An Anarchist Free Herbal

An Anarchist Free Herbal was first written and printed on unceded Cherokee and Muskogee land.

Second Edition October 2021

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Foreword to the 2nd Edition

I rushed the first edition of this zine out in approximately a week before a festival I was tabling at. I wanted to share so much of the world I was falling headfirst into—after a lifetime[1] of on and-off study, I had finally dedicated myself, studied seriously, put in the time. I was in my first real phase of practice, I was ready to take on the world, burning with an anger-based compassion at the injustice of it all...And five months later, that's still roughly where I am, just maybe with a little more self-awareness. I stand by the first edition, honestly. After all, this zine is not a true herbal, despite the catchy name I refuse to abandon—it's a guide for figuring out how to learn, and that is what I am qualified to teach.

I picked up a saying when I began this project: "The only reason anyone writes an herb book is because they think everyone else is teaching it wrong." This is, as all sweeping

1 Admittedly, this lifetime was less than 20 years, but still.

statements, not entirely true, but it sure does ring out in almost every book I've read, "Here's what my colleagues say, and they're wrong!". It's more tactful in some places than in others. I am not a very tactful person.

Anger is my driving force. I have reached a stage in my life where I am exhausted, exhausted by poverty, exhausted by loneliness, exhausted by my attempted solidarity that never feels like it's enough, and is rarely reciprocated. I've flirted with nihilism, with the rejection of a need for meaning and an embrace of desire, moments, movement. But at my core there is rage. I was spurred to become an herbalist through my hatred of the medical industrial complex, and I am carried through by my anger at other herbalists. I clawed competency from stolen textbooks, aided by a handful of kind acquaintances who answered my endless questions, while watching those that claimed to be like me, claimed solidarity, and radicalization, claimed "For the people, by the people" charge hundreds of dollars for weekend workshops, expect monthly tributes for pre-

existing digital resources. The landscape of receiving herbal services is somewhat better, at least in terms of economic barriers, but if we gatekeep who can provide that care, how much difference can that make? Whatever words we use to dance around legal liability for 'practicing medicine without a license', without free and open and accessible education, we still uphold the hierarchical divide between patients and practitioners. Fuck that.

I refuse to charge. I refuse to copyright. I refuse to continue this cycle. Hopefully some day I will not have to rely on anger anymore, hopefully before it burns me out. But for now it's what I have, and by all that is holy, I will use it.

In the first edition I repeatedly spelled the name of an author I greatly respect incorrectly,[2] and the section on dosages was limited and failed to communicate wider options, but hey! That's what second editions are for, right?

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2 The author's correct name is Robin Wall Kimmerer.

1.

Introduction To Herbalism & This Zine

This zine is intended as a practical guide to some of the topics that common herbal education tends to not cover—primarily, how to make and use herbal medicine on a low-to-nothing budget. Think of it as a "quick start guide" to summarize the information I personally think beginner herbalists should have—It is not the be-all end-all of herbal knowledge, nor should this be taken as gospel truth: Just one anonymous herbalist's methods, opinions and philosophies. There is some information on specific herbs included, but generally I wrote this zine under the assumption you would use it to seek out information from other sources (with tips on doing that for free included!). The rest of this introduction is some

basic philosophy about the function and practice of herbalism as an art and as anarchy—feel free to skip it if it doesn't interest you.

What makes an herbalist?

Herbalists are not special—or rather, there is nothing inherently arcane or inherently difficult to access about our craft, although many would have you believe otherwise. An herbalist is someone who knows and uses the healing properties of plants. Many of us are spiritual, but not all, and in my experience the respectful mutual relationship with the natural world that being an herbalist entails comes easier with time than it does with explanation (although Robin Wall Kimmerer's Braiding Sweetgrass is an excellent look into reciprocity with the natural world).

In my view, you need three things to become a "Good" herbalist:

1. An unconditional respect for the consent and bodily autonomy of those seeking care, including yourself.

2. Some form of reference that you can quickly/easily access containing information about the uses of specific plants.

3. A relationship to the natural world that includes respect, gratitude and humility, as well as an acceptance of your own right to exist within the world as a being that must eat and heavily impact other living things.[3]

All of these things come with experience, time, and intention, and are 100% free.

What anarchy has to do with it:

Anarchy is at its most basic definition the total rejection of hierarchy—the concept that one person or group of people should not have power over others. Commonly talked about anarchist beliefs include the total abolition (dismantlement, destruction) of police and prisons, as well as

3 This is not an anti-vegan statement, but the fact is whether it's animals or plants all creatures must survive by consuming other beings.

states/government itself (because government is inherently hierarchical).

These beliefs extend to medicine as well. In standard western medicine, doctors have power[4] over physicians assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners (NPs) and nurses, PAs and NPs have power over nurses, nurses have power over orderlies and clinic workers, and at the bottom of the ladder is the patient—to be examined, questioned, and sent away with a set of instructions.

(Content warning: The next paragraph includes discussion of common medical abuse & mistreatment. Please skip this paragraph if you need to) To those who have never been abused in a medical setting, or who have been taught to accept their abuse, this may seem all fine and dandy—the doctor went to school for the longest, we are taught to respect and revere medical practitioners, of course they know best—but

4 Both organizational (giving orders) and as a "final say" in diagnoses and treatment.

those who are especially vulnerable to medical abuse (People of color, particularly Black and Indigenous people, disabled people, transgender people, poor people, children and teenagers, women...) usually know pretty clearly: nobody knows our[5] bodies like we do, nobody from an external perspective can truly accurately gauge our needs and experience, and most medical professionals do not even try. Our pain is written off as exaggerated or nonexistent, our concerns are ignored, our questions left unanswered in the name of some overworked, insecure physician's ego. Those of us with chronic, even life-long disabilities cannot bring our own research (or sometimes even the words of previous doctors) about our conditions to a new practitioner: we have to learn the game of listing symptoms in such a way that they get to piece it together and feel like they figured everything out themselves,

5 I, the author, am physically and mentally disabled, transgender (coercively assigned female at birth), and a medical and psychiatric abuse survivor. I am white.

or risk being written of as hypochondriacs who have spent too much time on WebMD.

The structure of the medical industrial complex does this intentionally, especially within the medical education system. Medical school is extremely expensive, and scholarships are limited to those who excel academically—weeding out the poorest applicants who did not have access to college-oriented high school (and even elementary school) programs, making it so that even potential doctors are primarily wealthy and white. Both medical and nursing programs are extremely rigorous, forcing students to ignore their own physical and emotional needs—this lays the groundwork for a "tough it out" culture in the medical workplace, which is then transferred to a lack of empathy in patient care. It also prevents disabled people from making it through school. Finally, the monotonous, assembly-line-style function of hospitals and practices reduces people to patients, and patients to a set of standard tests and procedures—a stack of paperwork to complete. Any suffering human being whose

needs fall out of the limited, profit-driven procedural dictated by insurance companies and hospital administration becomes a jam in the system, an irritating problem that keeps the medical staff from being able to get on with their day. Medical professionals are traumatized and overworked and taught the patient is to blame, with many coming from already conservative or perspective-limited backgrounds. Because it makes money.

So then, in order to receive adequate care[6], we can either wait for the grinding wheels of systemic reform, fighting against massive pharmaceutical companies and physician's organizations, and probably never see meaningful change in our lifetimes[7]... Or we can become anarchists about it, and teach ourselves the skills we need to heal. Regardless of whether you

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6 If we can even afford to go to the doctor; I am impoverished to the point that making a regular appointment sounds like a ridiculous luxury...

7 Especially considering how systemic reform often reaches the poor last.

amass the body of knowledge (and resources) to live without ever going to the doctor again, there is incredible value in the simplest of healing: even having a remedy to try before heading to a doctor (or waiting out the illness instead of paying the bill...) can make a huge difference in our health and wellbeing. Autonomy is the best medicine.

