

Our Common Roots

-Field Guide-

Written by Chad Cornell

Revised by Kyrie Atford

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Table of Contents

Greeting Your Green Community.....	6
Wild Crafting Code of Conduct	7
Wild Harvesting Chart.....	10
Herbal Antibiotics & Diuretics.....	11
<i>Usnea (Usnea longissima) “Caribou Food”/“Old Man’s Beard”</i>	11
<i>Uva-Ursi (Archtostrya uva-ursi) “Bearberry”</i>	12
Legends of Nature	14
<i>Birch (Betula papyrifera)</i>	14
<i>Chaga (Inonotus obliquus)</i>	15
Global Traditions, First Nations.....	17
Herbal Antibiotics & Diuretics:	17
<i>Bentonite Clay</i>	17
<i>Garlic (Allium sativum; Liliaceae) “Poorman’s Treacle”</i>	18
<i>Juniper (Juniper communis & J. horizontalis)</i>	20
Cree: <i>Ka-ka-kau-mini</i>	20
Global Traditions: Ayurveda (ayur: life veda: science)	23
Understanding Natural Medicine Through Flavours.....	25
<i>The Six Tastes:</i>	25
Herbs for Cleansing.....	27
<i>Calamus (Acorus americanus) Sweet Flag, Wikis</i>	27
<i>Rosemary (Zrosemarinus officinalis)</i>	29
<i>Wormwood (Artemisia absinthium)</i>	30
Wound Healers.....	32
<i>Yarrow (Achilea millefolium)</i>	32
Lung Herbs.....	33
<i>Frankincense (Boswellia serrata, carterii) “Boswellia”</i>	33
<i>Safety: Very safe, though it may dampen digestion in some individuals if used over a long period</i>	34
<i>Mullein (Verbascum thapsus) “Rabbits Ears”</i>	34
Herbs for Stress	35
<i>Burdock (Arctium lappa)</i>	35
<i>Pineapple Weed (Maticaria matricarioides) Manitoba’s Local Chamomile</i>	37
<i>Plantain (Plantago major)</i>	38
<i>Red Reishi (Ganoderma lucidum, applantum)</i>	39
<i>Parts Used: Fruiting body</i>	39
<i>Rose (Rosa gallica)</i>	40
Wild Foods and Blood Cleansers	41
<i>Red Clover (Trifolium pratense)</i>	41
Immune Support.....	42
<i>Echinacea (E. angustifolia & E. purpurea)</i>	42
Wound Healers.....	44
<i>Comfrey (Symphytum officinale)</i>	44
<i>Calendula (calendula-officinalis)</i>	45
Emotions and the Heart- using Flower Essences with Terry Willard.....	46
Herbs for Stress	47
<i>Motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca)</i>	47

Herbs for Libido	47
Reproductive Essence (Ojas) & Toxin Build-up (Ama)	48
The Body, Jing and Vitality: Sexuality and Healing.....	49
<i>Angelica (angelica sinensis) "Dong Quai"</i>	52
<i>Ashwaghandha (Withania somnifera) "Winter Cherry"</i>	53
<i>Ginseng (Panax ginseng; Araliaceae)</i>	54
Kundalini.....	54
Vital Force (the western medical term)	54
Herbs and Consciousness	54
<i>Tobacco (Nicotiana)</i>	54
<i>Lobelia (Lobelia Inflata)</i>	56
<i>San Pedro (Echinopsis pachanoi)</i>	56
<i>Holy Basil (Ocimum Sanctum)</i>	57
<i>Sage (Salvia officinalis)</i>	58
Works Cited	62

Our Common Roots Field Guide

*The essence of all beings is earth,
The essence of earth is water,
The essence of water is plants,
The essence of plants is the human being.*
- Chandogya, from the Upanishads

Plants give us air, sun, food, shelter and medicine. If it were not for plants, we would not be here.



A large number of challenges we are facing today include how to heal the relationship between human and nature. If we want to find our way back to healing, we have to look at some key issues and ask some hard questions: How do we get out of this situation we are in with being so immersed in this world run by chemical institutions? How can we return to a more natural way of life, not just for ourselves but also for the rest of nature?

A big part of healing is finding the balance between the masculine and the feminine.

The first place the healing begins is when we come to the forest and learn to just be here. Breathe, feel our feet on the Earth and feel ourselves as a part of Nature. As we get closer to our natural mind there is another intelligence that comes out of us and plants are always ushering us in that direction, teaching us how to be open, how to be grounded, how to share and work together, and how to bloom. This is the essence of natural healing.

Greeting Your Green Community

The first thing we must do when we come to these plants is acknowledging them as living beings. Traditionally, there is always some form of communicating with the plant, asking permission to harvest, and saying thank you when you're done. The power of the medicine is not just in the chemical, but also in the relationship.

There are a variety of local plants we can use to address many common ailments in our lives. Plant medicine, diet and good lifestyle practices can contribute to the healing of almost any disease. Rather than simply listing an herb under a certain type of ailment, like garlic for high blood pressure, we can benefit more from understanding a plant's whole personality.

Every plant we meet has a personality; they may be warm or cold, damp and oily or dry, big or small, bold or subdued. Plants can be seen as passive or aggressive, flamboyant or shy, grounded or flighty, tight or expansive. They breathe, they drink, they eat, and they procreate - they are alive and experiencing life. They store solar energy from the sun, and they all have a vital energetic imprint unique to them. When getting to know a plant, and how they will influence us, it is invaluable to spend time with them in their natural environment.

Sit with a plant when you have enough time to slow down. Find a place you feel comfortable and choose a plant to visit. Introduce yourself, and clarify your

intentions. You may feel silly, but keep going. In this humble state notice the following:

How strong is the size / presence?

What colour is dominant?

What does it smell like? Sweet, pungent?

How quickly is it growing?

What time of year is it? What stage, is it an early bloomer or late?

Does it thrive in a disturbed area, or is it easily disturbed?

Does it seem immune to pests?

How aggressively does it reproduce?

What grows around it? Or does it grow alone?

Does it thrive in the sun or shade?

Does it seem to thrive in dry places or wet?

Does it spread its energy out along the ground or reach straight up?

Does the plant follow the doctrine of signatures? i.e. does it resemble any particular body part?

How does it make you feel, what song would you hum in its presence?

When you breathe in its essence, what part of your body does it go to, what colour do you imagine?

Wild Crafting Code of Conduct

Before you begin harvesting a wild plant, it is important to reflect on the following:

1. How well do you know the land?

Whose property is it? Do you have permission? Is it a protected habitat? Is there other wildlife that depends on the plants for survival? Is the land free of chemicals such as synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides?

Avoid roadsides, clear-cuts and ditches. It is optimal to develop a relationship with the land and plant before harvesting from it. Knowing the animals and insects that reside there, doing what you can to improve the land, keep it free of trash, etc. All of these help you make the best decisions on when, where and what to harvest.

2. Do you know what and how to harvest what you are harvesting?

If you are not 100 percent sure, leave it alone. Harvest with a guide or someone with experience, read up on plant identification. Is the plant a protected species? Is it scarce or in abundance? Only harvest 1/3 of the plant and only if it is abundant. This allows for the plant to sustainably propagate and still provide food or medicine to the wildlife that depends on it.

How much of the plant do you actually need? It is sometimes best to be cautious and harvest less if you are unsure. Do you have the proper tools or skill to harvest it safely? This means you want to be in a good state of mind/heart, and have scissors or other tools for a clean cut if needed and a breathable bag to put the herb into.

3. Know why you are harvesting. It is good to have an intention when harvesting a plant.

Why do you need this plant? What are its purposes? What will you be using it for? It is good to communicate with the plant, ask it for its help and whether it is ok to harvest. It may not feel right to harvest it and you

may want to keep looking for a bigger or different patch of growth. This can also help determine how much you need to harvest.

4. Know when to harvest.

What time of year is the plant or its specific parts available? What time of day / type of weather should you harvest in? What kind of energy do you want the plant to contain?

Will harvesting the plant now interfere with its growth? Is there enough of the plant growing in this area?

5. What can you give back?

Thank the plant. This begins to develop a relationship with it, which is as important to healing as the properties it beholds. Help maintain the area naturally such as cleaning up any litter, giving the plant a little bit of water if needed, and keeping the area sacred by protecting it from overharvesting.

The Wild Harvesting Chart on the following page is a great guide to bring with you wild crafting. It offers additional information to be aware of and record while harvesting.

Wild Harvesting Chart

Date: _____ Name of Wild crafter(s): _____

Location: _____ Ownership: _____

Permission Required/Obtained? _____ Season: _____

Plant Species: _____ Strength of Population: _____

Time of Day: _____ Weather Present: _____

Moon Phase: _____ Animal Signs: _____

Ecosystem Strength: _____ Proximity to Pollution: _____

Type of Soil/Conditions: _____

Main Other Plants/Trees Present: _____

Drying Details / Mold Avoidance:

Moisture Test: _____

Meditation: _____

Batch Number: _____

Form of Storage: _____

Other Notes:

Herbal Information – Note all dosages are based on adults, it is generally good to avoid the use of herbs in children under two, and it is always good to get professional advice from an Herbalist or doctor on any condition.

Herbal Antibiotics & Diuretics

Usnea (*Usnea longissima*) “Caribou Food”/“Old Man's Beard”

Parts Used: Mycelia

Energetics: P- K= V+ in excess

Main Actions: Antibacterial, antifungal, antiseptic

This beautiful lichen is a familiar sight in the boreal forest. It can usually be found on the lower branches of conifer trees such as spruce and tamarack.



It is actually composed of two plants - lichen and algae, each needing the other to survive. Usnea is used primarily in situations of lung infection, urinary tract infection, and fungal infections. It contains usnic acid and other lichen acids that are antiseptic in action. It provides a strong antibiotic against gram-positive bacteria. Even in very dilute amounts (1:50,000) usnea was shown to completely inhibit the growth of tuberculosis. It also completely inhibits the growth of *Staphylococcus*, *Streptococcus*, and *Pneumococcus* organisms.

