

The Art of Locally Grown & Wildcrafted Tea



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PLEASE READ: *The information handout has not been approved by the FDA and does not in any way intend to diagnose or prescribe. Always consult with your health practitioner before taking any remedy.*

Above this, I also recommend that you...

1. *Research an herb in at least three good sources before ingesting it (see website for sources),*
2. *Listen to your body/intuition to determine if an herb resonates or doesn't resonate with you.*
3. *Take proper steps to ensure that any wildcrafted or cultivated plant is what you think it is, AND*
4. *Check with your pharmacist for herb-drug interactions if you take prescriptions.*

Personalized Healing

Herbal medicine offers a unique healing process. Unlike most medicines, herbs have personalities. They engage all our senses so that we can understand them on a greater level and rely on them like good friends. Making tea is an herbalist and home healer's first line of defense in managing many health concerns. At the same time it is a simple, beautiful art for creating delicious beverage teas, which may (or may not) also have healing properties. Medicinal or not, I generally like to take my herbs in tea form. Through an art of blending, you can opt for better tasting healing herbs and improve the flavor of important tea herbs that may be bitter or less tasty.

THE ART OF TEA

The reasons for making your own herbal remedies are simple: they're easy, inexpensive, and sometimes stronger than what you buy in the store. Once you know the basics, you can create unlimited remedies to help heal many common ailments.

Drying & Storing Herbs

The low budget "paper bag method" for drying herbs works quickly and efficiently. Loosely put the fresh herbs (on or off the stem) in a paper bag and then clip or fold it shut. Place the bag in the windshield of your car, in a sunny spot, for 1-3 days. Check daily to shake the bag, and test for dryness. When the herb crumbles easily between your fingertips, it's time to remove the bag. Strip the leaves off the stem (if you haven't already) and store in glass containers in a cool, dark place. Aromatic herbs keep for about one year. Roots, seeds, bark, and non-aromatic herbs may keep for 2 or more years. If the color, fragrance, or flavor fades, it's time to replace them. Heat, light, oxygen, and moisture will cause herbs to lose potency or go bad more quickly.

Teas

Many herbalists consider teas their first line of defense. They are the easiest, least expensive, and fastest remedies to make, and they are often gentler than other herbal remedies. The strength of the medicine depends on which herbs you choose and how concentrated your tea is.

Straining Bulk Herbs

I like to use French press pots or mugs for bulk teas, or I make iron-able "press and brew" teabags (unfortunately made with polyurethane fiber) if I'm going to drink a tea regularly. In the winter, I'll place

chunky herbs like freshly grated or sliced ginger root, lemon wedges, sprigs of thyme, cinnamon sticks, and/or whole cloves into a thermos of hot water and let it sit for several hours, then drink throughout the day. The pour top on the thermos strains the tea as it goes into my cup. Other methods include wire mesh balls (fashioned like a spoon or teabag), strainers, strainer funnels, teapots with infusers, bamboo strainers that fit in cups, and reusable cloth teabags. All methods have their advantages or disadvantages in cleaning, ease of use, and whether or not pieces of herbs end up in the final tea. Use whatever fits your taste and budget.

Tea Strength

A *beverage tea* is often 1 tsp to 1 tbsp of dried herb per cup of water.

Steeped or simmered 2-5 minutes.

A *medicinal or tonic tea* often involves 1 tbsp or more of dried herb per cup of water.

Steeped or simmered 5-15 minutes.

A *strong medicinal tea* is 1 ounce of dried herb per quart of water.

Steeped or simmered 20 minutes or longer, sometimes hours or days.

A *fresh tea* is one handful of fresh herbs and/or fruit per two cups of hot water.

Steeped for 10-15 minutes.

A *sun tea* is the same as a “beverage tea” or “fresh tea” covered in lukewarm water.

Place in the sun for 1 hour to all day.

An *iced tea* is made by doubling the herb amount in any of the above techniques.

Follow the same steep/simmer directions, then pour it over a glass of ice.

OR Make any of the above teas at regular strength and then refrigerate overnight.

Infusion (Steep)

When you make tea with a teabag, you’re making an infusion. You bring water to a gentle boil, then pour it over the herb and let it steep. If the tea is aromatic, it’s best to cover the tea as it steeps to keep the volatile oils contained (for instance with mint or lemon balm).

Use this method for leaves, flowers, delicate parts of plants. It can also be used for powder

Decoction (Simmer)

This type of tea is made by simmering the herb in the water. We do this for tough plant parts so that you can get the constituents out of the plant better. Compare these two teas: 1. boiling water poured over a cinnamon stick, steep 15 minutes (infusion), and 2. a cinnamon stick simmered for 15 minutes (decoction). The first will have little flavor, while the second will be strong in flavor and have an astringent, mouth-puckering feel when you drink it. Straining decocted herbs can be a pain. You can also coarsely grind the herbs in a coffee grinder and then brew in a coffee maker (don’t use powdered cinnamon or maca – they’ll slime your filter).