2.

How to Build a Local Materia Medica[8] (and Access Free Resources)

The key to practicing herbalism for free is, of course, to use what you already have on hand. The next section of this zine lists some herbs that are common in many areas of so-called North America, can be easily propagated/grown at home, and/or are often cheap & easy to steal or buy on food stamps at grocery stores: But the

8 Materia Medica is Latin for "medical material". Herbalists use the term to refer to a body of plants/herbal medicines. In history it refers to the collected body of knowledge about the properties of substances used for healing; it has been replaced in Western Medicine by the term "Pharmacology".

best way to assemble your own materia medica is to find what is local to you.

My advice to everyone asking where to start in herbal education is to take a walk, somewhere close by and accessible to you that has a decent amount of vegetation and low risk for pesticides and pollution[9]. Bring a medicinal

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9 Toxin-safe foraging practices:

- Avoid areas where pesticides are used or potentially used—this includes manicured lawns, roadsides and parks. Unkempt/unmowed areas with lots of weedy plants and bugs are usually a safe bet.
- Avoid areas that collect a lot of runoff water from roads, yards or agriculture.
- Soil tests are a good idea if you live in an area with a lot of industry (or that used to have a lot of industry like factories or railroads)—they are usually around $10 from your County Extension Office, and will tell you about heavy metal content (and more!)

Personally, I only get soil tests if I am going to be growing or gathering bulk medicines to distribute to my friends & community—otherwise, I prefer to air on the side of freedom & connection to the world around instead of being terrified of

plant field guide with you (see "Finding Books For Free" at the end of this section), and identify as many plants as you can. Take notes about what you find, where it is, how much there is growing, and anything else you think is important. Once you get home, research as much as you can about each plant. Some helpful info to focus on might be times the plant is in season, what ailments it can be used for and by what specific actions it is useful, and how common it is. Take notes if a notebook is a good way for you to learn, if not find some other way to easily reference the information you find (see "Organizational Suggestions" in this section). I would recommend not harvesting before you have done some research.

In addition to toxin safety, please practice responsible harvesting[10]:

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unavoidable harm.

10 Adapted from the Honorable Harvest guidelines from Indigenous traditions as outlined by Robin Wall Kimmerer in *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

1. Do not pick the first plant you find, or the last—make sure there is plenty around before harvesting.
2. Ask the plant for permission. Spend a few moments observing its state and health—a "yes" looks like robust growth and obvious health, a "no" might look like lots of insects or insect traces (chewed on leafs), powdery mildew, wilted or dead parts, a particularly small plant, or anything else that seems "off".
3. Harvest with minimal disturbance. Step one helps with this, be aware of how much there is and don't wipe out whole plants or populations—but also don't leave bald spots in a patch. If you are harvesting roots, leave some behind to give the plant a chance to regrow.

Now you have a good idea of what medicines are available for free locally! You can stop here for now, and/or repeat the process whenever suits you (especially when seasons

change or if you move or are spending time in a different area, even a different neighborhood!), or you can move on to the following set of suggestions to round out your materia medica to treat a wider range of conditions.

Accounting For Body Systems & Ailments

There can be remarkable variety in foraging local plants—Generally I have found everything I need for common ailments as well as the particular needs of myself and my loved ones in a small radius—but sometimes there are important gaps in the range of treatments available that you would like to fill. The following is a set of recommended lists to make[11] or compare your materia medica to as an exercise to identify what those gaps are and figure out how to fill them. Everything in this section is a suggestion: There is

11 I'm all about lists, so if that's not a very helpful way for you to conceptualize information I'm very sorry.

no “right” set of medicinals! Follow your gut, and in time experience will answer most questions.

- Necessary care
    - What illnesses do you (or the people you plan on caring for[12]) have frequently?
    - What illnesses[13] or injuries do you want to be able to treat if they arise quickly? (Consider the functions in a first aid kit

12 Ask them! Always obtain consent, a good line can be: “I am starting to learn about herbal medicine, is there anything health-wise you need or often need that I can learn about for you?”

13 Some common illnesses to consider: Colds, allergies, the flu, urinary tract infections, kidney stones, digestion problems, difficulties surrounding menstruation (such as moodswings, cramps, constipation or pregnancy—unfortunately, herbal abortions are outside the scope of this zine, but it is an old and robust field), physical injuries (like cuts, sprains strains & broken bones, bruises, etc), disabilities and chronic illnesses like diabetes, crohn’s disease, arthritis, fibromyalgia...

or over-the-counter medications you're used to having.)

- Body Systems
  - Consider what herbs you have for:
    - The skin
    - The lungs
    - The heart & circulatory system
    - The stomach
    - The immune system (in general)
    - The reproductive system
    - The brain
    - The bladder, kidneys and liver
  - What might you still need? What do you not have, but don't need right now?
- Effects[14]
  - Consider what herbs you have that are:

14 This is by no means an exhaustive list, but good considerations to start with

- Antacid
- Antihistamine
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antimicrobial (antibiotic, antifungal, antiviral)
- Antispasmodic/spasmolytic (prevents spasms, especially in smooth muscle like that of the digestive tract)
- Astringent (tone and tighten tissues)
- Carminative (relieves gas)
- Expectorant (thins mucus in the lungs so you can cough it up)
- Mucilaginous (contains a soothing mucus-y substance that heals tissues, like plantain)
- Nervine (sooths/restores the nerves)
- Pain-relieving (in addition to herbs that prevent pain from being felt, there are many herbs that work on relieving specific kinds of pain but not

others, such as passionflower for nerve pain)

This is NOT an exhaustive list of actions recognized in Western herbalism—There are many, many more. See the section "Choosing Herbs" for a deeper discussion of herbal actions and how to apply them, and Appendix A for a more complete glossary.

Organizational Suggestions

Here are some suggestions of possible systems you can use to organize & access your herbal knowledge:

- A well-indexed notebook
    - Organizing a notebook you are continually adding to can be difficult, and I myself have too many times been bogged down by the stress of planing how to organize information I do not know. My favorite solution is using indexes instead of a table of contents or planned structure:

1) Section off several pages at the back of your notebook into alphabetized sections (I usually use a half-page per letter).

2) Number each page of your notebook from the front to the back.

3) Add entries (such as profiles on herbs or medicine making methods) to the front of your notebook as they come up —You can save space to add more information about topics, or just move on to the next entry. If you have more to add to an entry later, you can put a small note where you left of saying "Continued on page [number where the topic appears next]".

4) As you fill out your notebook, make note of key words you would want to look up later, and record the word and corresponding page numbers in your alphabetized index[15]. I recommend

15 I typically don't worry about alphabetizing each entry under the letters—I usually don't have

indexing terms like herb names, ingredient names, kinds of preparations (teas/decoctions/infusions, extracts, etc), effects, and ailments, as well as whatever you think would be helpful

- Pros: Can be accomplished with a cheap spiral bound notebook, is pretty customizable, and can hold a lot of information.
- Cons: Organization system may not work for some, can appear messy, requires handwriting.

- A recipe card box
  - You could also store your entries written (or printed) on index cards in a recipe-card-style box, organized alphabetically or however you see fit
  - Pros: Easy and changeable organization

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enough entries to make key words too hard to pick out of a list.

- Cons: Requires specific supplies (cards and a box to keep them in), requires handwriting, and may not be especially portable.

- Digital document(s)
  - Use a word processor on a computer or phone to keep a document with your entries.
  - Pros: searchable, changeable organization, no handwriting
  - Cons: requires access to tech and electricity, can be lost if your device breaks or it's otherwise accidentally deleted
- Reference list/library index
  - Create a reference sheet or small notebook with an index of topics and notes on where to find what information in other books or websites you have access to.

- Pros: minimal to no recopying of information
- Cons: Not portable

Finding Books And Resources For Free

Technology access makes finding free books on herbs a lot easier, but with some legwork they can be obtained in person as well.