Usnea has proven to be more effective against some bacteria than penicillin. It has been used throughout the world for skin infections, abscesses, and vaginal infections. The lichen, soaked in garlic juice or a strong garlic infusion was one traditional method of treating large gaping wounds. Usnea is also caribou food, so it is important to be mindful when harvesting. Usnea acts as a sponge to toxins so you should harvest it from a clean environment.

Safety: Excessively high amounts of usnea have shown toxicity in animals.

Preparation & Dosage: Usnea is only partially water-soluble. To make the strongest tea or decoction, grind the herb first, and then add enough alcohol to wet the herb. Let it sit, covered, for 30 minutes, then add hot water and let steep.

Tincture: Made in 40% alcohol (after it has been ground). An adult can use between 30 and 60 drops up to 4x per day. It should be added to water, as it has been known to irritate the lining of the mouth when taken straight.

Tea: Steep 1 tsp in 6 oz of hot water for 20 minutes. Use 2 to 6 oz up to 3x per day.

Douche: Add 1/2 oz of tincture to 1 pint of water. Douche 2x daily, upon rising and before retiring for 3 days.

Uva-Ursi (*Archtostrylos uva-ursi*) "Bearberry"

Parts Used: Leaves. Best collected in the fall from branches without flowers or fruit if possible.

Ayurvedic Energetics: PK- V+

Chinese Energetics: It affects the heart, bladder, small intestine and liver meridians in Eastern Medicine.



Main Actions: Antiseptic, diuretic, astringent

Found in woodlands and sandy hills throughout the boreal region, this plant's most specific action is on the urinary tract. Studies have shown that bearberry has an antiseptic effect in the urinary tract. It can be made into a mild tea and used as a diuretic. It is especially good in cases of gravel or ulceration of the

urinary tract. In chronic inflammation, or infection of the kidneys and bladder, it has no equal to its antibiotic qualities. For this purpose it can be effectively combined with barberry root powder, corn silk and usnea. Its astringent action is also useful in dysentery and diarrhea; back pain, as well as profuse menstruation. The high tannin content works well as an astringent to toughen skin and tone gums. It can also be used for dry skin conditions that weep. While its uses are diverse, prolonged use can irritate the kidneys. Some authors suggest that the body needs to be in an alkaline state in order for uva ursi to really work. Aboriginal uses include; smoking substitute, persistent cough (root), miscarriage prevention, postnatal recovery, and to bring on menstruation. The berries can be eaten raw as a survival food but are better cooked, traditionally in some sort of fat such as salmon oil, fish eggs, or bear grease.

Safety: Too much can cause constipation, stomach and liver problems. Bearberry in general is rich in tannins, which cause irritation and should be avoided by children and pregnant women.

Preparation & Adult Dosage: 3-6 grams. Steep ½ tsp per cup for 5 minutes, drink 1- 2 cups daily. Do not boil.

Precautions: There are gentler diuretics available. Long-term use may cause irritation. For re-occurring urinary tract infections, include a **pro-biotic** with treatment as well as another natural antibiotic such as grapefruit seed extract or colloidal silver if needed.

Legends of Nature

Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)

Parts Used: Young leaf, bark, sap

Energetics: Warm, sweet

Main Actions: Anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, antiseptic, diaphoretic, diuretic, hemostatic, tonic, urinary antiseptic.



The birch tree is often found along rivers and in moist sites across the Northern Hemisphere. The inner bark (*Cambium* layer and associated young *phloem* and *xylem*) can be eaten in the spring as a starvation food or sweet treat. The sap can be collected in the spring as a health tonic just as winter is ending, and the leaves or root inner bark can be boiled to make a beverage. The betulinic acid content found in the bark of birch trees is currently under study for its role in preventing rot. When a birch tree dies, you will often find the core of the trunk decomposed while the paper remains unchanged. Birch essential oil can be used for muscle and joint pain as it relieves blood stagnation and has anti-inflammatory properties. Birch can also be used in detoxification, clearing skin disorders, kidney stones, and bladder infections. Betulinic acid is used in cosmetics and birch oil is used to draw toxins out of skin, rubbed in daily as a cellulite removal or to treat acne.

Note: Never take the bark from the entire circumference of the tree. Only take it in small strips or pieces.

Preparation & Dosage: 1 tsp of the inner bark or leaf buds are steeped in boiling water for 10 minutes, one to two cups are taken daily.

Safety: Not to be used during pregnancy.

Chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*)

Parts Used: The middle portion of the mushroom (inner conk)

Main Actions: Tonic, alterative, anodyne, and restorative

There are many amazing medicinal mushrooms found in nature, but the chaga mushroom is very near the top of the list. It has been used in



herbal folk medicine for types of stomach complaints from gastritis, pain in the stomach, ulcers and cancer, as well as tuberculosis of the bones and glandular organs where operations were not possible due to the network of blood vessels. Most research into chaga has taken place in Russia. Since 1955 the Medical Academy of Science in Moscow has promoted chaga for clinical and domestic medicine, encouraged it commercially, and collected it for medical use. Chaga cannot stop all advanced forms of cancer, but chaga will reduce pain, give comfort, and slow or stop growths. In the swelling of the lower bowel, chaga can be prepared as a colonic in addition to oral medication. Chaga is also considered a blood purifier and tonic to regenerate deteriorated organs and glands.

Although the chaga mushroom may be found growing on some other trees such as alder, it is only the birch chaga that we seek. This is due to the betulinic acid, which is converted by the chaga from the betulin in the birch bark. The chaga mushroom that grows on birch trees concentrate the betulinic acid into SOD (*superoxide dismutases*) that is an enzyme that helps the body shed toxins. Studies have shown that betulinic acid is more effective and less toxic than any other cytotoxic therapy presently being used to treat melanoma. It is believed to down regulate the *mutant p53* suppressor gene responsible for allowing the proliferation of *oncogenes*. More research is needed to ensure that the human body is benefiting from the SOD found in the chaga. Chaga should be harvested

in the summer months in northern climates where it gets very cold and the conks get quite large (up to 1 foot in diameter or more).

Preparation & Dosage: To prepare the chaga mushroom we must remember that it is a living fungus! We do not want to boil it, nor do we want to use water that is really hot (less than 50 degrees). The inner part of the conk must be scraped out into a powder and soaked in warm water. For 1 part of crushed chaga pour over five parts of boiled (not boiling) water - or about twice as much. Let it soak for 1-4 hours (some say up to 24 or more hrs). Drink up to 3 cups per day about 30 minutes before a meal and 90 minutes after. It is good to start with a lower dosage and work up slowly. Some suggested dosages have higher water content at 1-ounce chaga to 12 ounces of water. Chaga may take time to work (from 3-5 months). Luckily it makes a pleasant tasting tea. It is common to hear that some people boil chaga, and many people re-soak the powder over and over before finally boiling.

Safety: Not to be used in large dosages especially during breastfeeding. Not to be used during pregnancy.

Global Traditions, First Nations

Herbal Antibiotics & Diuretics:

Bentonite Clay

Family: Montmorillonite

Bentonite Clay is best known for its drawing and absorbing powers in many industries. Because it is filled with minerals, it sops up toxins of the body and is used to clean up lead spills in the environment. It is good for aiding in cleansing the colon and body of heavy metals, parasites, fungus and other toxins. Bentonite fights infections and is anti-inflammatory. It stops the process of dysentery in its tracks.



The paste can be applied externally as a poultice on cuts, bruises, insect bites, bee stings, boils, rashes, acne, and burns, to draw out toxins and infections. It can also be used as a facial or hair mask, as a foot soak or in the bath. Taken internally, it soothes and detoxifies.

Preparation & Dosage:

Generally the dosage is 1 tsp of the powder in 4oz of water, stir well and drink. Then follow by drinking another 5 oz of water. This can be done a few times per day.

Topical: Simply add enough water to a teaspoon of clay in a small bowl in order to make a semi liquid paste that can cover the affected area (bug bite or boil.) Let sit for a few hours and then wash off with plenty of water, re-applying if needed.

Precautions: If using internally, wait at least 2 hours before any medications as it can lessen their effect due to bentonite's absorbing quality.

Film Notes: Sage, thyme, oregano, allspice and rosemary are all herbs that we can use as natural antibiotics. Combine with beneficial bacteria and ensure HCL (stomach acid) is present in order to fortify the body against the invasion of harmful bacteria and parasites.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*; *Liliaceae*) "Poorman's Treacle"

Parts used: The bulb and cloves. The bulb with its numerous cloves should be unearthed when it begins to wither in the early fall.

Energetics: VK- P+

Main Actions: Alterative, diaphoretic, diuretic, tonic, expectorant, antiseptic, anthelmintic, stimulant, antispasmodic, cholegogue, hypotensive, anti-catarrhal, carminative, rubefacient, vulnerary, antiseptic, anti-microbial.



Photo Juststone Kaminska

Originally from central Asia it is now grown worldwide. Garlic has always been used for its healing powers prior to the development of antibiotics. It was a treatment for all types of infections, from tuberculosis to typhoid. It was also used to dress wounds during the First World War. It has been used medicinally for at least 5,000 years. In Ayurveda, *rashona*- the Sanskrit name for Garlic- means "lacking one taste" as it contains all but one of the six tastes, sour.

Garlic stimulates immune function and improves its response, lowers blood pressure as well as lowering cholesterol counts. It is also effective in combating Candida, heart disease, cancer, and fatigue. Extracts made from either the whole bulb or clove, separate individual plant compounds have consistently shown a

broad- spectrum antibiotic range against both gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria as well as most major infectious bacteria.

