

# PRACTICAL HERBALISM ~ REMEDY CREATION:

## NOTES

### SLIDE 1

We have created our own remedies from when we first started working with herbs. Remedy creation means you know exactly what is going into the process, where the herbs have been sourced from and gives a deep connection to the herbs. We want to share some our accumulated knowledge about remedy creation and look at some of the ways you can prepare for maximum success and avoid common mistakes.

### SLIDE 2

Working with the herbs themselves is what led us Seed Sistas to studying herbalism. Our first ever workshop was teaching remedy creation.

We worked from Chris and Non's Book – Herbal Remedies. It had a simple approach to making remedies, but we were also taught herbal pharmacy at university. This gave us a deeper insight into how different compounds are extracted from plants and why that might determine what preparation to choose.

Our first remedy that we sold was Nettle Syrup and herbal teas at a car boot sale. We were so proud to have our bottles of syrup there with our old dads and second hand clothes we were also selling.

We then started to create combinations of syrups and tinctures for specific situations. We put them in dropper bottles and gave them fun but informative names. We took the drops ourselves and tested them out with practically hundreds of people, listened to their experiences and feedback, then settled on a name for each one, and wrote information down to help folk to discern which remedy was for them.





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



## SLIDE 3

Why choose drop doses over larger more standard doses?

Drops are for subtle neurological, hormonal and emotional responses. They can create profound shifts emotionally, and therefore physically, without pushing the body to places it doesn't want or need to go.

Some of our favourite combos of herbs in drops include:

**Passion Potion** – for igniting passion triggering passion in life generally as well as aphrodisiac

**Drops of Love** – for nurture and burnout

**Earth Clarity** – hay fever and for feeling grounded and head opened. Clearing sinuses


We also created a set of tonics to be able to give a more broad support when on busy tours and seeing a lot of people. We talk about this a lot, but when taking herbs, it is important to consider the terrain and temperament of the individual. If they are naturally more hot, cool, dry or damp and which herbs would be more suitable. Down the line of herb combining, you can be more subtle with this, but our tonics are designed to provide a balanced overall effect with these qualities in mind.

## SLIDE 4

Where are you getting your herbs from?

**Dried herbs** – consider where you'll locate these from. Do you have space to grow them or spaces you can harvest from? Are you 100% sure of the identification of the herbs? Even nettles and dandelions are easy to mistake for dead nettle and hawks but respectively.

And then there is harvesting with intention. What are you collecting the herb for? What remedy will you be making from them and who might they be for? If you hold this in your mind while harvesting it adds an extra touch of magic to your remedy.





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



## SLIDE 5

The simplest way to create a herbal tea is to pick a pinch from your garden and pop it directly in a cup and pour over boiling water. We favour rosemary, lemon balm, peppermint - any of the easy-to-grow aromatics that make flavoursome, headful teas.


## SLIDE 6

Making the medicines with specific intention from harvesting through to remedy production will hold that touch of magic throughout the process.

Ideally when you harvest, you follow the moon, preferring a full moon to harvest aerial parts, and the new moon for the roots and rhizomes.

Making remedies doesn't have to be complex.



You can get going with a few basic ingredients but you will need jars!!! Lots of jars.



### **How does herbalism work? First aid and complex health support.**

Herbalism can be simple with a few easy home remedies for coughs, colds, cuts, bruises, and stings - simple home remedies can be created to keep as a sort of home first aid kit.

Then there is the more complex treatment of deep seated conditions. This involves a much deeper look at what is going on for the individual. What is at the root of the condition, what was happening when it first arose and what are the influencing factors? This takes a more in depth understanding of the emotional, physical and spiritual bodies and how the herbs can influence and support these.



# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES

## Remedy creation principles

Simple preparations include dried herb teas, syrups, tinctures, balms  
More complex preparations include hydrosols, creams, and more complex tincture making.

## SLIDE 7

Essentially creating most herbal remedies is a way of preserving the herbs for use when needed.

## What products can you make with herbs?

- Herbal teas
- Oils
- Balms
- Floral waters



- Hydrosols – water-based products made from the distillation of fresh flowers, leaves, fruits, and other plant materials. An aromatic water is water enriched with both the essential oils and the water-soluble volatile components of a plant. They are also known as 'hydrosols', and were historically created as a by-product of the steam distillation of essential oils from plants.