Used bookstores (like Half Price Books) are often very easy to steal from, and usually have half-decent selections of field guides and herb books. If you have access to a computer, smartphone, or e-reader, and don't mind reading off a screen, basically any book is free. Look for sites like Libgen and Zlibrary[16] for free easy downloads.[17]

Some books to check out, recommended by either myself or fellow herbalists:

16 Both change URLs relatively frequently so Googling the names is best.

17 Maybe you should use a VPN, I don't.

- The Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook by James Green
- The Earthwise Herbal Complete Guide To New World Medicinal Plants and The Earthwise Herbal Complete Guide to Old World Medicinal Plants by Matthew Wood
- Spice Apothocary by Bevin Clare
- Body Into Balance: An Herbal Guide to Holistic Self Care by Maria Noel Groves

Learning herbalism from books involves a lot of sifting through information and deciding what you think is trustworthy. I try to stay away from books that make sweeping claims about popular topics: "Dr. Oz" style attention-grabbing promises to cure whatever disease has been in the news in recent years—these are usually poorly-researched or disingenuous cash-grabs, even when written by someone with letters after their name that are supposed to mean they know what they're talking about. There has been an influx in books on herbal antivirals since the COVID19 pandemic, for example. A good test for

many books that give an overview of diseases is how they mention autism, or more specifically, if they mention the heavily debunked "Vaccine theory" of autism—an idea based on one faulty, un-replicable study that was retracted by the journal that published it, AND published alongside a refutation of that study in the same journal issue it was originally printed in. A source that mentions the theory with any suggestion of possible validity can't be trusted to be accurate without significant cross-referencing. Reading many books and comparing the information they offer, in combination with thinking critically about how they present themselves, is the best way to make sure you get good education.

That being said, I encourage you to keep an open mind while being critical—most of my favorite books include "hippy-dippy" spiritual or philosophical components alongside scientific information and trustworthy traditional knowledge. Claiming to be empirical while relying on faulty science is a good indicator of bad information, but western science isn't the only

purveyor of truth! Herbal traditions around the world are many hundreds of times older than “empirical science”, and carry the wisdom of generations upon generations of experienced practitioners.

3.

Herbs to Know (or, "The Grocery Store Herbal")

The following herbs are either common foods/spices that can be found in grocery stores (and either bought on food stamps or stolen[18]) or

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18 Shoplifting Basics:

- Stealing is a lot easier than it can seem to be! The more confidence you have the easier it is.
- Keep an eye on cameras and employees and learn how to find blindspots, especially areas with tall shelves or displays that can be ducked behind under the pretense of tying a shoe or examining a product on a low shelf.
- Most of the time, store employees (especially in grocery stores) are not allowed to confront you. Businesses are also not allowed to detain you, and stores that check receipts (like Walmart) cannot actually force you to remain in the store, however there are situations when

common “weeds” prevalent across most areas of so-called North America.

Cayenne Pepper

Cayenne pepper is a kind of chili common in grocery stores and high in capsaicin. It can stimulate and invigorate tissues the body and dissipate feelings of sluggishness or stagnation & general malaise. In addition, a capsaicin salve made from cayenne makes an extremely effective topical painkiller by intercepting local pain signals within the nerves. Taken internally, cayenne can help better absorb other herbal medicines, and it improves blood circulation.

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an employee may stand in front of the door and attempt to force you to make contact (“””assault”””) in order to detain you. If you are concerned, leave the store quickly and confidently—feigning a phone call from someone who’s “there to pick you up” or “an emergency at home”, or simply chatting on the phone, can help quite a bit.

Chamomile

Chamomile is a flower native to Europe, common in relaxing & bedtime teas. It is soothing to the nerves and stomach, as well as being an anti-inflammatory, and is a good choice when irritability and tension are major factors in an illness. Chamomile has bitter and carminative actions, which stimulate appetite and digestion when taken before meals, and expel gas from the intestines respectively. Chamomile is considered an especially useful herb for children with teething problems or colic,[19] and in combination with garlic or yarrow for colds.

19 Colic is defined as "prolonged fussiness in a healthy child." While herbal remedies can be extremely helpful for easing the pains and frustrations of childhood, it is INCREDIBLY important to note that children should never be forced or coerced into intaking substances for being "bad" or troublesome, and to do so constitutes child abuse—I speak as someone who will never again talk to my mother. Speak to your children and offer them aid, but *please* do not decided that a kid needs to take a sedative because they are irritating.

Cloves

Whole cloves are an excellent spice to chew on for toothaches, as they are anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and numbing. Powdered clove can also be made into an oil infusion to be applied to the gums or for oil-pulling[20], for the same purpose.

Garlic

Garlic can be found in almost any grocery store in fresh or powdered form, making it one of the most common herbs on this list—as well as one of the most useful. Garlic is an excellent aid to the immune system, due to its antiseptic, antimicrobial and antiviral properties. It is particularly useful taken internally for respiratory and digestive infections or applied topically as a salve or poultice for infected wounds. Garlic can also lower high blood pressure and cholesterol.

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20 Oil-pulling is a technique from Ayurvedic medicine in which a few tablespoons of edible oil are swished gently around the mouth for a period of time (10-30 minutes or more) and spat out.

Ginger

Ginger is a common flavoring for both savory and sweet foods, and is similar to garlic in its near-ubiquitous availability. Ginger is used for a variety of issues in the digestive system, including diarrhea, irritable bowls, nausea, and indigestion—despite its spiciness. It promotes the production and secretion of digestive juices, and can help in re-acclimating the stomach and body to food after events such as food insecurity or some kinds of drug use. Ginger is helpful in a variety of applications to increase absorption of nutrients, such as an ingredient in a medicinal soup for a person just getting over an illness.

Goldenrod

Goldenrod is used to refer to a collection of extremely common roadside plants in the genus Solidago that flower in late summer and early fall. Goldenrod is a diuretic[21] helpful for the

21 Stimulates urination; be sure to drink plenty of water while taking diuretic herbs to avoid dehydration

kidneys and gallbladder, specifically for kidney stones. It is also beneficial to upper respiratory infections, sinus infections, bronchitis, chronic colds, and the oral yeast infection thrush.

Lavender

Lavender is one of the most commonly known and most accessible herbs for exhaustion, depression, and irritability. It stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for the "rest and digest" response in the body, helping us to feel calm, safe and relaxed. Lavender is most apt for emotional distress and anxiety when you are busy, overwhelmed, or hyperactive. Lavender can be taken internally as a tincture or syrup or used for its aromatheraputic properties (either as a perfume/mist/scented oil or simply carrying around some of the buds to sniff). Lavender grows robustly in many places and can often be found in lawns and gardens. It can also sometimes be found as a culinary herb in the spice section of

specialty grocery stores, especially large international ones.

Lemon Balm

Lemon balm is a member of the mint family with a citrus-y taste and scent. As a mint, it is extremely easy to propagate from small cuttings, taken from friends or plants in garden stores. Lemon balm is an excellent herb for stress and irritability stemming from feelings of anxiety and insecurity, and can be incredibly beneficial to those with chronic anxiety and fear. It is also helpful in migraines, stomach cramps, and urinary tract infections, and has been traditionally used for overactive thyroid conditions.

Oregano

Oregano is a spice common in Italian cooking that provides wonderful respiratory support to those having trouble breathing due to chronic illness, respiratory infections or allergies. It is also an antiseptic, antifungal and expectorant. Oregano in

large quantities should be avoided during pregnancy.

Peppermint

Peppermint is a respiratory support similar to oregano, as well as helpful to settle upset stomachs and relieve nausea or stop vomiting. It can also help soothe sore and painful throats, relieve minor headaches, and expel gas and cramping. Peppermint has been used historically as aromatherapy to raise depressed spirits.

