding these should be reduced to a half or third, and certain herbs should be avoided altogether (see guidance under each herb description). For elderly and frail people doses should also be reduced, seek the advice of a professional if unsure about what dose is suitable; any real herbalist will help out with this kind of advice. For children the general rule of thumb is;

6-12 months one tenth of adult dose, 1-6 years one third adult dose, 7-12 years half the adult dose. Again, this may vary with the weight and development of the child and there are herbs that should be avoided with children. Another way of calculating the dose for children is to divide their age at their **next** birthday by 24 and multiply the adult dose by this number; if the number gives a result smaller than 1 ml then remember that there are 20 drops (approximately, depending on the dropper aperture) in 1 ml and so the dose can be calculated as a number of drops. There are also herbs that should be avoided during pregnancy, with certain medical conditions and in conjunction with certain pharmaceutical preparations. IF IN DOUBT SEEK ADVICE. A lot of this is common sense However, here are some general guidelines:

For older patients the dose may need to be reduced by a third or a half. However, if you have a robust, active 70 year old then they may require the full dose for a healthy adult.

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The formulae for calculating the dose for a child are many and various but this is one of the simplest methods:

AGE (up to)	PROPORTION OF ADULT DOSE	EXAMPLE
Adult	5 ml	
12 years old	1/2	2.5 ml
8 years old	2/5	2 ml (40 gtt)
4 years old	1/4	1.25 ml (25 gtt)
2 years old	1/8	0.625 ml (12-13 gtt)
1 year old	1/16	0.3125 ml (6-7 gtt)

A Note on Hygiene:

Before making any of these preparations you need to prepare your equipment and ensure that it is spotlessly clean. Use stainless steel, or glass containers, bowls and pans. Use stainless steel implements, for stirring, mixing, chopping ingredients and so on.

Avoid using any dirty jars, or implements, tie back long hair and keep fingers out of all mixtures to prevent contamination. Any preparations that show signs of contamination (mould growing or smelling 'off') should be discarded immediately. Occasionally, water will 'bleed' out of the cream. This does not mean that they have gone off, but that some separation has occurred. They are still ok to use.

10

RECOMMENDED READING

Chevallier Andrew Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants Dorling Kindersley

Green James The Herbal Medicinemakers's Handbook A home Manual

Hedley, Christopher and Shaw, Non Herbal Remedies Mustard

Hoffmann David The Holistic Herbal Element books

Chapter 2



GROWING HERBS

Growing from seed

There is great pleasure to be had from watching a plant emerging from the seed and bringing it to maturity. By growing the plants yourself, nurturing them and getting to know their needs you enter into a deeper relationship with them. You get to be able to recognize them from infancy to maturity. The same is true with wild plants; if you start to learn to identify them from the newly emerging seedling, through all their stages of development you come to have a deeper understanding of your allies. For annual species it is the most sensible way to raise plants - less cost and gives healthier plants. For many other species raising them yourself gives an intimate understanding of the plant and their nature. For non-native species, it is said that plants raised from seed are better adapted to the environment in which they find themselves, especially if they are the offspring of parents grown here.

There are various methods of cultivation that include different philosophical approaches such as organic, permaculture, biodynamics, forest gardening, wild gardening, holistic gardening. They share some approaches in common and differ in some ways. They are all worth examining and exploring and seeing what resonates for one's own approach and the space that one is working with.

Plants are divided into different categories:

Hardy annuals complete their life cycle in one year. Seed is sown in early spring (late February - March), matures and blooms in the summer and make seed if allowed, before dying away in the autumn. They can normally be sown directly into their growing site, but may also be raised in trays for planting out. (e.g. Calendula, parsley, rocket, chervil)

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Half hardy annuals also complete their life cycle in one year, but are frost tender and often need a longer growing season. This means they need to be started in trays in early spring and kept in a warm sunny position in a propagator, on a windowsill, conservatory or heated greenhouse. They should not be planted out until all danger of frost is gone (May). Before planting out they should be hardened off (acclimatised) in a cold frame or a sheltered spot outside. (e.g. Basil, coriander, dill). It is normally better to start these a little later - late March - May.

Hardy biennials complete their life cycle in two years and die after flowering. They can be encouraged to grow for additional seasons by removing the flowers before seed is set. Seed is sown in the spring or summer, plants are placed in their growing position in the autumn or following spring to flower about 12 months after sowing.(e.g. Angelica, wild carrot, clary sage).

Half hardy perennials will continue to grow year after year, but need protection from frost in the winter. This means they either need to be grown in tubs that can be put into a conservatory or cold greenhouse in the winter, or lifted each autumn. They will sometimes survive the winter in very sheltered areas, but beware of hard frosts and cover with fleece or straw to protect if one is forecast.

Hardy perennials grow year after year. Seeds are normally planted in trays in Jan - March or May-June. Some varieties require a cold period to germinate and are therefore planted in the autumn. Check out the individual needs of the species you are working with (information is normally on the seed packets).

Tender perennials are the ones that need to be indoors all the time and are therefore treated as houseplants or greenhouse plants.

Getting ready to sow

You need the following:

1 A notebook or diary to record:

- what you have planted (record the variety of seed and where obtained for future reference)
- when
- any special cultivation techniques used (See below).

2 Clean trays or pots filled with a good quality seed or multipurpose compost (home made leaf mould compost is great and the perfect medium for seeds), unless the species requires ericaceous or other specialist compost.

3 Labels for the trays/pots so that you know what is what.

4 Propagators or transparent plastic bags to hold in the moisture for tender species.

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5 For seeds requiring dark, sheets of paper or cardboard to cover the trays.

6 Fine grade vermiculite or sieved compost for covering seeds that require this; some seeds should not be covered, but the general rule of thumb is to cover with a layer of vermiculite or compost to the same depth as the seed.

SPECIAL CULTIVATION TECHNIQUES

- Chipping/ scarifying is used for seeds with hard coats such as Ipomoea which prevent moisture being absorbed. Just chip the seed coat with a sharp knife at a point farthest from the eye, prick with a needle if very small or rub between two sheets of emery paper.
- Soaking is useful to soften hard seed coats and also leaches out chemical inhibitors which some seed contain to retard germination. Tepid water is used and soaking often only needs to be 1-3 hours. If soaking for longer change the water daily. any seeds that swell within 24 hours should be planted immediately - the rest should be pricked with a pin and returned to soak.
- Pre-chilling is needed for some seed; this can be done by sowing the seed and leaving in a cold frame over winter, but the process can be speeded by sowing the seed and placing in a fridge. Examine the seeds once a week and remove to warmer conditions once germination starts. Sometimes seeds will not germinate for up to a year, so patience is needed.
- Double dormancy; some seeds need a series of cold and warm periods e.g. tree paeony needs a warm period for root development, followed by cold to break the dormancy of the shoot. Such details are normally given with the sowing instructions provided with the seed.
- Tiny seeds can be mixed with a quantity of silver sand to facilitate even sowing. The mixture is then spread on the surface of the compost and covered with a sheet of glass or clear plastic (cling film or bag). A general rule is to cover seeds with a depth of compost equal to their own size.

Pricking out

Once the first true leaves appear it is time to pot them on into individual pots.

Never handle the plant by its' stem or roots at this stage, only by the leaves. Gently lever the plants out, one at a time, taking care to do as little damage as possible to the roots. A lolly stick or plant label, or dibber can be used. Make holes in the pot or tray being transplanted into with a pencil, your finger or a stick. Drop each seedling into a hole and firm the soil down around it. Water in with a fine spray.

Saving seed

Allow seed heads to dry out on blotting paper or newspaper to absorb any moisture, or by hanging upside down in a paper bag. When heads are dry, shake out the seeds onto clean paper, remove any debris and store in a labelled envelope in a dry, cool place. Saving seeds can require regular trips out to check

GROWING HERBS

which seed heads are ready to harvest; it can be labour intensive. In the Irish climate rain can impede the process, this is when seed may need to be harvested on damp days and gently dried on tissue.

Taking cuttings

Soft wood cuttings are taken by cutting a piece of the plant with at least three leaves and a new shoot, with no flower buds. Place the cuttings into a pot of moist, well draining compost, firm down the compost around the cuttings and cover with a polythene bag or place into a propagator. Remove excess leaves to prevent too much moisture loss through transpiration and diversion of reserves into this tissue rather than the meristematic tissue that will produce new roots and shoots.

Root cuttings are taken from plants such as comfrey and mints. Sections of root are divided off and potted up or planted out to regenerate new plants.

Hardwood cuttings are taken from mature wood at the end of the growing season from trees such as hawthorn, holly, bay. They are slow to root and need patience. Cuttings from some other tree species root really easily such as those from elder, willow and blackcurrant (ok so the last one is a bush not a tree but still it roots easily from hard wood cuttings).

Layering is done by bending a shoot down and burying a portion of the stem into the soil to root.

Mound layering is done by building up a mound of soil around the plant and allowing roots to be produced, then dividing.

Other plants can be divided in the autumn by lifting the plant and cutting the rootstock into several sections with a spade or, if necessary, a carving knife.

You can source great tutorials for these methods online on UTube. It is also good to take time to feel into the plant, feel where to take the cuttings from, should they be placed singly or in groups to root. Listen to what the plants are telling you.

Garden layout

Decide whether you want a specialised herb garden, or to interplant herbs in your other beds - many are very ornamental. If planning a specialised bed(s) decide whether you want a formal or informal layout. Draw the area onto paper and plan your planting. Taller plants should be at the centre of the bed for an island bed, or to the back of a bed that is against a wall/hedge. Leave sufficient space for perennials to spread into; these areas can be planted with annuals until the plants reach maturity to fill the space. You may decide on specific colour schemes or on a specific theme e.g. culinary, medicinal, scented, sacred (many plants fit into all four categories). With wild gardening some of the plants choose their own spaces but are still trimmed and cut back.

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Choosing your plants

Make sure that the plants suit the site. Some plants have a requirement for plenty of sun, whilst others thrive in shade e.g. primrose, lungwort, pilewort, sweet woodruff.

Some need plenty of moisture e.g. valerian, marshmallow, others need to be in a really wet area (pond margin or even in shallow water) e.g. Acorus and bog bean. Other herbs that hail from the Mediterranean cannot stand getting their feet wet and will die if the soil becomes sodden in a wet winter or summer, therefore plant into gravely 'poor' soil e.g. Rosemary, oregano, thyme, winter savory, fennel, sage, lavender.

If you are buying plants in then choose healthy plants that are not too pot bound. If planting plants that tend to spread, such as mints or sweet woodruff, and you wish to limit their spread then you can sink a large plastic pot into the soil and plant the specimen into this to contain the roots. This can periodically be lifted to divide the plant.

If you are regularly picking from your herbs they will need periodic feeding. Make sure not to overfeed, since this will produce a mass of soft green growth, without such high levels of therapeutic constituents, especially with the aromatic plants. I find that feeding spring and/or autumn with well rotted compost, or manure, a seaweed fertilizer, comfrey or nettle feeds suits most herbs.

When growing in containers, especially for the half hardy annuals, more regular feeding may be needed throughout the season. A liquid seaweed feed, or the liquid from a wormery make good feeds. Also, an excellent homemade liquid fertiliser can be made by soaking nettles and/or comfrey in a barrel for several weeks. It smells awful, but the plants love it!

Planting out potted plants and transplants

1 Prepare the soil ready for planting by removing any large stones, perennial weeds and annual weeds. Mix in seaweed dust, manure, compost or other organic fertiliser.

2 Dig a hole that ensures that the plant is placed slightly below the surface of the bed. Place the plant in the hole and back fill. Make sure that the base of the stem is not below ground level.

3 Water in well with water or dilute seaweed extract.

4 Most herbs are cropped before the flowers are fully open, but check this with each species.

GROWING HERBS

5 Harvest before the heat of the sun, but after the dew has dried, especially if they are being dried.

6 Pinch out the tips of young plants to encourage bushy growth. With older plants you can cut back by half when cropping.

7 If you are doing a hard yearly prune two thirds of the plant may be cut, but only cut back to hard wood.

8 Fertilising – many herbs produce more active material if given a little stress so do not over feed or overwater. However, if you are harvesting material regularly from your plants they will need some feeding to help them regenerate. Top dress plants as needed in the spring and autumn, using an organic compost, your home produced compost or seaweed. Over feeding can reduce the amount of active constituents, since it gives soft growth.

If the seeds you are planting are not poisonous and are uncoated (some companies coat seed with fungicides and other chemicals) then you may choose to suck them in your mouth before planting to exchange some of your information with them. Working with bare hands and walking barefoot on the soil you are working with enables you to send some of your physiological information into the soil (as well as enabling you to pick up the meanings from this amazing ecosystem). In this way the plants and the soil receive another source of information about you and adapt their physiology into closer coherence with yours. The use of humanure further facilitates this process but may not be feasible unless you have a compost toilet and a sufficiently large area of land to enable you to use the compost on your growing areas.

Herbs and soil types

Chalk Catnip, chicory, hyssop, juniper, lavender, lily of the valley, lungwort, marjoram, motherwort, pasque flower, rosemary, salad burnet, summer savory.

Loam basil, bay, betony, blood root, burdock, caraway, catnip, chervil, chives, coltsfoot, coriander, dill, foxglove, fennel, lady's mantle, lovage, parsley, rosemary, rue, sage, thyme, tansy

Moist loam angelica, bergamot, comfrey, elecampane, sorrel, lady's mantle, lemon balm, meadowsweet, mint, parsley, skullcap, soapwort, cicely, violet, valerian

Clay bergamot, burdock, coltsfoot, comfrey, lesser celandine, mint, wormwood
Sandy alfalfa, anise, arnica, borage, centaury, roman chamomile, coriander, cumin, evening primrose, fennel, foxglove, lavender, pleurisy root, tarragon, thyme, carrot, marjoram, winter savory

GROWING HERBS

Marshy bogbean, golden seal, gypsywort, horsetail, irises, marshmallow, meadowsweet, skullcap, sweet flag, valerian, bergamot

Aquatic watercress, *Acorus gramineus* and *calamus*, *Cyperus longus*, *Houttuynia cordata*, *Iris versicolor*, *Nymphaea odorata*, *Menyanthes*, *Caltha palustris*, *Nelumbo*, *Cardamine*, *Myrica gale*, *Typha latifolia*

Perennial herbs Yarrow, English mace, Anise hyssop, Lady's mantle, chives, garlic (grown as an annual), bugle, Lemon verbena (tender), Marsh mallow, horseradish, arnica, southernwood, wormwood, mugwort, black horehound, incense plant (tender), balm of gilead, chamomiles, chicory, lily of the valley, pinks, horse tail, meadowsweet, fennel, strawberry, woodruff, licorice (tender), curry plant, hops, St. John's wort. Hyssop, inula/elecampane, iris, juniper, bay, lavenders, lovage, honeysuckle, white horehound, Melissa/lemon balm, mints, bergamot, sweet cicely, myrtle, (aloe vera, tarragon, cat mint, oregano, poppy, geraniums, Jerusalem, Solomon's ladder, cowslip, primrose, lung wrot, rosemary, box, sorrel, rue, sage, elder, salad burnet, santolina, soapwort, skullcap, houseleek, golden rod, betony, comfrey, alecost, pyrethrum, tansy, feverfew, dandelion, wood sage, thymes, nettle, valerian, daisy, red valerian, vervain, heartsease, violet, eucalyptus, lemon (tender), red clover, hawthorn, apple, holly, ivy, guelder rose, roses, oak, willow, olive, artichoke, cardoon, asparagus

Annuals and biennials Dill, angelica, chervil, orache, borage, caraway, coriander, viper's bugloss, rocket, basil, evening primrose, parsley, smallage, alexanders, nasturtium, calendula, milk thistle, teasel, hollyhock, Californian poppy, fenugreek, alfalfa, purslane, burdock, centaury

Chapter 3



HARVESTING AND DRYING HERBS

- Collect healthy plant material that is free from disease and insect damage.
- If gathering in the wild avoid plants growing near roads or other sources of pollution.
- Do not mix plant material, keep different species separate.
- Use scissors or a sharp knife to cut material and place into a cloth bag or open basket, making sure to minimize bruising or damage.
- Use a field guide to aid identification of wild species. Always ensure that you are sure that you have correctly identified material
- When gathering prickly or irritating plants wear gloves (e.g. nettles, comfrey, cleavers, rue).
- Gather herbs in dry weather, preferably after the dew has dried. Jasmine flowers should be gathered in the evening when their essential oil content is highest
- Check that you are harvesting the plants at the correct stage of development or time of year.
- Leaves are gathered as they open in the spring or summer. Nettles are at their best in May and should not be gathered for use of the aerial parts once they are flowering. However, the roots are gathered in the autumn and the spring and the seeds are gathered once ripe.

Harvesting and Drying Herbs

- Whole aerial parts and flowers are gathered just as the flowers are starting to open (Melissa is normally gathered just before the flowers open, since this is when essential oil levels are at their highest).
- Fruit, seeds and berries are gathered just as they ripen (rosehips are often left until after the first frost to give good levels of sugars).
- Roots are normally gathered in the autumn as the plant dies back, and the constituents are stored under ground, or in the spring just before growth starts again.
- Bark should be harvested with great care to ensure that the plant is able to continue growing, usually gathered in the spring or autumn.
- Ensure that you have the correct plant and the correct part of the plant for the purpose intended.
- Some perennials can be cropped several times in the season once they are harvested, leaving enough material to allow a second flush of growth – about 4 inches or 10 cm above the ground.
- Check the specific harvesting requirements in a reputable herbal.
- If harvesting from the wild only take as much as you require and make sure sufficient is left for the population to continue to survive (definitely no more than a third should be taken).
- Think several times before harvesting roots from the wild – the harvest is a destructive one (the plant will not be able to regenerate) do you really need it more than the ecosystem from which you are taking it or would another plant do you just as well?
- If you are harvesting from a community of perennial plants try to leave the elder plants which provide seed for successive generations of progeny – if the plants are growing on a slope then the elders are normally higher up the slope. Otherwise they are to the centre of the community of plants.
- Only gather as much as you can process immediately after harvesting.
- Harvest with respect and be grateful to the natural world for what it has provided – do not exploit or pillage. Remember that the plants provide for many other species too. For example, do not strip a hedgerow of berries but leave some for the birds and small mammals that rely on them for autumn and winter food.

Harvesting and Drying Herbs

Once the material has been harvested check again for insect damage or disease. Aerial parts can be tied into small bunches. Do not tie too much material into one bunch otherwise mildew and mould will occur in the centre. Air must be able to circulate freely. Hang the bunches in a dry airy place which is out of direct sunlight and free from dust. Also make sure that the area is away from access to animals or birds.

- Tie bunches with natural twine or string
- Ensure that air can circulate through the bunches.
- Allow the plant material to dry until brittle but not bone dry
- Make sure that they are not dried at too high a temperature, especially aromatic herbs, otherwise the essential oil will be lost, reducing the herb's flavour and efficacy.
- Once dry separate the stems and rub the leaves and flowers onto clean paper or cloth.
- The rubbed herb can then be poured into a dark glass jar with a screw top or a brown paper bag. Make sure that the storage containers are completely clean and dry.
- Store in a dry dark cupboard at room temperature.
- Large flowers, such as calendula can be dried on sheets of kitchen paper or fine wire mesh. Spread them out thinly, making sure that none of them overlap or touch.
- Fruit and berries can be spread on absorbent paper and placed in the hot press or a cool oven. Turn them occasionally and remove any that look mouldy. It is also possible to get vegetable dehydrators/ driers which can also be used for these plant parts.
- Placing a dehumidifier in the room where herbs are being dried can speed the process.
- **NEVER USE A MICROWAVE TO DRY HERBS!** It changes the nature of the constituents and degrades them.
- Roots, rhizomes, bulbs and tubers should be thoroughly cleaned of any earth or compost and thinly sliced before drying on a fine mesh or absorbent paper.
- Seed heads can be hung up to dry. If necessary place over a tray to catch falling seeds, or dry inside a paper bag.
- Freezing is another alternative if you have plenty of space in the freezer. Clean dry herbs can be frozen in plastic bags or boxes. There is no need to de-frost the herbs before use if being used for culinary purposes.