Use this method for roots, bark, seeds, and other tough parts.

Think Beyond the Box (er, Teapot):

Soup is tea. Herbs can be infused or decocted in it. You can simmer your soup or tea down (reduction) and then freeze it in ice cubes. Some herbs like turmeric and ashwagandha infuse nicely in hot milk. There is much, much more than one way to make a cup of tea.

Key Local Tea Herbs

General Cautions: Allergies can potentially occur with ANYTHING. Always use caution and do your research before taking an herb, particularly if you are pregnant, nursing, are on pharmaceutical medications, or have a serious health concern. If an herb produces side effects, stop using it.

Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)

Mint Family

Anise hyssop brightens many home gardens with its long-lasting purple spikes. The leaves and flowers taste like licorice and can be

snipped into salad as easily as they can be turned into sweet tea. It is nearly identical to Korean mint (*A. rugosa*), except that the latter has a mintier taste and grows taller. These beauties attract butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees.

Medicinal Uses: The Agastaches are generally cooling and rich in antioxidants—perfect for a summertime sipper. They are soothing to the digestive system and the respiratory tract.

Growing Conditions: This perennial is low-fuss. It will grow in rich or poor soil in full sun to partial shade. Grow from seed, seedling, cutting, or root division. Harvest the top two thirds of the plant, just above a node, every few weeks. Anise hyssop rarely suffers from disease or pests. However, it may seed itself throughout your garden. After three years, it will die off, so keep some of the “babies” around.

Tea Attributes: Anise hyssop will lighten and sweeten any tea with its licorice flavor. It blends well with mints, chamomile, lemon balm, and rose petals.

Also Try: Herbal honey, cordial, fennel-stand in for cooking.

Holy Basil (*Ocimum sanctum*)

Mint Family

Conventional basil (*O. basilicum*) is a valued herbal plant, but I’m especially a fan of the purple-hued holy basil which has an aromatic, sweet taste and is revered in Ayurvedic medicine in India. It’s one of the few stress-relieving “adaptogens” that grows easily in the garden.

Medicinal Uses: Holy basil appears to modulate stress hormone output and help the body adapt to stress (“adaptogen”). In particular it may help lower cortisol, the stress hormone implicated in diabetes and abdominal weight gain. Holy basil makes a lovely tea for modest blood sugar control and to reduce carbohydrate cravings (great with jasmine green tea). The herb is calming and well-suited before meditation or a yoga class to promote a good mindset. It has many other uses, from colds and flu to ulcer protection to radiation protection. It’s a remarkable herb that is gaining ground in the U.S.

Growing Conditions: This herb thrives in a sunny location in well-drained rich soil. Basil species are well suited for containers, as seen throughout the Mediterranean neighborhoods, as well as in temples throughout Indian temples. Grow from seed, buy seedlings, or use a cutting. Harvest the top two thirds of the plant, just above a node, every few weeks. Basil will grow in all zones as an annual. Young basil plants are

prone to “dampening off” due to fungus in wet soil. Water in the morning to help control this. I find holy basil to be more forgiving than conventional basil, though it will also not tolerate frost.

Tea Attributes: Enjoy basil on its own, with mints, lemon balm, or jasmine green tea.

Also Try: Herbal honey, fresh or dry tincture.

Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp) Mint Family

True to its name, bee balm is a favorite amongst bees and hummingbirds thanks to its sweet nectar and bright red, pink and purple blooms. Bee balms great looks and low-maintenance care have earned it a place in many home gardens. However, few realize that the leaves and flowers make one of our best herbal teas, in spite of its other common names: Oswego tea and bergamont. wild or purple bergamont (*M. fistulosa*) and red bee balm (*M. didyma*) are the top tea favorites. Look for them in the perennial flower section of your nursery.

Medicinal Uses: Michael Moore instilled in me a love for thyme-y *Monarda* species. It makes a great tea or herbal honey for sore throats, colds and flues, etc. The warming, spicy quality may also stimulate the digestive system.

Growing Conditions: Bee balms prefer rich soil in full sun to partial shade. Water needs vary by species. Grow it by seeds, seedlings, or root division. Divide roots after three years. Harvest the top two thirds of the plant, just above a node, every few weeks. Powdery mildew can be a problem, but regular harvesting should keep it under control.

Tea Attributes: Bee balm became a popular beverage tea after the Boston Tea Party for its similarity to black tea. Some liken it to Earl Grey. Its citrus-oregano-thyme flavor will change slightly from mild to spicy depending on the species, variety, and climate. It blends well with mild, sweet mints like apple mint, pineapple mint, and spearmint.

Also Try: Herbal honey, fresh or dry tincture, steam.

Burdock (*Arctium lappa. A. minor*)

Sunflower Family

This friend of dandelion is a common weed and has similar, complimentary flavors and

medicinal properties. You know burdock because the round burrs stick to your clothes and inspired the creation of Velcro.

