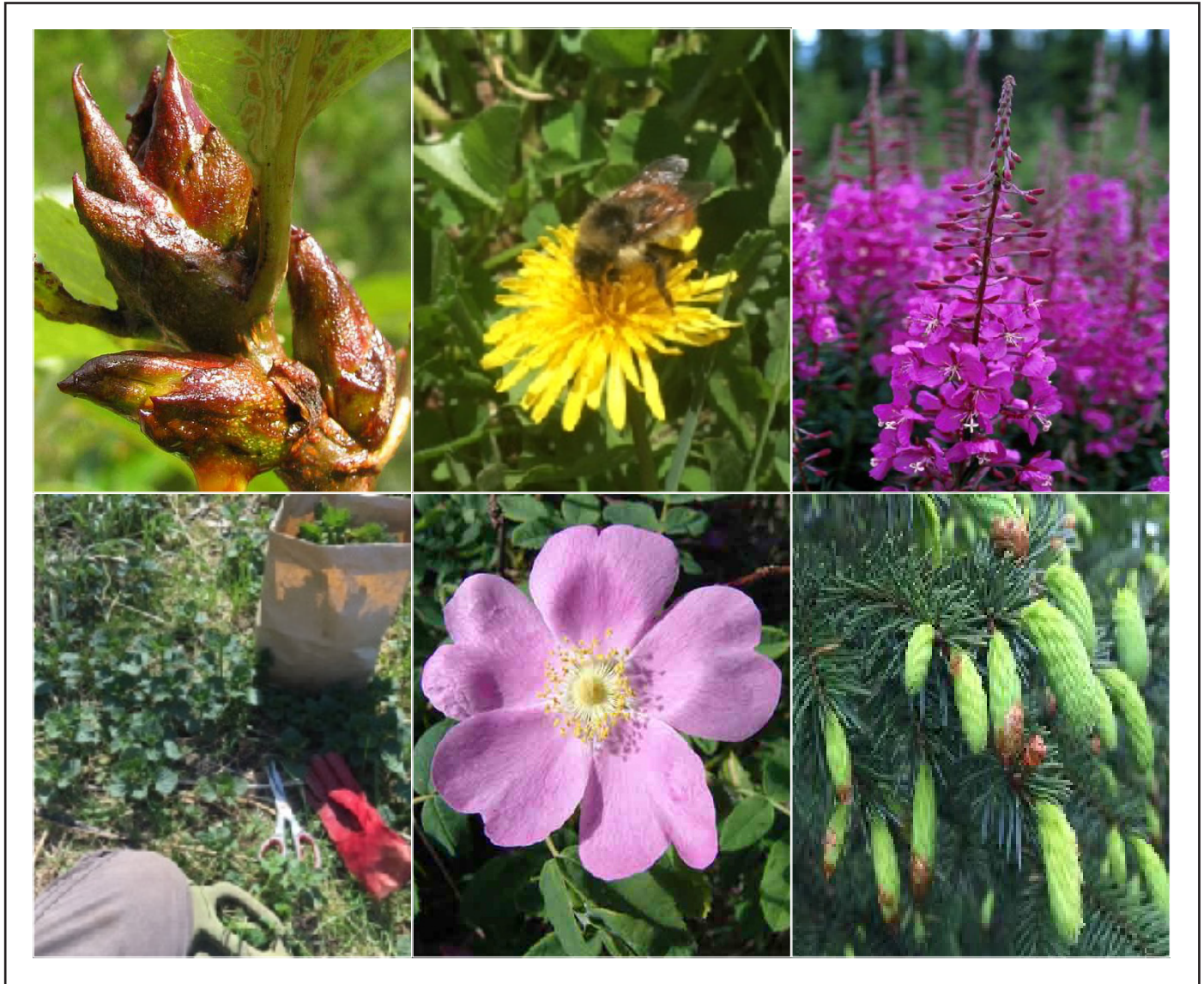


MAGICAL BACKYARD MEDICINES



IDEAS FOR GATHERING, PROCESSING AND USING COMMON
WILD PLANTS FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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FORWARD:

MAGICAL BACKYARD MEDICINES

This project is a collaboration between three communities in BC's Northwest—Houston, Smithers and Hazelton Community Response Networks (CRN). The project has been developed on the traditional territories of the Wet'su'we'ten and Gitksan peoples, who have been stewards of the land for time immemorial. The traditional plant knowledge and expertise presented are rooted in and overseen by Ross McRae (Fire Squirrel Chaser) and Lorraine Half (Baby Skin) from the Gitksan Territories. Magical backyard medicines rest in an 'all my relations' way of connection to life and land. In times of pandemic, social isolation can be a leading cause of risk for those living on the margins, who are already at risk for neglect, abuse and self-neglect. This project encourages participants to connect with their other relatives (plant relatives), by harvesting and transforming plants into oils, salves, skin toners, infusions/decoctions and syrups; while at the same time, engaging with others on our **Facebook page-- Magical Backyard Medicines**--who are doing the same. Each suggested plant can be found in your backyard or neighborhood. *See this booklet for more information on where, when, and how to harvest and prepare plants.*