HARVESTING SUMMARY

PLANT NAME	PART USED	MONTH(S) TO HARVEST
Agrimony <i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Aerial parts	June–August
Angelica <i>Angelica archangelica/sylvestris</i>	Leaves Roots	June September–June
Aniseed <i>Pimpinella anisum</i>	Seeds/fruit	July –September
Avens	Root Aerial parts	April–May July
Lemon Balm, Melissa	Aerial parts as flowers are opening	June–September
Betony	Aerial parts, just before flowers bloom	June–July
Barberry	Root bark	November or March
Bearberry	leaves	All year, but better in spring and summer
Birch	Leaves Bark	May–August November or March
Bittersweet	Leaves and stem Berries are poisonous	Stems September Leaves June–August
Bilberry	Fruits Leaves	August All year

Black Horehound	Aerial parts just as flowering	July
Willow	Bark	Spring as new growth starts from 3–5 year old trees
Blue flag	Rhizome	October–November
Bogbean	Leaves	May–July
Boneset	Aerial parts	August–September as flowers open
Borage	Aerial parts	As plant comes into flower in Spring or early summer. Collect leaves singly and reject damaged ones
Broom tops	Flowering tops	Spring, summer, autumn
Buckthorn	Fruit	September/October
Bugleweed	Aerial parts just before blooming	
Burdock	Roots Leaves Seeds	Autumn of first year Leaves spring and summer first year, spring second year Autumn second year
Butterbur	Rhizome Leaves	May–August February–September

Californian poppy	Aerial parts whilst flowering	June–September
Caraway	Seeds	July second year
Cayenne	Fruit	When ripe
Celery	Seeds	Autumn when ripe
Centaury	Foliage when flowering	July–September
Chamomiles	Flowers	May–August
Chickweed	Aerial parts	All year round when found
Cleavers	Aerial parts before flowering	Most of the year
Coltsfoot	Flowers Leaves	February–April May–June
Comfrey	Leaf	Before flowers open
Coriander	Seed	August–October
Cornsilk	Stigmas	
Couchgrass	Rhizome	Spring or early autumn
Cowslip/Primrose	Flowers Roots	March–May (just the corollae) Before flowering or early autumn

Cramp bark	Bark	April and May
Daisy	Flowers	When available
Dandelion	Leaf	Any time
	Root	June–August
Dill	Seed	When ripe
Echinacea	Root	Autumn
Elder	Flowers	June
	Berries	August and September
Elecampane	Root	September and October
Eyebright	Aerial parts in flower	Late summer and autumn
Fennel	Seeds	When ripe in autumn
Feverfew	Leaves just before flowering	Spring and summer
Figwort	Aerial parts during flowering	June–August
Flax	Ripe seeds	September
Fumitory	Aerial parts	When in flower
Garlic	Bulb	When leaves begin to wither July–August
Goat's rue	Aerial parts during flowering	July–August
Golden rod	Dried aerial parts	July–September

Gravel root	Rhizome and root	Autumn after flowering
Ground ivy	Aerial parts when flowering	April–July
Hawthorn	Flowering tops	May
	Berries	September–October
Hops	Flowers	August–September
Horsechestnut	Fruit	September–October
Horseradish	Leaves	When available
	Roots	In Autumn or winter
Horsetail	Aerial parts	May–July
Hyssop	Flowering tops	August
Juniper berries	Berries	When ripe in autumn
Lady's mantle	Leaves and flowering shoots	June–August
Lavender	Flowers	June–September
Lime blossom	Flowers just as opening	June–September
Lungwort	Leaves	March–September
Male fern	Rhizome	Autumn
Mallows	Leaves and flowers In summer when present	When plants die back in autumn July–September
	Root and Whole Plant	

Calendula Marigold	Flowers/petals	Whenever available
Oreganos	Aerial parts	During flowering June –October
Meadowsweet	Aerial parts when flowers are fully open	June–August
Milk thistle	Seeds	Autumn
Motherwort	Aerial parts in flower	June–September
Mugwort	Leaves and flowering stalks Root	July –September Autumn
Mullein	Leaves and flowers	July–September before flowers go brown
Mustard seed	Seed	August–October
Nasturtium	Aerial parts	July–October
Nettle	Leaf for tea Leaf for veg Root	When in flower Before flowering Spring or autumn
Oak bark	Bark from young branches less than 10 cm thick	April/May
Oats	Seeds Whole plant	Autumn

Pansy	Whole plant	Throughout growing season
Parsley	Leaves Seeds	Anytime When ripe The tap root can be harvested in the autumn of second year
Passionflower	Leaves	Just before flowering, or with fruit after flowering
Pellitory of the Wall	Aerial parts	June–September
Pennyroyal	Aerial parts before flowering	July
Navelwort	Fresh leaves	
Peppermint	Aerial parts before flowering	
Periwinkle (Vinca)	Aerial parts	Spring
Pilewort	Roots	May and June
Plantain	Leaves or aerial parts whilst flowering	
Pumpkin	Seeds (also grown for the fruit rich in carotenoids and the greens shoots for sautéing)	Removed from fruit harvested in late summer

Raspberry	Fruit	When ripe
And blackberry	Leaf	Throughout the growing season
Red clover	flowerheads	May–September
Sage	Leaves shortly before or during flowering	May–July
Rosehips	Fruit	Autumn
Rosemary	Leaves	Summer
Rue	Aerial parts before flowers open	
Self heal	Aerial parts before flowering Flower spikes	June–August
Shepherd's purse	Aerial parts	February–October
Silverweed	Aerial parts Roots as vegetable	June
Skullcap	Aerial parts	August–September late in flowering
Soapwort	Rhizome and roots Leaves	September–October July–August
Southernwood	Aerial parts	August –September
St.John's Wort	Aerial parts when in flower	Late June
Sweet violet	Leaves and flowers	March–April

Tansy	Leaves and flowers	June–September
Thyme	Leaves and flowering tops	June–August
Tormentil	Rhizome	Autumn
Valerian	Root	Late autumn from plants more than 4 years old
Vervain	Aerial parts just before flowers open	Around July
White horehound	Aerial parts when flowering	June–September
White poplar	Bark	
Wild carrot	Aerial parts and seeds	June–September
Wild lettuce	Leaves	June–August
Witch hazel	Bark or leaves	
Wood sage	Aerial parts when flowering	During summer
Wormwood	Leaves and flowering tops	July–September
Yarrow	Aerial parts when in flower	June–September
Yellow dock	Roots	August–October

Harvesting and Drying Herbs

Recommended reading:

Jekka's Complete Herb Book Jekka McVicar

The Royal Horticultural Society Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses Deni Bown

Grow Your Own Pharmacy Linda Gray

BOTANICAL NAMES

Achillea millefolium Yarrow

Allium sativum Garlic

Althaea officinalis Marshmallow

Arctium lappa Burdock

Avena sativa Oats

Bellis perennis Daisy

Calendula officinalis Marigold

Capsicum minimum Chilli/Cayenne

Chondrus crispus Seaweeds

Cinnamomum verum Cinnamon

Crataegus monogyna Hawthorn

Curcuma longa Turmeric

Eugenia caryophylla Clove

Euphrasia sp. Eyebright

Filipendula ulmaria Meadowsweet

Foeniculum vulgare Fennel

Galium aparine Cleavers

Glycyrrhiza glabra Licorice

Inula helenium Elecampane

Lavandula officinalis Lavender

Linum usitatissimum Flax/Linseed

Malus sp. Apple

Matricaria recutita German Chamomile

Melissa officinalis Lemon balm

Mentha x piperita Peppermint

Origanum vulgare Oregano

Petroselinum crispum Parsley

Plantago sp. Plantain

Prunella vulgaris Selfheal

Rosa sp. Rose

Rosmarinus officinalis Rosemary

Rubus idaeus Raspberry

Sambucus nigra Elder

Salvia officinalis Sage

Stachys officinalis Wood Betony

Symphytum officinale Comfrey

Taraxacum officinale Dandelion

Thymus sp. Thyme

Tilia sp. Linden

Trifolium pratense Red Clover

Urtica dioica Nettle

Valeriana officinalis Valerian

Zingiber officinalis Ginger

Chapter 4



HERB PROFILES AND RECIPES

45 HERBS THAT ARE EASY TO GROW OR READILY AVAILABLE AS KITCHEN SPICES

Alphabetically by common name:

Apple**Burdock**

Dandelion and Burdock Flapjacks

Chilli/Cayenne

Barbeque Spice Blend, Infused Chilli Oil

Cinnamon**Cleavers****Clove**

Garam masala

Comfrey

Comfrey Salve

Daisy

Daisy and Plantain Skin Food

Dandelion**Elder**

Elderberry cough mixture, Elderflower and elderberry Syrup, Elderflower cordial

Elecampane**Eyebright****Fennel**

Fennel and cheese straws, Aromatic rice

Flax/Linseed

Falafel, Seaweed balls

Garlic

Garlic honey, Chilli and garlic relish, Onion syrup

German Chamomile**Ginger****Hawthorn**

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Lavender

Lavender shortbread, Night time Tea

Lemon balm

Licorice

Linden

Marigold

Claendula and honey lip balm, Queen cakes with calendula petals

Marshmallow

Marshmallow root brownies

Meadowsweet

Nettle

Nettle soup, Raw nettle pesto

Oats

Face Pack Mousse

Oregano

Oregano vinegar, Tomato Oregano Psto, Oregano pesto, Molle Chilli powder, Herb Provencale blend

Parsley

Bean and Parsley Paté, Herb Stuffing

Peppermint

Tabbouleh, Koftas, Mint,yogurt and Cucumber dip

Plantain

Raspberry

Red Clover

Rose

Ras-el-Hanout, Rosehip syrup, Instant Rosehip Jam, Grá Balls, Poached Pears in Red Wine with Rose and Cardamom, Moisturising Cream (to feed the skin)

Rosemary

Rosemary and Red Wine Gravy, Rosemary and Broad Bean Paté, Bean and Squash Stew

Sage

Tuscan Beans

Seaweeds

Seaweed Tapenade

Selfheal

Sorrel

Thyme

Mushroom Tapenade

Turmeric

Ginger and Garlic Relish

Valerian

Wood betony

Yarrow

Apple *Malus spp.* Rosaceae

Malus from Latin name for the apple

Part used: Fruit

The crab apple is the native wild species. There are also many cultivars of domesticated apples. Apple is a deciduous tree of variable height (there are dwarf trees available). The flowers are white/pale pink and are a valuable source of food for bees. The fruit is gathered when ripe from August through to November depending on the variety.

Character: **Ripe**—Cool, moist, generally **sweet** **Unripe, wild and cooking varieties**—Cool, moist, sour

Actions:

- Tonic, digestive and liver
- Stimulant
- Diuretic
- Anti-rheumatic
- Laxative
- Antiseptic

Traditional/current uses

- Used to treat constipation and diarrhoea
- Lowers cholesterol and reduces high blood pressure
- Sour apples as diuretic in urinary infections
- Source of minerals and vitamins in anaemia and debility
- Infusion of raw fruit used for rheumatic pains and colic
- Juice and infusion a cooling remedy for fevers
- Stewed fruit for gastroenteritis, tummy bugs
- Stewed fruit to soothe bowel in food intolerance and IBS
- Poultice for skin infections such as scabies
- Stewed fruit for diarrhoea and dysentery. Also for ulcerative colitis and gastric ulcers
- Bronchial problems, hoarseness and coughs
- Mental and physical over exertion
- The peel is used in France to treat rheumatism, gout and urinary disorders
- Raw grated apple taken first thing in the morning will quell morning sickness
- Apples eaten last thing at night will help with insomnia and will also help with bowel problems
- Stewed apple can be eaten before meals to soothe the digestive tract for those with inflammation or with food intolerances. If an irritant food is inadvertently taken a fast on stewed apple will heal the bowel.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Apples contain pectin which is effective at drawing out toxins (including heavy metals) from the system, particularly when lightly cooked by stewing. The efficacy of using apple pectin to remove heavy metals has been demonstrated by its therapeutic use on the people of Chernobyl with whom it is used to draw out radioactive Caesium from the system. It can also be used to treat other heavy metal toxicity e/g/ accumulated mercury or aluminium. The flavonoids in the fruit have been shown to protect against stroke and elevated blood pressure. Raw apple can be made into a poultice to treat inflamed eyes, badly healing wounds and aches and pains. A traditional wart remedy is to rub two halves of an apple on the wart and then bury them; they will disappear as the apple decays. There is a Bach Flower Remedy of Crab Apple which is used for self-dislike, despondency, depression, over anxiousness, getting bogged down in detail, house-proudness and fussiness. According to Memory Paterson meditation with the apple tree (or fruit or blossom) helps bring about a communion between male and female, helping us to find love and trust. It helps us to develop love for others, but also for ourselves. It helps us to develop harmony within ourselves and therefore with the world. Seen as an extremely important tree in Celtic culture and many other ancient cultures. Several cultures have legends about Paradise being an apple orchard and the apple being the tree of knowledge or of wisdom. Apples are also connected with love. In Ireland the silver bough was cut from an apple tree; nine apples hung upon the branch and played continuous music that lulled people into a trance. The silver bough was seen as a link with the unseen world.

Burdock, Bardane, Great or Thorny Burr, Beggar's Buttons, Clotbur, Cocklebur, Cockly Buttons

Arctium lappa Compositae/Asteraceae

Part used: Dried aerial parts or roots. Also fruits

A large biennial with broad cordate leaves up to 40 cm long. Purple globular flower heads. The bracts are hooked burrs. It is native to Europe, parts of Asia and North America. It is cultivated as a root vegetable in Japan.

Actions:

- Diuretic
- Orexigenic (stimulates appetite)
- Alterative
- Diaphoretic
- Anti-rheumatic
- Antiseptic
- Depurative (blood purifier)

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Traditional and current uses

- Root Skin eruptions –acne, boils and abscesses, eczema, dermatitis and psoriasis
- Rheumatism, arthritis, gout
- Cystitis
- Anorexia nervosa
- Reduces the effects of mutagens, being investigated as a possible treatment of certain tumours
- Digestive tonic
- Lowers blood sugar – may be helpful in diabetes
- Seeds
- Flu, measles, tonsillitis, colds, fever
- Kidney stones
- Leaves as poultices for bruises and skin eruptions
- As a treatment for falling hair, use as a rinse
- The root tastes sweet and mucilaginous with some bitterness. The leaves are extremely bitter
- The seed burs contain seeds with small hooks which attach to animal fur and so on as a way of dispersing the seed. These gave the original inspiration for Velcro.

Dandelion and burdock flapjacks

150 g porridge oats

100 g butter or olive oil

3 tablespoons agave syrup or honey

50 g raisins optional

50 g hazelnuts chopped optional

3 tablespoons mixed seeds optional

Dessertspoon ground dandelion root

Dessertspoon ground burdock root

Heat oven to 180 oC. Melt butter and agave together. Mix in dry ingredients and press into a baking tray. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Allow to cool and cut into squares.

Chamomile, German

Chamomilla recutita / *Matricaria recutita* Compositae/ Asteraceae

Part used: Flowers

This is an annual plant that grows up to 50 cm. The flowers are white, daisy-like and the foliage is finely divided. Roman chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis* / *Chamamelum nobile*) is a close relative, which looks and smells similar, but is a perennial. It can be used in similar ways but is much more bitter. It is native to Europe and is widely cultivated in temperate zones. It can be easily propagated from seed sown in the spring or autumn.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

History / folklore / taste/energetics: The name *Matricaria* refers to an affinity to the womb or to the mother. It is certainly a useful herb for women. It is also a motherly herb that soothes many childhood complaints and helps those who are fretful to sleep more easily and feel less anxious. The flowers are used to flavour manzanilla sherry and it is a gentle bitter that helps digestion, especially after eating too much or eating the wrong foods; Peter Rabbit's mother gave him chamomile tea when he had gorged himself on Mr McGregor's vegetables. Bitter, aromatic, warm, moist.

Actions:

- Anti-inflammatory
- Antispasmodic
- Relaxant
- Carminative (relieves wind and tension in the digestive system)
- Mild bitter
- Anti-allergic
- Anti-emetic

Traditional and current uses:

- Dyspepsia and flatulence, especially with stress
- Vomiting in pregnancy
- Colic and digestive problems in children
- Acidity and gastritis
- Hiatus hernia
- Crohn's disease
- IBS
- Peptic ulcer
- Aids sleep and relieves irritability
- Bedwetting
- Contains spiroether, a strong antispasmodic, relaxes tense aching muscles and eases period pain
- Hayfever and asthma
- Also externally for sore itchy skin and eczema
- Swollen, itchy eyes – compresses made from infused tea bags. Also as compresses for skin ulcers
- Baths for itchy skin
- Teething
- Lightening fair hair

Chilli/Cayenne

Capsicum minimum / *frutescens* Solanaceae

Parts used: Fruit

Chillis are perennial, sweet peppers are annuals. Chillies are grown as annuals in this part of the world, although with careful minding and a sufficiently warm temperature they can thrive for several years. They are native to tropical America,

Herb Profiles and Recipes

and are now cultivated widely throughout the world. Grow plants from seed sown in the spring. The plant grows up to one meter. The flowers are normally white with 5 petals, the fruit can be a variety of colours – green, yellow, orange, red, purple. Taste/energetics: Pungent and hot!

Actions:

- Stimulant
- Tonic
- Carminative
- Antispasmodic
- Antiseptic
- Diaphoretic (increases sweating)
- Rubefacient (warming when rubbed on the skin)
- Peripheral circulatory stimulant especially to skin
- Analgesic
- Styptic (stops bleeding)

Traditional and current uses

- Poor circulation
- Psoriasis, neuralgia, other types of pain including headache and arthritis
- Antimicrobial
- Digestive complaints such as colic and flatulence. Stimulates digestive juices
- Anti-infectious, especially digestive tract infections. Used to treat diarrhoea
- Gargles for sore throats
- Externally for chilblains
- Externally as a rubefacient for arthritis, rheumatism and muscle and joint problems
- Fevers
- Powder applied to puncture wounds to disinfect and stop bleeding (really stings initially but then numbs the pain)

Contraindications: Do not exceed the comfortable dose (this depends on the individual and the strength of the chillis used). Avoid touching delicate tissues or open wounds after handling cayenne. If you do then use lemon juice or milk to neutralize.

Barbeque Spice Blend

Of the dried herb- 20g Rosemary leaf, 20g Thyme leaf, 20g Fennel seed, 20g Black Pepper, 40g Oregano leaf, 20g Salt. Grind in a coffee or spice grinder. Add 20g chilli powder and 40g Sumac powder and mix thoroughly. Use for marinading barbeque food.

Infused chilli oil

75-150 g powdered chilli (depending on strong you want the oil to be)

300 ml olive oil

Put the powder chilli into a jar and pour on the oil. Stir to ensure that all the powder is covered and soaked in oil. Use a jar that leaves little or no air space at the top. Seal tightly. Leave for 2-3 weeks, shaking the jar once a day. The oil can also be prepared by the hot method; put the powder into a pyrex bowl, pour over the oil and put into a bain marie. Allow the water to simmer for about 2 hours, stirring the mixture occasionally. Press off the oil once cool, or after 2-3 week. Use in cooking or to make liniments.

Cinnamon, Dalcini (Hindi)

Cinnamomum verum / *C. zeylanicum* Lauraceae

Parts used : Inner bark

Native to Sri Lanka and India, cinnamon is now widely grown in tropical forests throughout the world (especially in the Philippines and the West Indies). It is propagated from cuttings. Every second year the trees are cut back to just above ground level (coppiced) during the rainy season. The bark from the shoots is peeled off and left to ferment for 24 hours. This allows the outer bark to be stripped away and the inner bark is then further dried into quills. *Cinnamomum*-from the Greek name for the plant; *verum* meaning true, *zeylanicum* meaning from Ceylon. There is a related species called *C. camphora*., which is used for timber and was the original source of camphor. Another related species *C. cassia* is used as a spice and medicine in China to relieve cold conditions. Cinnamon is an evergreen tree that grows up to 18 metres if left uncut. It has small creamy yellow flowers.

Taste/energetics Dry and pungent/hot

Actions:

- Warming stimulant
- Carminative
- Antispasmodic
- Antiseptic
- Antiviral
- Astringent
- Antifungal

Traditional/current uses

- An antiviral, used for colds, flus and viral stomach bugs
- Stimulates the circulation to the fingers and toes, often combined with ginger in the treatment of cold conditions
- Digestive problems – nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea
- Muscular aches with viral infections
- Supports a weak digestion
- Used for debility and convalescence (similar to rosemary)

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Used after childbirth as a contraceptive in India
- A slight emmenagogue, stimulates the uterus and can encourage delayed menstruation
- **Cautions:** Excess use can be toxic. Do not take in medicinal doses during pregnancy. Do not take essential oil internally without professional supervision
- Cinnamaldehyde has been shown to be sedative and analgesic, to reduce high blood pressure and reduce fever.

Cinnamon is widely used in cooking to flavour cakes and biscuits and in spice mixes in Indian, Chinese and Arabic cooking. It has a natural sweetness and is great added to stewed apple or porridge. It can be added to warm drinks such as chai, spiced apple juice, mulled wine and elderberry cordial for its warming effects in the winter.

Cleavers, Goosegrass, Sticky Willie

Galium aparine Rubiaceae

Part used: Aerial parts. Best used fresh – infuse, juice or gently sweat as a spinach-like vegetable. Cut before seeds form any time from spring to autumn. The dried herb does not yield the same therapeutic effects as the fresh.

This is a sprawling green annual, one of the first to appear in the spring. The leaves and square stems have small hooks or prickles which stick to clothing and fur. The flowers are white, small and inconspicuous with four petals. The fruit are green, ripening to dark purple and also stick to clothing and fur (their method of distribution). It grows in hedges, ditches, waste land, shingle, gardens and just about anywhere. If you need to weed it out do not waste it – make a large pot of infusion and drink to give a good spring cleanse to the lymphatic system. Related species include madder, and lady's bedstraw

Actions

- Diuretic
- Lymphatic
- Mild astringent
- Slightly hypotensive
- Anti-inflammatory
- Circulatory tonic for older people

Traditional/current uses

- Skin disorders such as seborrhea, eczema and psoriasis
- Swollen lymph glands
- Strong detoxifying agent
- Kidney stones and other urinary problems
- Cooling drink in fevers
- Prostate disorders
- Compresses for burns, grazes, ulcers and skin inflammation
- Dandruff and scaling scalp problems

Herb Profiles and Recipes

The aerial parts can be used as a 'spinach', not recommended raw due to the prickles. The seeds have traditionally been roasted in Celtic regions as a 'coffee', which is apparently a general prophylactic.

Related species

Sweet Woodruff

Asperula odorata / *Galium odorata* Rubiaceae

A perennial up to 45 cm tall. The stem is square. The narrow elliptical leaves are held in whorls and the flowers are small and white. Native to Europe, also found in Asia and North Africa. It prefers woodland and shaded habitats. It can be propagated from seed or by division. The herb is gathered in the spring when in flower.

Parts used: Aerial parts

History and folklore: The dried herb smells strongly of coumarins, or of newly cut grass. It was traditionally used to scent linen and was steeped in white wine or added in brewing ale to increase inebriation.

Actions

- Anticoagulant
- Tonic
- Diuretic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Sedative
- Antispasmodic

Traditional and current uses

- Varicose veins and phlebitis
- Insomnia
- Tension and tension headaches
- Biliary obstruction
- Thrombophlebitis
- Dysmennorrhoea
- Renal colic
- Externally as a poultice for liver enlargement
- As a douche for pruritis vulvae

Contraindications: Do not use alongside anti-coagulant medication

Lady's Bedstraw

Galium verum Rubiaceae

A perennial plant with narrow leaves in whorls of 6-12 that encircle the squareish stem. The flowers are yellow or yellow/green and are held in long spikes at the top of stems that reach up to 100 cm (often smaller).

Herb Profiles and Recipes

The fruit is hairless and turns from green to black. It grows on rough grassland, dunes, dry grassy heaths and in hedgerows.

Part used: Flowering tops, dried quickly and used within a few weeks since it does not keep well.

History and folklore: This plant has been used to stuff mattresses, hence the name bedstraw. It can also be used as a substitute for rennet in cheese making, and as a colouring agent in the process.