Medicinal Uses: It is delicious sliced thinly or into matchsticks and sautéed with sesame seeds, soy sauce, and a little honey. It also makes a pleasant earthy tea (just dry chopped root slices). You can buy the fresh root in natural food stores, or in Asian markets as “gobo.” Like dandelion root, burdock is diuretic and a mild liver and digestive stimulant. It is often used for skin conditions including chronic skin eruptions, acne, psoriasis, eczema, boils, and sties. Many herbalists and systems of traditional medicine consider the liver and the skin to be closely linked; work on the liver, and skin conditions are expected to first break out and then clear up. Burdock root is also used to regulate lymphatic fluid (the “back alley” garbage system for sorting toxins, immune system trash, and fat) and improve excretion of toxins.

Cautions: Not recommended during pregnancy. To be safe, it should not be used in gallbladder disease or bile duct obstruction unless under the guidance of a practitioner.

Identification & Harvesting: Burdock grows in yards and disturbed soil, often on the edges of sunny/shady spaces. It has broad leaves that resemble rhubarb. In the summer, they put up tall flower stalks with thistle-like purple flowers. The flowers turn to velcro-like, round, brown burrs. In spring, you can harvest the second-year plants that are popping up with big rhubarb-like leaves but have not yet put up the flower stalk. Dig and clean like dandelion (above). Be warned, it’s a bugger to dig.

Tea Attributes: Slightly bitter, slightly sweet, earthy, mild.

Also Try: Tincture, capsules, vinegar, in food...

German Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) Sunflower Family

The tiny daisy-like chamomiles cheer up any garden and give it a meadow feel. The flowers and foliage have a light pineapple-apple scent to them. Also consider the hardy perennial & Roman chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*), which can be used similarly.

Medicinal Uses: Chamomile is best known as a relaxing herb. Many folks enjoy a cup of it before bed or to soothe frayed nerves. Bitter,

aromatic properties also make it a great relaxing digestive remedy. It is a premiere children’s herb for digestion, colic, irritability, and teething (weak tea, chamomile popsicles or soak a cloth in tea, freeze, and let the baby chew on it.)

Studies suggest that chamomile can even protect the stomach from ulcers.

Growing Conditions: Chamomile will thrive in most soils and conditions, though it prefers a sunny spot. Grow both types of chamomile by seed. Roman chamomile can also be grown by cuttings and root divisions. Dedicate a few leisurely mornings or afternoons throughout the growing season to collect the small flowers for tea. While it may take a while to harvest an adequate amount, their flavor will surpass any store-bought chamomile. German chamomile is an annual that often reseeds. Roman chamomile is a perennial.

Tea Attributes: Often enjoyed solo, fresh and dry chamomile flowers also provide a light pineapple-y flavor to tea. Consider blending chamomile with mints, alfalfa, and lemon balm.

Also Try: Herbal honey, fresh or dry tincture.

Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*) Sunflower Family

This scraggly weed puts out surprisingly beautiful cornflower blue blossoms in the morning, which shut around noon on sunny days. You’ll see them growing in the median strips and in fields. The roots have historically been used as a (caffeine-free) coffee substitute. Endive is from the chicory plant: lop off the leaves to the ground, put a bucket over it, let it grow in the dark, then harvest the light green bundles of leaves as a gourmet green (less bitter than the regular chicory leaves).

Medicinal Uses: Similar to burdock and dandelion, but more mild. Most often used as a gentle liver cleanser and diuretic.

Cautions: See burdock and dandelion.

Identification & Harvesting: The flowers are distinctive, so identify in the morning. Look for it in fields, and don’t harvest near the road or in “dirty” areas. Use a fork or digging stick to get to the roots. Be warned: they like compact, rocky soil! You can grow it in your garden, but it will probably take over and is very difficult to remove. Scrub, chop, dry, and then dry roast.

Tea Attributes: Bitter, earthy, roasted.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinalis*)

Sunflower Family

This is perhaps the most recognized weed in America. It's also a medicinal and nutritional powerhouse.

Medicinal Uses: The leaves can be eaten, cooked, or made into tea. They're bitter (less so in the spring, particularly before they flower), stimulate digestion, are rich in vitamins and minerals (especially potassium), and they're also diuretic (make you pee). The roots can be harvested, chopped up, and dried for tea. (Or used fresh for tinctures and other extracts.) The roots have similar properties as the leaves except that they are particularly good at encouraging the liver to remove and eliminate waste in the form of bile. And, as a diuretic, the roots are more sodium-leaching whereas the leaves are more of a general volume diuretic. The roots may also have the ability to reduce inflammation in the body and even stop the histamine response in seasonal and more serious allergies (ie: fresh tintured roots slurry). As a tea, enjoy the roots dry or dry roasted... roasting may reduce some medicinal properties, but it gives the tea a more coffee-like flavor. The flowers can be eaten as well, most commonly as in dandelion wine or as fritters.