Garlic can be used for skin or vaginal infections though should be diluted in another oil. It can also be used as nasal drops that will allow its volatile oils to be excreted through the lungs to remedy respiratory infections such as colds, flu, bronchial or ear infections. It has been used externally for the treatment of ringworm and threadworm. Garlic has shown impressive clinical results toward the treatment of heart disease, stress, cancer, fatigue, aging, and reducing blood sugar levels (which can help in late- onset diabetes). It also reduces the chance of stroke by thinning the blood. Although it is a good blood cleanser it tends to heat the blood and cause or aggravate bleeding. It has shown many additional benefits in combating various types of infection around the world. Garlic can also be used in conjunction with conventional antibiotics to lessen their side effects.

Preparation & Dosage:

Fresh cloves: Eat one clove up to 3 x per day for prevention. During acute episodes some clinicians have used 3-9 cloves per day. Mixing the juiced garlic oil with carrot juice is a common approach. Always start with small dosages as fore-mentioned.

Capsules: 3 capsules 3x per day as a preventative. During acute episodes; up to 20 capsules per day depending on the strength and the individual.

Tincture: Fresh bulb 1:2 ratio in 95% alcohol. Take 40 drops up to six times per day

Precautions: Due to the incredible pungent quality of garlic it can lead to nausea and vomiting. The quantity should start small and be diluted (such as 1 ml of juice in a full glass of carrot juice). Garlic is not suggested for nursing mothers as it might irritate the baby. The smell of garlic is strong and may bother friends and family. Capsules are available and eating parsley or taking chlorophyll or wheatgrass juice might help. Ayurveda cautions against its use in conditions of

hyperacidity, toxic heat in the blood, or a high *Pitta dosha*. Garlic thins the blood and lowers blood sugar levels and as such, should be considered carefully by those with corresponding health conditions. Garlic may aggravate the libido.

Juniper (*Juniper communis* & *J. horizontalis*)

Cree: Ka-ka-kau-mini

Parts used: Gather needles, bark, roots, or heartwood at any time of year. First year berries, which are light greenish in colour should be gathered after the first frost. Second year berries, which are bluish purple in color can be gathered at any time, preferably at noon on a hot day.

Energetics: K- P + V+ in excess

Main Actions: Alterative, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, anti-microbial, anti-septic, aromatic, diaphoretic, carminative, diuretic, emmenagogue, stimulant, tonic, uterine stimulant.



Found in Europe, southwestern Asia up to the Himalayas, and in North America, juniper likes really hot, sunny areas, as it is a solar shrub. Throughout history, juniper was burned to ward off the plague. Cree used the bark in a poultice for wounds. The Blackfoot used juniper on the floor of their sweat lodges (as a purification ritual) and at sun dance ceremonial sites. Juniper has been used all around the world for cleansing physically, emotionally and spiritually. In Ayurveda amongst other things, Juniper is used for its purifying action that extends to the aura and the subtle body, as it helps to destroy not only resistant bacteria but negative astral influences as well.

The berries are spicy sweet, warm, and bitter. Due to its heating nature, juniper is very aggravating for *Pitta* constitutions and for those avoiding excessive heat.

Many herbalists suck on juniper berries when they are treating patients with infectious disease as a preventative. The history of juniper in folklore is very lengthy and wondrous, and includes its use as a diuretic, contraceptive, source of the alcohol gin, strengthener of the stomach and impaired digestion by bringing in warmth, and more. There is plenty of scientific evidence that supports its use by indigenous cultures around the globe as both a preventive and a cure for illness.

Juniper is a tonic and diuretic whose effects are prompt and pleasant. It can be used to treat urine retention, gravel, and dropsical trouble. In the digestive system juniper is warming and settling, easing colic and supporting the function of the stomach. Taken internally or applied externally, it is helpful in chronic arthritis, gout, and rheumatic conditions. Applied externally as an essential oil it is said to draw toxins out from the underlying tissues. Juniper promotes menstrual flow and treats urinary tract infections. The berries or needles are used for upper respiratory tract infections of *E.coli*, *Samonella*, and *Shingella*. The heartwood, roots, bark, needles or berries are used for skin infections and infectious dysentery. The essential oil of the berry is excreted in the urine and is antibacterial against antibiotic resistant bacteria. In vitro studies have shown strong activity against antibiotic resistant bacteria, especially *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tincture: Soak berries in a 1:5 ratio with 75% alcohol. Take 5-20 drops up to 3x per day.

Tea: 1-teaspoon ground needles steeped (and covered), in 6 ounces of boiling water for 15 minutes. For upper respiratory infections or food poisoning, take as often as needed. For shingels, drink as much tea as can be consumed. As a general stimulant drink a cup of tea daily.

Wash: A strong decoction of the herb was used traditionally to sterilize brewing equipment, cooking utensils, surgical equipment, hands, counters, etc. The tea is

also useful as a wash for wounds to either prevent or cure infection. Use 1-ounce (25g) herb per 1-quart (1 L) water, boil 30 minutes, let steep overnight.

Berries: For gastric problems eat 1- 3 berries per day for 2 weeks.

Powdered: Add any part of the plant to wound powders, or use alone to prevent or cure infection in wounds.

Food: Berries and new needle growth can be added to many dishes both for flavor and to kill food-borne bacteria.

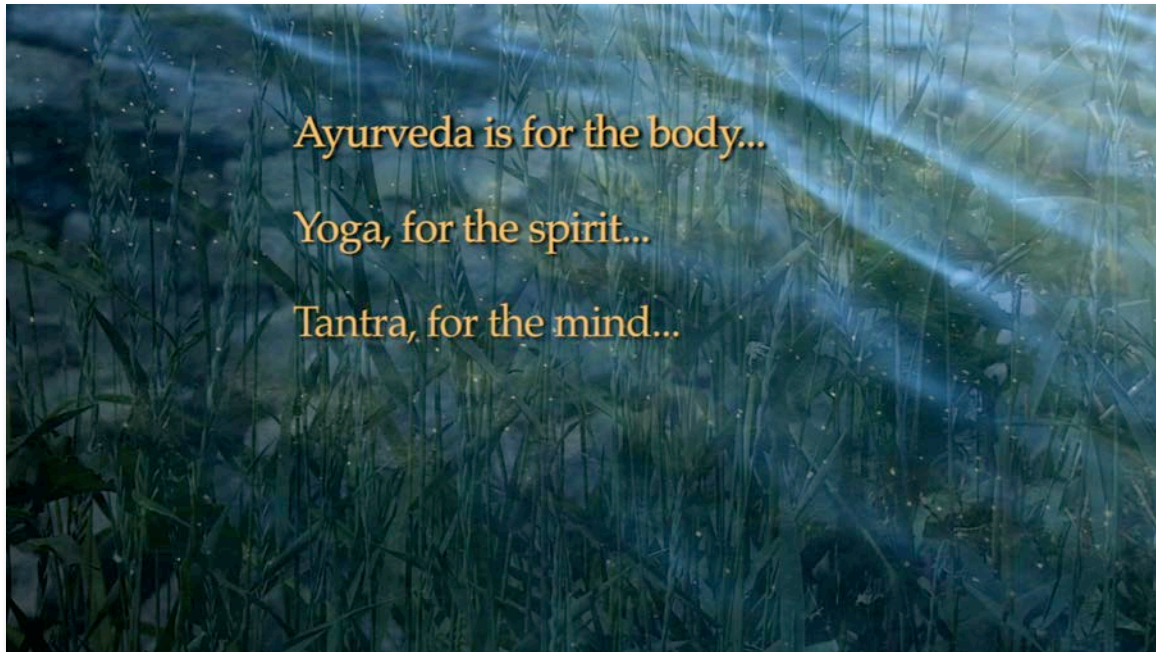
Steam: You may use any part of the plant, but usually the needles or berries are gathered. Use in sweat lodge or sauna, or boil 4 ounces (100g) of needles or crushed berries in 1 gallon (4:1) water and inhale the steam.

Precautions: Juniper can actually increase bleeding if used improperly, thus it is not good for kidney inflammation or urinary tract infections that have reached the kidneys. Do not use during pregnancy.

Global Traditions: Ayurveda (ayur: life veda: science)

The Vedic sciences are about prolonging life.

All are focused on balance, peace and harmony.

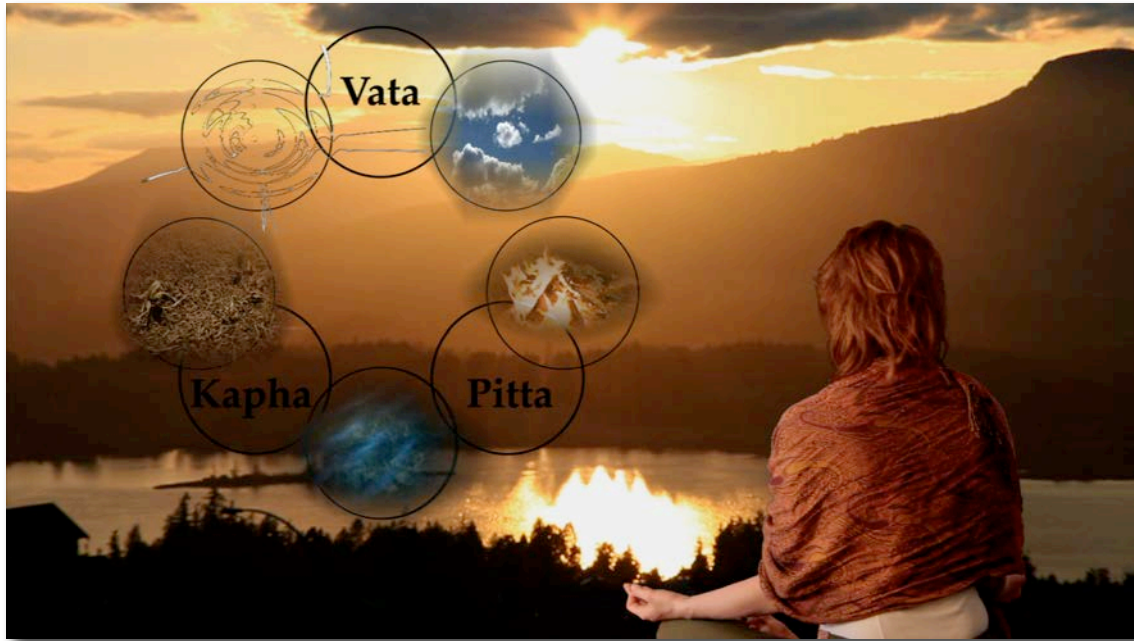


Ayurveda, the science of health and longevity, is the ancient healing system of India and the Indo-European region. Much like Chinese Medicine and other forms of traditional healing, it can be traced back thousands of years. These systems see the body as a complete garden and not simply a machine made of parts.