Actions:

- Astringent
- Vulnerary
- Styptic
- Antispasmodic
- Sedative
- Diuretic

Traditional and current uses:

- Oedema
- Cystitis
- Retention of urine
- Nervous states
- Headache
- Palpitations
- Epilepsy
- Externally to treat wounds and skin conditions
- Powder inhaled for nosebleeds
- To ease labour and childbirth; possibly encourages oxytocin production

Clove

Eugenia caryophyllata / *Syzgium aromaticum* Myrtaceae

Part used: Buds

Clove from Latin *clavus* or French *clou*, meaning nail. *Eugenia* after Prince Eugene of Savoy 1663-1736, a patron of botany, *caryophyllata* *caryo*=nut, *phyllata*=leaves *aromaticum* meaning fragrant).

An evergreen tree reaching 15 m, with creamy flowers similar to myrtle. From the Molucca Islands in Indonesia and southern Philippines. Now grown in Tanzania, Madagascar, the West Indies and Brazil. Grown from seed on the spring or cuttings in the summer. The buds are picked as they become available and are dried in the sun.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Clove has a fascinating history. Originally it only grew in the Molucca Islands and the trees were fiercely guarded to prevent anyone exporting them to grow elsewhere. Wars were literally fought over cloves. Hot and aromatic/pungent

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Actions:

- Antiseptic
- Carminative
- Stimulant
- Analgesic
- Anti-emetic
- Antispasmodic
- Eliminates parasites

Traditional / current uses

- In South-East Asia, where they have been used for thousands of years seen as a panacea
- Used to treat viral conditions, malaria, cholera, tuberculosis
- Topically for scabies and other parasites
- Internally for intestinal parasites
- Wind, colic, and abdominal bloating
- Relieves spasmodic coughing
- Topically for muscle spasm, rheumatism and arthritis
- Stimulating to the mind and improve memory
- General tonic and stimulant
- Stimulates uterine muscle so should be avoided in pregnancy, but has been used to facilitate labour
- Used as an aphrodisiac
- Used as insect repellents (the traditional orange studded with cloves pomander) for moths and mosquitoes
- Limited use in Western herbalism, mainly for mouthwashes and toothache.
- Can be incorporated into formulae for treating fungal skin and nail infections
- Used to treat acne, boils, skin ulcers, sores and styes
- **Cautions:** Anticoagulant, if used in too high a concentration can cause bleeding. Due to its phenol content should only be used at low concentrations and for a maximum of 3 weeks. Can irritate the skin and mucus membranes
- Used as food preservative especially with meat e.g. spiced beef, ham studded with clove buds
- Used in honey cakes, biscuits. Clove buds and fennel seed added to rice is a great combination.

Olives infused in lemon, clove, fennel, garlic and chilli taste divine.

Garam masala

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 tbsp cumin seeds | 2 tsp cinnamon powder |
| 2 tbsp coriander seeds | ¼ tsp chilli powder |
| 1 tbsp black peppercorns | |
| 2 tsp clove buds | |
| 1 tsp cardamon seeds | |

Grind and combine all the ingredients

Comfrey, Knitbone

Symphytum officinale Boraginaceae Comfrey from con firma, made firm referring to its ability to mend broken bones. Symphytum is from the Greek to unite.

Part used: Due to concerns about the toxicity of the pyrrolizidine alkaloids it contains in Ireland the root is no longer permissible for use. The leaves are only recommended for external use. The original Australian research was flawed in that they used a hybrid rather than the true species, injected the tincture rather than giving oral doses and used an inappropriate control. Judicious use is the key. Other comfrey species that are grown in Ireland and the British Isles include *Symphytum uplandicum*, *Symphytum asperum*, *Symphytum x uplandicum*,. *Symphytum tuberosum* – although these are excellent for horticultural use as fertilizers and compost accelerators they should not be used medicinally. A native of Ireland and Europe, it also grows in western Asia, North America, Australia and all temperate regions of the world. Be sure that you are using the correct species. The true species is a branching perennial with a substantial fleshy rootstock covered in a black skin and creamy white in the centre. The leaves are long and tongue-shaped and emerge from a rosette. The stem is covered in irritating hairs and is winged. The flowers are held in coiled forked clusters. The corolla is a nodding bell with a closed mouth; they may be cream, mauve, pink, purple or white. Traditionally the white flowers were thought to be more suitable for use with females and the pink for males. It prefers damp locations such as ditches, riverbanks and by streams. It can be grown from seed in the spring or from divided roots (traditionally in the autumn but root slips will take at any time). The leaves and flowering tops are harvested in the summer. In a good year several cuttings can be taken. Cut before seeding otherwise it will self seed and can take over. When harvesting comfrey you may prefer to wear gloves as the plant is covered in small hairs which can be quite prickly and irritating in the fresh state. It will also spread by its roots. If you wish to move it from one area then you must be assiduous about removing every part of the root. If you decide to use the root it should be harvested in the autumn when allantoin levels are at their highest but this no longer recommended in this part of the world.

Character: Cool, moist, sweet

Harvesting and cultivation: As well as being used medicinally it has a long tradition of use in the garden. If you need to cut it to prevent seeding but have more than you need to use at the present time or for drying then the aerial parts may be either added to the compost heap to help active it. Alternatively, they can be placed in a barrel and left to infuse for a couple of weeks to make an excellent liquid fertilizer. Do not use the roots in the compost heap otherwise it will become a comfrey heap. The fresh leaves should be used to prepare an infused oil by the hot method. Dried leaves can be macerated by the cold method. Allantoin encourages cell proliferation and therefore helps repair damaged tissue. For this

Herb Profiles and Recipes

reason it is also used in the cosmetic industry in its isolated form. It is important that it is only used on clean wounds otherwise there is a danger that the wound will heal over with infection still there. The phenolic acids contribute to the herb's anti-inflammatory action. The pyrrolizidine alkaloids have given rise to a deal of controversy about the safety of comfrey for internal use. The initial research that was carried out used a different species of comfrey and injected the tincture. The isolated alkaloids are definitely toxic to the liver. However it is not clear whether they are toxic in the tiny amounts present in the correct species. They are often absent in the dried aerial parts and may be destroyed by heat, but are present in larger quantities in the root, which is banned for internal use in Ireland and other countries. The leaf is also banned for internal use in Ireland but is considered acceptable for internal use in the UK and many other jurisdictions.

Actions:

- Demulcent
- Astringent
- Anti-inflammatory
- Vulnery (wound healing)
- Heals connective tissue – bones, tendons, ligaments
- Cicatriscant (regenerates the skin)

Traditional/ current uses

Formerly used to treat stomach ulcers, IBS, respiratory complaints such as bronchitis and pleurisy. *Plantago major* and *Pulmonaria officinalis* make good substitutions in countries where this is no longer permitted.

Formerly used as a food plant and as fodder. Still considered good fodder for racehorses and used in other countries to make fritters by dipping leaves in batter, as a green vegetable which can be steamed or added to stir-fries. In France it is added to soufflés or white sauce after cooking. The young shoots were formerly steamed or braised like celery and fresh young leaves were chopped and added to salads. The root was formerly chopped, roasted and ground to make a coffee substitute. Used to treat broken bones, sprains, strains etc in the form of compresses or poultices. Bruises and grazes (the combination of tannins and mucilage helps to heal and soothe. Acne, boils, scars and psoriasis. Also valuable in the treatment of aching joints and rheumatism.

Comfrey salve

250 ml Comfrey infused oil

20g beeswax

Heat these ingredients over a bain marie until the wax is melted.

Then add

50 drops Zingiber essential oil

50 drops Lavandula x intermedia essential oil

50 drops Eucalyptus globulus essential oil

Pour into jars and allow to set.

Daisy, Bruisewort

Bellis perennis Asteraceae

Part used: Flowerheads (leaves can also be used)

A rosette of spoon shaped leaves that hugs the ground with the flowers arising on hairy stalks. The composite flower is a single capitulum with a domed yellow central disc surrounded by white rays (sometimes with a pink tinge) It does not like very acid soil and occurs in grassland. Ornamental forms with multiple rays and deeper colours are available. Native throughout Europe, naturalised in other places. There is rarely any need to cultivate other than by limiting weeding as it easily occurs in lawns and beds. Harvest of flowers is from April until around October, depending on the climate.

History/Folklore/Taste/Energetics Sour, due to the high vitamin C content. Daisy may well be a corruption of 'day's eye' referring to how the flowers open in sunlight. Bellis probably refers to its beauty and perennis to the fact that it is both perennial and also self seeds freely and therefore once present is difficult to eradicate (not that one would want to). It is as effective as Arnica for bruising (and much easier to cultivate, as well as being native). It is a flower long associated with childhood and in homeopathy is used for bruising in childbirth both for the mother and baby, and birth trauma in general. It seems to help us recover from the bruising and woundings of childhood at any age. Recently we harvested daisy heads to make an infused oil for a summer skin balm; when I went to see how the students we getting on they were all sitting in the daisy patch with daisy chains round their wrists, their necks, in their ears, on their heads with the most happy, innocent smiles on their faces (these students were aged 25-50 and had the expressions of delighted children on their faces). There seems to be an affinity to the solar plexus, that healthy yellow central disc; an open clear solar plexus with pure, innocent energy radiating in the form of the white rays. Opening the solar plexus allows trapped emotional energy to move down to the earth to ground or clear up through the crown to disappate. A clear solar plexus will allow the information we receive from the world to pass through and flow on. Daisy also seems to help us see clearly and to clear our eyes, our inner seeing of those traumatic images and memories that may cloud our inner vision and make us look at the world in a jaundice manner; it can also clear the rose tints that prevent us seeing people clearly, warts and all. There is a lot more to this plant; the way it roots firmly to the ground, is well grounded, and from there reaches up to bask in the sun.

Actions:

- Vulnerary
- Astringent
- Expectorant
- Anti-inflammatory
- Cicatrisant

Traditional and current uses

Externally:

- Bruises
- Sprains
- Wounds
- Sun damage to skin
- Cuts and grazes
- Bolls
- Skin disorders

Internally:

- Bronchitis
- Bronchial catarrh
- Gastro-enteritis
- Contains large amounts of vitamin C

Plantain and Daisy Skin food

Harvest equal quantities of plantain leaves (either ribwort or larged leaved) and daisy flowers and place in a pyrex bowl in a bain marie. Cover with olive oil and simmer for 2 hours. Leave over night and then press off. This may be used simply after bathing or showering to nourish the skin. It can also be use to prepare a bumps and bruises salve by adding 35g beeswax per 500 ml and 2% each lavender and tea tree essential oils.

Daisy flowers (an a few young leaves) can be added to forage salads and are rich in vitamin C.

Daisy tea can be taken internally for the chest and stomach. The decoction or infusion can also be added to the bath.

Dandelion, Pis Enlit

Taraxacum officinale Asteraceae

Part used: Leaf, flower and root. Stem sap is used externally to treat warts

Too common a plant to need describing. There are probably up to 250 subspecies but they are so similar as not to warrant individual description. It is native to Europe and grows worldwide. Normally this plant does not need to be cultivated; it grows everywhere. However, there are 'vegetable' varieties of seed available and if you are not blessed with its presence in your domain seed is easily obtained in the wild and will germinate readily anywhere. Leaves when fresh and tender. Spring and autumn for roots

History/ folklore/taste /energetics: The leaf is bitter and salty to taste, the root is bitter and sweet; both are cooling bitters. Dandelion and burdock have traditionally been combined to make a cleansing and fortifying tonic beverage.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Because the leaves contain so much potassium they are alkalizing, neutralizing acid and acidic emotions. Potassium is also valuable for the heart and blood pressure and dandelion leaf helps to clear the heart of fear and drain it out through the kidneys- this process increases urination rates substantially if there has been a lot of fear and therefore more fluid and salt are needed. The root clears anger and other stagnant emotions from the liver and the bowel and tonifies the liver and pancreas to help us absorb and process emotions and emotional backlogs better; sometimes those who have suppressed their anger and been nice and quiet all their lives find that dandelion makes them speak out rather more vociferously and stand up for themselves. The yellow flowers have always been considered to be an indication of its value as a liver herb, it is probably that they also show that the plant helps to clear trapped emotional energy and information from the solar plexus. As all of that clears we really do recover our dandelion (a corruption of the French for lion's teeth), in other words we recover our lion heart teeth and all, our courage and our passion.

Actions:

- Diuretic, the leaf is stringer
- Mild laxative, the root is stronger
- Cholagogue (stimulates bile production by the liver)
- Detoxifier
- Bitter,
- Potassium supplement
- Bitter nerve tonic, especially for the gut brain

Traditional and current uses

- Mild liver tonic, root is stronger
- High blood pressure with fluid retention
- Water retention for hormonal reasons
- Muscular gout and rheumatism, flushes out acid wastes
- Infrequent urination
- Leaf tea can help to soften gallstones
- Potassium supplement for treating heart failure (whole plant)
- Liver tonic
- Atonic dyspepsia
- Constipation
- Rheumatism, arthritis and other connective tissue conditions where a detox is required
- Hormonal imbalance
- Some nervous conditions
- Allergies
- Catarrhal conditions
- Skin problems
- Good nervine, promoting parasympathetic nerve tone

Herb Profiles and Recipes

The leaves are used fresh as spring tonic salad (we use them all year round here and cut them back when they have flowered to produce more), they can be blanched by placing an inverted flower pot over - makes leaves more tender and a little less bitter. Also, the seeds can be harvested and sown in trays of potting compost and soil to be used as baby cut and come again leaves-delicious. Combining dandelion leaves with sweet grated raw roots such as carrot and beetroot can make them more palatable. The roots can be sliced and used in stir fires or roasted in a cool oven to make dandelion coffee; those wishing to cut down on coffee consumption often find this an acceptable substitute and it can be ground and used in cafetières or substituted in most of the coffee officianados rituals of making the beverage. The flower petals can be used in salads, giving a delightful colour and interesting taste. Dandelion flowers have also been traditionally used to make wine.

Elder

Sambucus nigra Caprifoliaceae

Parts used: Flowers, Berries (Leaves, Bark, Buds were used historically but this is no longer recommended)

Native to Europe. Grows abundantly in woods, hedges, ditches and wasteland. Now grows in most temperate regions. Often cultivated. Propagated from cuttings in spring. Self propagates from seed. Rich folk lore attached. . This plant perfectly illustrates how nature provides the things that we need in a particular season – elderflowers appear during the hayfever season and the berries appear just as the seasons change from summer to autumn and we often need a boost to the immune system then. A deciduous tree, growing to 30 foot, with creamy white flowers and bluish green leaves.

Actions:

Flowers

- Diaphoretic
- Diuretic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Mild nervine

Berries

- Laxative
- Nutritive
- Immune stimulant/ immune modulant
- Anti-viral at least as effective as Echinacea for colds and flus
- Proanthocyanidins mean that the berries are valuable for adding collagen repair and strengthening night vision

Traditional and current uses

Flowers coughs, colds, flu-to reduce fever and catarrh. Tones lining of upper respiratory tract by reducing oedema, increasing resistance to infection. Chronic

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catarrh, ear infections, hay fever, sinusitis and other respiratory allergies. Candida. Arthritis by promoting diuresis and sweating. Good for anxiety in the evening. A hydrosol from the flowers is called Eau de Sureau in France and is considered an excellent aftershave skin tonic.

Berries Colds, flu and respiratory infections, ear infections, Strengthens the immune system. Mild laxative often used in the form of syrups for children., but can also be used to treat diarrhoea, presumably because the anthocyanins are anti-inflammatory for the bowel wall. Probably has benefits for the eyes similar to bilberry due to the high levels of anthocyanins

Leaves Insect repellent. They are purgative and emetic in large doses, do not use internally. Used externally to treat bruises, chilblains and strain. The leaves were infused in linseed to make Oleum viride.

Taste and energetics

Definitely drying, slightly sweet. Sometimes described as hot and sometimes as cooling, I would view the flowers as cooling and the fruit as warming, some bitterness and sourness.

Flowers are used to make sweet fritters; a simple batter can be made from gram flower and water. The flower heads are dipped in and then plunged into hot oil.

Recipe for Elderberry cough mixture from Barbara Jeffreys

3lbs elderberries. Place in a large casserole in hot oven for 10 minutes approximately. Strain off juice and return to oven until all juice is run (about 1.5 pints). To each pint add half a pound of sugar, quarter teaspoon cinnamon and 12 cloves. Cover and simmer until sugar melts. Strain and bottle.

Elderflower and elderberry syrup

A nice variation is to make an infusion of elderflower, using 30g dried or 75 g fresh flowers in 250 ml of boiling water-cover and leave for 15 minutes. Make a decoction of 30g dried or 75 g fresh berries by placing them in cold water and simmering for half an hour. Strain these two off and combine the liquid and check the volume. For each ml of liquid add one gram of sugar or honey, or 1 ml of apple juice concentrate. Return to the heat and simmer for half an hour then bottle in clean bottles. Store in the fridge and use as a cordial, on ice cream or fruit pies or add it to white wine for an interesting variation on a kir, or with champagne to make a variation on kir royale.

The berries can be used to make wine or brew ale.

Elderflower cordial recipe from Neil McNulty

Ingredients:

35 large heads of Elderflower – all stalk removed

Juice of 3 lemons thick lemon slices

Zest of these 3 lemons

2 litres of the best water

5 tsp citric acid

Herb Profiles and Recipes

2 kg sugar (of course, you could try some Rice syrup but it wont thicken as much)

Method:

Place water, lemon juice/zest, citric acid & elderflowers in a large glass bowl exposed to the sun for a day, in a glasshouse or conservatory if necessary

Strain the liquid – keep the elderflower heads in another bowl

Heat the liquid and turn off the heat, stir in the sugar until you have the consistency you want for the syrup.

Let syrup cool to the touching temp (lukewarm) and then pour syrup on top of the elderflowers and let sit for a couple of days (covered with cloth)

Strain and bottle and fridge.

Elecampane, Elfwort

Inula helenium Asteraceae

Part used: Root

A tall, erect, stately plant up to 2.5 metres. The leaves are pale green, with grey hairs (rough on top and wooly on the underside) and are simple. The leaves are held alternately and can be 30-70 cm long. The many flowers are reminiscent of small sunflowers with yellow rays (it is sometimes called perennial sunflower). Native to south Eastern Europe and naturalized in some regions here, normally as an escape near orchards, meadows, walls, banks and roadsides. It will tolerate shade but prefers sun and deep soil. Easily grown from seed or propagated from root division. Barker says that the root is better used fresh, if dried it must retain its aromatic quality so must be dried carefully.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Elecampane has a tradition for being used as a root vegetable. The Greek and Romans used this herb as a panacea for many conditions including dropsy, digestive upsets, menstrual problems, sciatica (Ody). It has mainly been used as a respiratory herb in recent times but deserves wider recognition for its action on the digestion, spleen and adrenals and as a valuable nutritive tonic or adaptogen. Bitter, sweet, warming and drying.

Actions:

- Expectorant
- Soothing coughs
- Increases sweating
- Bitter
- Hepatic
- Eliminates worms
- Antiseptic
- Stimulating nervine
- Adrenal tonic

Traditional and current uses

- Chest infections
- Chronic chest conditions
- Shifts stubborn catarrh
- Asthma and hayfever
- Digestive complaints
- Excess mucus in the stomach with nausea, distension, flatulence and vomiting
- May help improve calcium absorption and deposition in osteoporosis/osteopenia due to its inulin content
- Traditionally used in the treatment of tuberculosis, recent research has shown that it is effective against MRSA in vitro
- Skin conditions including eczema and varicose ulcers
- Spleen meridian tonic, nutritive tonic for earth element
- Nutritive tonic for debility (probably an adaptogen)
- Adrenal tonic

Eyebright

Euphrasia officinalis (collective of species including *E. rostkoviana*, *brevipila*, *stricta*)
Scrophulariaceae

Part used: Aerial parts

A small downy annual saprophytic plant. It has a square stem up to 30 cm tall. The leaves are opposite and ovate. The two lipped flowers are red, purple or white and grow in axillary spikes. It is native to Europe, Western Asia and naturalized in the USA. Grows in meadows, pasture and grassy areas, including by seashores. It is difficult to cultivate since it is saprophytic to grasses but seed is available and some have succeeded in growing it from seed. It is harvested during the flowering period, usually May-October.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Astringent. The flowers are thought to resemble a healthy eye, according to the Doctrine of Signatures. Reputed by some to encourage clear sightedness on all levels. The botanical name is derived from the Greek word euphrosyne, meaning gladness.

Actions:

- Anti-catarrhal
- Astringent
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-bacterial
- Antispasmodic

Traditional/current uses:

- Eye lotion
- Nasal catarrh, rhinitis, sinusitis, ear problems, conjunctivitis, hay fever, colds, measles
- Mouth wash for throat and mouth inflammation
- Tones the mucus membranes
- Dries up fluid mucus, not suitable for dry congestion

Fennel

Foeniculum vulgare Umbelliferae/Apiaceae

Part used: Dried fruit, leaves. The root is also used although it has a milder therapeutic effect. Selected cultivars produce bulbous stems that are used as a vegetable.

Can reach 1-2 m in height. The plant is hairless and has finely divided leaves. The flowers are yellow and held in umbels. The fruit are ovoid. Indigenous to Southern Europe and naturalized particularly in coastal regions; cultivated in China, India and Egypt and all temperate regions. Fruit are harvested in the autumn when plump and still green (they turn bitter as they become brown). Leaves are harvested throughout the season. Roots are harvested in the autumn.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Traditionally regarded as a sacred plant in many cultures which protects against evil and witches. Sweet, warming, dry, pungent and aromatic.

Actions

- Carminative
- Aromatic
- Orexigenic (encourages a healthy appetite)
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antimicrobial
- Diuretic
- Hormonal
- Laxative
- Cardiotonic
- Expectorant
- Galactagogue (promotes breast milk production)
- Circulatory stimulant

Traditional and current uses

- Flatulent dyspepsia
- Anorexia
- Diuretic for cystitis
- Increases breast milk production
- Relieves colic, for nursing babies the tea can be taken by the mother. Otherwise a diluted infusion can be given in teaspoonful amounts before feeding.
- The Romans believed it to be good for dimness of vision
- Combined with laxatives to reduce griping
- For loose teeth, laryngitis or sore throats as a mouthwash or gargle
- Helps to eliminate high amounts of uric acid
- Stimulates the metabolism
- Gargle for sore throats
- Helps shift catarrh
- Topically the tea can be used as an eyewash for conjunctivitis and blepharitis.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Detoxifying
- Tonic for the kidneys and spleen meridians
- As a diuretic useful for arthritis, gout, cellulite and oedema
- Hormonal action makes it useful for PMS and menopausal symptoms
- A uterine stimulant that should be avoided at high dose in pregnancy but is safe to use in food still

Used in Indian and Chinese cooking to flavour a wide range of dishes. Good in vegetable stir fries and rice. Used in fish dishes - use the seeds, or the green herb in this case. The stems can be used to make fish kebab skewers. Green herb can be added to salad, check intensity of flavour before adding so as not to overwhelm the dish. Also, good with eggs - chopped into omelette, scrambled egg or egg mayonnaise. Can be added herbal seasoning blends such as Herbs de Provence.

