



INTRODUCTION TO FOLK HERBALISM

WASHINGTON, DC

- Sustainable Food and Medicine Education
- Seed Saving Project
- Seed Exchanges & Demos
- Grassroots Herbal & Holistic Wellness Program

COSTA RICA

- Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Agriculture Tours
- Grassroots Traditional and Holistic Health Tours
- Talamanca Local Foods Project



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What is an herb?

- * Herbs are any plants used for flavoring, food, medicine, bodycare, or perfume.
- * Leaves, flowers, seeds, berries, bark, roots and fruits – even fungi! (TCM – animals, rocks etc)
- * Sacred
- * Medicinal
- * Culinary
- * Aesthetic/Pleasure Medicine



What is herbalism?

- * New Term – Old Time Root/Herb/Bush Doctors
- * Lifelong Study
- * Practice
- * Art
- * Tradition
- * Who are Herbalists? – Clinical herbalist, medicine makers, medicine growers, foragers and harvester, community, family, mothers & fathers, researchers, educators



Folk Herbalism

- * Folk – people
- * Folk Herbalism – Medicine of the People
- * Part of everyone's ancestral lineage
- * Using plants as medicine is part of everyone's tradition

Folk Herbalism

- * *“Folk herbalism is the people’s medicine, tried and true, shaped by the land, driven by the healthcare needs of its inhabitants, and handed down through the generations by mouth and pen. Its vocabulary is that of geography, the plants, the elements, the earth and the sky. At its most glorious, folk herbalism heals the people and the land in one motion, because we really can’t separate the two. What happens to the land is reflected in health of our bodies, minds and spirits and folk herbalism acknowledges this interdependence. Without folk herbalism, we would be lost in a vast sea of corporate, pharmaceutical care. Lost without the herbal traditions that bring balance to this one-sided form of medicine, and lost without the understanding of the inter-connectiveness of the human body.*
- * *Folk herbalism is the yin to conventional medicine yang. It’s roots are deep, feminine and, and intuitive. And though it’s form may change over time and within cultures, its roots stay strong, viable and hardy. It will never die.” –Phyllis Light*

The Whole Story/ Traditional Healing

- * Importance of Modern Medicine – appropriate use, can be life saving!
- * Herbs are part of a wholistic approach to health and wellness.
- * Whole Herbs Vs. Pills Vs. Standardized Extracts – Systems vs. Reductionism
- * Interrelationships
- * Respecting where everyone is at on their journey in healing!

Sourcing Herbs

- * Your Garden!
- * Your local farmer, local apothecary, Blue Nile Herbs, Smile Herbs, Health food store
- * Companies – Zach Woods Herb Farm, Mountain Rose, Horizon Herbs, Red Moon Herbs, Starwest Botanicals, James River Herb & Spice Company
- * Ethical Wildcrafting
- * Sustainably grown
- * Socially Just
- * Whole Herbs Vs. Pills Vs. Standardized Extracts – Whole vs. Reductionism
- * Building relationship as stewards, asking, listening, giving thanks to the plants for their medicine



Clarifying Terms

- * Herbalist
- * Naturopath
- * Homeopathy
- * Aromatherapist



Learning & Practicing Herbalism in the US

- * No legal status or legal certification
- * American Herbalist Guild
- * Community Based Herb Schools
- * Apprenticeships with Herbalists
- * Bastyr, or Tai Sophia

Folk Herbalism Across Cultures

- * Native American Herbal Practice
- * Curanderismo
- * Traditional Chinese Medicine
- * Ayurveda
- * Traditional Western Herbalism
- * Southern Appalachia Folk Medicine – influenced by African, Native American, Scotch Irish, and more!



Wise Woman Tradition

- * Simple community based healthcare, empowerment the individual , simple accessible available to all, affordable, easily understandable, no heierarchy
- * As opposed to:
- * Heroic Tradition—that sees people as dirty and in need of cleaning, stresses detoxing, guilt from building up toxins
- * Scientific Tradition, that sees people as parts and machines to fix. Doctors hold the power of healing

Wise Woman Tradition

- * Draws from traditional cultures world wide
- * The Wise Woman Tradition emphasizes putting the responsibility and power of health into the hands of people. Idea that we are all healers inside, and have at our doorstep all we need to care for ourselves and our loved ones.
- * Our health is spiraling, ever-changing while disease and injury are doorways to change. Where good health may be freedom from disease, but it is also openness to change, flexibility, and compassionate embodiment, even when dancing with cancer or healing from a serious accident.
- * Not a cure, but an integration; not the elimination of the bad, but a nourishing of wholeness/health/holiness

Tastes/Actions

- * Sour
- * Bitter
- * Sweet
- * Acrid
- * Salty



Getting to know the Plants

- * Learning Plants – one at a time, don't get overwhelmed
- * Monographs
- * Better to know forty ways to use one plant than know one thing about forty plants
- * Growing your own plants, herbal garden, personal connection with the plants
- * Walk every day, visit them, get to know them, use them in all kinds of ways, journey with them

Working with the Plants!