Like the rest of nature, the body is comprised of the primary elements of water, air, earth, and fire. All of these elements are interacting within the element of ether or space. Each element is interwoven with the functioning of the body, the mind and their many processes or states.

According to Ayurveda, the science of health and longevity, we are all a unique balance of these elements, which they categorize into three "types" or *doshas*.

Depending on our *dosha* type - we will be dominated by fire and water known as *Pitta*, Earth and water - know as *Kapha*, or air and ether - known as *Vata*. Everything in nature, including different plants, will fall into these same categories. They can be recognized by their taste, colour or smell.



For example, *Vata* can be recognized in the **bitter** flavour, *Pitta* in the **pungent**, and *Kapha* in the **sweet**. Where we live, our sleeping patterns, hobbies, diet, vocations, emotions and so on, all affect our *doshic* balance. The goal in traditional medicine is to find elemental harmony, or constitutional balance and thus avoid disease. For example, in nature you want rain but you don't want a flood. You want warmth but not a drought.

If a garden gets moldy, or overtaken by a fungus due to its lack of drainage or excess water element, or its lack of exposure to wind and sun, it will do little good to spray a chemical on it. One must look at the balance of the elements, to see which one is lacking and which one is in excess.

Traditional systems seek to balance the body and mind via diet, herbs, and lifestyle using this ancient system of elements. This is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. Each element can be used to balance the others; this is a

holistic system that embraces the micro and the macro, the environment and the individual. It is important to realize that the “elemental” or “*Dosha*” types are not only referring to the actual elements but to the function of those elements in the body. For example *Pitta* is responsible for **sight** and **digestion**, *Vata* for **bowel movements** and **nerve impulses**, *Kapha* for **bone structure and lubrication and so on**. This is only an introduction to the concept of *doshas* and elements and is designed to inspire one toward further research.

Understanding Natural Medicine Through Flavours

There are numerous charts that separate certain foods, and herbs into *doshic* categories. **The Yoga of Herbs**, and **The Ayurveda Cookbook** are two of these. Many foods become instinctive once you absorb the elemental theory of nature.

The Six Tastes:

The six tastes are associated with the different elements. Both Chinese herbalism and Ayurveda relate the flavours of herbs and foods to their therapeutic uses. An important thing to note is that substances can have a particular action at a low dosage and have the opposite effect at a high dosage. The same is true for most herbs.



Salty (Water & Fire): Salt is dampening, softening, moistening and retains water. It can, however, be hot and heating in a mild way such as when placed on an open sore. It is helpful for *Vata* issues. It can be used to promote digestion, break open tumors, and liquefy *Kapha*. Too much can aggravate *Pitta*, create thirst, burning, falling of hair and wasting of muscles. It promotes hyperacidity, gout and other *Pitta*-type disorders.

Sweet (Earth & Water): Cooling nutritive, pleasant, softening, and anabolic in general. The sweet flavour is the same nature as the human body. It promotes the growth of all tissues and *ojas*. It alleviates *Pitta*, *Vata* and the effects of poison. It generally gives strength, good complexion and hair. It is good for the voice and energy. It gives contentment and rebuilds from weakness. If too much is used it creates obesity, laziness, excessive sleep, loss of appetite, weak digestion, abnormal growth of the muscles of the mouth and throat, difficulty breathing, cough, difficult urination, excess salivation, swelling of the lymph glands, loss of voice and goiter.

Astringent: Is considered cooling in Ayurveda. It is useful for such issues as debility, weakness, impotence, bleeding, and aging. It is drying, firming and contracting. Using too much on its own can cause heart pain, constipation, weakening of the voice, dryness of the mouth, and premature aging. It can cause *Vata* type paralysis, spasms, and convulsions.

Bitter (Air and Ether): In spring the first plants up are the bitter plants. These assist in kindling the digestive system and cleansing our body from the dampened system we've accumulated over the winter months. While cooling in action, it can be used to detoxify and it is antibacterial, germicidal, and kills worms. It relieves fainting, burning sensation, and inflammatory skin diseases. It creates a tightness of the skin and muscles. It can rid accumulated fat, lymph, sweat, urine and excrement. In excess it can be very depleting, drying and cooling. Cooling overwhelms all other flavours. It is clearing, drying and cleansing. It is not good for *Vata* types.

Sour (Earth and Fire): This is a heating flavor that improves the taste of food, and stokes the digestive fire. It adds bulk to the body, invigorates, and awakens the mind. It can give firmness to the senses, increase strength, dispel gas, and give contentment to the heart. Too much can make the teeth sensitive, cause thirst, blinking of the eyes, goose bumps, liquefy *Kapha*, aggravate *Pitta*, and build up toxins in the blood. It wastes away the muscles, aggravates wounds and sores, and can create edema.

Spicy or Pungent (Fire & Air): This heating flavour counteracts stagnation and congestion, stimulates the nervous system, digestion; causes tears, headaches, and tingly sensations. Spices are used to purify food and the blood. They can work against obesity, dispel worms and open the vessels. If used in excess it can decrease virility, cause delusion and emaciation. It can cause fainting, loss of consciousness and dizziness. It can create stabbing and burning pains in the body.

Post-Digestive Effect: This is more of a reference to the therapeutic effect of herb after it has been digested/metabolized. The best way to understand this concept in practice is to practice and refer to food and herb charts at first.

Herbs for Cleansing

Calamus (*Acorus americanus*) Sweet Flag, Wikis

Part Used: Root. The root is respectfully harvested from swamps or rivers in the late summer and fall.

Energetics: PV+ K-

Main Actions: Stimulant, carminative, expectorant, emetic, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-septic, anti-spasmodic.

Varieties of this plant are found all over the world, usually in swamps and waterways. It has been used traditionally in Europe, India and in Native America for many different purposes. The Indian variety is known as *Acorus calamus*. For Aboriginals on Turtle Island, it is considered to be one of the most commonly known and used medicines. Its uses include: throat infections, congested lung infections, diabetes, and as a



snuff for sinus congestion. The oil has been found to be anti-fungal, anti-septic, and anti-spasmodic. It is useful in combination with pau d'arco for throat infections. In addition, it has the ability to remedy strep throat in conjunction with barberry and myrrh. For lung infections it combines well with the tincture of usnea and the inhaling of eucalyptus essential oil. The dried and ground rhizome can be ground and added to a small amount of boiling water and applied as a poultice to sore joints. Other uses include aiding in poor digestion, correcting the fermentation process in the gut, aiding in the treatment of type II diabetes and to sharpen and rejuvenate the mind.

It has been chewed to induce a bad taste of tobacco smoke (for those wanting to quit smoking). Calamus has been used as a rub for toothache and gingivitis. In India, calamus was highly valued by the Vedic Seers, who used it for its effects on consciousness and mental performance. It is said to regenerate the nervous system of those who have abused narcotics. It affects the organs and meridians of the liver, spleen, and heart. It is commonly used for sinus and upper respiratory infections as well as for repairing the power of speech after a stroke or to strengthen the voice in general. It is often combined with gotu kola in India as a general tonic for the mind.

Acorus Calamus, the Indian variety, has been banned in North America due to its *Beta-asarone* content which, when isolated and highly concentrated, can cause cell

mutations (carcinogenic). However, as one goes further into the research on this plant, a component called *Alpha-asarone* is found that is considered an anti-carcinogenic. This sort of isolated chemical research can be likened to studying the effects of the sun on life on Earth without taking into account the ozone layer. This is why it is important to use plants in their whole form. The Canadian version of the plant mentioned here might be free of the harmful chemical in question, though more research needs to be done.

Dosage: It can be boiled and ingested as a tea but it is most commonly chewed. For an average adult one can chew the size of ¼ - ½ of an inch placed in gum area for 1 hour before swallowing 3 - 4x per day for a few days at a time. It can be used as a powder and snuff for sinus infections. As a tea, Calamus has been used as a purgative- so unless one is looking for a vomiting effect it should only be taken in small amounts at a time.

Rosemary (*Zrosemarinus officinalis*)

Parts Used: Aerial parts (leaves and flowers)

Energetics: PV+ K-

Main Actions: Carminative, antiseptic, antimicrobial, stimulant, hepatic, cholegogue

Rosemary is believed to be the herb worn in the hair of the studious ancient Greeks. It is legendary for its ability to increase circulation to the brain; it improves mental function, and supplies more mental stimulation (leading to satiation).

Some studies suggest that conditions such as ADD would benefit from these actions. It acts as a circulatory and nervine stimulant. It is a great ally when there is either mental or digestive tension, headaches or depression. Externally it can



be helpful for muscular pain, sciatica, and neuralgia (for this purpose it can be used as an oil along with St. John's wort). Some promote its value as an emmenagogue. According to Culpepper, rosemary is considered good for “cold” and “sinking” energy in the body/mind.

