



# INTRODUCTION TO FOLK HERBALISM

# 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.*

*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, community garden, friend or family members garden!

Your local farmer, local apothecary, 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

All Cultures  
Have Healing  
Traditions  
We all have our  
own distinct  
ancestral  
healing lineage.



# Folk Herbal Tradition

Simple community based healthcare

empowerment the individual

simple accessible available to all

affordable

easily understandable

no hierarchy

# Tastes / Actions

Sour

Bitter

Sweet

Salty

Spicy

Aromatic



# 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



*Sun Tea*

# 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 Using Fresh Herbs

Herbal Extracts in Alcohol

Vinegar, Glycerin are not tinctures technically are extracts

## *Fresh Herbs:*

Harvest, clean, chop to open cell wall (or blend) and fill jar completely then cover with menstrum

Cover jar, store in dry, cool, dark place, shake daily for 4-6 weeks

Press/Strain using strainer, cheesecloth, , clean linen, or professional press, then let settle overnight

In the Morning decant into fresh jar using coffee filter or cheesecloth

Always store in dark bottles

Label!

## *Dry Herbs:*

Use  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  jar full of herbs then same process





# 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