Cautions: Generally very safe. Don't use in a bowel or gallbladder obstruction (but, if you have these issues, you aren't lolling around making a cup of tea!).

Identification & Harvesting: Dandelions grow abundantly in disturbed areas and lawns. There are other common weeds (ie: hawkweeds) that resemble dandelion. Dandelions have jagged leaves at the base (dent-de-lion, or lion's teeth), and a single, hollow stalk that goes up to one flower. If it doesn't have jagged leaves, has branches, or has leaves anywhere but the base of the plant, it's not a dandelion. Don't bother growing dandelions. Seek them out in areas that are not sprayed, have clean soil, and are away from the road. Dig with a fork or a stick to get at the root. The roots are best harvested in the fall after they've been hit by a few frosts. Leaves are best in the spring. But, you can harvest both at any time.

Tea Attributes: Bitter, nutritious, earthy (roots).

Also Try: Tincture, vinegar, pesto...

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)

Rose Family

Many gardeners prize lady's mantle for its crinkly, dew-kissed foliage even more than its subtle golden flowers. Lady's mantle is steeped in lore: Dewdrops collected from its leaves were believed to hold magical powers and keep women young.

Medicinal Uses: As its name suggests, lady's mantle is an herb for the feminine reproductive organs. It is astringent and believed to tonify the uterus. It may also be used in formulas for boggy, irritated intestines. It is primarily used as a tea.

Cautions: Use with caution in pregnancy.

Growing Conditions: Lady's mantle likes full sun to partial shade in dry or slightly moist soil. Grow this perennial from seed, seedling, or root division. Harvest the young leaves for tea. Lady's mantle is low maintenance, but cut it back after it flowers to prevent it from reseeding all over the garden.

Tea Attributes: Lady's mantle tea has a mild, astringent flavor that resembles Chinese tea. It blends well with mints, lemon balm, hibiscus flowers, and raspberry leaves.

Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)

Mint Family

Lemon balm masquerades as its relative *Menthas* until you rub its leaves to release its intense lemon fragrance. It is loved by bees and other winged pollinators as well as herbalists, who turn to the tea for a relaxing beverage.

Medicinal Uses: Lemon balm is easy to grow and multi-purpose. The citrus-y essential oil is believed to be a mild antidepressant. The herb is used for anxiety and insomnia. Its bitter aromatic properties make it great for digestion (particularly nervous indigestion). Topically, lemon balm is an antiviral herb for herpes including cold sores, genital herpes, chicken pox, and shingles. It appears to block cell receptor sites to prevent the virus from spreading and is best used at the first sign of a flare-up.

Cautions: Theoretically may reduce thyroid, which is contraindicated for regular use with hypothyroid.

Growing Conditions: True to its mint genes, lemon balm is tolerant of most soil types, full sun to partial shade. You can purchase seedlings, grow it from seed, use a cutting, or root division. Harvest the top two thirds of the plant, just above a node, every few weeks. Lemon balm's root runners can get invasive. Keep it container-bound or dig out the plant if it spreads too far. Also be sure to cut it back before it goes to seed to prevent rampant reseeding.

Tea Attributes: This herb's bright lemon flavor is prized by tea blenders; however, it is also slightly bitter. Mints, anise hyssop, tarragon, chamomile, and other lemony herbs like lemon verbena, lemon grass, and lemon thyme will all lighten lemon balm's flavor.

Also Try: Fresh tincture, herbal honey, cordial with other lemon-y herbs. Dried lemon balm loses most of its flavor and properties within six months.

Lemon Thyme (*Thymus citriodorus*)

Mint Family

This shrubby evergreen herb will wind around rocks and along walkways, or hold its own in a formal garden bunch. It is less pungent than common thyme (*T. vulgaris*) and has a citrus flavor enjoyed by both herbalists and chefs. The tiny lavender blooms attract bees and other winged pollinators.

Medicinal Uses: Lemon thyme is a nice tea for singers, sore throats, and mild colds. Turn to *T. vulgaris* for tough colds and many respiratory complaints. It is even a nice adjunct therapy for asthma.

Growing Conditions: Thyme likes poor, well-drained soil in full sun to partial shade. Thyme can be grown by seedling, seed, cuttings, root division, or layering. Harvest the leaves and flowers at any time. Shear it up to two thirds down the stem. May rot during a cold, wet season.

Tea Attributes: Lemon thyme adds a warm, slightly spicy lemon taste to tea. It blends well with fresh lemon wedges, freshly grated ginger, cinnamon, lemon balm, lemon verbena, common thyme, bee balm, and mints.

Also Try: Fresh tincture, honey, steam.

The Mints (*Mentha* spp) Mint Family

No tea garden is complete without at least one mint. Beyond peppermint (*M. x piperita*) and spearmint (*M. spicata*), consider species and variety with other subtle flavors including apple, pineapple, chocolate, orange, ginger, and lemon. Do be careful when planting mints as they can be aggressive spreaders.