Rosemary brings brightness where there is dull sight and is used to bring in warmth to any disease where there is coldness. It aids in the *agni* (digestive fire) of the stomach, which is the first line of immune defense by properly breaking down food so the body does not become hospitable to parasites, fungus, yeasts, and other dampness. Rosemary cleanses the liver because it increases the flow of bile through the liver (which aids digestion). It also has an antiseptic property. Rosemary can be used as a mouth rinse to improve the health of the gums, and it has been used as a topical oil to stimulate hair follicles in premature baldness. Rosemary makes a wonderful room smudge to clean and clear the air.

Preparation & Dosage:

Infusion: Steep 1 tsp per cup, 1-3x daily.

OCR notes: Oregano, thyme, ginger, allspice, cinnamon and other such herbs and spices are all helpful for bringing warmth to the digestive function – this is why many cultures have used them in cooking for so many generations

Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*)

French: *Absinthe*

Parts Used: Leaves. Wormwood can be harvested at many times of the year. It comes up early in the spring and grows through the summer. I like to gather the leaves in late spring or early summer.

Energetics: PK-V+

Main Actions: Alterative, cholagogue, emmenagogue, astringent, vermifuge, febrifuge

It is interesting that the Greek Goddess of the Moon is named Artemis. Parasites are said to reproduce and increase their negative physical and psychological effects most intensely around the full moon. Artemisia, more commonly known as wormwood, is found in many anti-parasitic formulas. Recent research, specifically on a type of wormwood known as “Sweet Annie,” strongly supports the use of this plant in the treatment of certain cancers.

Wormwood can be burnt as a smudge to keep the bugs away. Wormwood contains high levels of a substance called *thujone*, which can have a very toxic effect on the nervous system if over consumed. This is why the popular drink absinthe was banned in Europe. It is said that Vincent Van Gogh was drinking absinthe when he cut off his ear. We now find this very, very bitter plant most commonly in digestive support formulas, and febrifuge (anti-parasite) formulas. According to Dr's Frawley and Lad in their text *The Yoga of Herbs*, wormwood can be used to counteract fevers, treat anemia and arthritis. They suggest that it is an abortive, and a good wash for itchy rashes. Wormwood is a wonderful digestive aid as it has bitter qualities and promotes the flow of stomach juices such as hydrochloric acid and bile. The bitterness of Wormwood is compared to the air element in Ayurveda where it blows on the *agni*, or digestive fire, to make it bigger and more powerful. It has effect on the liver and gallbladder organs and their meridians.

Safety: Although a valuable remedy, Wormwood should be used sparingly and with respect for its strength. It should be avoided by those who are pregnant or prone to epilepsy due to the *thujone* (also found in Sage) content.

Preparation & Dosage:

Leaf: Nibble on a little piece of leaf 10 minutes before a meal as a digestive stimulant. It is very important to taste the bitterness of the plant.

Tea: Steep ½ – 1 tsp teaspoon in a cup of boiled water for 3-5 minutes. Adjust the dosage depending on the size of the person and their vitality. If a person is very weak or small they should have small amounts only. Drink from 1 sip up to 2 cups daily.

Wound Healers

Yarrow (*Achilea millefolium*)

Parts Used: Whole plant, especially leaf and flower harvested in early summer, early in the afternoon on a sunny day.

Energetics: V+ in excess PK-

Main Actions: Diaphoretic, carminative, hemostatic, astringent, antispasmodic, stomachic.

Flavour: Bitter spicy, neutral

Habitat: Found in moist meadows and openings, often on roadsides.

There is something that is so attractive about this beautiful white flowered plant. Yarrow has a very soothing and positive presence. Often found as an ornamental, the uses of yarrow are many. It is legendary for its abilities to stop bleeding, internally or



externally. For this purpose, it combines well with plantain leaf and other antiseptic astringents. Yarrow is a good wound healer with antiseptic and disinfecting qualities. It can also be used as a digestive aid to ease gas and bloating. You can chew it and apply the leaf or flower to stings or cuts. Yarrow is quite reliable for reducing a fever when appropriate as it can bring on sweating and thus lower the body temperature. For this purpose it is really effective for flu when combined with peppermint, elderflower, and a pinch of cayenne and ginger.

Yarrow has been used by the Blackfoot Indians to hasten delivery. It's quite bitter, and stimulates bile flow. It is cleansing to the blood, is a circulatory system

tonic, and generally strengthening. It can be used in combination with nettle leaf and ginger for arthritis. Yarrow helps to "balance" menstruation, as it is an amphoteric herb. The personality of yarrow is one of inspiration and it carries a strong spiritual quality in the flower. Yarrow has a mild pain relieving quality.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tea: Steep ½ to 1 tsp of dried herb per cup of boiled water in order to get the diaphoretic effects. For its diuretic effects one can drink yarrow tea cold.

Tincture: 10 - 30 drops per day.

Safety: Not to be used during pregnancy

Lung Herbs

Frankincense (*Boswellia serrata, carterii*) "Boswellia"

Part Used: Resin, gum

Energetics: PV+ K-

Main Actions: Emmenagogue, antiseptic, antispasmodic, nervine

Boswellia is a great anti-inflammatory. It reduces pain, swelling, and inflammation in the lungs, intestines, and joints. It is a great alternative to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and steroids. This plant is more commonly known as frankincense, and is burned in ceremony and in churches. It can be effective in fibromyalgia, Crohn's disease, asthma, and some cases of arthritis and joint pain. I have seen it help people with fibromyalgia. Some studies have shown that boswellia has stimulated leukemic cells to kill themselves. Other studies of its



use in colitis have shown a remarkable 82% improvement of symptoms. It can be used for menstrual pains, to promote menstruation, and to clear and calm the mind as well as promote cerebral circulation.

Dosage: 2 to 3 grams 2 or 3x per day

Safety: Very safe, though it may dampen digestion in some individuals if used over a long period.

Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) “Rabbits Ears”

Parts Used: Dried leaves, and flower

Energetics: KP-, V+ - bitter, astringent, cool

Main Actions: Expectorant, demulcent, antispasmodic, astringent, anodyne, vulnerary

Habitat: Found in places that are well drained and dry, often along roadsides.

The main use of mullein is for lung issues. It is indicated in pulmonary disease, whooping cough, coughs, consumption, and hemorrhage of the lung. It is used to address bronchitis, hoarseness, and it is commonly used to rid excess heat.

Mullein is also used as an expectorant to remove stagnation and mucus from the lungs, or to clear Kapha

from the body in general. It combines well with anti-inflammatory and anti-viral herbs for lung infections.

Mullein is also useful for the glands; it has the ability to act well in the draining of tissue and congestion. Thus



it can be used to cleanse the lymphatic system (which is connected to the heart and emotions), and has successfully worked for cases of swollen testicles (combined equal parts with sanicle).

First Nations peoples smoked mullein as a wet smudge for lung problems as it is very soothing to the lung tissue and it is found in some modern alternative smoking formulas such as the Lunglover's Herbal Smoking Mix. It is soothing, calms irritated nerves and can be helpful in reducing pain and inflammation in general (especially the flower). Mullein can be used in a formula for earaches along with garlic, calendula, and St. John's wort. It is also known to aid in cramps and diarrhea.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tea: Valuable as an infusion, steep 1 tsp per cup.

Tincture: 10 – 30 drops per day.

Herbs for Stress

Burdock (*Arctium lappa*)

Parts Used: Mainly root, but also the seed, and leaf. Dig up the root in the fall of the first year after leaves have wilted, or in the spring of the second. It is not advisable to use it after the second year



shoots have sprouted (you'll often find that they have begun to rot in the center). Eat fresh or cut up in small pieces and dry in the shade with good airflow.

Energetics: PK-V+ in excess. Bitter, pungent, and astringent (root is sweet/cooling/pungent)

Main Actions: Alterative, diuretic, diaphoretic, cholegogue, tonic

Burdock, often referred to as "Great Burdock" is one of the most hardy and disliked "weeds" on the prairies, though originated in the Far-East. It spreads like wildfire and has a very strong presence; it is not surprising that it helps us to be hardy as well - even under adverse conditions. This is a powerful plant ally and has been used for a variety of cleansing and alterative/tonic formulas as well as a building tonic for weaker constitutions.

Burdock is known to neutralize most poisons. The leaves are sometimes used to stimulate bile flow, but most often it is the root that is used in formulas. Burdock is quite a popular food in some places of the world. Traditional Chinese Medicine doctors often use this root to treat fevers, cough, and swollen red throat. The root soothes the kidney and lymphatic system. It is used in general detox formulas, for skin conditions that stem from toxicity (acne/eczema/boils), for regulating blood sugar (*inulin* content), and for general debility. *Inulin* in the plant also feeds the friendly bacteria in the digestive system.

This root is often found in cancer formulas. It is mildly anti-fungal and antibacterial. Japanese scientists have found that it contains desmutagens, which means that it inactivates mutagens (cancer causing agents) such as pesticides and toxic compounds found in some cooked meats. The seed is used as a diuretic, for prostate inflammation, and to ease a cough. It can be considered a rejuvenative for *Pitta*, and is good for clearing anger, ambition, and aggression. It can be used in arthritis, to clear *ama* (toxins) in general.

Early settlers used the root and seed for cleansing wounds (probably crushed and steeped or boiled). Even though it was introduced from Europe it appears to have been used extensively by Native People. The powdered root has been mixed with grease and used for burns and skin irritations. Its main actions are alterative, diaphoretic, diuretic, antipyretic, and cholagogue.

Preparation & Dosage (root):

Eat: Eat freely as a vegetable when fresh.

Tea: Lightly boil 1 teaspoon per cup of water for 10 -15 minutes and drink 2 - 3 cups daily.

Tincture (1:5) ratio: 20-40 drops 3x per day.

Pineapple Weed (*Matricaria matricarioides*) Manitoba's Local Chamomile

Roman: *Anthemis nobilis* **German:** *Matricaria chamomilla*

Parts used: Flowers, whole herb

Energetics: KP-V+

Main Actions: Its actions are calmative, nervine, antispasmodic, anodyne, diaphoretic, emmenagogue, and carminative.