Fennel and cheese straws

100g strong white or wholegrain flour

50g butter or olive oil

50g mature cheese (cheddar, pecorino or similar)

1 egg yolk (optional)

¼ teaspoon mustard powder, ground black pepper or cayenne powder (optional)

Salt to taste

2-3 teaspoons crushed fennel seeds

Mix flour, salt to taste and cayenne (mustard or black pepper) together in a bowl. Rub through fat with fingertips lightly until it looks like bread crumbs. Use a light tough and cool hand if possible. Add the finely grated cheese and stir through the egg yolk. Add enough cold water to make a stiff dough, lightly knead. Leave to sit in the fridge or a cool place for 20 minutes. Roll out the dough as thinly as possible and cut into strips 7-8cm long and 1.5 cm wide. Strips can be twisted or left flat. Arrange on a greased baking tray, sprinkle with a little olive oil and fennel seeds. Bake at 200°C for about 12 minutes or until golden. Cool on a wire rack. Can be stored in an airtight container for about a week.

Aromatic rice

1 cup brown basmati rice

3 cups water

1 teaspoon vegetable bouillon powder or ½ teaspoon herb salt

1 dessertspoon sesame seeds

5 cloves

1-2 teaspoons fennel seeds

Soak the rice in the water for ½ hour. Add other ingredients and simmer gently for about 30 minutes until cooked. A little olive or other cold pressed oil can be stirred through before serving.

This amount is about right for 3-4 people with accompanying dishes

Flaxseed/Linseed

Linum usitatissimum/ Linum bienne Linaceae

Part used: Seed and fixed oil from seed.

Linon in Greek and Linum in Latin mean linen – the fabric made from the stem fibres of the plant. Flax has been in cultivation from earliest civilization, at least 7 000 years. The oil is used to manufacture paints, putty and lino. The seed cake left over after the heat extraction of the oil is used in cattle feed as it contains protein, mucilage and oil. For culinary and medicinal purposes only the cold-pressed and unrefined oil should be used. Can be annual, biennial or perennial. It grows up to a metre in height. It has slender lance-shaped leaves and pale blue flowers. It is native to temperate Europe and Asia. The seeds are harvested in the autumn. It can be cultivated from seed sown in the spring.

Actions

- Demulcent
- Nutritive
- Phyto-oestrogenic
- Bulk laxative
- Expectorant

Traditional/ current uses

- Used internally, the mucilage in the seeds soothes irritation in the digestive tract to treat colitis, IBS, and other inflammations or irritations in the gastrointestinal tract
- Bulk laxative – take with plenty of water
- Grind or split seeds before eating to make essential fatty acids more available
- Soothing to the urinary and respiratory tracts
- Poultice used externally for chronic coughs, bronchitis, pleurisy and emphysema
- A poultice made with the seed and red wine was traditionally used for wounds in Portugal
- The whole seed contains phyto-oestrogens which can help to reduce menopausal symptoms and prostate symptoms
- Soaked seed can be used in cooking and baking as a binder substitute for eggs

Falafel

500g dried butter beans or chick peas (soak them overnight)

3 onions, finely chopped

4 cloves garlic, finely minced

Large bunch of parsley (or other green herbs), finely chopped

2 heaped tspn sea salt

2 dessertspoons ground coriander seed

2 dessertspoons ground cumin seed

Herb Profiles and Recipes

1 dessertspoon turmeric (optional)
3 dessertspoons linseed (soak for an hour)
80 ml lemon juice
80ml olive oil

Grind the ingredients into a coarse paste, form into balls. Place on baking trays and bake at 180C until golden brown (about 40 minutes). They can also be deep fried.

Seaweed balls

3-4 cups mung beans (soak overnight)
1 onion, finely chopped
5 cloves garlic, finely minced
2 dessertspoons ginger powder
½ cup dry seaweed, roughly chopped
40 ml tamari
1 dessertspoon linseed, soaked
Prepare the same way as falafels

Garlic

Allium sativum Liliaceae

Part used: Bulb. The leaves can also be used in cooking.

Perennial plant, grows 1-3 foot, with pale pink or green white flowers. Originally from central Asia, now throughout the world. It is propagated by dividing the bulb into cloves and planting them in spring or autumn. In this part of the world I have found autumn plantings give a better yield, and guarantee that the clove divides to form new bulbs, due to vernalisation. It is harvested in late summer, when greenery has died back. Dry on a rack, then store in dry conditions. Can be made into decorative plaits.

History / folklore / taste/energetics: Tastes pungent, and can be extremely heating (described as hot in the 4th degree), so take more fluid when using this as a remedy or ingesting large amounts on food. Garlic has a reputation for increasing longevity- in Italy a traditional wedding bread contains rosemary for fidelity and garlic for long life. In the Middle East men are given a traditional wedding gift of a jar of pickled garlic for increasing their longevity and preventing ageing. It's association with keeping vampires away speaks of its' ability to help protect and purify on an energetic level.

Actions

- Antibiotic
- Expectorant (helps to shift mucus)
- Sudorific (promotes sweating)
- Hypotensive (lowers blood pressure)
- Anti-coagulant (thins the blood)
- Anti-diabetic

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Spasmolytic (reduces spasms)
- Bacteriostatic (stops bacteria growing)
- Antiseptic
- Antiviral
- Promotes leucocytosis (the activity of white blood cells involved in the immune system)
- Amoebicidal, anthelmintic, insecticidal, larvicidal (gets rid of parasites internally)
- Antitoxic
- Keeps vampires away
- Cholagogue (encourages the liver to produce bile)
- Carminative – good for the digestion
- Diuretic, diaphoretic
- Depurative (blood purifier)
- Cicatriscant (promotes healthy tissue growth)

Traditional and current uses

- Bronchitis, acute and chronic
- Respiratory catarrh
- Colds and flus as a treatment and a preventative
- Whooping cough
- Asthma
- Preventative of typhoid and cholera
- Athlete's foot and fungal infections, rub on areas of athlete's foot and take internally for fungal infections Lowering cholesterol
- Lowers blood pressure and helps prevent heart disease (atheroma)
- Balances blood sugar
- As a poultice for boils and abscesses
- Worms and other intestinal infestations (take with ground pumpkin seeds and grated carrot)
- As part of the treatment for candida
- To treat thrush use garlic perles as suppositories
- Rub a clove of garlic on the feet and the odour will be present on the breath within 10 minutes. Rubbing garlic on the feet is a traditional treatment for respiratory complaints, if used for young children or those with delicate skin apply vegetable oil first.

Cautions Large amounts can cause stomach irritation, and raw garlic may cause contact dermatitis in some people. Stop taking at medicinal levels 10 days before surgery due to anti-coagulant effect which reduces blood clotting ability. If breastfeeding be aware that garlic can cause wind in the baby when the mother eats it.

Garlic honey

Garlic honey is a traditional treatment for colds and flu- chop garlic finely, place into a sterilised jar (preferably with equal amount of thyme) and cover with honey.

Chilli and garlic relish

250g garlic

250g chillis (deseeded if you want it really mild - I leave the seeds in)

150 ml olive oil

250 ml cider vinegar

1.5-2 tablespoon salt

2 tablespoon ground cumin seeds

1-2 tablespoon chilli powder if you want extra heat

2 teaspoon arrowroot (optional as thickener)

Put all ingredients except arrowroot in food processor and process until finely chopped. Put into pan and bring to boil then simmer for 1-1.5 hours until reduced by a third. Mix arrow root with a little vinegar and stir in. Boil rapidly for one minute until thickened. Spoon into sterilized jars and seal. Ready immediately but improves with keeping. Keeps for 1 year, but normally devoured before that.

Onions and leeks are milder alternatives medically.

Parsley and cardamom are reputed to minimise odour on breath.

Related species Ramsons, Bear Garlic *Allium ursinum*

Part used: Bulb, aerial parts

Actions: Similar to garlic but weaker. High blood pressure, prevent arteriosclerosis, ease stomach pain, digestive tonic, treat diarrhoea, colic, flatulence, indigestion. Infusion used for threadworms. Used for asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema. Juice used to aid weight loss. Widely used as a food

Onions and leeks have similar medicinal properties; leeks have the mildest action.

Onion syrup is another traditional cold remedy. Slice onions into a glass bowl with sugar scattered over. Leave for at least 30 minutes and drink resulting syrup. This can also be prepared by mixing the chopped onion with apple juice concentrate and the resulting mixture makes a delicious fresh relish as well as a cough syrup. Another alternative is to hollow out a turnip, grate the material scrapped out and mix with sugar or honey; place back into the turnip, leave for several hours and drink the resulting syrup.

Elephant garlic (*Allium ampeloprasum* var. *ampeloprasum*)

This species is not a true garlic, it is more closely related to leek. It has a milder flavour than garlic. The plants are also used in ornamental gardens as they have pretty curly flower spikes. All the *Allium* family can be inter-planted with other plants in gardens to discourage pests. Garlic infusion can be used as a spray in the garden to deter and treat fungal diseases and insect infestations.

Ginger

Zingiber officinalis (Zingiberaceae)

Part used: Rhizome fresh or dried

Native to Asia, and grown widely in West Indies, Africa and India. The 10 month old rhizome is harvested, washed, soaked and sometimes boiled. It is propagated by dividing the rootstock. Needs fertile soil and plenty of rain. Can be grown undercover in this part of the world, but unlikely to flower. However, will increase rootstock.

Taste and energetics: Acrid, pungent, hot, dry

Actions:

- Carminative
- Diaphoretic
- Spasmolytic
- Warming and stimulating
- Promotes gastric secretion
- Circulatory stimulant
- Expectorant
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-tussive (reduces coughing)
- Antiseptic
- Anti-emetic
- Harmoniser of formulae;
- Neutralises endotoxins; used in Chinese medicine to reduce toxicity of other herbs
- Externally as a rubefacient (promotes blood flow to areas applied)
- Mild diuretic

Traditional and current uses

- Colic, flatulent dyspepsia, flatulent colic, alcoholic gastritis
- Diarrhoea from a relaxed bowel with no inflammation
- Powder added to tea or hot water (or crystallized root) for travel sickness or morning sickness
- Powder, or essential oil added to footbaths to improve circulation
- Disperses mucus and phlegm
- Tea used for colds and fevers and chills
- Promotes sweating
- Cold wet coughs
- Juice or tea used in scalp massage to promote hair growth
- Painful periods and relief of pelvic congestion
- Post operative nausea
- 70% of patients with bacterial dysentery made a full recovery when treated with ginger
- Chilblains and Raynaud's syndrome and poor circulation, internally and externally

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Any condition with cold hands and feet, weak pulse and pale complexion
- As an analgesic and anti-inflammatory may help relieve arthritis, rheumatism and other inflammatory conditions
- Much used in oriental cooking - dried powder or grated fresh root in Chinese, Indian, Middle Eastern and Thai cooking
- Powdered form or fresh grated ginger can be used to add warmth to raw foods, such as carrot salad etc.
- Fresh root can be incorporated into juices and smoothies to make them more warming
- Fresh root for flavouring drinks. –ginger beer, ginger and lemon tea, warm apple juice with ginger and cinnamon to settle the digestion
- In the powdered form for ginger bread, cookies, and with cooked pears
- Crystallised ginger taken after meals to settle digestion
- Pickled ginger with Japanese food.
- Ginger wine as a winter tonic

Hawthorn, Whitethorn, May, Quickset

Crataegus oxyacantha/oxyacanthoides and *monogyna/laevigata* Rosaceae

Part used: Berries; leaves and flowers

This is a deciduous shrubby tree. Long shoots and short thorny shoots. Lobed, stipulate leaves. Pink to white flowers – 5 petals, short triangular sepals, stamens prominent around nectary and carpels in corymbs. Red berries – mealy flesh and large stone. Both species used medicinally. European shrub, grows throughout Europe, North America, Asia. Seeds usually take 18 months to germinate, therefore normally propagated from cuttings.

Taste and energetics: flowers cool, astringent; berries sweet, sour, warm

Actions:

- Cardiac tonic
- Coronary vasodilator
- Hypotensive or blood pressure regulator
- Relaxant
- Anti-oxidant
- Diuretic
- Mild anxiolytic

Traditional and current uses

- Reputed to dissolve deposits in thickened and sclerotic arteries
- Cardiac failure
- Myocardial weakness
- Angina pectoris
- Myocardial weakness with high blood pressure
- High blood pressure

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Low blood pressure
- Arteriosclerosis
- Buerger's disease
- Improves peripheral circulation
- Improves circulation to the head and therefore can aid memory
- Paroxysmal tachycardia
- Benign arrhythmias
- Relieves mild anxiety, especially at menopause or andropause
- Dyspnoea
- Originally used for kidney and bladder stones May take a few weeks to show results, although often not. Initially, increased urination may occur – this usually balances out after a few days. Make sure adequate water is taken (at least 1.5 litres a day).
- In its action as a peripheral vasodilator to lower high blood pressure and increases blood supply to the tissues; the addition of horseradish and or cayenne can be very helpful
- Its vasodilatory properties extend to the arteries of the heart making this herb beneficial for the treatment of coronaries, angina and heart failure
- Hawthorn also slows heart rate if too high (chronotropic) and lowers force of heart contractions if too strong and vice versa (inotropic)
- Helps with repairing collagen in all tissues, including those of the joints
Fruit used to prepare haw jelly; this takes quite a lot of time and patience.
Flowering tops and young leaves used in salads as a spring tonic.

Lavender

Lavandula officinalis/vera/angustifolia Labiatae/Lamiaceae

Part used: Flowers, leaves may also be used but have a lesser action

Perennial evergreen shrub, grows up to 1 metre. The plant has grey green foliage, with spikes of flowers extending above the foliage. These are normally violet-blue, but there are cultivars in all shades of blue and purple, as well as white and pink. Much of what is sold as true lavender oil is actually *Lavandula x intermedia* or Lavandin. *Lavandula spica* produces more oil but it is of inferior quality. *Lavandula stoechas*, known as French Lavender, is used in Portugal and Spain to treat skin problems such as ulcers, wounds and sores. Indigenous to Southern Europe, mainly grown commercially in France, but throughout the world, notably Tasmania. Propagated by cuttings or seed.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Lavender is like the twin to rosemary; it lowers the blood pressure whereas rosemary raises it. Lavender is used to bring the energy down when it is all stuck in the head, causing anxiety. It is ideal after a day of being stuck up in the heady place to bring the energy down and clear looping thought patterns. It helps to calm the heart and the nervous system, to cool overheated emotions. In general it cools, calms, clears. Bitter, dry, cooling, aromatic

Actions:

- Anti-bacterial
- Analgesic
- Antiseptic
- Carminative
- Circulatory stimulant
- Cholagogue
- Nervine
- Spasmolytic
- Antidepressant
- Anti-rheumatic
- Relaxant
- Rubefacient
- Sedative

Traditional and current uses

- Flatulent dyspepsia, colic
- Depressive headache and migraines
- Tension headache
- Irritability and over excitement in children of any age
- Burns, sunburn
- Sleeplessness, irritability, depression
- Depressive states associated with digestive dysfunction
- Asthma, especially where there is a lot of stress and tension
- Coughs and colds
- Should not be used in large doses in pregnancy
- Wound herb
- To treat worms
- Helps to bring the energy down into the body from the head

Lavender shortbread

100g butter or vegetable spread

50g sugar

175 g self raising flour

2-3 teaspoons lavender flowers, according to taste

Cream the butter and sugar together. Mix in flour and lavender then knead into a smooth dough. Roll out the dough and cut into biscuits with a cutter. Place on an oiled baking sheet and bake at 230°C for 10-12 minutes.

Alternatively use 1.5 teaspoons lavender flowers and 2 teaspoons or rosemary leaves, finely chopped, or use 3 teaspoons rosemary leaves without the lavender.

Night time tea: 2 parts by volume each of lavender flowers, chamomile flowers, Tilia blossom, Melissa flowering tops, 1 part rose buds.

Mix together and use 1-2 teaspoons per mug. Pour on boiling water and leave to infuse for 5-10 minutes before drinking.

Lemon balm, Balm , Melissa

Melissa officinalis Lamiaceae

Part used: Dried aerial parts, gathered before flowering.

A perennial plant growing up to 30 cm. The leaves are heart shaped, tooth and very wrinkled. The flowers are white/pale pink. It is native to the Mediterranean but naturalized in Ireland. It can be propagated by division and self seeds readily.

History/Folklore/Taste/Energetics: The species name Melissa is the Latin name for a honey bee since the plant is much loved by bees. The Romans soaked the leaves in wine to treat scorpion stings and venomous bites. Pliny recommended planting balm near hives and a Dr. Losch recommended rubbing the inside of hives with Melissa to prevent the bees from vagabonding. The Elizabethans used the plant in salads, for tea and to flavour wine. It had a reputation for renewing youth even up to the 18th century; aromatic, sour, bitter, cooling.

Actions:

- Carminative
- Antispasmodic
- Diaphoretic
- Sedative
- Antiviral effect against herpes viruses
- Nervine

Traditional and current uses

- Flatulent dyspepsia and digestive problems of nervous origin
- Neurasthenia
- Depressive illness, calms the central nervous system
- Poly phenols are generally anti-viral, but particularly against herpes, both cold sores and genital herpes. Reduces healing time and reduces frequency of attacks
- Inhibits thyroid function
- Colds and flus as a tea
- Hysteria and shock
- Lowers blood pressure and can help reduce palpitations
- Increases bile production dramatically
- Traditionally considered to lift the spirits - 'chase away black humours' and encourage longevity
- When cutting back the plants, infuse the trimmings and add this to a bath for a beautifully relaxing experience
- Has been researched as a possible preventative of Alzheimers and dementia
- Insect repellent
- Macerated oil for tension, depression or chest complaints externally
- Compresses for gout and painful swellings of the joints

Makes a beautiful tea when the fresh herb is used. The leaves can be used in salads and chopped into butter to serve with fish or chicken.

Licorice, Sweet Wood

Glycyrrhiza glabra Leguminosae

Part used: Root and stolon

The plant is a woody stemmed perennial which grows to about 6 feet. It has dark green leaves and pea-like cream to mauve flowers in the summer. In Chinese medicine a related species is used similarly. Grown all over Southern Europe, but in mainly Russia, Turkey, Syria and Iran. The plant also used to be widely propagated in Yorkshire to make Pontefract cakes (a licorice sweet). Trenches 6 foot deep were dug and filled with sandy light soil to encourage the growth of long roots and allow easy harvesting. 3-4 year old roots are lifted in the autumn. Propagation is normally by dividing the roots in the spring. It can be raised from seed, but is slow enough to establish.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Sweet, neutral, moist and faintly astringent

Actions:

- Expectorant
- Demulcent
- Diuretic
- Spasmolytic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Adrenal agent
- Mild laxative
- Anti-allergenic
- Hypertensive
- Harmoniser of formulae

Traditional and current uses

- Bronchial catarrh, bronchitis, coughs, hoarse throat
- Chronic gastritis, peptic or duodenal ulcer (forms a foam which protects the stomach lining).
- Colic
- Adrenocortical insufficiency (adrenal exhaustion),
- Rebalancing the adrenal glands after cortisone therapy
- Bladder and kidney ailments
- A laxative
- May help reduce fever
- Asthma
- Liver disease, including hepatitis, jaundice, abdominal distension, nausea and vomiting
- Ulcers, including aphthous ulcers (mouth ulcers)
- Allergic and other skin diseases
- General tonic
- Should be given in neutral or alkaline solution.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- More effective taken before food
- Longterm use may result in hypokalaemia
- Potassium intake should be increased. (e.g. dandelion leaf, bananas, tomatoes)
- Avoid in hypertension, hypokalaemia, cirrhosis of the liver, pregnancy
- Oestrogenic effect in animals
- Excessive intake of sweet containing licorice can also give problems, but in all forms if intake is reduced or stopped side effects disappear.

Whilst not used much as a culinary herb, it is widely used to make sweet meats (confectionery) and to flavour beers and give a frothy head, especially in the manufacture of stout.

Linden, Lime Flower, Tilia

Tilia platyphyllos/cordata/ x europea Tiliaceae

Part used: Dried inflorescences.

Native to most of Europe, but not to Ireland, although it is widely present here as an introduced tree. Also grown in gardens and along roads.

Actions:

- Sedative
- Spasmolytic
- Diaphoretic
- Diuretic
- Mild astringent

Traditional and current uses

- Migraine, tension and sinus headaches
- Hysteria
- Tension and stress
- Calms the mind and allows easy sleep
- Panic attacks and nervous palpitations
- Arteriosclerotic high blood pressure, especially when associated with nervous tension
- Feverish colds and flu, reducing fever and catarrh
- Traditionally used in France for irritable babies and children as a tea
- Used in France to make a lotion or wash for irritated and itchy skin in combination with marshmallow. Also used for bites, boils, burns and sore eyes.
- Warming and relaxing to the digestive tract; release tension and contains soothing mucilage
- A cold infusion of the tea can help to relieve hot flushes

Taste: Taste aromatic and mucilaginous.

Makes a beautiful relaxing tea

Marigold, Pot Marigold, May Bud, GoldBloom

Calendula officinalis Asteraceae

Part used: Dried flowers or out petals (ligulates) of flowers. The leaf also can be used. An annual herb, indigenous to South Europe, but widely cultivated; readily self seeding. Plants will continue to flower throughout the winter if the weather is mild and flower into a second year. The second year flowers will often be slightly different in form with ligulate petals developing from the central disc. The flowers are collected when fully open. The leaves and stems also contain constituents and can be used alongside the flowers if supply is short. Tradition has it that the more orange the flowers are the more medicine they contain; definitely deeper orange flowers give a more intensely coloured infused oil.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: The name calendula refers to the fact that in mild enough climates it will bloom throughout the year. It is alleged that the deeper orange the flowers are the better their medicine is. The orange colour suggests an affinity with the sacral chakra and this is confirmed by its uses to treat gynaecological conditions and bowel conditions. The flowers are said to gladden the heart with their vibrant colour and are real sunshine energy that lifts the spirit, encourages cheerfulness, clears the head and the eyes. The resins that it contains are wonderfully healing to the skin and gut lining and help to treat all sorts of infections. There is a corresponding action on an emotional level of healing our sacral creative energy and wounds to our sexuality. It is slightly bitter, pungent, drying and cooling in character.

