

A few common native plants with good medicine

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black hawthorn, *Crataegus douglasii*

- leaf & flower harvested when coming into bloom, berries harvested early autumn
- Strengthens the heart and tones the cardiovascular system. Often used to help regulate high blood pressure and cholesterol. Calms the nervous system and helps alleviate agitation, anxiety, hypersensitivity, and difficulty with focus.

field horsetail, *Equisetum arvense*

- aerial parts harvested in spring when branches are at an upward, approx 45 degree angle
- Very high mineral content, specifically bio-available silica, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and phosphorus. Strengthens and helps repair connective tissue, broken bones, teeth, hair, skin, and nails. Helpful for a UTI, along with antibacterial herbs such as yarrow, Oregon grape root, *Usnea longissima* lichen, anti-inflammatory herbs, such as *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, goldenrod (*Solidago*), & soothing herbs that promote tissue repair, such as violet (*Viola adunca*) and *Prunella vulgaris*.

Cascade Oregon grape, *Mahonia nervosa* or *Berberis nervosa*

- Harvest horizontal rhizomes from plants in a robust stand, cutting and replanting the crown of the plant that contains the roots. Gently scrape off the thin outer bark and discard. Then carve off the inner bark that is bright yellow and use this for medicine, either fresh or dried. Carve the inner bark as soon as possible after harvesting, while it is still soft.
- Antimicrobial and bitter. Effective first aid on skin, mucous membranes, in the gut and urinary tract. For example: Staph, ringworm, chronic skin infections, Giardia, H. pylori, inflammatory bowel conditions, and sore throats. Bitter action

is effective in small to moderate amounts to activate digestive secretions, stimulate the liver, improve blood sugar balance, and clear toxins. This is a powerful herb used in specific ways. Ask an herbalist or consult a good book for more information.

wild rose, *Rosa nutkana*, *Rosa gymnocarpa*, *Rosa pisocarpa*, *Rosa woodsii*

- buds & flowers harvested before pollination, fruit (hips) harvested in autumn after a frost
- Astringent, anti-inflammatory, and cooling. Roses are known as a symbol of love and an herb for the heart, both physically and metaphorically, especially to aid in grief and depression related to the heart. The buds and flowers are healing to the skin, eyes, and internal inflammation. The hips are often utilized for their high vitamin C content and antioxidant properties. Do not eat hips whole! There are irritating hairs inside among the seeds. They can be steeped in water, vinegar, or honey, if you wish to use them whole. If you wish to eat them, the fruit must be separated from the seeds and hairs.

stinging nettle, *Urtica dioica*

- Top half (approx) of plant is harvested early spring when knee high, seeds are gathered when fully formed but still green in late summer, roots & rhizomes are dug in winter. Do not harvest when flowering.
- Leaves are nutritive, specifically calcium, manganese, magnesium, vitamin K, and protein. Strengthening to kidneys, adrenals, lungs, bones, hair, nails, and teeth. Can be eaten cooked (which deadens the sting) or freshly ground (which deadens the sting), such as in a pesto. Also can be dried and made into tea or tossed into soups. Used in situations of deficiency or when strength is needed, such as for a spring tonic, during pregnancy and breastfeeding, anemia, fatigue or burnout. Natural antihistamine, anti-inflammatory, and decongestant - treats symptoms of seasonal allergies. Seeds are used specifically to improve kidney and adrenal function. Roots are used specifically to tone the urinary system and for BPH, a common prostate enlargement in older men.

yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*

- aerial parts harvested in early flower stage, before pollination
- Antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, vulnerary, stimulates immune activity, diaphoretic... yarrow is a medicine chest. It has a carminative and bitter action which, when taken internally, stimulates digestion, assimilation, and acts on a microbial level to kill pathogens in the gut. When made as a hot tea for colds and flus (extremely bitter, add mint, elder flower, and honey!) it can speed up the body's process of moving a virus out of the system. As a cold tea it is diuretic. It's an effective first aid herb, with other names such as 'herba militaris', because it has been used to treat battle wounds for centuries. Also, with its unique combination of astringency and ability to move stagnate blood, it aids in vascular issues such as varicose veins, hemorrhoids, as well as both heavy or delayed menstruation.