Our locally found pineapple weed is a fine substitute for chamomile. German chamomile (*M. Recutita*) is a very close relative. Chamomile tea is very pleasant to drink and has many therapeutic properties. Pineapple weed is not as potent as chamomile medicinally but has all of the same qualities. Aboriginals used the dried plant steeped in water for insomnia or to calm the nerves. It can be combined with honey in a bottle to calm a baby. Michael Tierra suggests the use of chamomile in cold and flu, or digestive complaints. Pineapple weed can be combined with ginger to treat menstrual cramps as well as other pains and spasms.

Drs Frawley and Lad mention, in *The Yoga of Herbs*, that chamomile can be used in moderate amounts by all constitutions. It relieves congestion of the blood, is a *sattvic* herb and strengthens the eyes. Externally it can be used as an eyewash or as a poultice for nerve pains. It helps relieve digestive related headaches and is a particularly good tea for *Pitta*.

For a beautiful tea, combine a blend of chamomile, peppermint, fennel, and ginger. This makes a pleasant and effective carminative tea, as well as a good tea

to break a dry fever. For those wishing to make an entirely local (to Manitoba) wild-crafted tea, substitute caraway in place of fennel.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tincture: 10 - 30 drops

Tea: Hot infusion - steep 1 teaspoon in a cup of hot water (cover)

Topical: Bath or cream for inflammation

Precautions: Large doses may cause vomiting and aggravate *Vata*.

OCR notes: Looking at plants, you can find their properties and uses intuitively by spending time with them, observing their qualities.

Most people consider a lot of plants weeds. “Barn Yard herbs” are sustaining herbs. The best herbs are the ones that live around you, like red clover, burdock, and dandelion.

Plantain (*Plantago major*)

Parts Used: Leaf. Gather the leaves when needed throughout the summer from a clean area - late morning on a sunny day.

Energetics: PK-V+ - bitter, cold

Main Actions: Diuretic, alterative, astringent, refrigerant, vulnerary.

The most common use of plantain is as nature's band-aid! It is invaluable for stings, bites, cuts, scrapes and burns. Plantain can be used on boils and shingles that are blistering. It's been known as a remedy for the



mouth and gums. Particularly for sores and infections of this area.

Plantain, grows in hard dry soil, has the ability to draw moisture from the earth. It also offers this trait as a drawing agent to pull out dirt, splinters, and pus from infected wounds. Some early testimonials of its use say that when country people wounded themselves they quickly sought to squeeze the juice from the leaf onto the wound or onto a clean rag, which they then put on the wound. If the leaf refuses to give juice then the moistened leaf is put on the wound.

Plantain is a primary plant to consider for infections of any mucous membranes, including the lungs. It can draw out infection when it is deep seated and consumptive. Herbalist Michael Tierra describes plantain's ability to enter the bladder, small intestine, and gall bladder meridians. It can be used to address urinary tract infections and hepatitis. Plain Aborigines have used it for heart trouble, cramps, stomachache, stomach flu, and constipation. The stem can be boiled and drunk to relieve fainting spells. They also state that the leaf should be warmed by a fire and placed with the bottom side down on sores.

It can also be boiled and used as food in times of need (with the long fibers removed). The leaf contains water, tannins, riboflavin, niacin, Vitamin C, Vitamin A, and minerals. It has astringent, alterative, refrigerant, diuretic, and vulnerary actions.

Preparation & Dosage: 5-10 grams in an infusion, or 1-30 drops of tincture.

Red Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum, applantum*)

Parts Used: Fruiting body.

Energetics: Sweet in taste, neutral to slightly warming in action.

Main Actions: Adaptogen, nervine, relaxant, stimulant, anti-allergenic, hypoglycemic, alterative, anti-tumor, anti-viral, immune tonic.

This is probably the most valued and respected mushroom of the Orient. Its English name is *Spirit Plant*, as it does seem to have a spiritual quality to it. As well as being used as an adaptogen, its main uses are as follows:



It has positive effects in modulating hypersensitive immune system issues such as asthma, low immune function, insomnia, stress, nervousness/anxiety/paranoia, lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, balance HDL/LDL blood levels and so on. It is said to aid "knots in the chest". It strengthens the heart, lungs, and liver, and is considered a powerful longevity tonic that slows aging. Reishi also carries an antimicrobial action that has been proven effective against bacteria, fungi, and viruses. It is useful in the digestive tract as it is calming to the autonomic nervous system, reduces spasticity, ulcers, colitis, and is cleansing to the liver. It helps the body produce SOD (the body's natural toxic eliminator) and it is commonly used to treat cancer, AIDS, and chronic fatigue patients. It has a calming effect on the central nervous system as well as to overactive *Vata*.

A combination of reishi, boswellia, quercetin, and nettle tea can be very effective in treating asthma.

Dosage: 3 - 15 grams per day, or 35 drops of 1:5 tincture 3x daily.

Safety: It is considered a good idea to take reishi with vitamin C to ensure tolerance.

Rose (*Rosa gallica*)

Parts Used: Flower petals, and hips

Energetics: VPK= (K+ in excess)

Main Actions: Carminative, stimulant, emmenagogue

Known as the symbol of love, just spending time with the wild rose in its environment can be very therapeutic as it helps us get into a soft and receptive space. As an essential oil, it is good for the heart chakra and useful for states of agitation or



depression. The dried hips, gathered after the first frost in the fall, are a great source of vitamin C. Rose petals reduce heat in the system and are useful in combination with hibiscus flowers to regulate menstruation. It is also used for fertility. Rose petals are nice in the bath and can be used topically to soothe-inflamed tissue. Rose water is great for the skin and the essential oil is beneficial to the heart chakra. Rose opens the mind and heart and refreshes the eyes. The tea relieves a stagnant liver that is a result of resentments or a lack of expressing them. Rose combines well with shatavari and sandalwood.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tea: Steep 1 tsp. dried petals per cup.

Wild Foods and Blood Cleansers

Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*)

Parts Used: Flower and leaf.

Energetics: K+ VP, sweet, salty, cool, primarily affecting the liver, heart and lungs.

Main Actions: Tonic, de-obstructant, nutritive, alterative, mild stimulant.

Habitat: Located in open meadows, trail sides.

As a warm infusion, red clover is used for bronchitis, helping to cleanse and soothe the lungs and bronchial nerves. It contains many antibiotic properties, and is effective against several bacteria including tuberculosis. It can be used in arthritis formulas as well as anti-fungal



formulas. Red clover blossoms stimulate the liver and cleanse the gall bladder. It also acts as a phyto-estrogen in menopause and other formulas to calm hot flashes. This plant is really high in trace minerals, and has a massive root system. Red clover contains blood-cleansing *coumarins*, and is often used in cancer formulas. This herb can be used along with others, in smoking alternative blends, as well as in female fertility formulas.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tea: 1 tsp per cup in hot water for 20 minutes or longer, 3x per day.

Tincture: 25 drops 3x daily.

Immune Support

Echinacea (*E. angustifolia* & *E. purpurea*)

Parts used: The flowers are gathered in full bloom and the roots of 4-year old plants are unearthed in the fall.

Energy and flavour: PK- V+

Main Actions: Alterative, diaphoretic, sialogogue, immune system stimulant.

Native to central North America. *E. purpurea* is cultivated in Europe and central United States and Canada.

The Plains Indians used the plant as a sacred healing herb. The Sioux took Echinacea for snakebites, rabies, and septic conditions.

The Comanche used the plants healing abilities to remedy toothaches and sore throats.



It is also an excellent remedy to use topically for poison ivy. There have been studies that have shown it to be more effective for this purpose than jewelweed.

Echinacea is a very powerful anti-inflammatory and one of our best herbs for detoxifying the blood. It works on the lymphatic system and helps to stimulate immunity to counter both bacterial and viral infections by increasing cellular resistance to the virus. Whenever Echinacea is placed directly onto abnormal cells, the cells tend to return to normal relatively quickly. Echinacea can therefore be administered after an abnormal pap smear, or for external wounds. Echinacea tends to numb the tissue it comes in contact with and stimulates saliva, making it a great remedy for any infection causing a sore (including bites and stings), or a sore throat. The ability for Echinacea to cleanse the blood makes it very useful for bacteremia (blood infections). It can also be used to stimulate digestion. This herb is indicated for any infection or inflammation. The primary systems affected are the circulatory, digestive, urinary, and lymphatic. Echinacea's actions are mainly as an immune stimulant, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antibacterial, antibiotic, cell-normalizer, and anti-catarrhal.

Preparation & Dosage:

Tea: Low boil 1 tsp per cup for 10 min 3-4 x per day.

Tincture: It is important that Echinacea be used in a fresh and vital form for serious infections and at the onset of colds or flu's use no less than 30 drops per hour until symptoms cease. A more moderate approach would still require 35-45 drops 3x per day.

Wash: Grind fresh flower heads or roots into a fine powder (2oz) and add to boiling water for 15 minutes, let steep one hour and strain. Apply as needed. The powdered *E. angustifolia* can also be used as a suppository for yeast infections or abnormal pap smears.

Immune System: Stress reduction, exercise, probiotics.

OCR notes: Stomachs are our first line of defense (as is our skin); they should have a large amount of diverse kinds of probiotics (found in traditional ferments, miso, sauerkraut, and others).

Wound Healers

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)

Part used: Root, leaves.

Energetics: The root is a yin tonic.

Main Actions: Demulcent, expectorant, vulnerary, astringent. It is bitter, sweet, and cool.