In this kit you will find:

- Information about the **British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks (BCCRN)**
- Booklet—**Magical Backyard Medicines**
- Containers for the products you produce and items to help in the preparation
- Invitation to join the **Facebook page—Magical Backyard Medicines** collective social media platform. It is here where you will be able to meet Ross, Lorraine, CRN project coordinators and others across the Northwest who receive the medicine-making kits.

It is our hope that this project facilitates a connection with your non-human relatives as well as your human relatives. This 'all my relations' way of seeking connection and wellness can benefit you and all those you come in contact with throughout this project...and beyond.

Funding for this project comes from the British Columbia Association of Community Response Networks (BCCRN) and is administered and managed by Northern Society for Domestic Peace and BCCRN's Regional Mentor Belinda Lacombe. The CRN Coordinators involved in this project are: Carroll Airey (Houston BC), Tianna Rasmussen (Smithers BC), and Bonita Danes (Wii o om niin Hazelton, BC).

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present to you this little handbook to help you begin to meet and connect with your “plant relatives”, out on the land. Plants are central to our well-being. Humans require plants to live...they provide the oxygen we breathe in; plants require carbon dioxide to live...which we breathe out. What a great circle of connection!!

Plants have other amazing qualities that can nourish and improve our sense of wellness. Rather than looking at wild plants as weeds, we can change that focus, by learning how valuable these wild relatives can be, to offer us medicines to improve our bodies and our spirits.

Here we will introduce you to 6 different plant relatives...cottonwood (buds), dandelions, fireweed, nettles, roses and spruce (tips). When you meet these plant relatives, take a very close look at them...the plant as a whole; the individual parts-leaves, flowers, fruits, branches, even roots; how they co-exist with the other plants around them. Consider how you feel as you observe the plant... Do you see them differently than before? If you plan to harvest the plant, be kind, don't pick all the plants in one space, they need to continue to survive. Indigenous communities have been ensuring the continuation of plants through respectful practices for time immemorial. This provides an opportunity for you to find out about cultural and land-based protocols around harvesting plants. Some cultures leave tobacco, others simply say thank you and others replant where they harvested.

“Maybe you feel like saying “Thank you, little dandelion or fireweed or nettle!”. Imagine saying thank you to a nettle, but wait until you taste them!!”

These 6 plants are only the beginning...

In addition, you will learn to make infusions/decoctions, oils, salves, syrups and skin toners, all products that can contribute to your health and wellness. This booklet is by no means a comprehensive document, but it is intended to spark your interest in plant-based medicines. As you investigate the topic, you will discover other amazing plants, different recipes and methods for preparing the herbal products. Try them, experiment, and share your experiences...

We hope you will enjoy this new challenge: creating a relationship with these plants and with those human relatives you want to share this experience...making Magical Backyard Medicines.

We encourage you to join the **Facebook page: Magical Backyard Medicines** ...to connect with others, to share your experiences, ask questions, and continue to learn about your non-human relatives....

COTTONWOOD BUDS—*THE SMELL OF SPRING IN THE AIR, NATURE'S PAIN RELIEVER*

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

WHERE TO FIND

Cottonwood is commonly found on the margins of streams, rivers, flood plains and in wet bottomlands. Often in late winter and early spring, you can find large branches on the ground that have fallen during a windstorm. They will have the biggest buds.

WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST

Cottonwood buds are very sticky with the medicinal resin. Try rubbing your hands with salve or oily lotions before picking, to prevent the resin from sticking to your fingers, or use disposable gloves. Buds appear on branches from late winter to early spring. The buds should have a bright green end when they are snapped off the branch. Do not collect buds that show brown ends, they may already be deteriorating.

Pinch a bud and if you see resin, it is the perfect time to harvest. Just before they open, they will exude a drop of red to yellow resin. Some bigger, swollen buds have catkins inside. They will have less resin and are not as desirable for medicine. It is best to harvest buds on a cold day when the resin has not yet warmed and already become very sticky. To harvest, just break off at the nexus where the bud meets the branch. Leave the big bud at the tip of branches to continue growing the branch. Gather buds in a plastic bag or other container that you can dispose of, since the resin is difficult to remove.