Medicinal Uses: Peppermint is our primary medicinal mint. It is antispasmodic and useful for most digestive ailments—indigestion, gas, intestinal pain, boating, IBS, but NOT acid reflux (it can make this worse). Also helps to clear the sinuses and is a mild diaphoretic for fevers. Enteric-coated pills are particularly helpful for IBS and intestinal pain. Other mints are milder.

Cautions: Generally very safe, but peppermint can irritate acid reflux and ulcers.

Growing Conditions: Mints are readily available in nurseries and can also be grown from cuttings and root divisions. They do not grow well by seed—flavor will be lost. Mint grows in a variety of soils and conditions. Some species, including spearmint, thrive in damp soil. Harvest the top two thirds of the plant, just above a node, every few weeks. Help control mint from spreading by keeping it sparsely watered. Also consider keeping it container-bound to control the roots. It may occasionally get powdery mildew, but this can be discouraged with regular harvesting.

Tea Attributes: Mint is the most recognized herbal tea. It blends well with other *Mentha* species and mint family relatives including anise hyssop, bee balm, lemon balm, basil, thyme, and rosemary. It also combines nicely with chamomile, rose petals, cinnamon or bland herbs like nettle and alfalfa.

Also Try: Tincture, cordial, steam.

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica* spp)

Nettle Family

Yes, this is stinging nettles, a plant much hated by gardeners and hikers because it will sting you much like a fire and or bee sting. However, it also is a delicious herb for tea or food, and it's one of the most nutrient-dense foods you'll find! Harvest the leaves in spring, before they go to flower. (See cautions.)

Medicinal Uses: Nettle is rich in vitamins, minerals, and chlorophyll. It's one of the most concentrated and bioavailable forms of calcium available. A regular infusion of nettles is somewhat weak on minerals (it's not easy to pull minerals out of a plant). However, try Susun Weed's "Super Infusion" method, which reportedly has 500 mg calcium per cup! Steep 1 ounce of dried nettles in 1 quart of near-boiling water. Let sit for FOUR hours, then strain. Nettles is a diuretic and may have some antihistamine benefits to boot. Note: Alfalfa has similar nutritive benefits and flavor; however, I generally prefer nettles.

Cautions: If you don't want to be stung, wear long sleeves, pants, and gloves while harvesting nettles. Once it's cooked, dried, or blended, the sting will disappear. It is generally not recommended to pick nettles once they have flowered and produce seeds (possible kidney/urinary irritation). They also taste much better in the early, spring, non-flowering state. Make sure you have real nettles, as there are some imposters. The main look-alike is deadnettles (*Lamium* spp), which resembled nettles without the sting before it flowers. Once the plants flower, they look quite different. Nettles has greenish seedy flowers whereas deadnettles has mint-family pink or white flowers.

Growing Conditions: Nettles is a stinging weed, so think carefully before you plant it. It likes rich soil (compost, former cow pastures) and will grow in full sun, part sun, or shade. Nettles is a perennial as well as a rampant self-sower. "Deadhead" the flowers before they seed to reduce spreading. It can grow to 2-4 feet tall.

Tea Attributes: In a typical tea, nettles has a mild, green flavor that can be very pleasant on its own, and it provides a good "base note" for more flavorful herbs. (The "Super Infusion" is much stronger and will take some getting used to.)

Also Try: Fresh or dried nettles in place of spinach (cooked). Fresh leaves in smoothies.

Red Raspberry Leaf (*Rubus idaeus*)

Rose Family

Wild red raspberries are not always prolific bearers of fruit; however, they are a great source for free tea! Harvest the leaves of first year wild

raspberry in the spring and summer. First year plants will have green stems and a vibrancy unlike second-year plants (which have woody stems from the previous year, less prolific leaves, and later will produce flowers and fruit). The stems of raspberry have hairy thorns rather than the sharp thorns of a blackberry; however, you still may want to wear gloves. Note: Raspberry's relative, wild strawberry (*Fragaria* spp) leaves can be harvested and used in much the same way as raspberry leaves. Of course, you can also harvest and dry the fruits of raspberry and/or strawberry for tea, but that's a lot of work!

Medicinal Uses: Red raspberry leaves can be used at almost any time in a woman's lifespan to tonify the reproductive tissues, particularly the uterus. It appears to improve tone and blood supply. Many women drink a cup or two of a tea a day during the last trimester or two of pregnancy to facilitate easy, swift birth. It is an astringent, slightly diuretic, and relatively tasty tea that may also be helpful for canker sores, boggy digestive tissue, UTIs, and wound healing. It is mildly helpful as a hemostatic and for diarrhea.

Growing Conditions: Wild raspberry is better for tea and medicine than its cultivars, but it's not the most obedient garden plant, nor a great producer of berries. Your better off wildcrafting it than trying to grow it.