Plantain

Plantain is a common weed/yard plant that comes in broad and narrow leaf varieties. This veiny herb is incredible for minor issues with the skin, like bug bites, rashes, poison ivy, and minor burns and cuts. The leafs can be chewed and applied "in the field" to immediately relieve bug bites, or it can be prepared as a salve or poultice; and it can be taken as a tea to heal the intestines.

Plantain should never be used on deep/large or infected wounds or burns, because it stimulates cell growth in the skin only and can cause broken skin to heal before deeper tissue, sealing in infection and causing serious problems.

Purple Dead Nettle

Purple dead nettle is yet another member of the mint family, and it can be found practically wherever there is grass. It flowers for both the spring and fall allergy seasons, which is incredibly considerate of it as it is a natural antihistamine! Purple dead nettle is also helpful for sinus infections and chronic inflammation. It is a diuretic.

Willow

Willow bark contains salicylic acid, which is the active ingredient in Aspirin. It can be helpful for headaches and fevers taken internally. Willow bark can also be very helpful in a topical blend for minor staph infections (common boils), alongside tea tree oil, garlic, and turmeric. Willow

bark can be a blood thinner, so it's best not to combine with other blood thinners (like alcohol or prescription medication).

4.

Choosing Herbs

This section will cover how to determine which herbs to use for a particular situation. Maybe you or someone you know is sick, or they're looking for a tonic to support their unique general health concerns. Some people treat herbalism as a set of inputs and outputs, "this herb fixes this problem". A rigid system of problems and cures (diagnoses and drugs/therapies) works okay in Western Medicine, but I think in herbalism it is an extremely limiting approach in most if not all cases. One of the reasons it is limiting is because as herbalists, we usually don't have access to the same diagnostic tools medical doctors do—instead, if someone is sick, we have to analyze their symptoms and use trial-and-error to find an effective course of action and figure out the root cause. This takes a

lot of practice! I'm including this information because I think it is important for beginner herbalists to understand the skills they CAN build, not because you have to be an analytical master at choosing herbs right away. If there is an herb you (or someone you are helping) want to try, try it! Your skills will build in time. To get you started, there are three different tools we can use to choose which herbs are most appropriate.

Actions

The effects an herb has on the body are called "actions". Western Herbalism has a relatively eclectic set of commonly recognized actions: many overlap with drug actions recognized in Western Medicine, and many do not. For example, "anti-inflammatory" is used in both Western Herbalism and Western Medicine, but your pharmacist will not hand you a bottle with the word "mucilaginous"[22] on it.

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22 containing mucilage, a broad term for many mucus-like slimes present in many different plants that coat, lubricate, and protect tissues in the

Having a working knowledge of herbal actions is one of our best tools when trying to treat an undiagnosed illness or achieve a desired effect! When we combine herbal actions with an analysis of symptoms, we can pick herbs that are likely to be at least somewhat helpful—a good place to start.

I have stolen a reference sheet of herbal actions off the internet and edited it into appendix A. All information has been fact checked against other sources, plagiarism just seemed a lot easier than typing up info myself. It is just a list of definitions: you will need to do research to find what herbs accessible to you have these actions, which is kind of a pain. Most herbals will list actions at the beginning or end of each herb profile; I recommend flipping through a couple and checking the actions of herbs you are familiar with, and then if you are not familiar with any

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body. Cough drops do often say "demulcent", though, which refers to that coating/lubricating/protecting property.

herb that seems promising, moving to holistic health sources that are organized by body system[23] and reading the chapters that are relevant to the problem at hand[24]. This process becomes a lot easier as you amass knowledge, I promise.

Specific Indications

Another tool at our disposal that is frequently provided in herbals is specific indications, sometimes just referred to as "indications". These are reasons a particular herb might be most useful for a certain individual or situation. For example, when searching for an herb to relieve anxiety accompanied by heart palpitations, we might pick Motherwort, which is indicated for tightness or palpitations in the chest

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23 Such as *Body Into Balance* by Maria Noel Groves. I highly recommend picking up a handful of these kinds of books and reading them cover-to-cover.

24 For example, if you are looking to relieve a stomach issue, you would start with the chapter on the digestive system.

or heart, over lavender, which is indicated for overwork and difficulty turning "off" or resting.[25]

Additionally, many herbs that have the same action work best in different parts of the body. Specific indications can give us clues about which herbs to pick.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: A contraindication is a reason or situation where a specific herb might be harmful or dangerous. Be sure to put just as much care into researching contraindications for any herb you're considering, and disclose ALL contraindications if you're helping someone else![26] Common contraindications are medication interactions, medical conditions, and other herbs a person might be using already. Websites like drugs.com will very thoroughly[27] list

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25 If both are present, we might mix them! See "Blends" at the end of this section.

26 Even if they're not a concern for that particular person, we want to encourage people to share herbs, and to be able to share them safely!

27 I always get the vibe that they're trying to scare people, even though the information is useful and

contraindications for most herbs commonly used as supplements.

Pre-Existing Diet & Habits

Our last tool is a process of elimination, and more of a reminder to ask questions/think holistically than anything groundbreaking. Basically, take a look at your habits (particularly what you eat!) or ask whoever you are helping if they are already using herbs or other habits that you think might help. This can be used to make sure you're not wasting any time by doubling up on something already being used; or it can help rule out a potential root cause of the concern.

As an example of doubling-up: if you are prone to slow-healing wounds, and suspect that bad circulation is the cause[28] but your diet is

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good.

28 Circulation is the primary cause of slow healing, and usually the first thing to look at. Lets say for the sake of this example you have some evidence to be concerned about your circulation; you experience frequent pins and needles and have slow capillary refill.

already rich in spicy foods cooked with whole peppers, using additional cayenne pepper or other capsaicin supplements will probably not help and you might want to reach for other types of heart tonics, or try massage instead. However, if someone frequently deals with slow-healing wounds but enjoys spicy peppers, onions, and blueberries multiple times a week, and doesn't have any other complaints that would clearly suggest poor circulation, you can probably rule out circulatory problems and research other possible causes.

Not all herbs work for all people! If someone already includes herbs or foods with a particular action in their diet, it doesn't always mean different herbs with the same action won't be useful or that the root problem that action is intended to treat isn't present. When to eliminate a particular herb, a particular action or a whole suspected cause is very much a judgment call that comes easier with experience. If you are helping someone other than yourself, good communication about this decision is important!

People often know what is happening with their bodies on a relatively intrinsic level.

How to build blends:

Another set of judgment calls! I spent over a year working almost exclusively with single herbs before beginning to get a handle on blends, and I strongly recommend a similar approach for others. Waiting an entire year might be a little excessive, but I strongly recommend having a well-developed relationship to the herbs you are working with before mixing them. A simple way to work on this is to make a strong tea every time you encounter new herbs, and set aside some time to drink it very thoughtfully. Notice how your body feels! It can be a good idea to look over notes on the herbs' effects and see if you can get a good first-hand idea of what your sources describe, but always be wary of the power of suggestion and question the intensity[29] of what you feel. Taking notes as you do this can

29 And replicability! You can always drink a tea more than once

be very helpful if you are new to or struggle with body awareness, recording any feelings you notice from your head to your toes and in different body systems. It is this skill of awareness that lets us effectively blend herbs.

It bears saying that many other herbalists neither take blends as seriously as I do nor care half as much about, to put it colloquially, the vibes of different plants. My approach is not the only way. If you look, you will find plenty of guides for blending herbs that set out clear proportions and methods. What I have to offer is, as usual, a set of lists and questions to make and think about.[30] Here are some things to consider when making blends, as well as objectives herbalists might have and ways to achieve them.

Think about:

- What is the full list of concerns you're dealing with?

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30 :)

- What herbs do you think would be most appropriate? Are any of them contraindicated by each other?
- How is each herb best taken?
- Does the person taking the herbs (you, or someone else) already have a relationship to any of these plants? What is their experience with effects, strength, and dosage?
- What are the differences in dosage for different herbs you're considering?