Calendula carotenoids include Meso-zeaxanthin, Lutein and Zeaxanthin which have been extracted and used to make a product called Macushield which is reported to protect the macula against blue light damage, free radicals and help to replenish macula pigments. Presumably including marigold petals in the diet will do the same thing. Other plants that contain carotenoids that help heal the eyes and act as antioxidants on our tissues include saffron, Goji berries and carrots.

Actions:

- Spasmolytic
- Aperient (stimulates appetite)
- Cholagogue
- Diaphoretic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-haemorrhagic
- Emmenagogue (promotes menstruation)
- Vulnerary (helps heal wounds)
- Styptic (stops bleeding)
- Antiseptic
- Mildly oestrogenic
- Astringent

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- Anti-oxidant
- NOTE: constituents which dissolve more easily in oil or alcohol are responsible for the antimicrobial actions, whilst those which dissolve more easily in water are more anti-inflammatory

Traditional and current uses

- Amenorrhoea (absence of periods), dysmenorrhoea (painful periods)
- Gastric and duodenal ulcers
- Colitis, gastritis, oesophagitis
- Diarrhoea
- Nosebleeds
- Measles
- Enlarged or inflamed lymph nodes
- Skin conditions, especially acne and eczema, both internally and externally
- Boils, abscesses and cold sores
- Fevers
- Varicose veins, varicose eczema, proctitis, haemorrhoids, crural ulcers and bedsores
- Broken capillaries
- Topically on chilblains
- Burns and sunburn, topically
- As eyewash for conjunctivitis. Also believed to replenish eye pigments when taken internally and protect the tissues of the eye
- As a cream for athlete's foot and ringworm. Also as a cream for cradle cap, nappy rash, cracked nipples
- Compresses for mastitis
- Clearing to the liver
- Fresh juice for warts

Used in salads and as a 'pot herb', also claimed to be an alternative to saffron, although personally I have not found that they give much colour to the rice or other foods, although the golden threads taste spicy and add vibrancy.

Calendula and honey lip balm

100 ml calendula infused oil

50 ml rosehip oil

10 g beeswax or cocoa butter

2-3 heaped teaspoons honey

Gently melt all ingredients except the honey together in a bain marie. Allow to cool slightly and add honey and a few drops of essential oil (for example tea tree and lemon to protect against cold sores; mandarin and chamomile to help tissue repair for chapped lips; peppermint and eucalyptus); whisk until it starts to emulsify and pour into small jars. I tend to use 15 ml plastic jars as ideal to carry around.

Queen cakes with calendula petals

125 g butter or vegetable spread

125 g sugar (rappadura is best)

125 g spelt flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

2 eggs

1 teaspoon vanilla essence

½ cup fresh calendula petals

Cream butter and sugar together, whisk in beaten eggs and then fold in the combined baking powder and flour. Stir in vanilla essence and petals.

Spoon into paper cases and bake at 180 oC for 18-20 minutes.

Marshmallow

Althea officinalis Malvaceae

Part used: Root, leaf and flowers

A herbaceous perennial, growing up to 2 metres, erect and rarely branched. The plant is covered in soft down. The leaves are pale green-grey; they are heart shaped with a toothed margin. The flowers are pale pink and held on short stalks in spikes. Many related species are used for similar purposes; *Althea rosea* Hollyhock (not native but widely grown as an ornamental), *Malva moschata* Musk mallow, and *Malva sylvestris* Common Mallow. Musk mallow and Common mallow are better for culinary uses, although the flowers of all species are good in salads. Native to Europe It grows in salt-marshes, brackish marshes, ditches and by streams, not normally far inland. The flowering tops are harvested when in flower, the root in autumn from plants at least two years old, the leaves may be harvested for culinary use at any stage. Young seed heads are also traditionally eaten and known as bread and butter. *Malva moschata* grows in dry grassy places and ditches in richer soil. *Malva sylvestris* grows in dry banks, waste places and at the edge of beaches.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: The name derives from the Greek word although meaning to heal. Traditionally dried root sticks used as chew sticks for teething babies. Sections of root were candied to make the original marshmallow sweets. Flowers and young leaves can be added to salads, stews and stirfries. A cold infusion is traditionally used to prepare both the leaf and the root as it releases more of the mucilage responsible for it's soothing action. This should be carried out overnight (for 12 hours). The plant has a soothing, comforting energy, like a warm hug that makes everything feel better for the upset, confused child. Sweet, cool, moist

Actions:

Leaf

- Demulcent
- Expectorant
- Diuretic
- Antilithic (helps break down urinary and gall stones)
- Emollient

Root

- Demulcent
- Diuretic
- Emollient
- Vulnerary
- Mildly laxative or balancing to bowel habit

Traditional and current uses

Leaf

- Bronchitis,
- Respiratory catarrh,
- Dry coughs, Asthma, Pleurisy,
- Allergic rhinitis,
- Earache associated with chronic catarrh,
- Cystitis, Urethritis,
- Urinary gravel or stones,
- Respiratory catarrh with digestive weakness,
- Topically for abscesses , boils and ulcers,
- As a wash for itchy, inflamed or sensitive skin. The flowers are even better for this.

Root

- Gastritis, gastric or peptic ulcers,
- Enteritis, ileitis, colitis, diverticulitis,
- Excessive stomach acid,
- Inflammation of mouth or pharynx,
- IBS,
- Respiratory catarrh with irritating cough,
- Cystitis,
- Topically for varicose and thrombotic ulcers

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Mallow Soup Melokhia

1 onion , finely chopped

2 cloves of garlic, crushed or minced

2 tablespoons olive oil

A clander full of mallow leaves (musk mallow or common mallow are best)

1 litre of stock (or water with vegetable bouillon added)

A handful of fresh oregano, chopped (optional)

Salt and pepper to taste

Sweat the onions and garlic in the olive oil until transparent. Roughly chop the mallow leaves and add them to the pan with the stock and oregano if using. Simer for 15 minutes, season with salt and pepper. The soup can be blended if wished to give a wonderfully creamy texture.

Marshmallow Root Brownies

125 g butter

40 g marshmallow root powder

200 g rapadura sugar

50 g self-raising flour

1 teaspoon cinnamon and 1 teaspoon ginger (optional)

75g Chopped walnuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 180 oC . Line an 8 inch square cake tin with parchment. Melt the butter and stir in the marshmallow powder. Beat the eggs and sugar together, then add the butter and marshmallow root mixture to it Fold in the flour and spices. Stir in the nuts. Spoon into the cake tin and bake for about 40 minutes until cooked. Allow to cool in the tin then cut into squares

Meadowsweet, Queen of the Meadow, Bridewort, Lady-of-the meadow, Meadsweet, Pride of the Meadow, Doloff

Filipendula ulmaria, *Spirea ulmaria* Rosaceae

Part used: Flowers and leaves

Perennial herb growing in damp meadows and ditches. Creeping root stock with angular red stem. Branched near top. Leaves alternate, pinnate. Leaflets are entire, serrate and have a white downy covering to the underside. Terminal leaflet 3-5 lobes. Flowers creamy, yellow white in paniced cymes. Seeds spiral cases. Native to Europe, Eastern US and Canada. Prefers damp ditches, river banks, but will tolerate some dryness. Propagated by seed, or root division in autumn or spring. It is harvest from June to August when the flowers are open (sometimes it will flower as late as October or November)

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History/folklore/taste/energetics: It tastes like aspirin or almonds , also smells of aspirin due to salicylates. Some say the flowers smell of almonds. The plant was used as a strewing herb in mediaeval times. It was one of the most sacred herbs of the Druids, used to treat malaria and fever. Reputedly used by Cuchulainn. It has been used in brewing, particularly to flavour mead. The flowers can be substituted in the recipe for elder flower cordial.

Actions:

- Antiseptic
- Diuretic
- Diaphoretic
- Anti-rheumatic
- Astringent
- Antacid
- Aromatic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Spasmolytic

Traditional and current uses

- Rheumatism and arthritis, rheumatic muscle and joint pain
- Fevers
- Children's diarrhoea (and adults)
- It is a relaxant that can promote sleep
- Acid stomach, atonic dyspepsia with heart burn, peptic ulcer and hyperacidity; IBS
- Acute catarrhal cystitis, urethritis
- Dropsy
- Stranguary, difficulty in passing water
- Any condition which requires reduction of acid in the body
- Can be used to make a cordial following the elderflower cordial recipe
- To make mead
- This is the plant from which aspirin was originally developed in the nineteenth century (the name aspirin means from Spirea- the old botanical name for meadowsweet).

Nettle

Urtica dioica Urticaceae

A perennial herb can grow up to 5 foot tall; needs little description; it is dioiceous so there are separate male and female plants. A related annual species – *Urtica urens* is used similarly. Grows throughout the world, native to Ireland.

Part used: Leaves (gather before flowering for culinary purposes); flowering aerial part for tea and tinctures; root in spring or autumn; seed in autumn. Leaves for culinary use before flowering as too fibrous once flowers appear; cutting the plants

Herb Profiles and Recipes

back gives several crops of young tender leaves throughout the year and means that nettles can be used after May (the tradition is to have three good feeds of nettles before the end of May which is when they start flowering). Nettles can also be used to enrich the compost heap or to make a liquid fertilizer. Spent nettles from the fertilizer or from making medicines can also be added to the compost heap as an accelerator. Nettles also provide valuable food for the caterpillars of various native butterflies so it is good to have a few clumps in the garden. Flowering aerial parts for infusions etc; seeds when ripe; roots in spring or autumn. Nettle has traditionally been used to produce linen and twine.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Nettle was traditionally used to make twine and textiles- nettle linen is reputed to be finer than that made from flax. There is an old folk tale in Ireland where a sister weaves nettle shirts for her brothers who have been enchanted by an evil sorceress and turned into swans. The shirts have to be thrown over the swans backs to turn them back into humans. Due the fact that she ran out of time, or fibre one of the shirts only had one arm and so the brother who got that shirt had one arm and one swan's wing for the rest of his life. Rosemary Gladstar says that nettle medicine is particularly useful during menopause or at times when people feel that they have no boundaries; it helps to repair psychic boundaries; this may also be useful during puberty when young people are individuating and building the strength of their identity and personal boundaries. Cool, drying, astringent, bitter and slightly salty.

Actions:

Aerial parts

- Anti-haemorrhagic
- Hypoglycaemic
- Diuretic
- Tonic
- Hepatic
- Astringent
- Anti-allergenic
- Galactagogue

Roots

Tonic for the prostate

Seeds

Kidney and adrenal tonic and source of essential fatty acids, including omega 3 oils

Traditional and current uses:

Aerial parts

- Uterine haemorrhage
- Nose bleeds
- Anaemia
- Infantile and psychogenic eczema
- Asthma
- Hayfever
- Insect bites
- Itchy skin
- Arthritis
- Fluid retention and poor kidney function

Roots reducing prostatic enlargement

Seeds Energy food, tonic for kidneys and thyroid

Dried nettles are used as animal fodder and make a hay with an equal protein content to Lucerne. Nettle can also be used to produce a liquid fertilizer for plants. When brewed properly this should smell pleasant rather than foetid. Nettle can also be used to prepare tea and to brew beer. Nettle juice is a wonderfully hearty drink, nourishing and cleansing at the same time. When nettles are juiced, or pulverized to make pesto, the juice antidotes the sting of the hairs so there is no stinging effect. For the braver raw food enthusiast it is possible to carefully pick a nettle leaf, fold it down from the central rib on each side with the underside enclosed, roll it up, squeeze gently and munch it like that without a sting; can take a little practice and if you don't quite get it right then make sure you have a plantain leaf to hand to munch straight after to treat buccal stings (plantain tastes a lot nicer than dock leaves and in my experience is a more effective treatment for nettle stings). Nettle seed is a valuable winter energy food. The seeds are picked when plump and green and can either be dried or pickled in vinegar to make 'poor man's caviar', they have a pleasant nutty taste.

Nettles can be used as an alternative to spinach in soups and stir-fries. For a constant supply of nettle leaves (they are really only good to eat before the flowers start to appear) treat nettles as a cut and come again crop.

Nettle Soup

- 1-2 chopped onions
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or butter
- 2 diced potatoes
- 1 litre of nettle leaves
- 1 vegetable stock cube or a dessertspoon of bouillon powder

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A few sprigs of parsley and thyme

Black pepper or ginger to taste

Sauté the onions in the olive oil. Add the potatoes and other ingredients and then add about a litre of water or oat milk. Simmer until the potatoes are cooked then liquidize to produce a rich green soup.

Raw Nettle Pesto

About a litre of gently packed nettle leaves (or 2/3 nettle and 1/3 golden marjoram)

1-3 cloves garlic

½ cup of ground almond or hazel nuts

s, or use whole cashews or pine nuts

1 dessertspoon balsamic or cider vinegar

125-250 ml olive or hemp seed oil, depending on the texture you like. I tend to gradually drizzle the oil into the mixture and it is processed in the food processor.

Salt to taste

Put all the ingredients except the oil in the food processor. Start the processor running and drizzle in oil until the desired texture is achieved. Pesto can also be made using a pestle and mortar.

Oats

Avena sativa Gramineae

Part used: Dehusked and rolled starchy seed endosperm, Oat straw

Actions

- Antidepressive
- Thymoleptic
- Cardiac tonic
- Nervous system trophorestorative
- Topically – emollient
- Nutritive
- Hypercholesterolaemia

Traditional and current uses

- Depression
- Melancholia
- Menopausal neurasthenia
- General debility, especially from chronic pain or insomnia
- Soft fibre can help to reduce cholesterol (the bran is particularly helpful)
- Soft fibre helpful for IBS and constipation
- Useful food for convalescence
- Useful food to improve stamina and muscle function
- Excellent food for children to build bones and teeth

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- As a skin cleanser and softener. Place fine oatmeal in a muslin bag and use as a substitute for soap.
- As above or added to the bath can soothe eczema and itchy skin.
- Use fine oatmeal to make purifying face packs for acne and congested skin.
- Use as a base for poultices

Facepack Mousse

Equally good as a face pack or to eat as a vegan mousse.

500g berries (straw berries, blue berries, raspberries or a mixture)

1 dessertspoon honey

50 ml rosewater or neroli water

3 cups ground oats

Blend all the ingredients together and leave in the fridge for 2-12 hours if eating, or apply directly to the face (eat what's left!) and leave on for about 15 minutes then wash off.

Oregano, also known as Wild Marjoram and Compact Marjoram

Origanum vulgare Lamiaceae

The name Oregano is from the Greek word meaning joy of the mountain. A herbaceous perennial native to Europe and naturalised in the Middle East. It has a preference for chalky soil and therefore is often found close to the sea. It grows to 80 cm. As with all members of this family it has square stems which are red; the leaves are elliptical and the deep pink flowers are held in clusters. Oreganos hybridise easily and the progeny can be extremely variable in taste and in pungency. A lot of the taste and therapeutic effect of Oregano is due to its essential oil content and this is affected by levels of sunlight – needless to say that in a bad Irish summer the quality of locally produced oregano can be quite poor and not worth drying. They are easily raised from seed in the spring or can be propagated by dividing clumps in the spring or autumn. There is a golden form *Origanum vulgare* "Aureum" which seems better adapted to the Irish climate, forms a great ground cover, has a good flavour and is sometimes called golden marjoram.

Part used: The aerial parts and essential oil. Gathered when in flower.

History/Folklore/Taste/Energetics:

This is an amazingly invigorating and empowering herb. It gives strength to our immune system, is a stimulating nervine and helps balance our digestion and our gut flora. It is a true adaptogen and wonderful for bringing the energy of summer sun to food in the winter. Pungent, warming, astringent.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Actions:

- Carminative
- Choleric
- Antiseptic-antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral
- Analgesic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Emmenagogue
- Rubefacient
- Expectorant

Traditional/current uses:

- Wind and flatulence
- Coughs, colds, tonsillitis, bronchitis, asthma
- Delayed periods and period cramps
- Herb can be used as a poultice for muscular pain and stiffness
- Essential oil diluted and applied externally to toothache and aching joints
- Both the herb internally and the oil externally can be used for treating wart, especially molluscum contagiosum
- The internal use of oregano oil has become popular for treating *Candida albicans*

Sweet marjoram is also the source of an essential oil widely used in aromatherapy. Oregano essential oil has not traditionally been widely used in aromatherapy due to its high level of phenols; it has recently gained popularity both internally and externally as an antiseptic. However, it should be used cautiously, no more than 2 drops 3 times daily taken in a suitable excipient for no more than 3 weeks and should not be used for children under the age of 12 or during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

Widely used in cooking; a traditional pot herb; used in Italian cooking, particularly in tomato sauces, meatballs and for pasta. Add to soups and stews or in summer wild herb salads. The essential oil is used as a preservative/anti-oxidant in the food industry. In Mexico a member of the *Lippia* genus is called oregano, but our native can be substituted in recipes calling for Mexican oregano. Related species are *Origanum marjorana*/ *Marjorana hortensis* (Sweet Marjoram) and *Origanum onites* or Pot Marjoram. Sweet Marjoram is more tender and is often grown as an annual in Ireland. Pot marjoram is less flavoursome but more hardy.

Oregano vinegar

Loosely pack a clean dry jar with dried oregano and cover with organic cider vinegar. Shake to release any trapped air bubbles. Allow to macerate for 2-4 weeks in a warm place then press off, wonderful in salad dressings.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

Tomato oregano pesto

230 g brazils
40 g fresh oregano
55 g lemon juice
250 g soaked sun dried tomatoes
25 g water
6 cloves garlic
90 g olive oil
30 g hemp oil

Place all the ingredients in the food processor and blend to a smooth consistency. Can be spread on bread or stirred through pasta, or used on baked potatoes.

Oregano pesto

1 litre loosely packed oregano leaves
A handful of pine nuts or cashew nuts
3-5 cloves garlic
Dessertspoon of balsamic or cider vinegar
Salt to taste

Place ingredients in food processor and start to blend. Drizzle in olive or hemp seed oil until desired consistency is reached.

Molle chilli powder blend

1 part chilli powder
1 part ground black pepper
1 part ground cumin
1 part ground coriander seed
2 parts oregano
1 part cocoa powder
1 part garlic powder

Herb Provencale blend for soups and stews

9 g fennel seed
9 g black pepper
5 g sage
5 g thyme
10 g oregano
Grind herbs together in a coffee grinder

Parsley

Petroselinum crispum/sativum *Carum petroselinum* Apiaceae

There are many varieties of Parsley with either curly or flat, pinnate, segmented leaves. It is a biennial plant grown for leaf in the first year and for seed in the second year. It has small yellow/green flowers, held in umbels of 8-20, with bracts. The seeds are ovoid with longitudinal ridges. The thick fusiform tap root is used as a vegetable and there is a special variety called Hamburg parsley adapted for this use. Parsley is native to East Mediterranean and naturalized throughout the world. The seed sown in rows 45 cm apart. Thinned to 15 cm apart. Slow to germinate, process speeded up by watering in with warm water. The leaf is harvested in early summer or when available. Roots are harvested in autumn and seed is collected in 2nd year of growth when plump and green

Part used: Leaf, seed, root

History/folklore/taste/energetics: warming, pungent, salty, drying

Actions:

- Diuretic
- Digestive tonic
- Antispasmodic

Traditional and current uses

- Oedema, dropsy, urinary stones (apiol, myristicin)
- Carminative (similarly dill and fennel), flatulence/colic, relaxes bowel and gut
- Stimulates stomach activity and secretions thereby inducing hunger and therefore used for anorexia.
- Jaundice – the root cleans liver, spleen and belly due to kidney/bile flow (empirical evidence)
- Volatile oil reduces contraction of smooth muscle
- Potentially abortifacient at high doses and therefore should only be used in culinary amounts during pregnancy
- Used for skin affectations and conjunctivitis
- Apiol in isolation causes inflammation of the gut lining/kidneys, liver damage, heart arrhythmia, central paralysis, nerve inflammation over 2 years; but this effect is buffered by other constituents in the herb. This highlights the fact that whole plant extracts are safer than isolated constituents.

Also valuable nutritionally; add the leaves to soups, salads and stews or stirfries. Seed can be used in small amounts as a flavouring. Roots are used as a vegetable in many parts of Europe either steamed, roasted or grated into stirfries.

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Bean and parsley paté

1 can cannellini beans

Juice and grated zest of 1 organic lemon

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 red pepper

Salt to taste

Large bunch of flat leaved parsley, stems removed if tough

Black pepper or a little chilli to taste

Place all ingredients in the food processor and blend until smooth. Add a little water or olive oil to get the desired texture. Great with rice, on crackers, with baked potatoes or to accompany other salads

Herb stuffing

4-6 cups bread crumbs

1 onion finely chopped

Large bunch of parsley plus sprigs of any or all of sage, rosemary, thyme, tarragon, oregano, chervil all finely chopped together

2 minced cloves of garlic

1/3 cup lemon juice

Grated zest of one lemon (optional)

Black pepper to taste

Mix ingredients together making sure there is enough lemon juice to moisten the mixture. Place in a baking dish and drizzle a little olive oil on to make the top crispy. Bake at 180-200 oC for about 30-40 minutes

Related species

Wild Celery, Smallage

Apium graveolens Apiaceae

Part used: Seeds; also leaves and stems in food. The roots are also sometimes used in food. A biennial plant, smelling strongly of celery. It can grow up to a metre. The plant is hairless and has solid stems with deep grooves. The leaves are divided into several leaflets which are palmate and have a serrated edge. The small white flowers are held in umbels which arise from the stem at the leaf stalks. The seeds or fruits are small and round. The seeds are harvested from June to September. The leaves and stems are best harvested before flowering and should be used fresh. It is native to Northern Europe, the British Isles and found around the coast in Ireland. It should not be confused with water dropwort hemlock which does bear a resemblance but does not smell of celery and is highly toxic.