PREPARATION

Check the buds for green ends, discarding any with brown colouration.

For using to make oil, lay on parchment or wax paper to dry for a day or two, to remove moisture that could result in mold.

Buds can be dried or frozen. Add to boiling water for use in steam inhalations to bring relief for those suffering congested sinuses or lungs.

For cottonwood oil follow directions for **How to Make Herb-Infused Oils** (p.14/15) Solar or Cold Infusion, or for faster method use Hot Oil Extract

For using to make salve, follow the directions for **How to Make Herb-Infused Salve** (p.18)

Cottonwood syrup: see recipe in **How to Make Herbal Syrups** (p.16)

BENEFITS

The buds are rich in salicin, which acts as an anti-inflammatory agent. Cottonwood bud oil and salve can be used to rub aching muscles and joints, relieve inflammation and can help arthritis sufferers.

Cottonwood resin has anti-fungal and anti-microbial properties.

WEBSITES of INTEREST

<https://www.herbalremediesadvice.org/cottonwood-benefits.html>

<https://www.blackbearherb.com/single-post/2017/01/14/Cottonwood-Bud-Harvest-Time>

DANDELION—COMMON WEED, NUTRITIOUS FOOD, POWERFUL MEDICINE

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

WHERE TO FIND

Dandelions grow just about anywhere, check out your backyard. There are some look-alike plants—dandelion leaves are NOT hairy. Because dandelions have been found to accumulate soil contaminants, be sure you harvest them well away from roads, industrial sites, buildings, roof drip lines or any place where chemicals or pesticides are sprayed.

WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST

All parts of the dandelion are useful, and best harvested on a dry sunny day. **Leaves** are best harvested in early spring before flowering when they are most tender. Harvest from the inside of the plant for best flavour. **Buds**—pick when they are tight little buttons at the base of the plant. **Flowers** are best gathered for food or medicine on a sunny day when they are dry and fully opened. Pluck from the stem and collect in a bag or other container. **Roots** may be dug in spring—higher in medicinal properties but more bitter; or in fall—a little sweeter and higher in a carbohydrate that is beneficial for diabetics. Deep rich soil will produce the thickest, easiest roots to harvest.

PREPARATION

Leaves—wash, use in salads, soups, casseroles, smoothies or steam them. For tea—dry by hanging in bundles with a rubber band or lay flat in a single layer.

Buds—can be eaten fresh, cooked or pickled.

Flowers—remove the green parts at the base of the flower head. Add a few to a salad, or to cooked foods like quiche, pancakes, muffins, etc. Use for infused flower oil: gather fully opened flowers on a dry day. Pull the yellow flower part from the green base and let wilt in a basket for at least half a day to help reduce water content. Then follow directions for **How to Make Herb-Infused Oil—Solar/Cold Infusion** (p. 14).

Roots—scrub thoroughly, chop into small pieces. For making a substitute coffee drink, dry the chopped roots until they are very brittle. Roast in a warm oven (200 F) about 4 hours, turning occasionally, until browned and dried completely. Grind and use as you would for regular coffee. Or place ground root in a cup of boiled water, steep for 10 minutes and strain.

BENEFITS

Dandelion contains an impressive list of vitamins and minerals. It is higher in Vitamin A than any garden plant.

WEBSITES of INTEREST

<https://www.threehillsssoap.ie/make-dandelion-infused-oil/>

<https://theherbalacademy.com/dandelion-the-dandiest-weed-of-all/>

FIREWEED—THE RESTORER OF STRONG ECOSYSTEMS

CAUTION: review information on page 4

WHERE TO FIND

Fireweed is often the first plant to grow in burned, logged or other disturbed areas. It can be found in areas with good sun exposure, near open fields and forest edges. Its deep pink to purple blossoms at the top of the tall sturdy stalks, begin to appear in July and August.

WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST

Fireweed can be harvested in every stage of its growth.

Early shoots—in spring, 15-30 cm (6-12 in)—when leaves are close to the stem and pointing upwards—snap off at the base

Leaves—when flowers are in bloom

Flowers in late summer—for oils and salve

Stems—when tall and strong

Roots—early spring or late fall

PREPARATION

Wash collected plant parts in warm water, drain and air dry in a single layer on paper towel, or pat dry with towels.