Main actions and supports

When dealing with a specific concern, it can be useful to combine a main action that targets the cause of the concern with other components that support the efficacy of the main action and/or offer symptomatic relief. Ex: A blend to treat a respiratory infection might use an antimicrobial and an immune stimulant to attack the source of disease, an expectorant to hasten the removal of mucus and ease the pain of

coughs, and a mild bronchodiolator or other respiratory herb to support labored breathing.

NOTE: a lot of herbs already have multiple effects—for example, oregano is antimicrobial AND supports easier breathing.

Multiple body systems

Often, health concerns are not localized to just one area of concern. For example, stomach difficulties can come up alongside a lot of different illnesses—often because being sick disrupts how & what people normally eat, which can disturb digestion. Whether or not you want to blend multiple focuses like this is up to you, and of course if you're helping someone else, ultimately it's their choice. Single herbs are much easier to monitor the effects of and to adjust dosage if necessary, but once those herbs are proportioned in a blend you can only take more or less of all of them. There's nothing wrong with this, but some folks do appreciate more information about what each specific herb is doing, especially if the concern is more

complicated or has an unknown cause. On the other hand, blends for multiple concerns like this can be a lot easier on those who struggle with daily habits. Herbal medicine is already taken a lot more frequently and requires more effort to prepare than most western medications, and remembering to use one preparation multiple times a day can be difficult enough if you're having trouble adjusting. The most technically perfect set of herbal remedies in the world won't do anything if you can't actually get them into your body.

Health tonics (and polypharmacy)

Tonics are herbal medicines meant for general support for the body or a specific body system, as opposed to a treatment for a particular concern. A tonic might support the immune system to ward off illness, or give extra help for a body system you're concerned about, like a urinary tonic if you are prone to kidney stones. Fire cider is a common immune tonic that is also used to treat colds—recipes differ from

person to person, but it is an infused apple cider vinegar typically made with onions, garlic, various immune supports such as elderberries or rose hips, and various other herbs that are helpful to the body during illness such as turmeric for general pain and inflammation and cayenne to invigorate bloodflow and clear the sinuses. Many tonic blends contain a large number of herbs, and some cross the line into polypharmacy: a medicine made with many herbs ingredients, sometimes even dozens.[31] Fire cider is an excellent example of where many-ingredient blends are very useful—one bottle on the shelf can provide broad relief for general malaise and feelings of "yuck" from a bunch of different causes.[32] Generally, though, I am against

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31 Polypharmacy has a different definition in western medicine: when an individual is taking five or more medications daily.

32 My fire cider recipe: Fill a 1 gallon jar with four chopped onions, five to seven bulbs of garlic, a cup of cayenne pepper, a cup of turmeric, three ginger roots, a quarter to half cup black pepper, a cup or two honey, a cup or two rose hips, and fill the rest

polypharmacy: I think it muddies the waters and makes it harder to figure out what is actually helping.

It is very common for polypharmacy to be used in commercial herbal blends. This is because it makes them more marketable: everyone's bodies have different reactions to different herbs. By including every vulnerary[33] herb under the sun in a salve, it does raise your chances of the blend having "something for everyone". Except for when someone has an allergy to one of the herbs. Or is on a medication that interacts badly with one of them. Or is especially sensitive to an herb and needs a much smaller dose than what's included. Or, most insidiously: The herbs that do help them are so diluted by ones that don't that they have to use far more of the preparation, and thus buy more of it.

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of the jar with apple cider vinegar. Let sit for two to four weeks before straining. I don't actually measure any of this so go with your gut regarding proportions.

33 wound-healing

This is not to say that polypharmacy is evil or wrong; it's just very exploitable and has serious drawbacks. Including several herbs can be very good, but I think the most important thing is knowing exactly what your intention is in making any herbal medicine—what are you trying to heal? Why are you going about it this way?—and to use plants that, well... go together. This concept is hard to articulate, it's sort of like building flavor profiles while cooking, and I can only trust that you'll know what I mean with enough practice, or devise your own methods that make sense to you.

5.

Medicine Making Basics

This section contains basic instructions for a variety of medicine making procedures. More complicated information is available regarding strength[34] and chemical mechanics[35], but the measurement-free "folk methods" offered here should do absolutely fine. As you make more medicines you should develop a pretty good feel for how strong a batch is; in my view standardization is really only applicable when

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34 The most common system herbalists use to standardize the strength of a medicine is called weight-to-volume or w:v.

35 I recommend *The Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook* by James Green for an approachable and in-depth guide to the specifics of medicine making. It can be downloaded from Libgen and Zlibrary for free.

continually supplying a large public project like a clinic.

What preparation you choose depends on what is most convenient and compelling to you—feel free to pick what seems best! Generally speaking, internal preparations (things you eat) are best for generalized and systemic ailments or issues with internal organs (like a cold or cough, respiratory infection, or kidney stones); whereas topical preparations like salves or poultices are better for issues with the skin or in the limbs (like wounds, bruises, or broken bones) or issues localized to a specific region (like arthritis). Some, myself included, find internal preparations easiest to use daily for chronic ailments, and topical preparations are often the best option for children, animals and anyone with a low tolerance for harsh flavors.

Notes on Dosages

Dosage really depends on the herb being used and the strength of the preparation. Research into your particular herb should give you

a more precise idea of how much to take, and experiment[36] with different dosages to see what feels best for your body! Here are some starting places for different kinds of preparations:

Tinctures: Most "standard" tincture doses are between 1 and 5mL. I tend to prefer the weight-based "folk" dosage: two drops of tincture per pound of body weight. There are about 30 drops in a mL. When taking tinctures myself, I base dosages off of my experience with the strength of that particular herb; as a baseline I typically start with 10-15mL[37] of a preparation every three to six hours (or as needed), bump up to around 20mL if it seems like a higher dose is needed and typically move on to a different remedy if there's no improvement after 3-4 doses.

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36 Be more careful if you are using a herb with potential toxicity, and research contraindications (reasons taking an herb may be harmful) for every herb you use.

37 For reference, I weigh about 250lbs.

Tea: I like to start with roughly one tablespoon of dried herb (or blend) in 6-8 ounces of water, one to four times a day.

Salves and Topical Oils: Rub into the skin like lotion to the desired area whenever needed.

Syrups & Oxymels: 1 teaspoon to 3 tablespoons, preferably in water.

Internal Oils or Butters: 1tsp to 2tbsp every 3-6 hours or as needed.

Notes on Storage

All herbal preparations stored for longer than a day or two should be stored protected from light—in dark closets, tinted or opaque bottles, or protected by tinfoil or brown paper. This is because the compounds in herbal medicine are often very fragile and can be destroyed by sunlight: think of how dried flowers left in a windowsill become brittle and brown with age.

Simples

Fresh or dried unadulterated herbs are called "simples":[38] The simplest way to take herbal medicines is to eat them! Or in the case of topical medicines (like plantain for bug bites and rashes), chew them up and spread the paste over the affected area.

In addition to just munchin', try cooking meals that incorporate or center medicinal herbs, if you have access—after all, most of the herbs listed in this zine are culinary spices. A garlic- and ginger-rich chicken soup has just as much cold-healing potential as a tincture... or even more, considering it comes with all the nutrients and vitamins in the chicken and vegetables.

Teas and Decoctions

Teas and decoctions are water-based medicines intended to either be consumed

38 Some also use the term to refer to single-herb tinctures (as opposed to blends).

immediately or as a base for a syrup. They are some of the simplest and oldest methods of preparing medicine, and my favorite way to engage with herbalism.