Tea Attributes: Pleasantly mild and astringent on its own. It also provides a nice "base note" for other ingredients. Blends well with rose petals, lady's mantle, anise hyssop/licorice mint, nettles, mints, rosehips, lemony herbs, etc.

Rose (*Rosa* spp)

Rose Family

There are hundreds of types of roses out there. While any unsprayed rose could theoretically be used medicinally, we generally turn to older and wild varieties, generally pink and fragrant. You'll want an extremely fragrant rose if you're harvesting buds and petals for flavorful tea. Harvest the hips from any rose that makes nice, fully formed hips with good flavor. Popular species include apothecary rose (*R. gallica officinalis*), dog rose (*R. canina*), cabbage rose (*R. centifolia*), Damask rose (*R. damascena*), or

Japanese rose (*R. rugosa*), which has naturalized along the seacoast.

Medicinal Uses: Rose petals are used in tea mostly for their light, aromatic, and slightly astringent properties, which become more pleasantly fragrant with a longer steeping time. The astringency is helpful internally for bleeding, diarrhea, or boggy digestive tissue. Externally for aging, irritated, or inflamed skin. Rosehips are among the more universally-known herbal nutritives. Many vitamin C supplements include them as a source of extra vitamin C and bioflavonoids (and to look good to passers by—generally the amount of rosehips added to these supplements is minimal). The red fruits of many types of roses (*Rugosa* & *Dog*) are harvested in autumn, generally just after the first frost. Crushed and/or whole rosehips are also widely available in commerce by almost any store or supplier that sells loose tea herbs. It'll give you a modest dose of vitamin C along with many other complementary flavanoids and antioxidants.

Cautions: Strain rosehips well; the little hairs and irritate the throat. If you're harvesting your own, make sure the roses have not been sprayed with chemicals.

Growing Conditions: Roses have a reputation for being finicky perennials. *R. rugosa* is more hardy. Most of the roses mentioned will become shrubby over time. You'll want to make sure they have good soil in a sunny or partially sunny spot, and be sure to prune regularly to enhance airflow and reduce disease.

Tea Attributes: Fragrant flowers and buds will give a pleasant flowery taste to teas, especially if allowed to steep for 30 minutes or more. They blend well with mints, nettles, and other rose family astringents (red raspberry, lady's mantle, etc.). Rosehips are sweet, tart, and fruity. They blend well with hibiscus, rooibos, and dried fruits.

Also Try: Syrup, honey, cordial. Delicious rose petals can be used as a garnish or candied.

Other great teas...

Blueberry (*Vaccinium spp*) – Leaves are astringent, lower blood sugar, and help ease UTIs. Berries are fruity, sweet, rich in antioxidants, and helpful for eyesight and capillary health. Wild is best. Home cultivated is ok. Likes acidic soil.

Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) – Leaves and flowers are useful as a sedative, bitter digestive for colic, and as a diaphoretic for fevers. (And, of course, for driving kitties crazy!) Bitter, but blends well with mints. Self-seeding garden perennial.

Horsetail (*Equisetum spp*) – The “tails” of this ancient plant can be harvested and dried for a nutritious tea rich in the mineral silica. More potent if you allow it to simmer and/or infuse for several hours. Also diuretic. Be sure to harvest from “clean” areas as it will concentrate agrobusiness waste in runoff. Wild, near water.

Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia citrodora*) – Leaves are intensely, deliciously fragrant and lemony. Best fresh or at least freshly dried. Tender garden perennial.

Pineapple Sage (*Salvia elegans*) – Leaves have a fresh pineapple scent when crushed and can be used fresh or dry in a pleasant, slightly astringent tea. Blends nicely with peach. Tender garden perennial.

Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) – Leaves and flowers are a useful sedative for sleep, anxiety, and general relaxation. Bitter, but blends well with mints. Perennial, also wild.

Stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana*) – Leaves are incredibly sweet with a slightly bitter aftertaste. Use a pinch of the fresh or dried herb to sweeten tea without sugar, carbohydrates, or calories. Safe for diabetics. Tender garden perennial.

Wintergreen (*Gaultharia procumbens*) Leaves & Black Birch (*Betula lenta*) Bark – These two wild herbs have a pleasant wintergreeny flavor. Aspirin-like compounds in them help relieve pain and reduce fevers. Wintergreen leaves can be tricky to dry without molding. Prune birch branches up to about 1 inch thick and scrape off the bark with a knife. Smaller twigs can just be chopped up. These plants should not be used in high doses or long term; not recommended with kidney disease. (The essential oils of these plants are quite toxic, but modest use as tea is fine for most people.) Wild.

Visit the Links page of www.WintergreenBotanicals.com for Local & Online sources for seedlings, seeds, *herb supplies, herbs...* as well as links to *informative herbal websites*.

BLEND & FORMULATION

You may want to start with “simples” or a single herb tea to get started and comfortable with the herbs’ properties, flavors, and how to make tea. However, blending allows you to make more complex flavors, lighten herbs that might have a strong flavor or less desirable undertone, and improve the flavor.