- Creams
- Syrups
- Oxymel
- Vinegars
- Poultices
- Glycerites



# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES

**When how and why can you use and make herbal remedies at home?**

**What can you treat:**

- Day to day coughs colds, sore throat, etc.
- Minor skin infections, rashes, etc
- Herbal first aid – headaches, poultices
- Food as medicine
- Hormonal support as needed (not longer-term deep seated issues)
- Digestive complaints
- Emotional fluctuations
- Help with daily magical spellwork

## SLIDE 8

Kitchen Witchin' is what we call home herbalism with a magical flare.

When you are thinking about home herbalism, you can first consider what you have got in stock. You can make a wide variety of medicines from the spice and herb rack, and the store cupboard alone.

**What are the easiest and most useful herbal preparations to make from the kitchen store?**

- Bread poultice
- Turmeric milk
- Cinnamon, ginger, cardamom milk
- Onion and sugar syrup
- Garlic oil
- Chili oil





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



## SLIDE 9

### Plant Chemistry

There is a bit of basic plant chemistry that will help you to decide how you will make a remedy and how then to use it.

Plant compounds are the groups of molecules that make up plant constituents that will act on the body in certain ways.

**Molecule** – group of atoms bonded together, representing the smallest fundamental unit of a chemical compound that can take part in a chemical reaction.

- Some molecules are polar and these are water soluble.
- Some molecules are non-polar like oily molecules.
- There are some molecules that contain both like phospholipids.

**Polar molecules** have a high boiling point and a high melting point. Non-polar molecules have a low boiling point and a low melting point. Think of the length of time to boil water over heating oil in a pan.



This basic principle forms the foundation of making herbal remedies.

Depending on which compounds you want form a herb, that will in part determine what preparation you make form the plant.

It is worth noting that a single plant will have a chemical cocktail with potentially both polar and non-polar compounds.

**Non-polar molecules** include oils and resins. Oils can be extracted by oil and alcohol (minimum 25%) and include aromatic oils like mint and lavender, lemon balm, rosemary, thyme, eucalyptus, bay. Very small.

**Resins** need heated oil to extract or very high percentage alcohol (>95%). Herbs like calendula, turmeric, rosemary, myrrh, propolis (bees).





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES




**Essential oils** are aromatic substances present in the specialised cells or glands of certain plants used by them to protect themselves from predators and pests, but also to attract pollinators. In other words, essential oils are part of the immune system of the plant.

Plants can also communicate with one another, and with microbes, some of which cause disease.

They escape readily on steam.

Often can effect the nervous system – think of the response you have when inhaling an aromatic herb


You need to be careful to retain those oils during your extraction and making processes.

- Always put a lid on the tea pot or cup if brewing a tea to retain the aromatic oils
  - Store any preparations in a cool, dark, dry place and lid any containers of liquid
  - You can smell if the tinctures or oils have little scent left, the oils have evaporated.
  - Steam distillations and infusions are the best ways to extract these in water, while alcohol, vinegar, sugars and oils will also work well in general.
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**Polar compounds** - water extracted compounds are extracted via infusions, decoctions, sugar, honey, glycerine and vinegar.

These include **Flavonoids** that make the dark colours in berries and fruits. Pigments such as poanthocyanidins or beta carotenes.

Bilberry, raspberry, blackberry, sea buckthorn berry, St John's Wort (oil for external use only – do not take internally without professional supervision), yellow dock root, cramp bark (guelder rose), elderberry. Medium





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



Some form precursors to vitamins, others help maintain healthy blood vessels – think of coloured pigments as the grease in the wheels. Nothing goes right without enough of these. Being bigger, these chemicals take slightly longer to move from the plant to the solvent, just as the colour of your tea will deepen as the minutes go by.

If you're extracting St John's Wort into oil, it can take weeks for the oil to turn the desired red colour. For tougher fibres like cramp bark, applying more heat by decocting will ensure you see the colour of the water turn deep red.