Teas: Steep your herb of choice in boiling water for around five minutes, or to your liking. Covering the tea with something (like a plate) while steeping can keep it hotter for longer and make a stronger brew. Dosage is subjective; I usually use a small handful of fresh herb or about a tablespoon and a half of dried herb. Depending on the ailment, teas can be used one or multiple times a day—They are often apt for an "as-needed" basis. A DIY teabag can be made with a coffee filter and a stapler, folding the filter in half with the herb in the center and folding the sides in to seal with one or two staples. Coffee filter tea bags are less porous than standard tea bags and need to be gently pressed against the side of the cup with a utensil about every minute of brewing.

Decoctions: A decoction is like an extremely strong tea, which can be drunk fresh

within a few hours (or days if refrigerated) of being made, or used as the base for a syrup.

- Place your herbs in a pot on a stove and add enough water to cover.
- Let the herbs soak for an hour or two, if time permits.
- Turn the heat on LOW and slowly bring to a gentle simmer.
- Simmer for 5-15 minutes. With practice, you will develop a feel for how long is correct; generally wait until the herb "surrenders its properties" and becomes soft and formless with muted colors. Be careful not to over-boil, as high temperatures can destroy the delicate compounds that make up herbal medicine.
- Take off the heat and allow to cool before straining through a tea strainer.

Syrups

Tinctures get a lot of attention for being shelf-stable medicines, but they're not the only ones! Plain sugar and water can be combined to make a shelf-stable concoction, with a small amount of math and a kitchen scale.

Unlike the other preparations in this section, the measurements for a syrup are important—you need the right concentration of sugar for the mixture to remain preserved. Too little sugar and microbes like yeast can ferment and spoil the syrup, and too much sugar will make an unstable solution that won't remain dissolved through temperature drops[39], the sugar will precipitate out and again the liquid will not have a high enough concentration to resist fermentation. James Green[40] suggests a ratio of 85 grams of sugar to 47mL of liquid for a self-preserving sugar syrup. I have used lower

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39 Like how honey crystallizes when left in a refrigerator

40 Author of *The Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook*

concentrations (600g to 500mL) with good success in a warm climate, and I recommend starting with that if your measurement equipment is imprecise —or 2 cups of sugar to 1 cup of liquid by volume. Refrigeration is still ideal, or adding high-proof grain alcohol to achieve a 30% concentration of alcohol by volume in your syrup. A syrup preserved with alcohol is called an elixer, which is fun.

Syrup from a decoction: Start with a decoction that has been strained and then filtered through a coffee filter. Place the liquid in a saucepan over LOW heat, and reduce by half[41] without boiling. Once your decoction is reduced/concentrated, measure it and slowly add your decided upon proportion of sugar. Stir

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41 Keep track of your reduction by sticking a chopstick or butter knife straight down into the center of the pot, marking the water level, and measuring against this mark until the liquid drops to half its previous volume.

You may also choose to reduce further for a stronger syrup, which I'd recommend if you are making an elixer.

continually until the liquid clears, and pour into a container with a tight lid and label.

Oxymel

Oxymels are a blend of honey and vinegar that can be infused with medicinal herbs similar to a tincture. Ratios of honey to vinegar vary—I like to use two parts honey to one part apple cider vinegar. Oxymel is especially well suited to aromatic and flavorful herbs and fruits, and makes a delicious, hydrating beverage with 1tbsp in around 8 ounces of cold water.

To make, chop or grind your herb and place in a clean glass jar. Measure and thoroughly blend your honey and vinegar in a separate container. 1:1, 2:1 and 5:1 honey:vinegar are common ratios. Estimating how much oxymel to make for your volume of herb is a learned skill—you can measure the volume of your herb and add about ¼ cup if you're not as practiced. Cover the herb in oxymel blend by about ¼ to ½ inch, making sure it is totally saturated. Cap the jar with a tight fitting lid and let sit for two weeks before

pressing through cheesecloth. Oxymel is very thick and kind of hard to press—gently heating the jar in a warm water bath before pressing thins the preparation and makes it slightly easier.

Oil Infusions and Salves

An oil infusion can be used topically or internally.[42] A salve is an oil infusion that is solid at room temperature (either made from a solid oil or blended with a wax) to be applied topically.

Any oil can be used for an oil infusion! Grapeseed, sunflower, olive and sweet almond are common due to their neutral flavors and benefit to the skin. Grapeseed is my favorite since it can be bought cheaply at grocery stores, is allergy-friendly and when combined with beeswax makes a very stable salve not prone to accidental melting. Oils can also be extremely good carriers for herbs intended to act on the brain or nervous

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42 Probably better to cook with, a la marijuana edibles, as opposed to drinking oil. The one exception is herbally infused butter or ghee, which can make a nice spread.

system—Ayurvedic medicine uses ghee (clarified butter) for this purpose, and I recommend it highly.

Cold oil infusion: Bruise or grind your herb to increase available surface area. Place in a glass container and cover ¼ inch over the herb with a neutral oil. Cap tightly and shake well. Check the oil level a few hours later, and add more oil if the herb has absorbed the covering ¼ inch. Keep out of sunlight (in a closet or wrapped in a brown paper bag or aluminum foil) and shake several times a day for two weeks. Filter through cheese cloth or a coffee filter.[43]

Hot oil infusion: Set up a jar with herb and oil the same way as the cold infusion process, but instead of sealing with a capped lid cover loosely, with the cap or with aluminum foil. Set the jar in a pot on the stove or in a crock pot and fill the pot with water to the same height as the oil. Turn the stove or crock pot on LOW and let sit for 6-

43 Warming a cold infusion with 5-10 minutes in a water bath as described in the hot infusion process can make the oil filter a lot faster.

10 hours. Filter with cheese cloth or a coffee filter while still warm.

Solid oil salve: For a salve that does not require additional ingredients to be solid at room temperature, perform the hot oil infusion method with vegetable shortening, cocoa or shea butter. You can use coconut oil but I don't recommend it as the resulting salve is not very stable and is prone to melting in bags and cars on warm days. While vegetable shortening is extremely convenient, be aware that it is mostly hydrogenated soy bean oil and is thus not allergy friendly. Petroleum jelly can also be used for this purpose.[44]

Wax salve: Measure your oil with a measuring cup before gently warming it in a pan on low heat over the stove. Add ½ to 1 oz

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44 See note 45

beeswax or paraffin[45] per cup of oil and blend thoroughly with a whisk.

Poultices

A poultice a soft absorbent mush that is applied topically to rashes, broken bones, boils, and bruises. Poultices can possibly be used on wounds with due consideration to potential infection. They use heat and moisture to increase skin absorption of the medicinal ingredients, and

45 Paraffin and petroleum jelly are petroleum products, which means they are made from fossil fuels. I personally do not use them as they are ecologically disastrous, can damage skin cells, and may cause allergic reactions, but they are cheaply and widely available so I'm including information on them anyway in case it's all someone has access to. Considering almost all commercial lotions and lip balms contain petroleum products, an herbal preparation with paraffin or petroleum jelly is a drop in the bucket of what we are exposed to, and I strongly believe still a net good: it is better than nothing unless you or someone else has an allergy or strong reaction.

also function in their own merit as a hot compress.

Bag poultice: Shred or grind fresh or dried herb material to a fairly small size. Fill a small bag[46] with the herbal material and close it, placing into a heat-safe bowl. Pour boiling water over the bag until it is thoroughly moistened but ideally not dripping wet. When it is cool enough to touch, gently knead the bag until its a pleasant temperature against the skin, and apply to the affected area until it becomes cold and feels like it's not doing anything anymore.

Brown paper poultice: This method is ideal with vinegar extractions (see section on extracts) to add astringency to a topical treatment, especially one for boils or similar skin ailments. It can also be made with decoctions. Shred kraft paper[47] or unprinted cardboard into approximately 1 inch pieces. Put about 1/3 cup of shredded paper into a pot (or microwave-safe bowl) and add

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46 A spice or potpourri bag, or just a sock

47 Brown paper from paper bags, etc.

enough extract or decoction to slightly cover the paper. Let it soak for 30-45 minutes to absorb as much liquid as possible, and then warm to use temperature VERY GENTLY on the stove or microwaving for 15 second intervals. Knead to make a relatively cohesive mass and apply to the skin in the same way as a bag poultice.