Early shoots—eat raw or steam lightly like asparagus

Young leaves—eat like spinach

Leaves when the plant begins to flower—fresh tea-strip off one small handful of leaves per cup of boiled water and steep for 15 minutes, or, dry in baskets or paper bags for tea (see website below—fireweed-tea—for interesting information and instructions to make Russian Chai)

Buds and flowers—add to salads; dry and add to baking

Large stems—cut off, split and scrape out pith to eat as a sweet treat, it can also be used to thicken soup and other dishes

Leaves and flowers—follow instructions for **How to Make Herb-Infused Oil** (p.14/15), **How to Make Herb-Infused Salve** (p.18), **How to Make Herbal Skin Toner** (p.19)

Roots—dig, wash and crush into an anti-inflammatory and soothing poultice

BENEFITS

Fireweed is high in vitamins and minerals, has great benefit for the digestive system and has been used as a tonic tea for hundreds of years in Russia. It is a gentle but effective anti-inflammatory and has antifungal properties. Leaves and flowers are used for soothing skin problems.

WEBSITES of INTEREST

<https://joybileefarm.com/fireweed-tea/>

<https://joybileefarm.com/wildcrafting-fireweed/>

<https://www.veganemily.com/blog/2018/8/4/fireweed>

NETTLES—NO PLANT MORE USEFUL IN DOMESTIC MEDICINE (BOOST THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND AWAKEN THE BODY TO SPRING)

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

WHERE TO FIND

Nettles are a perennial herb that are common near streambeds, in forests and especially in disturbed areas with rich wet soil.

WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST

Nettles will sting!! Use gloves and scissors to collect them in a plastic or paper bag. If you find a good nettle patch in the early spring, you may want to rake away the dead grass and debris for easier cutting later.

Nettle season is short so they are best harvested in the spring when they are 4-8 inches high. Cut above the bottom set of leaves so the plant can regenerate new leaves and stalks. The tender stalks and leaves are edible. Do not harvest after they flower, they are tough and may irritate the kidneys.

PREPARATION

- Once cooked or dried, nettles **completely lose** their sting!!
- Using rubber gloves, wash the nettles thoroughly. There are many ways to prepare nettles for food including: Steaming until stems are tender crisp 5-10 minutes; Sautéing 5-8 minutes; Freezing: by steaming 5-8 minutes, let cool and place in freezer bags for a nutritional boost in winter. They can be added to casseroles, stir fries, meat loaf, lasagna, egg scrambles, etc. Your imagination is the limit!!
- Tea—1 cup of fresh leaves to 2 cups of water; Dry the leaves to make tea: 1 tablespoon of dried nettles per cup of boiled water, (more or less depending on your taste). Cover with a lid, steep for 15 minutes to several hours. Nettles blend well with mint.
- Follow the method **How to Make Herbal Infusions or Decoctions** (p.12). Keep in the fridge for up to 3 days. Drink hot or cold.
- Use as a skin toner following instructions for **How to Make Skin Toner** (p.19)

BENEFITS

Nettles are considered a **super food**...they are intensely rich in vitamins, minerals and even protein. Nettles are both astringent and anti-inflammatory, which helps with the symptoms of allergies and many other complaints.

Nettles are tonic to the liver, blood and kidneys. They can be especially useful for arthritis, gout, eczema and skin rashes.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

<http://www.wortsandcunning.com/blog/nettles-plant-profile>

<https://learn.eartheasy.com/articles/nettle-tea-how-to-make-a-natural-spring-tonic/>

<http://wildfoodsandmedicines.com/nettle-restorative-food-purifying-medicine-guardian/>

ROSE—SYMBOL OF BEAUTY, LOVE, PROTECTION AND GRACE. HEAL YOUR BODY, OPEN YOUR HEART, REFRESH YOUR SOUL

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

WHERE TO FIND AND WHAT TO HARVEST

Roses grow in a variety of habitats including open, dry and moist locations, shady and sunny spots. Petals, leaves and stems can be used. Although domesticated roses have much larger rose hips, they usually are not as flavourful or medicinal as the wild roses.

WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST

Spring to early summer: pluck rose petals, leaving one petal per flower to continue to attract insects

Fall: Gather bright red or orange rose hips. They get sweeter after the first frost, but may develop brown spots soon after. Pinch off the brown sepals on the bottom. Dry away from direct sunlight, single layered on paper towel, or in an open paper bag. Move them around each day until they are COMPLETELY dry, about 10 days. Store in a container such as glass jar. You can also de-seed rosehips, since the hairy inner seeds are not digestible by humans.

Be careful not to over-harvest any particular rose bush.