## SLIDE 10

### More on compounds:

**Glycosides** are found in many roots and mushrooms.

**Minerals** and water soluble vitamins are from lush, juicy plants like nettle and cleavers.

**Mucilages/sugars** are from marshmallow root which are so polar that in high percentage alcohol they will clump together in a tight ball. Marshmallow root and leaves, chickweed, liquorice root, cinnamon bark.

These are like plant syrups. They feel slimy in the mouth and they coat the surfaces they come into contact with. This is useful for digestive irritation and for nourishing tissues that are dry and worn out.

Many of these chemicals are best extracted by infusing overnight in cold water. Hot water cooks the relatively delicate mucilage, which can make it less digestible and threaten it's coating properties. Some of them can be very long, so giving them enough time to come out is key.



# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



It's essential to give them a watery solvent to extract into – as noted above, the sugars will literally clump together if faced with oily, non-polar solvents and you won't get anything of use out, except a good chemistry experiment for kids.

**Minerals** - Vinegar is particularly good for minerals and trace elements. Nettle in vinegar extracts a lot of the nutritious minerals such as silica or magnesium.  
Parsley in vinegar for example, extracts zinc.

**Tannins** are high in the rose family like hawthorn and rose, but also in Oak. Mostly large.

The diverse range of chemicals known as tannins tend to maintain the integrity of the tissues, stopping too much moisture forming in the body, which can lead to inflammation, aches and pains. Too many can dry the gut up, too much that absorbing essential things, like iron, becomes difficult.

The key to tonics is having the right amount. Oak galls are said to be the highest in tannins. If you ate enough oak, it would tan your insides. Tannins usually occur in plants in lower quantities, enough to be pleasant, like in green and black tea, rosebay, willowherb and yarrow.

Experiment with your teas because tannins tend to be extracted by water, and decide how long you like to let them steep based on your taste preferences. The longer you leave it, the more tannin rich it will be. This can be useful for skin washes if the condition is hot and weeping. Tannins are also a little anti-microbial.





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



**Bitter herbs** stimulate the digestive process. If you sweeten bitter herbs too much this action will be lost.

## **How does the preparation effect the actions?**

The resultant effects of the preparation can also be altered by how it is taken. For example, a bitter herb will be tasted as a tincture and will stimulate the vagus nerve to immediately start the digestive process. A bitter herb taken as a capsule filled with dry powder will take longer to act and will miss that direct immediate response of the vagus nerve. Herbs differ from homeopathy in that there are active constituents within the herbal preparations. Part of the action is from taste, via the vagus nerve to other areas of the body.

## **SLIDE 11**

### **Water-based extractions**



What are the differences and benefits of different methods of extraction/preparations?

### **Decoction, infusion, cold water infusion**

Infusions are steeped for a short period in hot water or a longer period in cold, and decoctions are simmered. The reason for this distinction is that some plant parts have more robust cell walls and therefore require a little more 'coaxing' to extract the chemicals of interest. Plant parts, like roots and seeds, often require a decoction to extract the constituents.

### **Castor oil packs, external ointments, plasters/compress, poultices**

External preparations that keep the herb or herbal compounds on the skin to absorb directly where they are needed.





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES

## **Aromatic waters**

Aromatic waters are the left over compounds from essential oil extraction. The fluid collected after the essential oil is separated out from a still. They have much of the essential oil extracted although are still often delicately aroma rich.

## **Flower essence**

The energetic aspect of flowers steeped in water with the influence of the sun, preserved in alcohol.

## **SLIDE 12 ~ Juicing and Ice cubes**

Juiced herbs can be drunk immediately or frozen as ice cubes.

## **SLIDE 13 ~ Syrups**

Syrup with sugar: 1lb (454g) sugar:pint liquid – if you use honey, you need 50% more than sugar and it won't keep as long.

Ensure all bottles are sterilised especially well for syrups

## **SLIDE 14 ~ Vinegar**

Vinegars on their own, have many health giving properties too even before you start to extract the herbal compounds. Cider vinegar can support a lot from bone health, digestive issues, heart health and more.

Blackberry vinegar is delicious and full of nutrients.