Tea bag poultice: Brew tea and use the tea bag as a poultice! Convenient for small injuries and eyes.

Tinctures

Finally, the barest introduction to modern Western herbalism's most common preparation: Tinctures. A tincture uses a solvent that is not water or oil to dissolve compounds in a herb, to make a more concentrated preparation that is shelf-stable. Alcoholic tinctures are most used in western herbalism because being shelf stable means they can be sold on a large scale—this also makes them convenient since they don't require preparation for every dose.

The Extracting Process: A tincture is most commonly made by bruising/shredding or powdering a fresh or dried herb, covered with a solvent, and allowed to steep protected from sunlight for two weeks (shaken multiple times a day) before being filtered through a cloth or coffee filter. This is called tincturing by maceration. There is a faster process, called tincturing by percolation, that involves a fancy glass funnel and is quite frankly more trouble than I think it's worth, but you can learn all about it in Jame's Greens book I have already referenced.

The strength of a tincture can be standardized through something called the weight to volume (or w:v) method, which displays the ratio of the herb used in grams to the volume of the solvent used in milliliters: For example a tincture made from 50 grams of lavender and 250 mL of glycerin would have a 1:5 w:v ratio. The most common w:v ratios are 1:5 for dry herbs and 1:1 for fresh herbs. I personally do not worry too much about standardizing tincture strength, since

even the plants themselves have a variation of strength and it seems like far more trouble than its worth for my practices.

The solvents commonly used for tinctures are as follows:

Alcohol is the most common solvent, since it has an indefinite shelf life, and generally holds more similarities with pharmaceutical medications than other solvents. It can reliably extract a fairly wide range of compounds. Tinctures are usually made with a clear alcohol (like grain alcohol or vodka). Generally 80-proof (40%) or higher is used, because it is strong enough to remain reliably shelf stable even when diluted with the soluble compounds of the herb. Tinctures made with alcohol are shelf stable nearly indefinitely, as long as they are protected from light.

Glycerin is a clear, sweet, viscous liquid that is chemically classified as an alcohol but does not have the intoxicant properties in humans and can be gentler for those who are sensitive to or avoid alcohol. Glycerin has the same spectrum

of soluble compounds as alcohol but a slightly weaker extracting property. Glycerites (glycerin extracts or glycerin tinctures) are usually shelf stable for approximately a year.

Vinegar is a fermented liquid made from alcohol by microbial cultures. Vinegar can be made out of any fruit or sugar, it is most commonly made from grapes or apples. Distilled vinegar has all of its cultures and most other constituents removed, making it a 5-7% solution of acetic acid in water with some traces of organic material, while "raw" and unfiltered vinegars retain their cultures[48] and organic ingredients, which can have medicinal properties of their own. Vinegar extracts typically have a shorter shelf life (6-8 months), but it is extremely cheap and readily available.

Blends: Tinctures can also be made with a blend of two or more solvents! For my own medicines I favor a blend of glycerin, unfiltered apple cider vinegar, and filtered water in a 2:1:1

48 Though often these microbes are no longer living by the time they make it to grocery store shelves.

ratio. This gives a wider range of potential solubility than any one solvent, while also being very cheap and easy to produce with a reasonable life expectancy of about 4-6 months. I highly recommend researching these (and other!) solvents more, if tinctures seem to suit your needs as an herbalist.

Final Notes

Thanks for reading! I hope you got something out of it and have some ideas to experiment with. Like I said at the beginning, herbalists aren't special. We're just people with experience—and luckily, that experience can be pretty easy to gain if you're willing to go looking for it.

So much of our time these days is spent angry at systems almost infinitely bigger than ourselves, and so much of our lives is engineered by those systems to be powerless and domesticating. Daily practices of autonomy, whether it's refusing to pay for something or drinking a cup of tea instead of taking an aspirin(or suffering through), nourish us. Medicine from a friend is a reminder of love and a message of solidarity. On the surface, these simple, every-day practices can seem the same as the minor treats and "self care" that Capitalism offers to placate the masses...but in practice, these acts

build on each other day after dasy, strengthen us instead of temporarily numbing our pain.

On my end, this zine was a pain in the ass to write—it's actually the first informational zine I've ever finished. Hopefully one day I can write an expanded edition or follow-up zines with information on things like managing chronic conditions, approaches to lessening emotional distress with herbs, and abortion... but in the time it'll take me to get around to addressing those topics, you'll probably be able to figure it out for yourself :-)

Until Next Time! Stay free <3

Appendix A: Herbal Action Definitions

Anesthetic, mild:

Deadens sensation.

Anodyne:

An herb that relieves pain; analgesic.

Anthelmintic:

Destroys or removes intestinal worms.

Antiallergic:

Herbs that counteract allergies. Generally, the herbs have an anti-inflammatory and antihistamine effect in the body.

Anticoagulant:

An herb that mildly inhibits blood coagulation through platelet activity.

Antiinflammatory:

Herbs that lower inflammation, either by inhibiting

prostaglandin (local-acting hormones) synthesis or blocking the production of inflammatory substances (such as histamine) by the immune system, or by other means.

Antibacterial:
An herb that destroys bacteria or slows its growth.

Anticholesteremic:
Herbs that have a tendency to lower blood cholesterol with continued use.]

Antidepressant:
An herb that helps relieve mild depression. NOTE: While "antidepressant" is a commonly recognized herbal action, and thus one I am providing a definition of, it is an extremely reductive category and not one that I agree with existing. Herbs that are used to relieve depression (or any emotional pain) have a WIDE array of mechanisms that impact different people in different ways—it is important to experiment with different herbs and

gauge how they impact you!

Antidiarrhetic:
An herb that slows or stops diarrhea

Antiemetic: Counteracts or relieves nausea and vomiting.

Antifungal:
An herb that kills fungus[49] or slows its growth.

Anhydrotic, internal:
Herbs that dry tissues, removing excess water. They work in two major ways: 1. Astrngent herbs "tighten" or condense tissues to squeeze out excess moisture. Tannins in herbs can do this. 2. By increasing the elimination of water from the body through the kidneys and bowels--diuretics and aquaretics can do this.

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49 Yeast is a fungus.

Antihydrotic, external:
Also called anhydrotic, this is an herb that slows the production of sweat.

Antilithic:
Dissolves and removes urinary gravel or stones (calculi). Helps prevent their formation.

Antimicrobial:
An herb that kills microbes of any type, such as bacteria, fungus, and viruses.

Antinauseant:
An herb that releaves nausea.

Antioxidant:
Antioxidants are compounds such as phenolic compounds found in fruits that bind with "free-radicals" and deactivate them. Free-radicals are highly reactive molecules containing oxygen that can bind with the cell-walls and genetic material in the body's healthy cells, disrupting their function or even destroying them. Free-radical

damage in the body is associated with an increased risk of cancer and is the main mechanism by which our vital organs are damaged when they do not receive sufficient blood, or when there is an infection.

Antiperiodic
Usually refers to an herb or substance that helps relieve cyclic fevers, as in malaria.

Antiphlogistic:
See Antiinflammatory.

Antiplatelet:
Inhibits platelet activity, supposedly reducing blood viscosity and coagulability.

Antipyretic:
Reduces fever by turning down the temperature control in the hypothalamus.

Antirheumatic:
An herb that lowers inflammation and helps relieve the pain and swelling associated with

rheumatism.

Antiscorbutic:
Relieves and prevents scurvy by supplying vitamin C.

Antiseptic:
Inhibits the growth of harmful organisms (bacteria, etc.), kills on contact.

Antispasmodic:
Relieves or reduces spasms, especially in smooth muscle (uterus, intestine, blood vessels, bronchi).