PREPARATION

Rose petals can be used to make:

- **Rose oil:** wilt the petals for about one day until they are half dry. Then follow directions for **How to Make Herb-Infused Oil** (p.14/15)—Solar or Cold Infusion, using an oil with little fragrance such as almond or grapeseed (extra-virgin olive oil can be used)
- **Rose petals are edible:** add to salads, desserts, jellies and sauces.
- **Rose tea:** using dried or fresh petals and leaves. Use 1 tablespoon per cup and steep for 5-10 minutes. Mix with other herbs, black tea or green tea.
- **Wild Rose Toner**—see **How to Make Herbal Skin Toner** (p.19)
- **Rose Petal Syrup**—see recipe in **How to Make Herbal Syrup** (p.16)

Rose hips can be used to make:

- **Tea:** 1 heaping tablespoon dried hips per cup of boiled water and steep for 15 minutes. Boiling will make a stronger brew but you will lose the Vitamin C content. However, it may increase extraction of minerals and pectin.
- **Rose Hip Syrup**—<https://triedandsupplied.com/saucydressings/make-rosehip-syrup/> (see additional websites **How to Make Herbal Syrup** (p.16)

BENEFITS

Rose oil and toner, with their delicate scent, are great for moisturizing or toning irritated and delicate skin.

Rose is a mild diuretic, and in tea can flush the urinary tract.

Rose hips are loaded with vitamins and minerals, and are high in antioxidants. Wild varieties are estimated to contain 30-50 times the vitamin C of oranges.

SPRUCE TIPS—ESSENTIAL TONIC FOR SPRING

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

WHERE TO FIND

Spruce trees can be found in forests throughout the province. Choose a spot at least 100 m from any roadway to prevent contamination.

WHEN AND HOW TO HARVEST

The young tips are harvested in the spring when they are emerging from their brown papery husks, limey green and tender. Pinch off the new growth discarding the brown husk. Make sure not to gather too many from one tree, including the growing tip at the end of each branch, which can stunt its growth.

PREPARATION

Spruce tips can be used fresh, frozen or dried. Add chopped spruce tips to soups, pastas, stews, curries, etc.

Hot Tea—take a handful of tips for 3-4 cups of boiled water. Cover and let steep for 10 minutes.

Cold Beverage—Add 2 handfuls of tips in a quart jar and cover with room temperature water. Place in a warm spot and let sit 3-8 hours. Strain and drink, or mix with lemon or lime and sweetener.

Spruce Tip Syrup—to use on pancakes, in tea, over ice cream, in sauces and to glaze meat.

(Ratio—water to sweetener to spruce tips: 1 to 1 to 1. Double or triple the recipe, depending on the quantity of spruce tips you collect)

1 cup water

1 cup sugar

1 cup spruce tips, packed

1 tablespoon lemon juice (optional)

1. Bring the sugar and water to a boil, stirring to dissolve all the sugar. Turn off the heat.
2. Stir in the evergreen tips, cover and leave to cool. The longer you steep the syrup, the stronger the evergreen flavour.
3. Strain the syrup through cheesecloth or a fine mesh strainer, add lemon juice (if using) to taste, bottle, label and store in the fridge. Save the spruce tips for the recipe below—Spruce Tip Candy

Spruce Tip Candy

With the reserved spruce tips from the syrup, spread out in a single layer on a parchment-lined cookie sheet. Heat in low oven with the door open (or in a food dehydrator) until completely dry. Store in a cool, dark cupboard or pantry.

BENEFITS

Spruce tips are packed with Vitamin C and are rich in minerals such as potassium and magnesium. They have been used to ward off colds, cough, fatigue and scurvy.

WEBSITES of INTEREST

<https://www.nutriplanet.org/2014/05/5-reasons-to-eat-spruce-tips-8-ways-to-use-them/>

<http://wildfoodsandmedicines.com/fir-hemlock-and-spruce-tips/>

HOW TO MAKE HERBAL INFUSIONS OR DECOCTIONS

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

To avoid any allergic reactions, consume only a small amount of the infusion or decoction for the first time. Most infusions and decoctions will last up to a week in the fridge. However, dispose of it sooner if you notice a smell, change in appearance, or off-taste.

WHAT ARE THEY?

Herbal infusions and decoctions have been used for thousands of years; the most common is simply an infusion of tea leaves. They are known as:

Infusions-Hot or Cold: for the most delicate parts of a plant—flowers, stems and leaves

Decoctions: made with the tougher parts of a plant—roots, inner/outer bark and seeds

Try experimenting to craft your own herbal preparations for health and well-being or just for a delicious new flavour. Nourishing herbal infusions are a great way to add extra botanical substance into your life without spending a lot of cash.

EQUIPMENT

Cup, teapot

Jar--Mason jars with lids and rings work well for making a bigger volume

Cheese cloth or small muslin bag

Strainer, fine mesh sieve or funnel with a filter

Kitchen scale (optional)

INGREDIENTS

Possibilities from the back yard:

- Dried or fresh: nettle leaf, red clover, raspberry leaf, yarrow, plantain, dandelion leaf, rose buds

From the pantry:

- Ginger root
- Honey (if preferred, add when drinking your infusion or decoction)
- Filtered or distilled water, if possible

Here are three preparations for water-based herbal extracts that you may be interested in trying.