History / Folklore / taste / energetics: The wild plant is recorded as being used widely as a vegetable and condiment in ancient Egypt, by the Greeks and Romans. The wild type (much more strongly flavoured than the cultivar selected for its stems and sold as celery, or the one selected for its roots and sold as celeriac) is still widely used on Asian and Caribbean cooking and is considered far superior in those

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regions. It is a nourishing herb and contains apiole (an essential oil constituent) which is a stimulating nervine and helps lift the mood. The seed has traditionally been used either as a substitute for salt or in combination with salt to add savour. It is salty, and warming.

Actions:

- Diuretic, urinary antiseptic, removes acid waste via the kidneys
- Stimulating nervine
- Aperient

Traditional and current uses:

Particularly used for rheumatism, gout and arthritis as it helps flush out acid water. For urinary infections and cold conditions of the kidneys. Fibrositis and perhaps other inflammations exacerbated by excess acid in the system. As part of an alkalinizing diet.

Lovage

Levisticum officinale Ligusticum levisticum Apiaceae

A herbaceous perennial growing up to 2 m. The leaves are glossy with a toothed margin and are compound. The green/yellow flowers are held in umbels. The seeds are small and black. Native to southern Europe and southwestern Asia. In the wild it grows on sunny mountainsides. It is also widely cultivated. The leaves are gathered throughout the growing season; the seeds are gathered in late summer and the roots are harvested in the autumn. Related species are Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum*, Chinese Lovage *Ligusticum sinense*, Osha *Ligusticum porteri*

Parts used: Root and rhizome, leaves and seeds

History / folklore / taste / energetics: The leaves are used to flavour soups and stews. A particularly interesting soup can be made from lettuce and lovage; however, do not use too much it has a strong flavour. Its taste is salty, bitter, slightly warm. Lovage is closely related to osha, a native of Northern America and has many similarities therapeutically. Tradition has it that when bears emerge from hibernation in the spring they seek out osha plants and dig up the roots to get their digestion and excretion working again (during hibernation they do not eat or excrete). The bear has long been perceived as symbolizing the medicine person. Osha and lovage are really valuable for those who have retreated deep into the cave to process and do inner work and need to get their appetite for the ordinary world, for material food back. Lovage helps us reconnect with the Earth and our physical being when we have journeyed through a dark night of the soul.

Actions:

- Carminative
- Anti-dyspeptic
- Digestive tonic
- Spasmolytic
- Diaphoretic
- Diuretic
- Emmenagogue
- Expectorant
- Antimicrobial

Traditional and current uses:

- Flatulent colic
- Dyspepsia
- Oedema of renal origin
- Painful and delayed periods
- Lithuria
- Cystitis
- Tonsillitis, as a gargle
- Aphthous ulcers as a mouth wash
- Loss of appetite

Contraindications: Avoid medicinal doses in pregnancy and in kidney disease

Use the leaves finely chopped in salads. It is added to chicken dishes, soups and as part of the stock when boiling ham. The seeds are used in bread, and cheese biscuits and game casseroles.

Lovage leaves have also been added to the bath as a deodorant. The root is used to prepare decoctions or tinctures for a stronger medicinal effect than the leaf and seeds.

Peppermint (hybrid of *Mentha aquatica* and *Mentha spicata*)

Mentha x piperita Lamiaceae

A herbaceous perennial growing up to 90 cm. The stems are dark reddish purple and the leaves are often dark on the underside. It may produce mauve/pink flowers. Native to Britain and Europe, cultivated in Central and Southern Europe and America. It is a natural hybrid. In the wild it may be a garden escape or arise by hybridization. Just before flowers open, it must be dried carefully to conserve aromatic element. True peppermint must be raised from cuttings (or by cross pollinating the two parent species), as it is a hybrid-it cannot be raised from seed. It was originally grown in Mitcham in Surrey. Although it is no longer grown there, the 'Mitcham' clone is now being grown in England again, for oil distillation. The essential oil is distilled from the dried leaves which may be stored for up to three

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years before processing. The best quality oil is produced from the fresh flowering tops and is produced mainly in France, England, USA, Russia, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Morocco and China. The whole oil is more effective than the extracted menthol.

Part used: Aerial parts and essential oil

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Menthe was a nymph who attracted the lustful eye of Zeus and was turned into a plant to protect her chastity. Peppermint is considered to be very clearing to the mind and energy field. It helps clarity of thinking but is also good if one feels overloaded with other peoples' energy or ideas. It can also help if one finds other people draining to one's energy. It is another of the herbs that help restore vagal tone (hence its use in smelling salts) and so can relax without sedating. Pungent and cooling. Used as a culinary herb widely - lamb and mint sauce, tabbouleh and many other middle Eastern dishes. In cooking it is better to use one of the milder mints such as spearmint or apple mint. Cautions – Herb not suitable for children under 5, oil not suitable for under 12 or 5; different authors give different ages. Other mints are safe

Actions:

- Spasmolytic
- Carminative
- Diaphoretic
- Febrifuge
- Cholagogue
- Anti-emetic
- May have a mild hormonal action
- Hepatic (liver remedy)
- Hypertensive (only essential oil, not whole herb)
- Stimulant nervine
- Cordial
- Cephalic (improves circulation to head and ability to think)
- Decongestant and expectorant
- Antiviral
- Vasoconstrictor
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-lactogenic (reduces milk production)

Topically – antiseptic, antipruritic (reduces itching), analgesic, antifungal, insect repellent

Traditional and current uses:

- Intestinal colic in people over 5 (not suitable for those under this age)
- Gripping spastic colon
- Diarrhoea-helps by soothing bowel lining and should be combined with

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astringent herbs such as raspberry leaf, lady's mantle, meadowsweet, cinnamon or if none other available black tea may be used

- Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy
- Nervous nausea, gastritis, enteritis, indigestion
- Travel sickness
- Wind and indigestion, especially after rich food or too much food- hence the popularity of after dinner mints
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Common cold, flus and fevers; as an infusion, often combined with elderflower and yarrow, but works well alone too- it is an antiviral and also helps to reduce fever by promoting sweating
- Dysmenorrhoea or painful periods
- Headaches and migraine, especially linked to digestive weakness
- Rhinitis and sinusitis, helps to reduce mucus. Avoid overuse of the oil in inhalations for this condition
- Reproductive stimulant, works on ovaries and can help regulate infrequent periods as well as reducing period cramps and heavy bleeding
- To help low blood pressure
- Promotes clear thinking
- Relieves apathy, nervous palpitations and vertigo
- Reducing milk production during weaning
- Hepatitis, cirrhosis and jaundice, but only under practitioner supervision.
- Topically – use the infusion or diluted essential oil to relieve the pain of bruises, sciatica, shingles or neuralgia and also itching of eczema, herpes, and urticaria.
- Repellent for gnats, mosquitoes, lice, scabies, rats and ants. Spearmint tea seems to reduce the amount of androgens produced. This can reduce libido in men, and can reduce hirsutism in women with polycystic ovaries or high levels of androgen production For cooking I prefer apple mint or spearmint in general although peppermint leaves in a wild salad are tasty
- All three mints can be shredded and added to apple juice for a refreshing summer drink

Tabbouleh

½ cup wholemeal couscous
1 cup boiling water
3 large tomatoes, diced
1 cucumber, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 small red onion finely chopped
5-6 sprigs flat leaved parsley, finely chopped
5-6 sprigs mint, finely chopped
1 dessertspoon lemon juice
1-2 tablespoons olive oil

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Pour boiling water over couscous and leave to stand for 10 minutes. Stir in other ingredients and add salt and pepper to taste. Allow flavours to mingle for at least half an hour before eating.

Koftas

500 g minced organic lamb, or chicken, or beef

1 onion, finely chopped

3 cloves of garlic finely minced

1 teaspoon bouillon powder

1 dessertspoon powdered cumin seeds

1 dessertspoon powdered coriander seed

Large bunch of mint, finely chopped

Combine ingredients thoroughly. Form into balls and bake at 190 oC for about 30 minutes until thoroughly cooked

Mint, yogurt and cucumber dip/dressing

½ cucumber, grated and with excess juice drained off

Large bunch mint, finely chopped

300 ml live yogurt

1-2 cloves minced garlic (optional)

Black pepper to taste

Combine ingredients and use as a dip or as a dressing.

Plantain, Way Bread, White Man's Feet

Plantago major Plantaginaceae

A perennial with broad oval or elliptical leaves in a rosette with 3-9 veins. Pale green and smooth. The flower stem is hairy and unfurrowed and may be 5-50 cm. The anthers are pale purple, becoming yellow/brown. A common plant along roadsides, paths, in gardens, arable land and disturbed waste ground. Leaves are harvested during flowering from May to June is best. Seed harvested when ripe. *Plantago lanceolata* has similar actions although there is some dispute about which is more efficacious-Barker says that major is better for skin, and lanceolata is better for the respiratory system. Also related to *Plantago ovata*, *P. indica*, *P. afra* used as a bulk laxative.

Parts used: Leaves; seed

History and folklore: The leaves have been used as a survival food and the seeds have a similar action to psyllium to which it is related; one of Nine sacred herbs of the Druids (second after Mugwort) and one herbs of St. John's Eve. The young emerging leaves of the rosette have a distinct mushroom flavour that is less marked but still present in the larger leaves. Known as the healing plant in Gaelic due to its' use for bruises and wounds. Plantain syrup is still in the official pharmacopoeia

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in Russian medicine. Plantain contains allantoin, same as comfrey. The taste is salty, slightly sweet and bitter and it is cooling and mainly drying in character although the mucilage content also makes it moistening to some degree.

Actions:

- Haemostatic
- Cicatriscant
- Diuretic
- Expectorant
- Decongestant
- Astringent
- Antiviral
- Bacteriostatic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Immune modulant

Traditional and current uses:

- Chewed and applied to cuts and wounds to stop bleeding and prevent infection
- Helps to repair damaged tissue; an alternative to comfrey for treating broken bones and bruises
- Skin ulcers and fistulae as an ointment or lotion
- Urinary tract irritation and bleeding
- Catarrh in the respiratory system, allergic rhinitis. *P. lanceolata* particularly good for longstanding bronchitis with damage and scarring and for tuberculosis
- Loss of voice
- Irritable bowel, diarrhoea
- Gastritis and peptic ulcers
- As poultice for blood poisoning
- As a poultice for nettle stings (better than dock leaves) or insect bites
- Placed inside the socks to prevent blisters, and to keep feet fresh.
- As a compress or eye-bath for blepharitis and conjunctivitis
- As a compress for acne rosacea
- Juice mixed with *Hypericum* oil for otitis media
- Used in Welsh herbal medicine to draw out splinters, abscesses and treat tumours of the skin

Culinary uses: The young leaves can be chopped into wild salads. Older leaves can be used like spinach in stir fries and soups. The seeds can be used as a substitute for linseed or psyllium seed and can be added into bread.

Raspberry

Rubus idaeus Rosaceae

A deciduous perennial shrub growing to 2m. There are autumn and summer fruiting varieties, mainly red fruit, but a few varieties with yellow fruit. Slips can be taken, or plants bought in. There are also various hybrids with blackberries, such as tayberry and logan berry.

Part used: Leaves and fruit are used. Leaves are collected in early summer and fruit when ripe.

History/Folklore/Taste/Energetics: Drying, astringeing and cooling

Actions: Astringent, mild diuretic, Uterine tonic. Fruit is nutritive, antioxidant, diaphoretic and may be mildly laxative

Traditional and current uses:

The leaves are used as an astringent, specifically for the uterus to encourage easy labour, but should not be taken until the last 5 weeks of pregnancy. They are thought to strengthen the longitudinal muscles of the uterus or else they work on the ligaments. The leaves are also a useful astringent agent for heavy periods and for treating diarrhoea and can be used to make a wash for conjunctivitis, ulcers and wounds. They are used to make mouthwashes and gargles.

The fruit is nutritious, containing large amounts of antioxidants. A vinegar or syrup can be made from the fruit to preserve them for winter use and were traditionally included in gargles to prevent cleryman's throat – larynx strain due to overuse.

Related species

Blackberry, Bramble

Rubus fruticosus Rosaceae

Part used: Leaves Young shoots Fruit Flower buds Bark of root

Actions:

Leaves are astringent and anti-oxidant. Fruit are nourishing and anti-oxidant. Roots are astringent

Traditional and current uses:

The leaves used to treat mouth ulcers, inflamed and infected gums, sore throats, as a douche for leucorrhoea and to wash skin ulcers and to treat diarrhoea

Root bark is used to treat diarrhoea and inflamed bowel. The fruit are used for cough syrups and cordials.

Red Clover

Trifolium pratense Leguminosae

Part used: Flowers or flowering tops

A perennial growing up to 40 cm. The stem is upright and hairy, the leaves have 3 (occasionally 4) leaflets with a white crescent marking and the pink/purple flowers are borne in egg-shaped flower heads. It is native to Europe and Asia and naturalized in USA and Australia. It is widely cultivated as a hay crop and to fix nitrogen. The flowers are harvested in the summer when they are newly opened. The quality is particularly important. Use fresh where possible and use infusions rather than tincture. The Romans used *Trifolium frangiferum* infused in wine for kidney stones and used the root for dropsy.

Actions:

- Expectorant
- Depurative
- Oestrogenic
- Alterative
- Antispasmodic
- Diuretic
- Anti-inflammatory

Traditional/current uses:

- Formerly used to treat cataracts.
- Still used as an eyewash for conjunctivitis
- Compresses of a concentrated decoction were used to treat breast cancer
- Used with herbs such as dock and burdock to treat skin conditions including eczema and psoriasis
- Used for spasmodic and stubborn coughs in the form of a syrup made from the infusion
- Recently has received a lot of interest as a treatment for menopausal symptoms due to its oestrogenic effects,
- Also has received interest as a preventative for several forms of cancer
- Compresses are used for arthritis and gout
- Crushed fresh flowers are good for soothing insect bites and stings
- An ointment is used to treat lymphatic swellings, made from a decoction blended into a base ointment or cream
- An infusion can be used as a douche for vaginal itching
- It can take a few weeks to take effect
- Sweet, slightly cool and moistening

Both this species and white clover (*trifolium repens*) are used as fodder crops, green manures to fix nitrogen in the soil and small amounts can be used in salads and sandwiches.

The flower heads are a useful bee food. They can be sucked to quench thirst and small amounts could be used in salads. The seeds are also used for sprouting.

Rose

Rosa damascena/ centifolia Rosaceae

Rosa canina

Dog rose is a climbing perennial up to 3 m. Curved thorns, Leaves with 2-3 pairs toothed leaflets. Flowers 4-5 petals (white or pink), fruits scarlet. Apothecary's rose is a deciduous shrub reaching about 1.5 m. Stems are smooth, with smaller thorns. Leaves divided into 2-3 pairs of leaflets with serrated edge. Many-petalled pink or red flowers and scarlet fruits. The dog rose (*Rosa canina*) is native to Europe, and temperate regions of Asia and North Africa. It grows in hedgerows, thickets and on waste ground. *Rosa gallica* is originally from the Middle East. It is no longer found in the wild. It has been cultivated for at least 3 000 years. Flowers are gathered in the summer.

Part used: Petal, leaf, hips/fruit

Also, rosehip oil from *Rosa rubiginosa*

History/Folklore/Taste/Energetics: Rose is seen as the queen of flowers but was the symbol of warriors too; a true queen who is a warrior, why else would she have thorns other than to protect. The human race has a love affair with this plant; she is a symbol of love, of the heart. She opens our heart, like a rosebud unfurling, There may be an initial vulnerability, open hearts are vulnerable but we can open the strong heart that knows who we are and fights for our truth; a warrior. Rose is associated with love and passion and eros. A symbol of beauty and femininity, the feminine, Venus. She helps to soothe the depression that comes from a loss of self identity, clouding the heart and stagnating the liver. She dries out damaged boundaries in the guts and the skin, helping to astringe and heal. She appears contradictory (how feminine) in that she astringes/dries/tightens and rehydrates at the same time- so she tells us we need to step out of dualism to the 'and, and, and'. She nourishes the womb but also tonifies the male reproductive parts – fertility is not just a physical issue. It is a reputed aphrodisiac. The fruits or hips contain large quantities of vitamin C which is also protective and healing to our tissues. The taste of the fruit is sweet and aromatic. The leaves and flowers are also aromatic, with some sweetness, astringency and bitterness.

Actions:

- Antispasmodic
- Astringent
- Digestif
- Nervine
- Diaphoretic
- Tonic
- Thymoleptic
- Antimicrobial
- Uterine tonic

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Traditional and current uses:

Petal

- Sore throats as a gargle
- Conjunctivitis as an eye wash or compress
- Skin tonic; rosewater is widely used for cleansing and toning and helps clear up inflammation and infection in acne but is also useful for treating bruises
- Clears uterine congestion and therefore good for heavy, painful or irregular periods
- Cooling for menopausal hot flushes and night sweats
- Treats urinary tract infections
- Reduces fevers
- An uplifting and calming nerve tonic good for insomnia, low mood, irritability, and mental fatigue, especially when related to hormonal issues.

Hips As a source of vitamin C, A,B, and K and bioflavonoids; used as a sweetmeat; Rosehip syrup as a nourishing drink and vitamin tonic; Useful for diarrhoea; mildly diuretic; Reduces thirst; Alleviates inflammation.

Rose is widely used as a flavouring in many middle eastern and Indian spice blends for example; Ras-el- Hanout -a blend of spices which varies from household to household.

A sample mixture is:

2 tspn black peppercorns
1 tspn coriander seed
1 tspn cumin
1 tspn allspice
2 tspn cinnamon powder
1 tspn nutmeg powder
1 tspn ginger powder
½ tsp cloves
½ tspn cardamom
¼ tspn chilli
1 tspn rose petals

Ground rose buds can be added to your favorite curries to add extra fragrance. Rose water is used to flavour sweet and desserts e.g. Turkish delight, baklavas. It can be used in making sorbets and as a cooling and calming summer drink.

Rosehip syrup

Cover fresh rosehips in water and simmer for 20 minutes. Press off juice. Measure volume of liquid and then add 1 g sugar (or honey) per ml of liquid. Alternatively add equal volume of apple juice concentrate. Simmer for 10 minutes and bottle. Store in fridge and use as cordial. Also delicious poured on stewed apple, apple pie or ice cream.

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Instant rosehip jam

Fill jam jar two thirds with dried rosehip shells, cover with pressed apple juice and leave to soak over night.

Grá balls

250 g ground almonds

125 g agave syrup

50 ml rosewater

Mix ingredients together and form into balls. Roll balls in cocoa powder. Great heart medicine.

Poached pears in red wine with rose and cardamom

Peel and half 6 pears. Place in a flat oven proof dish and cover with a mixture of red wine and water (1:2) add 6 rosebuds and 4 cardamom pods and bake at 200oC for half and hour.

To feed the skin (moisturizing cream)

50 ml rosehip oil

100 ml hemp seed oil

150 ml jojoba oil

35 g beeswax

Gently warm oils and wax in a bain marie until the wax melts. Remove from heat and gradually whisk in 300 ml rosewater. When the mix emulsifies continue to beat until cool to room temperature (if necessary immerse in a cold water bath to speed the process). Spoon the cream into clean jar and place in fridge to continue setting. Should be stored in the fridge until ready to use to lengthen shelf life. Use opened jars within 3 months.

Rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis Labiatae/Lamiaceae.

Part used: Leaves and twigs

An evergreen shrub, growing to 2 metres. It has narrow, dark green leaves with a pine-like shape and the typical labiate flowers are normally a bluish mauve, but there are blue, pink and white flowered cultivars also. It has a beautiful aroma. The plant is native to Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, cultivated elsewhere. Likes a warm, moderately dry and sheltered environment, but also does ok by the sea (hence it's name) and in my own windswept garden. Reputed to grow more strongly in gardens of households where the woman is in charge. It is best cultivated from slips in this part of the world as seed is slow to germinate. Also, slips guarantee that the plant is able to withstand the vagaries of the Irish climate. It is normally harvested after flowering (it flowers in late winter or early spring generally).

Herb Profiles and Recipes

History/folklore/taste/energetics: Rosemary has a deal of history and folklore attached to it. It was planted in graveyards for remembrance and included in a traditional Italian wedding bread to encourage fidelity. It has a great reputation for improving the memory. It also has a reputation for binding the soul into the body; really valuable for those who find it hard to ground or feel like they are pulled off all over the place. It is a cordial that strengthens the pericardium or heart protector. When one's soul is truly seated in one's heart it is better able to express its truth and therefore rosemary is also a truth drug. It is invaluable for helping to restore kidney chi, and heart chi when these have been insulted or drained through physical, emotional, mental or psychic strain or overload. It helps us to convalesce and rebuild ourselves and get our energy rising again after illness or other trauma. It restores our compassion for ourselves and others; it heals our heart memories so that we can remember, release the grief and hold our memories dear without painful attachment. It is also a truly restorative nervine, helping to reduce pain and repair the nerves. Warming, dry, pungent and bitter.

Actions:

- Carminative
- Spasmolytic
- Thymoleptic
- Sedative
- Diuretic
- Antimicrobial
- Anti-inflammatory
- Tonic and restorative - general, cardiac and nervous system
- Astringent
- Diaphoretic
- Stomachic
- Nervine
- Anodyne
- Stimulant and cephalic
- Stimulates the circulation, adrenal glands and liver
- Anti-oxidant
- Cicatriscant and vulnerary
- Rubefacient
- Cholagogue and choloretic
- Anti-microbial
- Topically – rubefacient
- Analgesic
- Parasiticide

Traditional and current uses:

- Mild to moderate depressive states with general debility
- Cardiovascular weakness and debility of old age or as a result of long term illness or stress

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- Improves the circulation to the head, helping concentration, so valuable for exams and study
- Migraines and headaches
- Encourages hair growth when used as a hair rinse or to massage the head, also good for retaining the colour of dark hair`
- Can help to relieve symptoms of low blood pressure; the herb is safe for high blood pressure, but the oil is not
- Fainting and weakness due to deficient circulation
- General debility, especially with poor circulation and digestion
- Topically for myalgia, sciatica and intercostal neuralgia
- Footbaths for poor circulation – use an infusing, the essential oil or the hydrolat
- Strengthens the liver and gallbladder
- Externally, the oil and the herb are an excellent skin regenerator, good for congested skin, acne, healing burns, dandruff and oily hair

Taste and energetics: Camphorous; warming; dry; bitter; pungent; aromatic.