** It’s usually easier to keep leaves & flowers together in a blend. Or, roots and spices in a blend.*

Technique: “Notes”

1. Top note – sweet, licorice, floral, hot spicy, some minty– 1-25%
2. Medium note – aromatic, medium spicy, fruity, some minty– 10-50%
3. Base note – bitter, earthy/rooty, “tea-ish”, nutritives – 25-75%
 - ☛ Stevia (top) 1%, spearmint (medium) 50% & nettle (base) 49%
 - ☛ Licorice (top) 25%, cloves (medium) 10% & cut/sifted astragalus (base) 65%
 - ☛ Vanilla (top) 10%, dried blueberries (medium) 45%, blueberry leaves (base) 45%

Technique: Flavor Combinations

Spicy, acrid, bland/green, and earthy/bitter plants are mellowed by sweet, minty, and mild herbs

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|
| ☛ Bee balm (spicy/acrid) | and | Apple Mint (sweet, mild, minty) |
| ☛ Chamomile (floral, bitter) | and | Peppermint (spicy, minty, sweet) |
| ☛ Alfalfa or Nettle (bland/green) | and | Peppermint (minty, sweet, mild) |

Technique: Medicinal Actions Triangle (Rosemary Gladstar’s technique)

1. Strong Healing Herb 5-50%
2. Supportive, Nutritive, or Buffering Herb 25-75%
3. Mover & Shaker (& Flavor) Synergy Herb 5-50%
 - ☛ Gentle Relaxation: 1. Lemon Balm 40%, 2. Nettles 30%, 3. Spearmint 30%
 - ☛ Cold Remedy: 1. Bee Balm 50%, 2. Thyme 25%, 3. Apple Mint 25%
 - ☛ Digestion: 1. Chamomile (40%), 2. Catnip (20%) 3. Peppermint (40%)

Technique: Medicinal Actions Flavor Categories (Maria Noël Groves’ technique)

1. Think of your top medicinal herbs for the condition at hand. Choose 1-3 with compatible flavors.
2. Think of any companion herbs that help to support that action and have a pleasant flavor.
3. Think of any important mover/shaker and/or flavor herbs to set the other herbs off well.

(Some of the herbs may serve multiple roles.)

☛ *Blood sugar lowering/balancing....*

Good herbs: cinnamon, fenugreek, blueberry leaves, blueberry fruits, green tea, holy basil....

- ➔ Spicy Blood Sugar Blend: 1. cinnamon, 2. black tea, 3. cinnamon (not local)
- ➔ Sweet Fruity Blood Sugar Blend: 1. blueberry leaves & fruit, 2. blueberry leaves & fruit, 3. vanilla bean
- ➔ Aromatic Blood Sugar Blend: 1. holy basil, 2. jasmine green tea & gotu kola, 3. holy basil & green tea

☛ *Nutritive tea....*

Good herbs: Nettles, dandelion leaf (too bitter), alfalfa, calendula....

- ➔ Minty Nutritive Blend: 1. nettles & alfalfa, calendula 2. red clover, 3. mints

☛ *Sleep tea....*

Good herbs: Lemon balm, skullcap, passionflower, valerian (tastes too strong), hops (too bitter)

- ➔ Sleep Blend: 1. Lemon balm, skullcap, passionflower (all slightly bitter), 2 & 3. Spearmint (lightens flavor)

Fabulous Tea Herbs

(ital = not usually locally grown)

The Flavorful Mints:

Apple Mint
Catnip (slightly bitter)
Chocolate Mint
Peppermint
Pineapple Mint
Spearmint

Licorice-y Herbs:

Anise (seeds)
Anise Hyssop
Fennel (all parts)
Licorice (root)
Star Anise (pods)
Tarragon

Citrus-y Herbs:

Citrus wedges
Lemon Balm (slightly bitter)
Lemon Grass
Lemon Thyme
Lemon Verbena
Orange Mint
Orange Thyme

Sweet Herbs

All Licorice-y Herbs
Cinnamon (bark)
(longer steep time)
Fenugreek (seeds)
(maple-y, slightly bitter)
Stevia (just a pinch!)
Vanilla bean

Nutritive Herbs:

Alfalfa
Hibiscus
Calendula
Dandelion leaf (bitter!)
Gotu kola
Horsetail
Nettle
Oat (straw, meal)
Red Clover
Rose (hips)

Calming Herbs:

Ashwagandha (root)
Catnip
Chamomile
Gotu Kola
Holy Basil
Lavender
Lemon Balm
Passionflower
Skullcap

Spicy Herbs

Bay Leaf
Bee Balm
Cardamom (pods)
Cayenne (fruit) (just a pinch!)
Cinnamon (bark)
Cloves (buds)
Garam masala (spice blend)
Ginger (root)
Nutmeg (seeds)
Thyme