General RATIO of herb to water for all three methods: (Add more or less, depending on your personal preference)

Dry herbs 1 oz (28 gm) to 4 cups of water. If you don't have a scale, a good ratio to follow is 1 tablespoon of **dry herb** to every 8 oz of water.

Double the quantity if using **fresh herbs** (2 tablespoons of crushed fresh herbs for 8 oz of water)

1. HOT HERBAL INFUSIONS

Hot infusions draw out vitamins, enzymes and aromatic oils. Flowers, leaves and aromatic roots are ideal ingredients for hot infusions. Generally, the longer herbs are steeped, the stronger their flavours.

Directions:

1. Using the ratio above, place dried or fresh herbs into a tea strainer or directly in your cup, teapot or quart jar.
2. Heat water just to boiling, pour hot water over herbs to submerge them and cover to help hold in any volatile oils.
3. Steep for 15 min to 1 hour and strain, drink and enjoy! Any extra—label, and store in the fridge.

2. COLD HERBAL INFUSIONS

Cold infusions are ideal for enjoying herbs with delicate essential oils, such as rose buds or nettles leaves. Since there is no boiling involved in this preparation, bacteria growth can happen more quickly than with hot infusions. Be sure to use clean tools, **refrigerate any leftovers**, and consume or dispose of it within a week (or sooner if you notice a smell, change in appearance or off-taste).

Directions:

1. Using the ratio above, fill a container with cold water (boil and cool the water ahead of time)
2. Bundle herbs in cheese cloth or muslin bag.
3. Slightly moisten the herbs inside the bundle (for easier submersion).
4. Submerge the bundle below the surface of the water in the jar.
5. Drape the tied end of the bundle over the lip of the jar.
6. Secure by loosely screwing on the ring or cap.
7. Allow to infuse overnight in the fridge, occasionally stirring or gently shaking.

OR

1. Place loose herbs in a container, fill with cold water and cap.
2. Allow to infuse overnight in the fridge, occasionally stirring or gently shaking.
3. Strain herbs with a cheesecloth, fine sieve or funnel with a filter.

Label, store extra in the fridge, drink and enjoy!!

3. DECOCTIONS

Decoctions are simmered teas that are perfect for extracting the properties of hard roots, dried berries, barks and seeds. They are much stronger in flavour than herbal infusions and also more concentrated.

Directions:

1. Using ratios above, place dried or fresh herbs into a small sauce pan.
2. Cover the herbs with cold water, according to the ratio.
3. Slowly heat the water to a simmer and cover, allow to gently simmer (just below boiling point) for 20 to 45 minutes.
4. Strain into a container, do not discard the herbs. Some water will have evaporated, so your strained liquid may not fill the container.
5. Pour additional hot (but not boiling) water over the herbs in the strainer until your jar is full.
6. For added flavour and nutritional benefit, once your decoction is finished simmering, you can infuse more delicate leafy herbs or flowers that cannot stand up to the lengthy simmer time, into the hot decoction in the container. Strain the mixture again after another 10 or 15 minutes.
7. Most decoctions will last up to a week in the fridge.

Label, store extra in the fridge, drink and enjoy!!

HOW TO MAKE HERB-INFUSED OIL

CAUTION: review the information on page 4

Don't forget: Before applying anything new to your skin, to identify and prevent an allergic reaction, do a patch test, by putting a few drops on your inner wrist.

EQUIPMENT

You will need:

Jar (canning jars work great, with the ring to secure cheesecloth or netting, and lid for storing)

Natural wax paper

Cheesecloth or fine netting

Tool for stirring—Eg. chopstick, wooden spoon handle, tongue depressor

Crockpot or double boiler (for Hot Oil Extraction method)

Coloured glass container for storage, or foil to wrap a clear container

INGREDIENTS

You will need:

OILS

Herb infused oils can be made from oils such as: good quality organic extra-virgin olive oil, sweet almond, avocado, grapeseed, apricot, sunflower, or coconut (melted first).

HERBS-Fresh or Dry

Dried herbs make an extremely potent medicinal oil. Fresh plant material can be used but there is greater risk for bacterial growth due to the high moisture content of the fresh plant material, which can later lead to spoiled oil. Cut them into small pieces, wilt them for at least 12 hours and crush them to remove moisture (too much water will cause your oil to go rancid).

For the best results, and longest shelf life, use well wilted or dried herbs when making medicinal oils.