Antitoxin:
The herb has the ability to help the body remove as well as neutralize toxins from the blood, organs, and tissues.

Antitraumatic:
An herb that helps the body deal with trauma and speed up the healing process.

Antitumor:

Inhibits tumor growth, or prevents its formation. Some herbs stimulate immune function to specifically increase its ability to target tumor cells and destroy them.

Antitussive:
Relieves or reduces the urge to cough.

Antiviral:
An herb that kills viruses or slows the progression of viral infection in the body. Can be direct-acting against the virus or by inducing the antiviral activity of the immune response.

Aperient:
A gentle stimulant (stimulating tonic) to the digestion; a mild laxative.

Aphrodisiac:
A sexual stimulant.

Appetizer:
Stimulates the appetite.

Aquaretic:
A gentle herbal diuretic that increases the body's output of
urine, helping to relieve edema.

Aromatic:
Herbs or remedies that are grateful to the digestion (well-tolerated); mildly stimulating; usually essential oil-containing. Herbs that warm the mucous membranes and cool the interior of the body.

Astringent:
Polyphenolic (tannin)-containing herbs that contract tissues, removing moisture (drying), cross-linking proteins. Astringent herbs can be anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-diarrheal, etc.

Azoturic:
An azoturic is a remedy that increases the elimination of nitrogenous waste products from

the body through the urine or feces.

Balsam:
A resinous, aromatic, sticky plant exudate containing phenolic acids (benzoic acid derivatives), having stimulating, warming and anti-microbial properties.

Bitter:
Herbs or foods that taste bitter and activate the appetite and digestion.

Blood Builder:
An herb that helps enrich the blood, stimulating the production of new blood cells.

Blood Purifier:
A blood purifier is an herb that stimulates the immune system, liver, and bowels to increase the removal of waste products from the blood.

Blood-mover:
An herb that stimulates the movement of blood in various parts of the body.

Bronchodilator:
An herb that dilates the bronchi, the large air passages leading into the lungs, allowing freer movement of air in and out.

Calmative:
A mild sedative or relaxing herb.

Cardiac:
Beneficial to the heart, or sometimes helps relieve a feeling of fullness or discomfort in cardiac region or near the pyloric valve.

Carminative:
Herbs or essential oils that help the bowels release gas.

Cathartic:
Divided into purgatives and laxatives--an herb that helps facilitate the emptying of the bowels. More forceful than a laxative, but less so than a purgative. Stimulates peristalsis, decreases

uptake of water from the fecal mass, which makes feces softer.

Caustic:
Corrosive--destructive to living tissue. Used to stimulate new granulation in a stagnant ulcer.

Cholagogue:
An herb that increases the flow of bile into the duodenum.

Counterirritant:
An irritation produced in one part of the body, such as the dermatones on the skin, to relieve congestion in another part (such as the liver).

Decongestant:
An herb that reduces congestion, especially in the nasal passages.

Demulcent:
Mucilaginous herbs which soothe irritated or inflamed tissue or mucous membranes.

Deodorant:

An herb which destroys or lessens body odors.

Depurative:

A purifying or cleansing agent.

Diaphoretic:

An herb that promotes perspiration and facilitates the elimination of toxins via the skin.

Digestant:

An herb that promotes good digestion.

Diuretic:

An herb that increases urinary output. In Europe, mildly diuretic Herbs are called "aquaretics." The word diuretic is reserved for drugs that have a stronger effect on the output of urine.

Emetic:

An herb or other agent that causes nausea and

vomiting.

Emmenagogue:
An herb that stimulates the onset and regulates the flow rate of menstruation.

Emollient:
An herb, usually containing mucilage or gum, applied externally to soothe and soften the skin.

Errhine:
An herb that stimulates nasal discharge.

Expectorant:
Lowers the viscosity and promotes the expulsion of mucus from the respiratory tract.

Febrifuge:
A cooling herb which lowers fever.

Galactagogue:
An herb which increase the flow of breast milk.

Hemostatic:

Stops internal or external bleeding

Hepatic:
An herb that tonifies and strengthens the liver, while regulating its action.

Hormonal Regulator:
An herb that has a tendency to normalize hormone output from the glands.

Hypnotic:
Herbs that induce sleep.

Hypotensive:
An herb that lowers blood pressure, especially when it is too high. Most herbal hypotensives are very mild-acting and require several months of use before they have a marked effect.

Hypothyroidal:
An herb that reduces the thyroxin output of the thyroid gland, useful for people with overactive (hyperthyroidism) thyroid function.

Immune stimulant:
An herb that activates various immune functions, such as
macrophage activity. These herbs are often recommended for short cycles (up to 10 days on 3 days off) for peoplewho are not immuno-compromised, to direct the body's energy to fight infections such as colds or flu. Immune stimulants are often contraindicated for use with people who have severely compromised immunity.

Irritant:
These Herbs are often called "counterirritants" because they stimulate nerve endings on areas of the skin that in turn send a signal to internal tissues or organs that are
connected to the same nerve pathway. This process can help send more blood and energy to the area to remove congestion and stimulate healing. Internal counterirritants are sometimes used similarly, especially to dilate the air passages and remove mucus (expectoration).

Laxative:
Herbs promote bowel evacuation by hydrating and softening the fecal mass as it travels through the colon and by simulating peristalsis. Two types are recognized, stimulant laxatives and bulk laxatives.

Lymphatic:
An herb that stimulates the flow of lymph in the lymph vessels. The lymphatic system is largely involved with purifying the blood system, helping to remove wastes from the tissues. The lymphatic fluid is rich in immune cells, such as phagocytes, cell eaters that remove wastes, old body cells, and toxins from body tissues and systems.

Metabolic:
Metabolism is all the chemical and physical processes which function to support our bodies. Metabolic is the adjective that refers to metabolism, "metabolic processes." The word is sometimes taken to mean an herb that regulates

or stimulates the metabolic processes.

Moistening herbs:
Herbs that moisturize tissues or organs.

Mucolytic:
An herb that dissolves mucus, or an herb that thins mucus so the body can move it out of the body.

Narcotic:
A pain-relieving herb which can cause sleep in large doses.

Nauseant:
An herb that induces nausea.

Nephritic:
An herb used to support the health of the kidneys.

Nervine:
An herb that soothes, protects, and/or heals the nervous system.

Oxytocic:
Stimulates uterine contractions, facilitating childbirth.

Pectoral:
Affects diseases of the respiratory tract.

Platelet-inhibitor:
See Antiplatelet.

Purgative:
Causes strong bowel evacuation.

Refrigerant:
An herb that relieves fever, internal heat, and thirst.

Restorative:
An herb or food that restores balance and strength to the body and its systems; a tonic, sometimes called a "roborant."

Rubefacient:
A local irritant that increases circulation in the skin, relieving pain in the muscles and promoting healing.

Sedative:
A soothing and calming herb that relieves nervousness and stress.

Sialagogue:
An herb that stimulates the secretion of saliva.

Stimulant:
An herb which accelerates the physiological processes of the nervous system, hormonal system, digestion, etc..

Stomachic:
An herb or process that tonifies, strengthens, or normalizes the activity of the stomach.

Styptic:

An astringent herb which stops bleeding by contracting the blood vessels.

Thyrogenic:
Herbs that affect the activity of the thyroid gland.

Tonic:
A general term for herbs or processes that are strengthening and beneficial to a specific organ, specific

tissues, processes of the body, or to general health.

Uterine Tonic:
An herb that is said to improve the nutrition and function of the uterus.

Vasodilator:
An herb that widens the blood vessels, lowering blood pressure.

Veinotonic: The herb or formula has a

strengthening effect on the veins of the body. It might be useful for hemorrhoids, varicose veins, and other conditions.

Vermifuge:
Causes expulsion of intestinal worms; an anthelmintic.

Vulnerary:
An herb which stops external bleeding and promotes the healing of wounds.