Fun things to make with herbs

Herbal vinegar - a "tincture" made with vinegar and dried or fresh herbs

- Take by the dropperful as a digestive aid, immune tonic, nutritive boost, and/or respiratory support - directly into the mouth, or with water.
- use to prepare salad dressing or other raw dressings and sauces

To make use:

~ 4oz, 8oz, or 16oz canning jar, preferably with a plastic lid for better storage (will not corrode)

~ raw apple cider vinegar, approx enough to fill 2/3 of your jar

~ herbs, finely cut or coarsely ground, enough to loosely pack into jar about 3/4 full

Start with herbs that are dry (even if freshly harvested) and clean, since water can add unwanted bacteria. Pour vinegar over herbs, making sure they are covered by at least a half inch. Cover, label, and shake regularly while it steeps, for around 4 weeks. Strain herbs from the vinegar and pour into clean jar with label. Use herbal vinegars within 6 months, or if refrigerated, 1 year.

Raw apple cider vinegar extracts (pulls out) nutrition and medicine from plants, most notably minerals, alkaloids, and volatile oils. These are just some of the valuable properties of plants. While we know that certain constituents of plants are powerful, such as the alkaloid berberine, found in Oregon grape root, it is often noted by experienced herbalists that products made from the plant part itself (such as an Oregon grape root tincture) are more favorable than a single constituent, such as you might find in encapsulated or supplement form. We don't fully understand how the chemical synergy of the plant works, but we do know that our bodies recognize plants in their whole form and can receive them well this way. Apple cider vinegar itself contains minerals and beneficial bacteria (probiotic). Chemically, it is made of water and acetic acid. It is useful because it can extract more than water by itself, and it is a preservative. It also promotes digestive secretions and circulation, which aids the body to absorb nutrients.

Herbal honey - an herbal remedy made by soaking dried or fresh herbs in raw honey

- take by the spoonful as you would a syrup for sore throat, cough, respiratory & immune support, mix into warm tea
- spread on toast or use in recipes in it's raw form, such as "energy balls"
- use as a face mask to cleanse, soften, and nourish skin

To make use:

~ 4oz or 8oz canning jar

~ raw honey, approx enough to fill 2/3 of your jar

~ herbs, finely cut or coarsely ground, enough to loosely pack into jar about 3/4 full

Start with herbs that are dry (even if freshly harvested) and clean. Pour liquid honey over herbs, making sure they are covered by at least a half inch. (If honey is crystallized, gently heat by placing the jar of honey in a hot water bath until it has liquified.) Cover, label, and steep at least 4 weeks. You may want to leave herbs in the honey if you enjoy consuming the herbs along with it. Rose petals, for example, might be fun to leave in the honey. Alternatively, strain herbs from the honey, using a stainless

steel mesh strainer, and pour into a clean jar with a label. Herbal honey has a very long shelf life. Use as long as it tastes and smells good.

Raw honey is hygroscopic, which means it pulls water from whatever it is in contact with, such as fresh herbs soaking in the honey. It is able to extract water-soluble vitamins and phytonutrients like polyphenols that have an antioxidant and tonifying effect in the body. It also extracts minerals and other beneficial constituents of plants we broadly call “medicine”. Honey itself contains enzymes and prebiotics, which benefit the gut micro biome and absorption of nutrients, as well as powerful antimicrobial properties, which creates a very shelf stable and nutrient dense remedy.

Oxymel ~ an “elixir” made by steeping dried or fresh herbs with vinegar + honey

- take by the dropperful as a digestive aid, immune tonic, nutritive tonic, and respiratory support
- add to sparkling water for a refreshing drink
- use to prepare salad dressing or other raw dressings and sauces

To make use:

~ 4oz, 8oz, or 16oz canning jar, preferably with plastic lid for better storage
~ equal parts raw apple cider vinegar and honey, approx enough to fill 2/3 of your jar
~ adjust parts to taste according to how you want to use it and what flavor you like
~ herbs, finely cut or coarsely ground, enough to loosely pack into jar about 3/4 full
Start with herbs that are dry (even if freshly harvested) and clean. Pour vinegar and honey over herbs, making sure they are covered by at least a half inch. Cover, label, and shake regularly while it steeps, for around 4 weeks. Strain herbs from the vinegar and honey, and pour into clean jar with label. Use oxymel within 6 months, or if refrigerated, 1 year.

The combination of vinegar and honey steeped with herbs dates back to at least 400 BCE. Writing by Hippocrates claims an oxymel (coming from Greek, meaning acid & honey) benefits the respiratory and immune system, and helps with issues like difficult

breathing, cough, and excess mucous. This ancient recipe can be made with both medicine and enjoyment in mind. Think of a body system or a seasonal ailment you would like to improve, and most likely there are some helpful plants that could come to your aid. Fruits and berries can also be added to the recipe, adding another twist of flavor, and often, medicine (for example elder berries, hawthorn berries, and rose hips)

Resources:

[Herbal Medicine From the Heart of the Earth](#), Sharon Tilgner

[The Herbal Medicine-Makers Handbook](#), James Green

[Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants](#), Scott Kloos

LearningHerbs.com