METHOD OF PREPARATION

There are primarily two ways to prepare herbal-infused oils:

1. Solar or Cold Infusion

The amount of herbs used will depend on the size of the jar, as you want to leave at least a 4 cm (2 in) of space for oil coverage, easy stirring or any swelling that may occur as the herbs soak up oil.

Fill a sterilized glass jar 1/3-2/3 full of plant material and then cover it by filling the jar with oil of your choice, to at least 2 cm (1 inch) above the plant material. Stir VERY GENTLY to combine and to release any air bubbles. Make sure the plant material is **always** submerged in the oil. Cover top of jar with wax paper to protect oil from any chemical coatings that may be on the lid. Seal tightly with a lid. Allow the oil and herb mixture to steep for 2 to 4 weeks in a warm and sunny location. After a day or two, if any plant material rises to the surface, either add more oil to cover it or remove the floating pieces to prevent decay or mold from forming.

***Continue to GENTLY stir the contents occasionally throughout the infusing period, watch for condensation on the underside of the lid or wax paper. Wipe off any moisture accumulating there.

HOW TO MAKE HERBAL SYRUP

CAUTION: see information on page 4

Don't forget: To avoid any allergic reactions, consume only a small amount of the syrup for the first time.

Herbal syrup: the liquid is usually an herbal concentrate—an infusion/decoction—and is reduced by simmering, which evaporates the water and thickens the liquid (see **How to Make Herbal Infusions and Decoctions** p.12). It features dried or fresh herbs, a sweetener such as honey, or some other sugar. If you are looking for strong herbal flavor, consider that both honey and maple syrup have their own dominant taste and can overpower mild-flavored herbs. (Optional: a little alcohol can be added, to act as a preservative for longer shelf life).

USES: Herbal syrups can be used for sore throat, coughs or digestive issues. They can be added to beverages and food for a new flavour...and feeling of well-being!

EQUIPMENT

- Saucepan
- Strainer and coffee filter, fine sieve, or cheesecloth
- Funnel
- Glass jar or bottle (preferable to plastic)

INGREDIENTS

- Fresh or dried herb of your choice—be sure they are clean, free of debris and bug-free
- Honey (best for preserving syrups); or some other unrefined sugar (cane sugar, brown sugar, sucanat)
- **(Optional)** Alcohol such as brandy—as a preservative if using sugar (or store in the fridge or freezer)

BASIC METHOD OF PREPARATION

General ratio of **water** to **herbs** (unless specified differently in a recipe): for dried herbs—4 to ¼ ; or for fresh herbs—4 to ½. Eg. 2 cups of water to ½ cup dried herbs or ¼ fresh herbs. You can experiment with the ratio of water to herbs, depending on your personal preference for flavour.

1. Start by making an herbal decoction (herbs and water p. 13) in a saucepan, heating over low heat until the liquid is reduced by 50%
2. Strain the herbs and let the remaining liquid cool to room temperature.
3. Add to the herbal liquid, the same amount of honey or sugar as remaining liquid (1 to 1 ratio Eg. 1 cup sweetener to 1 cup of liquid). Stir and heat gently over low heat, until the sweetener just dissolves. Do not boil. If you prefer the syrup to be more or less sweet, just add more or less honey or sugar. **Caution:** Too little sweetener will make the syrup thinner and may cause the syrup to become contaminated.
4. Let syrup cool.
5. **Optional:** As a preservative for sugar-based syrups, you may wish to add up to ¼ cup of brandy for each cup of syrup.
6. Pour into sterilized glass bottle, label, date and **store in the fridge or freezer.** (Note: If you used a 1 to 1 ratio of liquid to honey; or with sugar, added alcohol, it should last up to 6 months.)

RECIPES FOR HERBAL SYRUPS

Rose Syrup (do not use commercial roses, they are heavily sprayed with chemicals)

1 cup water

1 cup sugar

2 cups fresh rose petals (1 cup dried)

1. Place water and sugar in a small saucepan, bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves.
2. Reduce the heat, stir in the rose petals and simmer gently for 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and let steep until cool.
3. Strain the syrup through a fine sieve or cheesecloth into a sterilized glass jar or bottle. Label and store in the fridge for up to a month; in the freezer, even longer.
4. Uses: Drizzle on a cake or vanilla ice cream; add to beverages such as soda water, lemonade, tea or coffee.

Cottonwood Bud Syrup

½ cup cottonwood buds

1 cup honey

Let sit for 4 weeks to 6 months, then strain. The longer the extraction, the stronger the medicine. Stir the syrup into hot water or tea for sipping, to relieve dry coughs or bronchitis symptoms.