**Possible mistakes:** Can leave fresh herbs in too long causing vinegar to denature.

## **SLIDE 15**

Fire Cider - a combo of circulatory and immune stimulating herbs great for the winter months

**Mistakes:** Not to use herbs like jack by the hedge as the vinegar extracts oxalates.





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



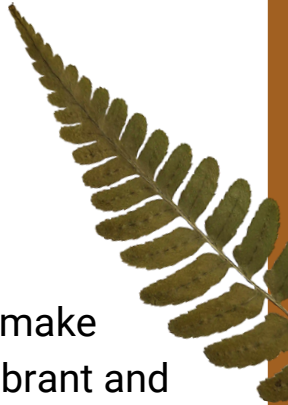
## SLIDE 16 ~ Oxymel

An oxymel is a combination of honey and vinegar. In Ancient Greece, it was called "oxymeli" which translates as "acid and honey." Seems like we're always on about Ancient Greece, but a lot was written down and much of Ancient Greek Medicine has influenced modern herbalism here in the UK.

If you use good quality local honey, there are benefits from the honey alone before it becomes infused with the herbs. Honey can support the immune system, help with allergies, has a plethora of useful phytonutrients, can soothe mucous membranes and the digestive system as a whole.

Mix them together and you have a delicious valuable elixir.



## SLIDE 17 ~ Tinctures



Tinctures are an alcoholic extract of a herb. Dried herbs are said to make stronger tinctures but we find that fresh herbs make such a more vibrant and delicious tincture that the vibrancy outweighs the concentration of compounds in terms of resultant effects.

**Tinctures:** We tend to fill a jar with herb and pour alcohol over it but there are technical ways to measure ratios if that way appeals to you.

**STANDARD TINCTURES DESCRIPTION** Although in pharmacy definitions exist that encompass a broad range of manufacturing procedures and materials, for our purposes, a tincture is the liquid preparation produced by macerating prepared plant material in a mixture of alcohol and water at room temperature over a prescribed period of time, which is then pressed and bottled.





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



## SLIDE 18 ~ Herbal Oils

Herbal oils can be created by making hot oil infusions, burying them in the earth in earthenware jars, or placing on a sunny windowsill.


Herbs for oils that we like to use are:

Comfrey, calendula, heather, horseradish, lavender, daisy, plantain

- Horseradish – needs cloth on top and sulphurs to escape – again can't be too dry
- Comfrey – water rich, needs hot oil infusion. OR dried comfrey
- Heather is quite dry as it is
- Lavender can be dried then turned into an infused oil

## SLIDE 19 ~ Herbal Oils

Hot oil infusions, burying, sunny windowsill

- Comfrey, calendula, heather, horseradish, lavender, daisy, plantain
  - Horseradish – needs cloth on top and sulphurs to escape – again can't be too dry
  - Comfrey – water rich, needs hot oil infusion. OR dried comfrey
  - Heather is quite dry as it is, lavender also can be dried
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## SLIDE 20

Hypericum – yellow hypericum flowers in oil placed on a sunny windowsill turns the oil a blood red colour.

## SLIDE 21 ~ Balm making

Balm ratio: 4 parts oil, 2 parts shea butter, 1 part beeswax and essential oils at the end. 1-2% of total volume as essential oils.

Essential oil 20 drops = 1ml





# PRACTICAL HERBALISM: NOTES



## SLIDE 22

Daisy bruise balm – saponins contained in daisies help to breakdown the pooled blood that causes bruising.

## SLIDE 23

Rose cream – creams need emulsifiers to combine the oil and water components. There are seaweed based emulsifiers.


Emulsifiers work by stabilising a mixture of two liquids that tend to separate. Most commonly, emulsifiers have properties that are both oil-loving (lipophilic) and water-loving (hydrophilic). It's this property that enables these ingredients to mix.

## SLIDE 24

Chutneys and preserves - its worth investing in a jam thermometer to create the best consistency for your jams and chutneys. You can also kraut or ferment veg with herbs added too.

## SLIDE 25

Herbs in Chocolate – powdered herbs, like roseship powder, can be added to a base of raw chocolate balls – sour and tasty, full of antioxidants.



## SLIDE 26

Chilli Hot chocolate with hawthorn brandy is a Seed Sistas' special combination for a heart warming, perception shifting option. YUM!