- * Native/ Non-Native Species
- * Bio-Regionalism
- * Harvesting
 - * Fall Harvest
 - * Digging Roots
 - * Clipping flowers for leaf growth
- * Drying techniques
 - * Racks
 - * Drying bundles
 - * Dehydrator



Intentional Medicine Making

- * When medicine making – Set an intention / Clean the space
- * Light candles, Special Medicine making tools
- * Numerology- 9 –healing and completion, 5 change
- * Moon Cycle Medicine Making and Harvesting
 - * Full Moon – energy in the leaves, flower and seeds
 - * New Moon – energy in roots
 - * Saps/Barks – high tide on new moon
- * Always give thanks to the plants, asking and listening



Medicine Making Continued

- * Labeling
 - * Common Name, Botanical Name, Parts Used, Date, Menstruum
 - * Example:
 - * Valerian, *Valeriana officinalis*, Fresh Root, 11/11/11, Brandy
- * Composting Marc – used plant material
- * Formulas vs. Simples

Teas ~

Water Extracts of Herbs

The Foundation of Herbal Medicine!

Infusions:

Hot Infusion – draw out vitamins, enzymes, and aromatic volatile oils. Ex. chamomile, holy basil, ginger, nettles, peppermint.

Dry Herbs – fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of jar with herb then rest with water for 15 minutes to 1 hour

Cold Infusion: - Ideal for slimy herbs and herbs with delicate essential oils. Ex. Marshmallow, chia, fresh lemonbalm.

Put herbs in tea bag, submerge in water and allow to steep overnight.

Sun or Moon Tea

- * Infuse your teas with the energy of the sun or moon!



Decoctions

- * Simmered teas over heat (hard roots, berries, barks, seeds)
- * Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ of jar with herbs then rest with water, simmer preparation in pot for 20-45 minutes
- * Doses – 2 -3 cups daily, must make fresh daily!



Herbal Tinctures ~ Extracts in Alcohol, Vinegar & Glycerine





Tinctures

- * Alcohols to Use: (brandy, vodka, grain alcohol etc)
- * Storage
 - * Alcohol – 2+ Years
 - * Glycerin – 1 year
 - * Vinegar – 6 Months
- * Vinegar and Glycerin Extractions – for folks that do not want to ingest alcohol
- * Vinegars – great for extraction minerals and vitamins
- * Glycerin – used for kids often, not as powerful extractions

Topical Preparations of Herbs

Herbal Oils

- * Extraction of Herbs in Oil
 - * Types of Oils - olive oil, coconut oil, shea butter, cocoa butter, sunflower, apricot, almond, jojoba
 - * Use externally, massage directly on skin, or drop sparingly in ears
 - * Methods
 - * Stove Top - Steeped on low heat for 4-6 hours, can use fresh herbs
 - * Sun Oil - dry herbs in jar over period of several weeks In sunlight for herbs that need more heat (St. Johns Wort)
 - * Infused Oil - dry herbs in jar over period of several weeks indoors
 - * Examples: St. Johns Wort Oil, Calendula Oil, Mullein/ Garlic Ear Oil, Goldenrod Oil

Goldenrod Oil



Herbal Salves/ Balms

- * Mixture of Herbal Oil with beeswax to form a solid preparation
- * Examples:
 - * Trauma Salve – calendula, arnica, St. Johns Wort
 - * Healing Salve – Comfrey, Calendula, Plantain
 - * Or lipbalms, deodorants, etc.



Herbal Poultice

- * Poultice – plant material, whole or mashed, layered, and spread over skin.
- * Used to pull poisons or infected matter out of swollen tissues, wounds or cysts
- * Preparation: moisten herb with hot water, apply to skin, wrap with non-poisonous leaf or bandage and change every few hours
- * (Comfrey, plantain etc)



Herbal Compress

- * Cotton cloth soaked in dilute tincture, infused herbal oil, castor oil, or herbal tea and applied to skin.
- * This is used for localized afflictions to skin, muscles, tendons, joints, throat. Examples: St. Johns Wort, Arnica



Herbal Baths/ Hand & Foot Baths

* Herbal Baths

- * Large quantities of herbs in extracted bath water then absorbed through the skin

* Herbal Hand/Foot Baths

- * Can be effective in treating entire body as circulation is stimulated by hot water, absorbed and distributed

- * Especially useful when treating babies/young children who won't take herbs

- * Use one quart of strong tea in foot/hand bath, soak 20 minutes, then lie down.

- * Examples: Rosemary, lavender, hops, witch hazel



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