Additional Syrups:

Dandelion Syrup

<https://naturesnurtureblog.com/homemade-dandelion-syrup/>

Rosehip Syrup

<https://marysnest.com/homemade-rose-hips-syrup-recipe/>

Fireweed Syrup

<https://delishably.com/sauces-preserves/When-Your-Jelly-Fails-to-Gel-featuring-Fireweed>

Spruce Tip Syrup

See p. 10

HOW TO MAKE HERB-INFUSED SALVE

CAUTION: see information on page 4

Don't forget: To identify and prevent an allergic reaction, before applying anything new to your skin, do a patch test, by putting a small amount on your inner wrist.

EQUIPMENT

You will need:

- A pot to heat water
- A smaller pot, bowl, jar, or Pyrex measuring cup with a handle that can hang on the edge of the bigger pot
- Stirring utensil eg. chopstick
- Enough clean, sterilized containers with lids to store the salve eg. small glass jars, tin containers, hard plastic jars

INGREDIENTS

You will need: (depending on how much salve you want to make)

1 cup (8 oz) of herb-infused oil (see instructions for **How to Make Herb-Infused Oil** p.14)

1 oz (28 gm) of beeswax--solid, grated or pellets

OR for a smaller volume 1/2 cup of oil and 1/2 oz (14 gm) of beeswax

(Optional): essential oil of your choice Eg. lavender

METHOD OF PREPARATION

1. Put the beeswax into the smaller container, and warm in the bigger pot that contains about an inch of simmering water, **JUST** until the beeswax is melted. Add oil, (the wax will solidify a little) and stir with the chopstick until all is liquid again. To prevent scorching the solution—**DO NOT OVERHEAT**. Test the consistency of your salve by putting a few drops on wax paper and putting it in the freezer for a few minutes. If it's softer than you'd like, add a little more beeswax, or if it is harder, add a little more oil, and do the freezer test again.
2. If adding essential oils (only a few drops are needed), do so now, stir to mix thoroughly. Pour the **still-warm** salve into the containers. Let sit until the salve sets up completely.
3. Put the caps on the containers, label with date and ingredients. Store in a cool, dark place. Salves will last up to a year. (When not using regularly, storing in the fridge will help extend the life of your salve).

HOW TO MAKE HERBAL SKIN TONER

CAUTION: see information on page 4

Don't forget: To identify and prevent an allergic reaction, before applying anything new to your skin, do a patch test, by putting a small amount on your inner wrist.

Toner is a liquid that you apply to your skin with a cotton ball/pad, or spray on with a spritzer. Some are astringent and can remove oil and tighten skin. Others are gentler and aid in cleansing and refreshing. Preparing your own herbal skincare produce can help in your health and wellness. Just being outside and around plants can increase your life span. The light exercise, vitamin-D from sunlight, and effect on mood all contribute to your wellness.

Various toners can be prepared with distilled water, apple cider vinegar, or 14% witch hazel (available in pharmacies).

Rose Toner—hydrate and gently tone the skin with witch hazel (14%)

1. Fill a glass jar with wilted or dried wild rose petals.
2. Cover completely with **14% witch hazel extract**.
3. Cap the jar with a lid and let sit for at least 2 weeks. Shake every couple of days to distribute medicine throughout the fluid. Be sure all petals are submerged.
4. Strain with muslin cloth or fine mesh sieve, store in a sterilized glass jar or spray bottle, label, and store in the fridge.

Spray or pat this liquid on your face as a refreshing astringent to tighten pores and balance skin.

Rose Water Toner

1. Pick about 3 cups of rose petals following the ethical guidelines (on p.9). Leave outside for about 30 minutes on a tea towel to allow any insects to escape.
2. Put rose petals in a saucepan and fill with water (distilled if possible) until the petals are just covered. Cover with a lid and warm on very low heat until most of the colour has faded from the petals, about 20 minutes. **DO NOT** bring to a simmer, as too much heat can destroy the flower's beneficial properties and colour.
3. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve or cheesecloth. Pour into a sterilized jar, allow to cool and store in the fridge. Use with a cotton pad or as a face mist with a mini-spritzer bottle. It will keep for about 1-2 weeks.

Fireweed Toner and Fireweed Water Toner—follow the directions in the recipes above for Roses

Lilac Water Toner

Cut and shake the lilac blooms to remove any insects or other debris. Pick the individual purple lilac flowers off the stem. Pack a jar with the blossoms, pour very hot water over them, cover and allow to steep for 30 minutes, pushing the blossoms down to remain covered by the water. When cool, strain into a sterilized bottle, label and store in the fridge where it should last for about 1-2 weeks. Apply to your face with a cotton pad, or mist with a mini-spritzer bottle.



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