As a culinary herb, it is used with fatty meat, such as lamb. It is also good with roasted vegetables, just add a couple of sprigs to the tray and in winter vegetable stews. It can be finely chopped and sprinkled on pizza or focaccia as an alternative to oregano or basil. In Italy it is used with chicken in combination with white wine or lemon juice. A traditional Italian wedding bread contains rosemary for fidelity and garlic for long life. If you enjoy barbeques, rosemary prunings can be put in with the charcoal and infuse the food with a wonderful flavour. Prunings can also be used as home made smudge sticks.

Rosemary and red wine gravy

40 ml olive oil

3 dessertspoons flour

750 ml stock (either from roasting juices from meat or made up with vegetable bouillon, or combination of both)

250 ml red wine

1-2 dessertspoons of finely chopped rosemary

1 finely chopped onion

1-3 minced cloves garlic

Heat the oil and sauté the onions and garlic. Stir in the flour to make a roué. Add the stock and red wine gradually to make a smooth consistency. Add rosemary and simmer gently for 20 minutes with lid on to allow the flavours to mingle. Great with roast potatoes (with or without meat).

Rosemary broad bean paté

2 cups cooked broad beans
2 minced cloves garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 dessertspoon lemon juice
Salt and black pepper to taste
1-3 dessertspoons chopped rosemary, depending on taste

Puree all the ingredients together into a smooth pate; great on bread, baked potatoes or as a garnish with salad.

Bean and squash stew

70 g butterbeans, soaked overnight and cooked until tender
1 butternut squash, diced
2 onions chopped
4 leeks, sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced or finely chopped
50 ml olive oil
6 sprigs rosemary
1-2 teaspoons ginger powder
1 dessertspoon bouillon powder

Sauté the onions and leeks in the olive oil until slightly softened, add garlic, ginger, butter beans and squash and cook for a further 5 minutes. Add enough water to just cover. Finely chop the rosemary and add it with the bouillon powder. Cook for 30 minutes. Serve with bread, rice or baked potatoes.

Sage

Salvia officinalis Lamiaceae

A perennial evergreen shrub that grows up to 1 metre. The plant has grey green or purple green foliage, with spikes of flowers extending above the foliage. These are normally violet-blue, but there are cultivars in all shades of blue and purple, as well as white and pink. The stems are square. Other ornamental cultivars with variegated leaves, are not true sage. It is indigenous to the Mediterranean, although cultivated throughout the world and therefore needs sun. The grey/green form can be grown from seed or cuttings; Purple sage (*Salvia officinalis purpureum*) is considered superior for medicinal use and needs to be raised from cuttings. There are two related native species; *Salvia pratensis* has been used to reduce sweating and *Salvia sclarea* mainly used in the form of an essential oil although the leaves are used to make fritters, and in brewing to make beers more euphoric. The oil is used to regulate hormones, as a euphoric and antispasmodic. *Salvia elegans* or Pineapple sage is a native of Mexico which is often grown as an ornamental; it is used as an antidepressant, anxiolytic and nerve tonic as well as for heartburn and indigestion.

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Part used: Leaves. The flowers are delicious added to salads.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: The species name from the Latin root *salvere* (salvation, healing) attests to the high regard given to this plant. It is deemed to be an adaptogen by Julian Barker and is definitely valuable for restoring neuroendocrine balance after periods of stress on any level. The common name sage reflects its ability to work on memory and wisdom; it can be seen as an ally that embodies the medicine person energy. It is, however, a strong ally that is normally only used in small doses and for no more than 6 weeks at a time at medicinal doses due to its thujone content. It is particularly useful for women stepping into their crone energy, but also for younger women to balance their fertility.. Cretan sage (*Salvia triloba*) contains far less thujone and can therefore be used for longer periods of time. Aromatic and bitter, cooling and drying.

Actions:

- Astringent
- Antiseptic
- Aromatic
- Carminative
- Hormonal balancing action
- Antihydrotic
- Tonic
- Spasmolytic
- Nervine

Traditional and current uses:

- Flatulent dyspepsia and mild diarrhoea
- Pharyngitis, laryngitis, uvulitis, gingivitis, glossitis, both internally and as a mouthwash or gargle
- Excessive sweating, including night sweats and hot flushes of menopause
- Nerve tonic, can calm or stimulate the central nervous system, depending on what is needed
- Depression and extreme fatigue following illness
- May promote fertility
- Helps improve the memory
- Irregular and scanty periods
- Asthma
- Reduces milk production
- Thujone is a potential neurotoxin and abortifacient. Therefore should be avoided in pregnancy and lactation

Tuscan beans

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 onion finely chopped
2-3 cloves of garlic minced
1 red pepper diced
Boullion powder to taste
5-6 sprigs fresh sage chopped
1 tin cannellini beans, drained
1 tin chopped tomatoes
Handful of olives (optional)
Black pepper to taste

Sweat the onions in the olive oil until transparent, add the garlic and red pepper and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add all the other ingredients and simmer for 10-30 minutes.

Seaweeds

There are mainly wonderful species of seaweeds native to the Irish coastline and several companies harvesting them on the Atlantic coast where the water is relatively clean.

Seaweeds are rich in mucopolysaccharides which are immune boosting, detoxifying, prebiotic, help repair connective tissue and are full of valuable vitamins (including B12 in several species such as nori and dulse) and a wide range of minerals, including iodine which is often low in the modern diet due to its depletion in the soil by conventional farming methods. Seaweeds have traditionally been used to treat arthritis, bronchitis, to improve nutrition and during convalescence. Seaweeds baths are a traditional healing therapy in Ireland and there are still places offering seaweeds baths in Galway, Kerry, Donegal, and Sligo. Seaweeds are great to include in the diet and make wonderful liquid fertilizer for the garden.

Seaweeds can be soaked (if using dried) or rinsed and added to soups, stir fries, steamed rice or salads.

Chondrus crispus also known as Irish Moss or Carragheen is used to make a drink useful for upset tummies, convalescence and chest infection. The seaweed is decocted for 15-20 minutes and then lemon and honey are added. It is strangley gloopy but quite pleasant. Carragheen is also used to make a milk pudding similar to blancmange.

Dulse or dilisk is a red seaweed high in B 12 and known as laver in Wales, It can be added to bread and crackers and imparts a lovely flavour.

Seaweeds can also be used to make a delicious tapenade (people often do not realize it has seaweed in it).

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Take about 30g dried dilisk or mixed seaweed or a couple of generous handfuls of fresh. Place in a food processor (or on a chopping board) with half a roughly chopped red onion, 4 chopped gherkins, a couple of dessertspoons of cappers and a generous handful of flat leaved parsley or Cuban oregano. Chop or process to the desired texture. A little lemon zest or crushed garlic can also be added along with some olive oil. This is delicious on baked potatoes, with rice or on crackers.

Many other great seaweed recipes and more seaweed information can be found in Prannie Ratigan's great book *Seaweed Kitchen*

Selfheal, All-heal, Carpenter's Herb, Sticklewort, Touch and Heal, Woundwort, Hercules' Woundwort, Blue Curls, Brownwort, Hock Heal

Prunella vulgaris Lamiaceae

A creeping perennial, reaching 5-30 cm. The leaves are oval. The flowers are a blue-violet colour and occur in densely packed heads with a pair of leaves at the base. They are the typical lipped shape of Lamiaceae. They grow in grasslands and waste ground. The name comes from Brunella from the German for quinsy. Self heal was deemed to be good for throat problems due to the shape of its flowers according to the Doctrine of Signatures. Prunella can usually be found growing wild, but will also grow easily from seed. Found throughout Europe, into Asia and also naturalized in other temperate regions. In Europe it is harvested just before or during flowering. In China the flowering tops are gathered in late summer as they start to wither. This may account for the slightly different uses in the two regions.

Part used: Aerial parts gathered when in flower. In China the flower spikes are used as a remedy.

History and folklore: The plant has a long history of use in Europe as a wound healer and also as a general tonic (hence it's common name). However, it has fallen out of fashion in recent times. The fact that it is used in Chinese medicine for fevers and liver weakness has resulted in more interest in it again.

It is a particularly soothing remedy for the nervous system and for supporting us in grounding and earthing our energies and helps us to access our inner ability to heal and do inner repair work on all levels. It seems to calm and help us to work at a steady grounded pace, one that suits the work we are doing on ourselves, particularly releasing stagnation and old traumas and irritations. It is cooling. Slightly bitter, pungent, drying.

Actions:

- Antibacterial
- Balances blood pressure
- Diuretic
- Astringent
- Wound healing

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- Liver stimulant
- Astringent
- Antioxidant

Traditional and current uses:

- All sorts of bleeding, including heavy periods and blood in the urine
- Diarrhoea
- Spring tonic
- Haemorrhoids
- Eyewash for tired and hot eyes or conjunctivitis
- Gargle and mouth wash for sore throats, bleeding gums and mouth inflammations
- High blood pressure
- Leucorrhoea
- In China it is used for fevers, dizziness, vertigo, headaches and sore, inflamed eyes (signs of 'liver weakness' and liver fire). They mainly use the dried flower heads
- Infected and enlarged glands, especially in the neck .
- Possibly may be useful for the treatment of diabetes due to an alleged effect on the pancreas
- Flu and hot flushes

According to Chevallier, Chinese research shows that the herb dilates the blood vessels and lowers blood pressure. Other research from China shows that the herb has a reasonable antibiotic action against a broad range of pathogens. According to Bruton-Seal and Seal, recent research shows it to be an effective remedy for herpes. The young leaves and stems can be used in salads and the plant can also be used as a pot herb (added into stir fries, soups and stews). The flowers are very mild in flavour (sweet) and pleasant in salads

Sorrel

Sheep's sorrel

Rumex acetosella Polygonaceae

Can be distinguished from docks by their sagittate pikestaff leaves which are variable in size. The plant is 4-40 cm tall and is a creeping perennial. The flowers are unisexual. Common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) has longer leaves with a more typical arrow shape and grows in grasslands and open woods. They are interchangeable therapeutically according to some authors. Well drained acid grasslands and sandy habitats. Leaves are harvested throughout the year as available. Can be cultivated from seed or divided in spring.

Part used: Leaves

Actions:

- Laxative
- Diuretic
- Depurative
- Digestive

Traditional and current uses:

- Spring tonic
- Blood cleanser
- Cooling, sour. Sheep's sorrel is one of the ingredients in Essiac tea
- Should be used sparingly due to high levels of oxalates
- Avoid with kidney stones, arthritis and gout
- Externally to cool dry irritating rashes
- This and the related French sorrel (*Rumex scutatus*) are used to make green sauce and pestos. They are also used in soups, salads and in egg dishes such as omelettes and quiches

Thyme

Thymus vulgaris Lamiaceae

There are 70 or more species of thyme native to Europe. This species is from the Mediterranean but will grow fairly well in Northerly reaches. It reaches 10-30 cm and is a small shrub. Indigenous to France, Spain and Italy, cultivated across Europe and America. The related species *Thymus serpyllum* Mother of thyme grows wild throughout Europe on heaths moorlands and barren places. It is harvested during summer whilst flowering. Several croppings can be made. Various chemotypes or chemovars (cultivars with specific essential oil constituents) are grown for the extraction of essential oil and used for variable therapeutic applications in French herbal medicine- they include *Thymus vulgaris* ct. carvacrol, ct. thymol, ct. linalool, ct. geraniol, ct. thujanol-4, ct. terpineol. Plants benefit from regular trimming otherwise they tend to become straggly

Part used: Leaves and flowering tops

History/folklore/taste/energetics: There are many ornamental cultivars with variegated or silvery foliage and cultivars with different scents and flavours. The orange and lemon scented ones are particularly useful for cooking, but the ordinary type is the best for medicinal uses. Lemon scented thyme excellent for sauces or stuffing for chicken and orange scented varieties for using with duck. Thyme was traditionally burned in hospitals as a fumigant and can still be used in this way to clear the air both physically of germs and insects, and on an energetic level. Pungent, warm, drying and slightly bitter

Actions:

- Carminative
- Spasmolytic
- Antitussive
- Expectorant

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Bactericidal
- Fungicidal
- Antimicrobial
- Vermifuge
- Anti-oxidant (therefore anti-ageing)
- Antiputrescent
- Capillary stimulant
- Rubefacient
- Mental stimulant and nervine
- Cicatriscant
- Diuretic

Traditional and current uses:

- Dyspepsia (painful indigestion), gastritis
- Bronchitis, whooping cough, asthma and hayfever
- Diarrhoea and worms in children
- Bedwetting
- Laryngitis and tonsillitis, fresh leaves may be chewed for a sore throat or made into a tea and whole honey added. Also as a mouth wash for gum infections
- Sprigs can be added to the bath to give an invigorating and immune boosting soak.
- Relieves muscles spasm
- Research indicates a strong antioxidant and tonic effect
- Helps to raise the mood, good for anxiety and depression. Also general debility and fatigue
- Acne and fungal skin infections
- Candida
- Cystitis
- Traditionally used as a meat preservative
- Low blood pressure and poor circulation

Topically as essential oil

- Used to treat scabies, lice and fungal skin infections, including athlete's foot and nail fungus
- It's warming action makes it useful in liniments and massage oils for arthritis. Rheumatism, stiff joints and tight muscles.
- The essential oil will irritate the mucus membranes and cause dermal irritation if used in large doses, therefore limit dose and length of treatment. Best avoided in pregnancy, except for the linalool type which is safe in pregnancy and for infants.

Good added to bean stews and salads, or winter vegetable stews and roasted vegetables. It is also delicious added to rice. The flowers can be added to salads.

Mushroom tapenade

200g mushrooms, finely chopped

1-2 cloves garlic finely minced

30 ml olive oil

A generous bunch of thyme (5-6 sprigs)

Pinch of sea salt

Black pepper to taste

Sauté mushrooms with the other ingredients until all the water is driven out. It is delicious on toast or crackers. It can also be stored in a jar in the fridge for a week and used as a substitute for stock powder in soups or stews.

Turmeric, Haldi, Jiang Huang

Curcuma longa Zingiberaceae

Botany: A perennial with a short stem, large lance shaped leaves and a knobbly rhizome with distinctive orange flesh. It is native to India and southern Asia. Cultivated throughout Asia and in other tropical regions. It is propagated from root cuttings and needs well drained soil and high humidity.

Parts used: Rhizome

Actions:

- Cholagogue
- Anti-inflammatory
- Stomachic
- Anti-oxidant
- Antibacterial
- Hypolipidaemic

Traditional and current uses:

- Lowers cholesterol
- Stronger anti-inflammatory than hydrocortisone
- Preventative against cancer
- Anti-coagulant, keeps blood thin
- Increases the flow and production of bile
- Protects the stomach and liver
- Alleviates nausea
- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Eczema and other allergies
- Reduces risk of heart attack and stroke
- Used internally and externally for skin conditions such as psoriasis
- Used to treat fungal infections like athlete's foot
- If used externally it will colour the skin
- It occasionally causes skin rashes and can increase sensitivity to sunlight.

Herb Profiles and Recipes

- Powder 1 tspn three times daily or by decoction. It can be added to a variety of dishes- some people add it to their porridge, it is pleasant in stewed apple along with some cumin or cinnamon and there are many Indian and Thai dishes that include it in the blend of spices used

Ginger and garlic relish

250 g garlic
250 g fresh ginger, grated
150 ml olive oil
250 ml cider vinegar
1.5 tablespoon sea salt
1.5 tablespoon ground tumeric
2 tablespoons ground cumin seeds
2 tablespoons ground coriander seed
2 teaspoons arrowroot

Put all ingredients except arrowroot in food processor and process until finely chopped. Put into pan and bring to boil then simmer for 1-1.5 hours until reduced by a third. Mix arrow root with a little vinegar and stir in. Boil rapidly for one minute until thickened. Spoon into sterilized jars and seal. Ready immediately but improves with keeping. Keeps for 1 year, but normally devoured before that.

Moroccan chicken (or butter bean) stew

2 onions
2 whole lemons, chopped into chunks
a jar of black pitted olives
3 cloves garlic
1 tablespoon turmeric powder
Olive oil
6 chicken drumsticks or 3 breasts cut in half

Chop the onions and sauté in the olive oil. Add the garlic and turmeric powder and cook for a further 2 minutes. Add the chicken and seal the outside. Add the chopped lemons, and olives. Cover with water and add a stock cube. Simmer until the chicken is cooked through. Butter beans or chickpeas can be substituted for the meat; use tinned ones or cook before adding.

Valerian, Allheal

Valeriana officinalis Valerianaceae

Botanical Description: Erect, herbaceous perennial. The stems are stout and usually unbranched, without hairs. Grows to at least 1 metre normally, with pinnate divided leaves and pink flowers in umbels. *V. capensis* is used in South Africa for hysteria and epilepsy, *V. harwickii* in China and Indonesia as an antispasmodic, *V. uliginosa* in North America for cramps and menopausal symptoms, and *V. wallichii* in India used as same as Valerian. The roots of plants at least 2 years old are harvested in the autumn. It is native to Europe and Northern Asia and cultivated in Britain, Holland and Belgium. It will grow in damp shady woods, hedges, ditches, wet grassland, fens, dry grassland, scrub, woodlands and meadows. There are now thought to be 3 subspecies, differentiated by the variation in appearance; however, these are not easily distinguished and there are intermediate forms. It can easily be cultivated from seed (it will self seed readily in our climate) or by division of older plants in the spring or autumn.

Part used: Rhizomes and roots

History / folklore / taste / energetics: Tastes bitter and camphorous, or deliciously earthy depending on your point of view. The smell (due to isovalerianic acid) is supposedly reminiscent of tom cats; cats are attracted to it by another component-an iridoid called actinidine. It is widely used in relaxing tea blends and to prepare apple flavourings for the food industry. It was known as Allheal in the past, showing how valuable a plant ally it was felt to be. It is an incredible healing ally, even having a reputation for curing epilepsy. The name may be from *valere* the Latin to be healthy or valuable, or named after a Roman physician Valerius. It is variously described as a sedative or a stimulating nervine. It is wonderfully anxiolytic and brings the energy down from the head, helping to ground and earth anxiety, panic and whirling thoughts. It is rich in calcium and nourishes and calms the heart too. It would appear to help calm the entire nervous system and all the brains as well as relieving tension in all body systems. It is a definite nutritive tonic. Formerly its sedative action was thought to be due to the isovalepotriates and then due to valerianic acid; now it is thought that it is due to a complex of several constituents.

Actions:

- Sedative
- Mild anodyne
- Hypnotic
- Spasmolytic
- Carminative
- Hypotensive
- Anxiolytic

Traditional and current uses:

- Hysterical states, panic attacks
- Excitability and anxiety
- Insomnia – improves sleep quality and duration, and encourages sleep to occur easily
- Hypochondria
- Cramps and muscles spasms. Relaxes over contracted muscles
- Intestinal colic, spastic colon, IBS
- Rheumatic pain
- High blood pressure
- Palpitations and nervous sweating
- Stage fright
- Anxiety in menopause
- Asthma
- Period pain
- Prolongs action of inhibitory neurotransmitters. So reduces excessive nervous activity
- Migraine and nervous headaches
- Neuralgia
- Nervous indigestion
- Fevers
- All stress related conditions

Although it is apparently only to be used as a medicine one of my students made amazing scones with a small amount of valerian combined with elderflower and elderberries as the flavourings. It has also been used to manufacture apple flavourings for the food industry.

Related species:

Red valerian, Wall valerian *Centranthus ruber*

This plant is a native of the Mediterranean, a garden escape that is widely naturalized; the flowers may be red, pink or white. It is highly tolerant of alkaline conditions and therefore colonises walls. Both the roots and leaves are edible (better harvested before flowering). The leaves can be eaten raw or cooked and the roots are cooked. Some authors caution about quantities eaten. It has a reputation as a mild sedative.

Lamb's lettuce, Cornsalad *Valerianella locusta*, Italian Cornsalad *Valerianella eriocarpa*.

The former is native and both species are widely grown as a salad vegetable. Containing high levels of vitamin A, slightly laxative and demulcent it is also a medicinal vegetable. Traditionally valued for convalescence, for balancing the metabolism, boosting the immune system, relieving rheumatism and as a diuretic. Spikenard *Nardostachys jatamansi* is a related species native to India from which an essential oil is distilled. It is used in India as a nervine and is a valuable oil for treating nervous conditions and for the condition of the skin

Wood Betony, Betony

Stachys officinalis, *Stachys betonica*. Lamiaceae

The name derives from Gaelic for good head.

A perennial plant reaching 60 cm and forming mats. The leaves are elliptical with a toothed margin and the pink (or sometimes white) flowers are held in spikes. Found throughout Europe and into Asia as far as the Caucasus. Grows in meadows, grasslands and hilly areas. The aerial parts are collected in the summer when the plant is in flower. It is easily raised from seed sown in the spring or by dividing the clumps in the spring. Pick just as flowers are opening – the flowers and leaves are used.

History/folklore/taste/energetics: According to Culpeper Antonius Musa, physician to Emperor Augustus, listed 47 uses of betony, including protection from snakes and from evil. An Italian saying from nineteenth century Italy is “ May you have more virtue than betony”. In the Middle Ages it was cultivated in monastic gardens and graveyards to protect against witchcraft and would be worn as an amulet around the neck or placed under the pillow for protection. Cool, drying, bitter and sweet. The leaves emit a wonderful aroma when crushed in the hand.

Actions:

- Sedative
- Astringent
- Styptic
- Hepatic
- Tonic
- Nervine
- Mild bitter
- Cleansing and detoxifying

Traditional/current uses:

- Formerly regarded as a panacea
- Headaches and migraine
- Recovery from head injuries
- Facial pain
- Improves nerve function
- Calms an overactive mind and general overactivity
- Useful for insomnia caused by a racing mind
- Scattered thoughts
- Anxiety, irritability, depression
- Poor memory
- Improves concentration
- Nervous tension
- PMS
- Nervous exhaustion
- Sinus headaches and congestion

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- Nosebleeds
- Tones the liver, gallbladder and digestion
- Soothing for IBS, gastritis, inflammation and tension in the bowel
- It helps us to face the fears and evils in our own minds
- Useful for withdrawal from addictive drugs
- Feelings of spaciness and unconnectedness
- Balances the solar plexus.
- Grounds us and connects us to the Earth
- Tonic for older people or in convalescence from a long illness as a general tonic, increasing strength mentally, physically and spiritually.
- Good for those who are underweight – stimulates the appetite
- Prolapse of the uterus and other organs. Weak labour, excessive menstruation
- For those who feel unwell without any recognizable cause
- **Caution:** Avoid in pregnancy

The tea is used for indigestion, headache, poor circulation, muscular tension, nightmares, sinus congestion, watery and irritated eyes, head colds, chills and fevers and insomnia. Also used in the form of tincture for spaciness, vertigo, memory loss, nervous exhaustion, anxiety, irritability, poor concentration. A cleansing herb used in arthritis and toxic conditions.