Comfrey is another one of those incredibly well respected plants that has helped us through the ages. However, due to its continued "underground" use and historical significance it is included in this guide. Comfrey root has an alkaloid in it that is theorized to be toxic to the liver. Studies have shown that rats should not eat large amounts of comfrey root or their livers can become toxic. Usually

found in moist, well-soiled areas, other historical names for this plant are boneset, knit-bone, and bruisewort due to the ability of this plant to heal and regenerate tissue. It is also highly nutritious!

Comfrey heals any inflamed and degenerative tissues in the bowel and even heals at the level of the bone. The root is helpful in chronic cough, and hemorrhage of the lungs or other membranes that are inflamed or wasting away. As a lung tonic comfrey combines well with elecampane root. In short, the root or leaf of this plant are very helpful to speed wound healing whether used topically or internally. Comfrey also contains *allantoin*, a cell proliferate chemical found in pregnant mothers and a newborn's urine.

Preparations & Dosage:

Tea: Low boil 1 tsp per cup 5 min.

For Sprains: Take enough leaf to cover area in pain and add boiling water to the leaf - just enough to cover it. Then add a sprinkle of cayenne pepper to the leaf and place the warm (not hot) combination on the area and wrap.

Precautions: Topical use of comfrey leaf on broken tissue should only commence once there is certainty of no infection. It can regenerate the skin so fast that it can grow over the infection, trapping it! Avoid ingesting it in large amounts or if pregnant.

Calendula (*calendula-officinalis*)

Parts Used: Flowers.

Energetics: Sweet, Bitter, resinous, warm, moistening

Main actions: Anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, vulnerary,

Good for healing cuts, scrapes, burns, and abrasions. It is a disinfectant, and stimulates new cell growth.

The flower is often made into ointments (salves), by being soaked in oil then mixed with bees wax. The petals have a



very bright colour due to their carotenoid content, making them also very good for the eyes.

Traditionally used in cancer formulas as the colour brings light to the rot and darkness of cancer.

Emotions and the Heart- using Flower Essences with Terry Willard

When we use a plant to heal (ex. a bitter plant), it enters the body as a medicine and will start to cleanse the liver. When you cleanse the liver, you begin to also move stored emotion. Part of the healing process is to move and create flow in the body. Move out emotions. Move out bile. You can't separate the health of the body from the health of the mind.

Pink yarrow is best for protecting the heart. Combined with borage, wild rose, white yarrow and yellow yarrow help create protection, and buttercup to bring joy.

In order for healing to occur one must also first open the heart chakra to create a magnetic pull to attract healing into the area. For example, if one has had a heart attack, taking hawthorn, reishi, etc won't stick until they've re-opened their heart.

Herbs for Stress

Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

Parts Used: Tops and leaves, when aerial parts are mature on a sunny day, early afternoon.

Energetics: Bitter, spicy, slightly cold. VP+ K

Main Actions: Antispasmodic, emmenagogue, cardiac, nervine, laxative



Habitat: Grows well at the edge of damp meadows.

Motherwort, as the Latin name suggests, is a great heart tonic. It calms the heart, mind and nerves and may be used in high amounts safely. It is especially strengthening in heart palpitations. The Chinese often combine it with Dong Quai as a regulator for the menstrual cycle. It is helpful for hot flashes, calming hysteria, and sciatica / neuralgia. Motherwort can be used for cardiac edema and swollen or high over-functioning thyroid (for which it is often combined with lemon balm and bugleweed).

Preparation & Dosage: Steep 1 heaping tablespoon per cup 3 - 4x per day.

Safety: Generally not recommended during pregnancy

Herbs for Libido

In Eastern healing practices an increase of sexual energy often leads to dis-ease as it can lead to lust, then greed.

These following tonics are combined with herbs, essences and oils like sandalwood and rose to bring the sexual energy up into the heart and then up into the brain for transcendent healing experiences. The desire to merge on the physical level can turn into the desire to merge on the heart level as devotion and unconditional love and to a more divine spiritual experience.

Reproductive Essence (*Ojas*) & Toxin Build-up (*Ama*)

In Ayurveda, *Ojas* is the essence of semen or reproductive tissue. Semen and reproductive tissues contain the essence of all bodily tissue. It is the final product of all metabolisms. *Ojas* means, "that which invigorates" it contains within it the ability of rejuvenation, and it supports the auto immune system as well. This is why we should be mindful of how we use or misuse this tissue. There are stories about monks and other spiritual seekers who have attained heights of consciousness and clarity of perception by holding onto their *Ojas*, which has an energetic quality to it, and transferring it into their spiritual practice. It is also said that when Buddha was burned, as with many monks, after his death crystals were found in his ashes - some say that it was crystallized *Ojas*. Was it because Buddha was able to transcend his more primal desires and retain his *Ojas* so that he was able to achieve such wisdom?

Ojas depletion is also connected to the strength of our *Agni*, our transformative fire element in the body that pertains to digestive strength, metabolism or even cognitive function – If *Ojas* is strong - then so should be the *Agni*! Anyone who has lived with a wood stove knows that if the fire is weak and you put wood on it, let alone damp wood, we will get smoldering smoke and clog up the stovepipe with creosote. This is analogous to a poor functioning digestive fire, which includes hydrochloric acid, enzymes, bile and so on, along with the energy of heat in the body. If the fire is strong, and the appropriate food burns clean, we get our nourishment, and fewer toxins (or smoldering smoke) are produced that can clog our body channels and promote disease. This is one reason why an Ayurvedic practitioner would not drink ice water before or with a meal that

would diminish *Agni*, and instead include many warming spices in their foods as they promote strong digestion.

Ayurveda is a magnificent and evolving body of knowledge, what I cover here is a very brief introduction, Ayurvedic traditions go into many other areas of study that range from astrology to surgery. Today, Ayurveda is being incorporated into Western thinking models, but to say that all aspects of Ayurveda are perfect, complete and relevant to our time would not be true. Ayurveda can be considered a great tool, in combination with other systems of healing, and a great guide to understanding the more subtle aspects of health and disease facing us in these times. There are many emerging therapies such as Osteopathy, and traditional therapies such as Acupuncture that are available to be used in conjunction with the timeless principles covered here. When trying to understand a disease one might ask - "how would an Ayurvedic practitioner think of this?" This knowledge can then be combined with modern physiology, psychology, and so on to gain a well-rounded insight into an issue.

The Body, Jing and Vitality: Sexuality and Healing

The Yellow Emperor, still looking sad and anxious, nodded for the dark girl to continue her discourse: A man can live long if he conserves his semen and thus sustains his spirit. He may eat a healthy diet and take the right medicines but if he does not know and practice the right method of sexual intercourse, food and drugs will be useless.

- Feng Nei Chi

Ayurveda and other Eastern healing systems, such as those of the Daoist traditions of Asia, reference a connection between health and sexual energy. It is not too hard to understand why sexual energy is such a focus in traditional healing, as it is sexual energy that is the force of vitality beneath life itself, all of our lives began with the act of sex.

If we want to understand health and vitality we have to explore this crucial part of our nature, or the nature of nature, which is at its base driven by the urge to merge. This merger for a plant is to merge with the light, with water it is to urge to merge with the ocean and sky (to dissolve), in the human it is the urge to merge with another human being, and on a soul level, much like a plant, to merge with the light of our higher nature that resides within, beneath, and beyond form.

The fundamental concept to grasp here is that the physical body is also an energetic body. The physical body is immersed in a realm that is formed and fueled at its base by desire. This is not entirely different than the understanding of biochemistry, but it is concerned with more subtle vibrations that underlay our physiology than with chemicals or fluids alone. The chemicals, hormones and fluids we find in the body are more dense counterparts to more subtle energies found in the chemical and energetic symphony of nature.

Traditional systems of healing require that we understand that life is energy and that health is the result of a healthy presence and flow of quality energy. We receive energy from:

Food: Gives us energy from the sun and nutrients from the soil (recycled life).

Air: Gives us prana as oxygen and nutrition.

Vital Force (Primordial Qi/Shakti/Kundalini): This is the energy that flows through all life and is not considered chemical or physiological. It is the force beneath creation and evolution.

Jing: (Congenital Qi): Our parents provide us with a base of this energy when we are conceived and how we nurture or deplete this essence will affect our health.

Poor diet, and eating non-vital foods blocks the food energy pathway. Poor air blocks the lung *Qi* and too much mental activity, stress, and sexual fluid emission leads to weakened congenital *Qi*. If we can help our minds to access emotional balance the experience of a calmed mind (*sattva*), the body and the vitality are thus nourished. In holistic theory creation comes primarily from the subtle into the denser physical realms. The sun could be seen as a type of down-regulator of more subtle light energy, and all levels of energy and light have a quality of consciousness present in them. This might sound far fetched to the average western mind but imagine telling our great grandparents that we are made from the carbon matter of dead stars, something that is now considered common science, would sound far fetched in their day.

The physical vitality of nature, the energy that underlies and animates life, is known by many in India as *Shakti* or *Kundalini*. This energy is a key part of our health and well being from the perspectives of modern research as well as more ancient systems of healing around the world. Sexual energy and *Shakti* are closely associated; they represent the energy of creation coming into being as sexual vitality or libido that carries with it many rejuvenating abilities and supports life.

Eros, the root word of erotica is the source of libido, the desire and ability to do work. *Thanos* is the death impulse and the counter to libido and *eros*. Healthy sexual arousal can provide the body with feelings of bliss and joy that counteract the feelings of pain, suffering, and depression experienced by many people. There are modern studies that support the importance of a healthy sex life in relation to good immunity, prostate health, heart health, strength, and a general positive outlook on life, amongst others. The same energy can be utilized to promote a higher functioning level of our entire physiology and mind in general. It is passion that can be considered the root source of compassion, and even high levels of spiritual awareness or simply a clear mind. If the sexual energies and channels are blocked or drained it is hard to find true and lasting health or wholeness. If an individual is too focused on the physical goal of self-pleasure it can be likened to a moth being attracted to the stimulation of a flame. The more

holistic perspective is not to deny physical pleasure but to raise the bar and focus the energies on service and devotion to others, as well as the realization of a higher love and bliss that can accompany a spiritually active life.