Astringent “Tea-ish” Herbs

Green & White Tea (C)
Black Tea (C+)
Yerba Mate (C+)
Blackberry (leaf)
Blueberry (leaf)
Lady’s Mantle
Raspberry (leaf)
Strawberry (leaf)
Rooibos

Floral (Flowers)

Chamomile
Jasmine
(loses flavor quickly)
Jasmine Green Tea
Lavender
Neroli/Citrus Blossom
(loses flavor quickly)
Roses

Fruity

Bilberry/Blueberry
Elderberry
Hibiscus (flowers)
Lychii/Gogi Berry
Rooibos
Rose (hips)
Citrus wedges
Fruit juice
Dehydrated berries

Energizing Herbs

Green & White Tea (C)
Black Tea (C+)
Yerba Mate (C+)
Coffee (C++)
Ashwagandha (root)
Eleuthero (root)
Ginseng (root)
Holy Basil
Maca (root)

Earthy, Bitter

Coffee (C++)
Yerba Mate (C+)
Ashwagandha (root)
Astragalus (root)
Eleuthero (root)
Ginseng (root)
Barley (grain, roasted)
Burdock (root)
Chicory (root, roasted)
Dandelion (root, esp roasted)

Aromatic

Basil
Bee Balm
Holy Basil
Hyssop
Marjoram
Rosemary
Oregano
Sage
Savory
Thyme
White Pine needles

C = contains low caffeine, C+ = contains caffeine, C++ = contains high caffeine

Assume all plants are leaves unless specified or the name contains “berry” (which are fruits unless otherwise specified) or it’s in the “floral” category (flowers).

~ Specific (Mostly) Local Tea Blends For Different Uses ~

Relaxing Tea

Nice for insomnia, anxiety, or just to chill out. For daytime, increase the lemon balm and reduce the skullcap. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part lemon balm
- 1 part skullcap
- 1 part spearmint

Calm Alert Tea

Great for morning energy, high in antioxidants, some caffeine. May help stabilize blood sugar. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 5 min.

- 1 part gotu kola
- 1 part holy basil
- 1 part jasmine green tea

Spicy Mint Tea

Features two great garden herbs (hard to find in commerce). Nice warming beverage tea and for sore throats and colds. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part bee balm
- 1 part apple mint or spearmint

Lemon Drop Tea

Feel free to experiment with different lemon-y herbs. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part lemongrass
- 1 part lemon verbena
- 1 pinch stevia

Sweet Romance

Pleasant and light nutritious and antioxidant properties. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part oat straw
- 1 part Korean licorice mint
- 1 part rose petals
- maybe 1 pinch stevia

Brisk Winter Forest Tea

Delicious during or after a xc ski! Opens the lungs and helps fight infection. Infuse in a quart jar, 20 min.

- 1 handful fresh or dry black birch bark and twigs
- Several sprigs pine needle branches
- 1 tablespoon peppermint

Digestive Relaxer

Great combo for the tummy. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 5 min.

- 1 part peppermint
- 1 part chamomile

Minty Nutritive

Great basic, uplifting & nutritious tea. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 5-15 min.

- 1 part nettles or alfalfa
- 1 part pepper/spearmint

Nutri-Tea

Delicious & nutritious! Infuse 1 tsp/cup, 15-30 min.

- 2 parts nettles
- 2 parts alfalfa
- 1 part peppermint
- 1 part spearmint
- 1 part horsetail
- 1 part oatstraw
- 1 part red clover
- 1/4 part calendula

Whimsical Tea

Tastes like a craft shop! Mild digestive tea. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 5-15 minutes.

- 2 parts spearmint
- 1 part nettle
- 1 part lady's mantle (opt)
- 1/4 part rose petals
- Shake of cinnamon powder or cinn. sugar

“Earl Grey” Tea

Simple & delicious!

- 1 sprig fresh lemon verbena or lemon balm
- 1 bag of green/black tea

Heart Calm

Cardio tonic & may help stress-hypertension. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part hawthorn berries
- 1 part hawthorn lf/flwr
- 1 part linden

Bitter Brew

This tea has coffee-ish flavors when cream or milk is added. The herbs are very nice for liver detoxification (particularly w/o the dairy).

Decoct or brew 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 10-15 min.

- 2 parts burdock
- 1 part dandelion root
- 1 part roasted chicory

Blueberry Blood Sugar Tea

Great after meals to help lower blood sugar. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part blueberry leaves
- 1 part dried blueberries
- 1 part holy basil

Antioxidant Berry Tea

Loaded with antioxidants, vitamin C, bioflavonoids. Infuse 1 tsp/cup, 15 min.

- 1 part rosehips
- 1 part dried blueberries
- 1 part dried elderberries
- can also add nonlocal rooibos, hibiscus, etc

Lady Tea

Light astringent, tissue toner. Infuse 1 tsp-1 tbsp/cup, 15 m.

- 1 part raspberry leaf
- 1 part lady's mantle
- 1 part rose petals