May be used externally in an ointment for bruises, sprains, strains, varicose veins, and haemorrhoids. A poultice can be prepared from the fresh herb to treat bruises and wounds. An infusion can be used to bathe leg ulcers and infected wounds or used as a mouthwash for mouth ulcers, sore gums and sore throats.

A tonic wine can be prepared by infusing 50g betony, 25g vervain and 25g hyssop in 75cl white wine for two weeks. This is taken in small doses for nervous headaches and tension according to Penelope Ody.

Yarrow (Milfoil, Nosebleed, Soldier's Woundwort, Sanguinary, Noble Yarrow, Staunch Weed, Carpenters Weed, Thousandleaf, Bloodwort

Achillea millefolium Asteraceae

Part used: Aerial parts **Botanical Description** Creeping perennial, growing up to 3 foot, with white or pink flower heads and finely divided leaves. Ornamental cultivars are available in most shades of yellow, orange and red. It is native to Asia and Europe, naturalised in North America and most temperate zones.

Taste and energetics: The taste is complex, including bitter, aromatic, astringent, sweet and it is cool and dry. Yarrow stalks are used with the I Ching for divination. Arrow (particularly the pink flowered plants) are considered to be good for psychic protection and even to protect against electromagnetic radiation from computers and other mechanical sources. Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm accredit yarrow

Herb Profiles and Recipes

with being sacred to the Horned God or the divine masculine and consciously balancing our relationship with the masculine within and without. One old name is 7 years love, helping loving fidelity to be maintained between couples.

Actions:

- Diaphoretic
- Antipyretic
- Hypotensive/ amphoteric for blood pressure
- Astringent
- Diuretic
- Antiseptic (especially for urinary system)
- Haemostatic
- Spasmolytic
- Anti-haemorrhagic
- Styptic
- Antispasmodic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Emmenagogue

Traditional and current uses:

- Fevers, colds, flu, especially in a tea with peppermint and elderflower
- Hayfever and allergic rhinitis, bronchitis and asthma
- Measles
- Essential hypertension – lowers blood pressure due to peripheral dilatation
- Rheumatism and arthritis
- Amenorrhoea, menopausal and menstrual complaints, heavy periods, and period pain
- Digestive stimulant
- Diarrhoea and dysentery
- Lack of appetite and anorexia
- Peptic ulcers, gastritis, enteritis
- Lower abdominal pain, stomach cramps, gall bladder and liver problems
- Tonic for blood vessels, can help relieve varicose veins
- Cystitis, urethritis
- Thrombosis with high blood pressure

Apigenin is anti-inflammatory, anti-platelet and spasmolytic. Azulenes and salicylic acid are anti-inflammatory. Eugenol is anaesthetic. Betonicine is haemostatic. Cyanicidin influences the vagus nerve, slowing heart beat. Young shoots can be included in spring salads.

May produce allergic rashes to those with an Asteraceae allergy. Prolonged use could theoretically cause photosensitivity; just take regular breaks when using this herb and keep doses low for longer term use.

Appendices



APPENDIX I

Wild Foods and Foraging

Gathering wild foods encourages us to get out into the wilderness (or some slightly less wild places), to begin to appreciate their beauty, the immense diversity and to develop a respect for the rest of the natural web.

Wild foods have been shown to contain all sorts of micro-nutrients that are not present in our diets normally and which can protect against many Western diseases – it has been shown that the reason that the Masai do not suffer from the kind of diseases associated with a diet high in saturated fats in the West is because their diet also contains many wild plants; when they move into cities they lose these from the diet (and walk less) and start to suffer from these diseases. Wild foods are also high in anti-oxidants; research in the Czech Republic has shown that blackberry leaves are higher in anti-oxidants than green tea, and they make a delicious cuppa (as well as the young shoots making a good vegetable). For those who eat meat, wild game has been shown to have a different fat composition to farmed meat or fowl; due to their diet and their exercise patterns wild flesh is higher in essential fatty acids and lower in saturated fats.

The following is not an exhaustive list of wild foods that can be found in Ireland, but gives an idea of the wide variety of foods which can be gathered in the wild and which would have been included in the diet by our ancestors. Foraging can become a very pleasurable past time. For those who garden the term ‘weed’ becomes all but obsolete as you discover that many of those guys can actually be used in the diet too – in fact some of the more exclusive eateries are now serving nettles, dandelion leaves, chickweed, fat hen and other ‘weeds’ at their linen-covered tables.

If you do go foraging in wild places please remember to ensure that you are not harvesting from places that have been sprayed (for your own sake). For the sake of the plants, our ecosystems and the other species with whom we share them remember the principles of wild-crafting that are outlined in the article on harvesting and processing herbs. Some of the species listed below are indigenous

Wild Foods and Foraging

native plants, some are naturalized and some are on the list of 'invasive alien species'. For those in the last category, feel free to harvest in large quantities as a way of removing them from the ecosystem in a sustainable way.

Sea vegetables: Irish moss, kelp, laver, dulse, sea lettuce, bladderwrack, pepper dulse Iceland moss, rock tripe, maidenhair fern. **Be aware that seaweeds and shellfish should not be gathered from areas where there are high levels of pollution.**

Fungi: sparassis, chanterelle, horn of plenty, Cantharellus infundibuliformis, wood hedgehog, wood blewits, oyster mushroom, Flammulina velutipes, parasol mushroom, shaggy parasol, field mushroom, horse mushroom, shaggy cap, Pholiota mutabilis, ceps, Giant puffball,, common puffball, Jew's ear, morel, truffles (not sure if these grow in Ireland), Fairy club, Hericium coralloides, Sarcodon imbricatum, beefsteak fungus, anise cap, Russula vesca. **There are many other fungi which are edible, but either hard to find in quantity, or do not taste so good. There are also some that will make you extremely unwell!! Best to go foraging with someone who really knows to start with and get a good guide book.**

Fruit, nuts and berries:

Nuts – Hazel, Sweet chestnut (not a native but sometimes found growing and producing nuts especially on old estates, Beech (not a native but grows widely again on old estates), Oak acorns (used in famine times to make flour or meal for cooking – not considered a gourmet food), Walnut (not a native and probably only found in gardens).

Fruit – barberry, raspberry, blackberry, dewberry, strawberry, rose-hip, sloe, cherry-plum, bullace, wild cherry, damson, morello cherry, bird cherry, hawthorn, gages, rowan, crab apple, red currant, gooseberry, black currant, white currant, bilberry, elderberry, Oregon grape, hottentot fig (not native and considered an invasive alien), cloudberry, medlar, june berry, whitebeam, French hales, wild service tree, pear, dwarf cornel, strawberry tree, cranberry, cowberry, wintergreen, ash, snowberry, guelder rose (toxic unless cooked), juniper, **Remember that some wild fruit need cooking to make them palatable or truly edible and that some should only be used in small quantity.**

Roots: Horse radish, wild parsnip, dandelion, white water-lily, turnip, radish, dittander (not native), spring beauty, marsh mallow, rest-harrow, wild licorice, bitter vetch, dropwort, silverweed, herb bennet/wood avens, evening primrose, sea holly, pignut, rampion, ox-eye daisy, chicory, flowering rush, galingale, salsify, common star of Bethlehem, early purple orchis, lords and ladies (need cooking or they will burn your mouth off), burdock.

Wild Foods and Foraging

Herbs, flowers and leafy foods:

Salads - watercress, white mustard, penny cress, lady's smock, hairy bitter cress, common wintercress, jack-by-the-hedge, linden, wood-sorrel, wild strawberry, parsley piert, salad burnet, brooklime, cornsalad, hawthorn, beech, dandelion, chicory, nipplewort, catsear, rough hawkbit, goatsbeard, wall lettuce, prickly lettuce, corn sow-thistle, garden cress, common scurvy grass, golden saxifrage, winther gree, yarrow, nasturtium.

Greens – sea beet, fat-hen, good king henry, common orache, hastate orache, sea purslane, chickweed, shepherd's purse, bladder campion, rose bay, hogweed/cow parsnip, hop, yellow archangel, henbit, red dea-nettle, white dead-nettle, common mallow, ground elder, bistort, lady's mantle, red leg, common sorrel, stinging nettle, comfrey, turnip, wild cabbage, charlock, miner's lettuce/spring beauty/ purslane, pigweed, jewel-weed, monks rhubarb, curled dock, patience dock, lungwort, oyster plant, plantago major, giant bellflower, goosegrass, red valerian, Japanese knotweed (young leaves and shoots).

Stems – sea kale, marsh samphire, alexanders, rock samphire, burdock, reed, marsh thistle, Russian thistle, milk thistle, asparagus, butcher's broom, bath asparagus.

Herbs: meadowsweet, cow parsley, wild celery (this plant is not native in Ireland and so is more likely to be found in gardens. Be aware that water dropwort hemlock has a similar appearance and grows in damp places and streams and is very poisonous), fennel, wild angelica, sweet gale, corn mint, water mint, Corsican mint, whorled mint, eau-de-cologne mint, spearmint, peppermint, horse mint, apple mint, common calamint, marjoram/oregano, wild thyme, woodruff, fenugreek, sweet cicely, parsley, lovage, borage, wild basil, lemon balm, ground ivy, lady's bedstraw, tansy, wormwood, sand leek, chives, ramsons. These are some of the culinary wild herbs – a much wider range of plants can be used for their medicinal properties.

Spices: corn poppy, black mustard, coriander, caraway, alexanders seed.

Flowers: lime, broom, roses, hawthorn, hop, heather, elder, sweet violet, heartsease, pansy, cowslip, primrose, chamomiles, lesser knapweed, sage, rosemary, thyme, pot marigold, borage, nasturtium, clover, daisy, honeysuckle, fuschia.

There are plants such as the caper spurge that have a reputation as food plants but are actually quite toxic. Also many of the Apiaceae family have toxic relatives which look similar so proper identification is of paramount importance with all plants, seaweeds and of course fungi.

BASIC RECIPES

Soup: Chop an onion and sweat in some olive oil or butter. Add 1-2 litres loosely packed leaves of nettle, or mallow, or sorrel, or a combination of 'spinach' type leaves and a small amount of more flavoursome ones (such as parsley or oregano). Add sufficient stock to cover (use home made stock or use vegetable bouillon and water, or miso) Simmer for 20-30 minutes. Add cream/ oat cream or similar if desired and may be blended for a smooth consistency. Spices such as black pepper, cumin or chill may be added for more warmth.

Green Sauce: Place about $\frac{3}{4}$ litre of loosely packed green leaves in a blender or pestle. Ramsons can be used alone or a combination of summer leaves such as sorrel, borage, rocket, mallow, oregano, cress, chervil, chives, parsley, salad burnet, dill, lemon balm, even daisy, ribwort plantain and dandelion and other soft leaves. Add about 30 ml vinegar or lemon juice and blend to a smooth green paste with olive (or other) oil to desired consistency. Some onion and garlic can be included and in some regions they add some bread to give a thicker consistency.

Pesto: About a litre of gently packed nettle leaves (or $\frac{2}{3}$ nettle and $\frac{1}{3}$ golden marjoram), or other suitable greens

1-3 cloves garlic

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup of ground almond or hazel nuts, or use whole cashews or pine nuts

1 dessertspoon balsamic or cider vinegar

125-250 ml olive or hemp seed oil, depending on the texture you like. I tend to gradually drizzle the oil into the mixture and it is processed in the food processor.

Salt to taste

Put all the ingredients except the oil in the food processor. Start the processor running and drizzle in oil until the desired texture is achieved. Pesto can also be made using a pestle and mortar.

Salad: Use a selection of mild and more flavoursome leaves in season. Chopping to bite sized pieces allows the flavours to mingle pleasantly. Add some flowers for colour and extra flavour.

Stirfry: Particularly good are plantain, mallow, nettle, sorrel, but many others are good too. When stir frying add a little water to prevent burning and overcooking. Add some nuts, seeds, tofu or meat as protein. Season with seaweeds, miso, tamari and some spices if desired.

Vinegar: Place fresh leaves and /or flowers into a pyrex bowl in a bain marie. Cover with cider vinegar or other local live vinegar. Simmer for 2-3 hours. Allow to sit until cool and then strain or press off. Use in salad dressings, sauces and such for summer flavour and nutrition through the other seasons.

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Oil: Follow the method for vinegar but cover flowers or leaves with olive oil. When pressing off make sure that any watery liquid is separated off before bottling. Oils can be used for food but also to feed the skin as a moisturiser or to make salves and creams.

Syrup: Places fruits (or barks, seeds or roots) into a pan with a little liquid and simmer for about 45 minutes. If using flowers or leaves make a strong infusion by pouring over boiling water and leave covered for 15 minutes. Strain off, measure liquid and add 1g per ml of sugar (use whole sugar such as rappadura), or honey, or apple juice concentrate. Return to clean pan and simmer to a syrupy consistency. Pour into bottles and store in fridge.

Dried preparations:

Tea: Dry any excess of the leaves/flowers/fruits that you are using over the spring, summer and autumn and mix them together for a tea to use over the winter and lean months.

Supergreens: Powder the herbs and make them into local supergreens blends to add to smoothies, soups and stews over the winter. Our local forage foods are quite possibly richer in micronutrients, antioxidants and all those amazing constituents that those expensive products sold over the counter from exotic locations contain.

For further information on which parts of each species are edible, medicinal uses and special preparation techniques refer to the monographs on the Veriditas Hibernica website www.veriditashibernica.org (these are in the process of being added to) or to the following books which have been a great source of inspiration:

Burrows, I Food From the Wild

De Sloover, J and Goossens, M Wild Herbs of Britain and Europe A Nature Trek Guide

Fletcher, N Easy Wild Food Guide

Kindred, G A hedgerow Cookbook

Mabey, R Food for Free

Michael, P Edible Wild Plants and Herbs

Mears, R and Hillman, G Wild Food

Phillips, R Wild Food

The National Trust wild Food

Wild Herbs of Britain and Europe A Nature Trek Guide

Appendices



APPENDIX II

Making Cider Vinegar

MAKING CIDER VINEGAR AND USING IT FOR VINEGAR TINCTURES, OXYMELS, CREAMS AND SHRUBS

Live vinegars are a valuable fermented food that helps to alkalise the body, encourages good liver health and also tones the whole digestive system, including the pancreas and its secretions. Vinegars can help with the absorption of minerals and can act as a prebiotic that will encourage a healthy bowel flora. They have many uses both internally and topically.

As with all foods and fermentations local is best so in Ireland we would consider making apple cider vinegar as a first choice but could also prepare malt vinegar from beer and other vinegars from hedgerow wines. The scope is very wide.

To make apple cider vinegar:

Peel and core apples, either cookers, eaters or cider apples. Place the peels and cores in a crock, an enamel or stainless steel pan with a close fitting lid and cover with water. Leave at room temperature. Open and stir every day. For the first few days bubbles will start to appear and the mixture will smell distinctly cidery and slightly alcoholic. Some people skim off the bubbles each day, I don't bother. Once the bubbling stops (about a week) continue to stir each day until a good strong vinegar aroma develops. Strain and bottle. Depending on the type of apple used there may be a degree of sediment; this can be decanted off or just left to settle to the bottom of the bottle or jar the vinegar is stored in. This vinegar can be used and can also be used as a starting mother for future batches. So far I have not included live vinegar as a starter but some people add some live vinegar to the start of the process to ensure good vinegar flora to get the process going. The fruit pulp that is left from peeling and coring can be used to make apple purée or apple sauce to add to curries, pies and all sorts of dishes. Some people make their cider vinegar from pressed apple juice rather than the cores and peels. In this case I would take the pressed juice and add some live mother vinegar.

Making Cider Vinegar

Vinegar tinctures:

Although alcohol tinctures have predominated for the last century or so we are finding that vinegar tinctures are a really good alternative.

Some people find the sour taste a little challenging at first, but this really tones up the digestion and can help with heat in the digestive system. Vinegar also is better at extracting minerals from the herbs and helps with their absorption, especially calcium absorption so these tinctures are particularly useful for bone repair, nerve function and have many other uses. Vinegar tinctures can be taken internally in the same way as alcohol tinctures, singly or in blends. Some practitioners find that patient compliance (getting people to take them) can be an issue as a lot of people find the sourness challenging. However, others find that a lot of people may wince at first then tuck into them quite happily when they notice the benefits. They are also really good when people wish to avoid alcohol. They can be mixed into a little fruit juice to help with taking them. They can also be sprinkled over vegetables, rice or salads as a food-medicine. In France these vinegars are used as summer cordials due to their wonderfully cooling properties.

They are also excellent for the skin, treating inflammation, correcting the pH of the acid mantle and encouraging a good skin flora (most of our skin flora prefer an acid environment and over use of soaps and detergents over alkalises the skin). They can be combined into creams (vinegar creams make an excellent vegan 'mayonnaise', see the culinary section) or used in compresses and poultices. Added to drawing poultices they potentise the action. I learned from herbalist Paul Bergner that William Cook, a Physiomedicalist of the 1800s preferred vinegar as a menstruum for issues of the respiratory system. He felt that it concentrated the herb's actions to the respiratory system. They are really helpful in anti-inflammatory creams since the vinegar is also good at reducing inflammation. Pickled herbs are another possibility – sushi ginger but many other possibilities. When we made our burdock vinegar we took a little of the pickled roots that had not been pressed off and added them to our forage salad; they were delicious.

Vinegar Creams:

A vinegar cream is made in the same way as other creams. The oil and beeswax or cocoa butter are warmed together in a bainmarie until the wax is melted. The vinegar is then dribbled in slowly whilst whisking (an electric whisk is definitely easier). Keep whisking until the cream reaches room temperature. At this stage essential oils could be added if desired, then spoon into jars and refrigerate until using. A basic recipe is: 300 ml cold pressed unrefined vegetable oil or macerated oil, 35g beeswax, 300 ml vinegar.

We made one with macerated rosemary oil and oregano vinegar and it turned out to be a delicious vegan alternative to mayonnaise. As such it would be a great digestive tonic too. In this case, one might want to add a little salt, pepper or other seasonings.

Making Cider Vinegar

Oxymels:

An oxymel is basically a combination of vinegar and honey. The simplest version is to mix 4 parts honey with one part of apple cider vinegar or other vinegar. A more complex version is to mix one part water, one part vinegar and two parts of honey then simmer down to a third of the volume and then skim off any scum. Oxymels are a traditional folk medicine panacea, but used particularly for fevers, as a gargle for sore throats, to clear excess phlegm, for arthritis, gout, to promote weight loss (as a metabolic stimulant) and to promote longevity. They are diluted in water as a refreshing drink as well. Obviously, one can use aromatic honeys (ones from particular places, or ones with essential oil incorporated) or vinegar tinctures to enhance the therapeutic effect. One can also use oxymel as the basis of a syrup which has some similarity to the next idea.

Shrubs:

Amy Stewart of The Drunken Botanist fame mentions another type of preparation, shrubs. Shrubs are a variation, prepared as a cocktail ingredient or a cordial that is thirst quenching and cooling. The name is derived from the Arabic word "sharaba" or "shariba" (meaning "to drink"), "shrub" may refer variously to a drinking vinegar alone; a soft drink made by combining drinking vinegar with soda water; or a cocktail in which a drinking vinegar is used as a mixer; but basically a shrub is a beverage made using a drinking vinegar as one of its ingredients. A drinking (or sipping) vinegar is a concentrated, sweetened fruit- or vegetable-infused vinegar. The difference between shrubs and vinegar tinctures or drinking vinegars is that sugar is used in the preparation. Shrubs were a way of preserving fruit. They can be prepared by a hot method which is basically making a syrup then adding vinegar to preserve it or by a cold method. Some people feel that the flavour of the fruit is kept fresher and brighter with the cold method. With the cold method equal parts of fruit, sugar and vinegar are used. The fruit is macerated in the sugar for a few hours or a couple of days. It is then pressed off and the resulting syrup is mixed with an equal volume of vinegar. The flavour is determined by the fruit but also what type of sugar and vinegar are used. There are lots of shrub recipes on line and one could be experimenting forever with this.

Appendices



APPENDIX III

Making your own Household Cleaning Products

Four recipes from Brigid Weeks

Antibacterial Household cleaner (based on 4 thieves vinegar)

Take equal quantities of the following herbs: Wormwood, Thyme, Lavender, Rosemary (other herbs that have been included are mint, oregano, garlic, meadowseet, sage, cloves, angelica, white horehound and rue). Place in a kilner or widemouthed srew top jar and cover with cider vinegar. Shake well daily for 2 weeks. Press off herbs and and essentail oil of orange or lemon (you could also use ti tree or lavender) at 1part in 20. Put into a spray bottle and use neat to clean all kitchen and bathroom surfaces, wiping down with a cloth after application. For mopping floors spray on the cleaner and then mop with hot water.

Window Cleaner

1 part each: Lemon vinegar (made by steeping whole lemon slices in cider vinegar for 2 weeks as above), Liquid soap, Water.

Place all ingredients in a spray bottle. Shake well before spraying onto glass and buff glass to a shine with old newspaper or buffing cloth.

Liquid Cleaner Polish for Wood

10 fluid ounces/280 ml real turpentine (available from artist suppliers)

10 fluid ounces/280 ml raw linseed oil

5 fluid ounces/140 ml methylated spirits

5/fluid ounces/140 ml cider vinegar

3 teaspoons orange oil or other oil of your choice

Place all the ingredients into a bottle and shake well. Shake before applying with a soft cloth and buff into the wood. This cleaner nourishes and feeds the wood as well as cleaning.

Making your own Household Cleaning Products

Furniture Polish for Wooden Furniture and Floors

2 ounces/55 g beeswax

5 fluid ounces/140 ml real turpentine

2 tablespoons raw linseed oil

2 teaspoons cedarwood oil (pine, spruce, tea tree or eucalyptus could be substituted)

Melt the first three ingredients together in a bowl placed over barely simmering water in a bain marie, or using a vegetable steamer basket in a saucepan. When melted remove from heat, pour into a jar and whisk in the essential oil. To use rub well into wood with a soft cloth; leave to dry for about 2 hours and then buff with a clean dry cloth to a shine.



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