Angelica (*angelica sinensis*) "Dong Quai"

Part Used: Root

Energetics: PK+V- Primarily affecting the heart, liver, and spleen.

Main Actions: Emmenagogue, sedative, analgesic, blood tonic.

Next to licorice root, this is the most commonly used herb in China. It is found on mountain slopes in China and certain areas of North America. It is primarily used as female tonic, but can be used to balance hormones in either sex. It is used as a fertility tonic, often combined with other herbs like chaste tree berry, red clover, or sometimes maca.

Its strong, musty smell indicates that it is a very nourishing and nurturing herb. It contains many B vitamins including B12. It promotes the proper flow of blood throughout the body generating healthy youthful



looking skin and hair. It can be used to regulate the menstrual cycle. One of its main uses in Asia is as a "blood builder" after childbirth, where it is usually added to chicken soup. It is a commonly indicated herb for infertility, dysmenorrhea, amenorrhea, tinnitus, anemia, hair loss, blurred vision, and heart palpitations. This plant has also shown some antibiotic actions against gram-positive bacteria (including *E. Coli*), and can thin the blood. It is an expansive herb that is good for consciousness. *Dong Quai* has been in known use since 588 B.C.

Dosage: 1 - 10 grams daily.

Precautions: Avoid during pregnancy and if heavy bleeding or blood thinners are present. Be mindful of Angelica's heating nature.

Ashwaghandha (*Withania somnifera*) "Winter Cherry"

Part Used: Root

Energetics: VK-P+ (in excess), great for high Vata.

Main Actions: Tonic, rejuvenative, aphrodisiac, nervine, sedative, astringent

Primary Meridians/organs affected: Lungs, kidney, reproductive, respiratory

This root is the ginseng of India. It translates as that with the smell of a horse. It is known most for its ability to restore sexual vitality, especially in males. It is also said to provide the energy and stamina of a horse. It is an adaptogen that promotes the rejuvenation of the glands. It is commonly found in energy tonics, adrenal formulas, and thyroid support formulas. It can be used in woman as well as men.

It is a great rejuvenative for those with wasting tissue strength, failing memory and vision, and weakened vitality in general. It is great for the elderly or the overworked. Although it is an energy tonic, it is a calming herb, which acts to calm and strengthen the nerves and clarify the mind. It promotes a deep dreamless sleep and supports yoga and meditation. It can be used successfully to alleviate joint inflammation in combination with boswellia as they are both anti-inflammatory. The same combination can be used externally on sores and wounds. Ashwaghandha is high in iron and indicated in anemia.

Preparation & Dosage: Decoction, milk decoction, in ghee or oil, (powder) 250 mg to 2 gm, 1- 2 times per day.

Tincture: (1:5) 20 - 30 drops 2 times per day.

Precautions: Avoid if high toxicity / mucous / ama. It may cause nausea.

Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*; Araliaceae)

Parts Used: Rhizome

Energetics: Warm, bitter, sweet, moistening, slightly bitter, sweet.

Main Actions: Adaptogen, cardiac tonic, liver tonic, nutritive, stimulant, antidepressant, demulcent, aphrodisiac.

Increases immune function and performance in athletes. This energy can be traced back to *Ojas* and adrenal glandular strength. The point is not to increase sexual urge, but to keep the body functioning well, keep the *chi* in the body and its vitality.

Kundalini

Vital Force (the western medical term)

“A hypothetical force, independent of physical and chemical forces, regarded as being the causative factor of the evolution and development of living organisms”

Herbs and Consciousness

Tobacco (*Nicotiana*)

Part Used: Leaf

Energetics: Warming

Main Actions: Entheogen, psychoactive, anti-inflammatory, stimulant, purgative, emetic, anti-parasitic.



Safety: Avoid during pregnancy. Inhaling tobacco

smoke on a regular basis can be very detrimental. Some of the substances inhaled include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (such as benzpyrene), formaldehyde, cadmium, nickel, arsenic, radioactive polonium-210, tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs) and phenols. Not only does the smoke contain many harmful substances but also the many pesticides used via its typical modern cultivation. It is best used as an incense, topical, and non-inhaled smoke for ceremonial purposes.

Tobacco is one of most sacred plants on the planet. Some cultures have used it to commune with sacredness of life. Shamans and traditional healers to access intuitive knowledge and direct insight have used it. It is considered the *Master of Ceremonies* in different ceremonies. Tobacco is being abused today by being mixed with many harmful chemicals. Not only is there an issue with toxins but there is also a concern that the abuse of the relationship to the plant leads to a loss of its powerful potential affects.

Nicotine alkaloids affect the pineal glandular system that is often referred to as the seat of consciousness in the human body. It has an effect on a psychological level and can be used to help remove parasites and restore digestion when used with the guidance of a traditional healer. There is some modern research on the use of nicotine to calm cytokine storms via the vagus nerve, otherwise known as nausea.

Lobelia (*Lobelia Inflata*)

Parts Used: Leaf, flower and seed.

Energetics: Bitter, neutral

Main Actions: Diaphoretic, relaxant, nauseant, sedative, emmenagogue, antispasmodic, expectorant, stimulant, diuretic.

Lobelia (also known as pokeweed) should be used mindfully due to its ability to induce vomiting. Though it is often considered a controversial herb, it has been used safely for many decades by herbalists and is a traditionally used herb by some Native American tribes. It is a very helpful herb for those experiencing asthma as it relaxes the respiratory passages. It has similar chemical properties to tobacco and thus is often used by people who are quitting smoking. Though it should be used cautiously as it is considered a “thinking herb” due to its ability to balance the autonomic nervous system and glandular system. The best outcome seems to occur when used properly. It has been used for issues ranging from lockjaw to poisonous stings and bites. It is best prepared as an acid tincture.

Dosages: Please research in detail and consult an herbalist. In general adults tend to use 10 – 15 drops for a commonly prepared tincture. 6 -10 gms dried.

San Pedro (*Echinopsis pachanoi*)

Parts Used: Cut cactus pieces

Cultivation: Can be grown from seeds or propagated from cuttings. One or two stalks will grow in the place the cactus was cut.

Preparation: It is best to learn this from a traditional healer and used cautiously and with respect for it as a medicine and not simply a recreational drug. Generally speaking it is cut and boiled for a few hours and often has other plants added to it.

This cactus has been traditionally used in Peru and the Central Andes region and surrounding deserts for at least 2,000 years. It has been used as a sacred medicine and shamanic plant. It is named after Saint Peter who is the



keeper of the keys to heaven. This plant contains *mescaline* and was usually used by shamans who were often under the guidance of other healers.

Safety: It is important to note that not everyone is prepared or equipped to work with such medicines and so those with psychological imbalances are advised not to use such plants without professional or experienced guidance. Though it is not always taken in order to induce visions it can cause psychotropic activity at higher dosages. These types of plants are, in the author's opinion, best used in a ceremonial context with healing intentions.

Holy Basil (*Ocimum Sanctum*)

Parts Used: Aerial portions

Main Actions: Diaphoretic, antipyretic, antispasmodic, carminative, antispasmodic, stomachic, galactagogue, nervine, anti bacterial, antiseptic.

Energetics: Spicy, warm

Holy basil is considered a very sacred plant. In its native India it's considered to be the queen



of all plants and perhaps the most sacred herb of India. It is a very strong anti-fungal and seems to center ones awareness in the heart. It is known to open the heart and mind and promote a state of love and devotion. It is said to strengthen faith, compassion, and clarity. It is a great adaptogen and adrenal tonic. It is said that basil (known also as tulsi) clears the aura and strengthens immunity. It is known to treat fevers, colds, flu, stomach cramps, vomiting, indigestion, intestinal catarrh, constipation, enteritis, whooping cough, lung congestion, headaches, and menstrual pain. The fresh juice can be used on the skin as an anti-fungal. Tulsi is said to contain a natural form of mercury (in very small amounts), which is valuable for promoting pure awareness.

Dosage: Generally 1 tsp per cup or 10 – 30 drops of tincture.

Safety: Generally not to be used during pregnancy

Adaptogens keep people in a state of inner calm/peace. Certain plants provide a special quality to the nervous system and consciousness, which can bring a higher level of awareness and insight into patterns, our possible solutions, and ourselves.

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

Main Use: Diaphoretic, diuretic, expectorant, nervine, astringent, alterative, carminative, antispasmodic, stimulant, estrogenic

Energetics: Spicy, astringent, warm



Part Used: Leaf

There is an old saying that if there is sage in the garden there should be no one sick in the home. It is not only used as a beauty tonic to promote healthy looking skin and hair, but it is a powerful natural antibiotic. It is useful at drying up excessive secretions such as sweat, saliva, breast milk, sores and ulcers and in addition it stops bleeding. Sage is used to clear the mind and calm excess passions and desires by calming the heart. When taken cold it is an astringent and diuretic and when taken hot it is a great diaphoretic. It is commonly used as a gargle for sore throats and as a tea for indigestion and cystitis.

Dosage: Infusion of 1 tsp per cup; tincture, 10-30 drops.

Safety: Sage is generally not recommended by those with epilepsy due to the *thujone* content that acts on the nervous system. It should also be avoided during pregnancy.



The plants are here to help us. They provide us with life; and we are dependent upon them. They too are living beings that breathe, drink, eat, feel and reproduce.

They offer us a chance to walk in the sacred garden of life, to feel the harmonic blessing of creation, our place in the web of life and miraculous cures.

The guidance and healing we receive when we act as both students and stewards of nature is more than the quality and longevity of our own lives. It is about the healing, survival, and evolution on all levels. It is about finding our greater role as human beings, serving the next generations, and caring for the world within and around us.



This is the path of the plant lover, the wild crafter, and the herbalist.

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