

# Oils & Salves

## Healing the Body through the Skin

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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.*

### Choosing Your Carrier Oil

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Herb-infused oils, and most natural bodycare recipes, start with a carrier oil. A carrier oil is your base oil for massage oil, infused oil, lip balms, body butters, and so on. It generally has little to no scent and does not evaporate, unlike essential oils which are heavily scented, volatile, evaporate quickly, and are used in small quantities only (1-2% of an entire formula). By far the most popular carrier oil in herbal products is olive oil. A good quality olive oil has a relatively long shelf life—1 to 2 years if stored properly—and has its own healing properties. It's not too expensive and already ubiquitous in the American kitchen, making it an easy ingredient in natural recipes. However, there are other options for carrier oils as well, each with slightly different properties. Here is my experience with the most common oils:

☞ **My favorite carrier oils**

⚙ **May have slight SPF protection**

✓ **Less likely to clog pores**

☞ ✓ **Olive Oil:** Advantages: As mentioned, olive oil is the carrier oil of choice for most herbalists and natural bodycare craftswomen. It will go rancid more slowly than other oils, meaning you can still use your lip balm a year later without getting a nasty, acrid flavor and gummy texture. It is of medium viscosity, is easily available, and not too expensive. It is easily available unrefined. Disadvantages: Olive oil has a distinctive scent that may not be popular in bodycare products. Some people do not like the texture and feel that it does not sink into the skin well. It does not withstand high temperatures well.

☞ **Grapeseed Oil:** Advantages: Grapeseed oil is a light, fragrance-free oil with possible antioxidant properties. Many favor it for massage oils because of its lighter viscosity and glide effect. It is priced comparatively with high quality olive oil. It has a relatively long shelf life and withstands high temperatures. Disadvantages: Grapeseed is always refined and often a bit expensive.

✓ **Almond Oil:** Advantages: Almond oil—which does not smell like almonds—is rich and smooth. It provides a fantastic texture to body and massage oils and lip balms. It is believed to be therapeutic to the skin. Disadvantages: Almond oil is quite expensive and has a very short shelf life. I've had lip balms go rancid within three months. Extend the shelf life by adding more long-lived oils and natural preservatives.

☞ ✓ ⚙ **Sesame (Untoasted) Oil:** Advantages: Sesame oil is priced in the eastern world for its skin-protective and healing properties and is often used as a base for Ayurvedic skincare and medicines. It has some natural sunscreen properties and a relatively good shelf life. It is priced comparatively with quality olive oil. Disadvantages: It has a slight scent of sesame. (Do not confuse it with toasted sesame oil which is dark brown and strongly sesame scented.) Slightly expensive.

✓ **Avocado Oil:** Advantages: Avocado oil is rich, thick, and highly moisturizing. It is great on its own or in combination for very dry skin. Disadvantages: It's quite expensive, goes rancid quickly, and is too thick for many people.

✓ **Apricot Oil:** Advantages: Like grapeseed, apricot is a light and unscented oil, making it great for massage. Disadvantages: It is expensive and has a moderate shelf life. It's a kind of bland oil without much healing property.

• **Canola and Safflower Oils:** Advantages: These oils are cheap, somewhat light in texture, unscented, and have a moderately good shelf life. Disadvantages: They are bland oils with little/no healing properties. They tend to be highly refined are products of major agribusiness.

✿ ✓✓ **Jojoba Oil:** Advantages: This liquid wax is similar to the skin's oil and makes a nice addition to advanced skincare products or as a light facial moisturizer. Common golden jojoba is slightly thicker and better for dry skin. Filtered clear jojoba is lighter and more appropriate for oily skin. It has the longest shelf life of all the carrier oils. Disadvantages: Jojoba is probably the most expensive of all carrier oils. For some it is not moisturizing enough.

☞ ✿ ✓ **Coconut Oil:** Advantages: This saturated fat is semi-solid at room temperature, hard at cooler temps, and liquid in warm climates. It is very rich and soothing for dry skin. Extra virgin, raw, and unrefined coconut oil is the best for skincare and has a slight coconut scent and flavor. It has a good shelf life if kept in a cool, dark spot, and withstands higher temperatures. Refined coconut oil is not as useful herbally but it does have an even longer shelf life and is scent/flavor free for those who prefer it. Coconut oil is lovely solo as a body moisturizer or tanning oil. Some report that it has light sunscreen properties. Disadvantages: Quality coconut oil is somewhat pricy. The temperature-sensitive consistency can be a pain since lip balms turn to liquid on a summer day and massage oils solidify in the jars during the winter. Some people find it too thick for their tastes. While the coconut scent and flavor can be a boon to some bodycare makers, others don't care for it.

• **Cocoa Butter:** Advantages: This chocolate-y, rich butter of the cocoa bean is a great addition to lip balms, thicker massage oils and body butters. Opt for fair-trade products, if possible. It has a long shelf life. It can be used to solidify a balm or salve without beeswax (for vegans). Disadvantages: It is extremely solid, which makes it hard to get out of the container and mix into recipes. It's a bit pricy and too thick/rich/hard for most bodycare recipes. It's strongly chocolate scent mixes nicely in some formulas but can overpower others. Cocoa butters can be adulterated with other ingredients—look for 100% pure AND double check the ingredients list. [www.mountainroseherbs.com](http://www.mountainroseherbs.com) sells organic cocoa butter.

✿ **Shea Butter:** Advantages: This rich putty-like butter is fantastic for irritated and dry skin, making it a great simple or addition to formulas for eczema, psoriasis, and dry skin. It is available, organic, raw, and unrefined, though it can be hard to find all traits in one product. It's available in white or golden forms. Opt for fair-trade products. It has a good shelf life. Disadvantages: Shea is very expensive and the putty-like texture can be hard to work with. If melted into a liquid product, shea might settle to the bottom with milky thickness (just shake and/or warm to remix), which is perfectly safe but may look unappealing. Shea can have a slightly funky odor that some don't like. Many of the shea butters on the market are not 100% pure—always double-check the ingredients list.

✓ ✿ **Castor Oil:** This thick, drawing oil is very rich yet has the reputation for not clogging pores.

## Making Herb-Infused Oils

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You can easily make natural bodycare products without ever infusing herbs into your oil. However, to do so will add extra healing properties to your products – whether the recipes are simple or complex. Herb-infused oils will not have the strong fragrance that essential oils have and their healing properties are generally gentler than their more aromatic counterparts.

For most herbs, oil is not the best solvent (alcohol and water tend to be best). However, we prefer to infuse herbs in oil for most topical recipes. It has the added benefit (in most situations) of holding in moisture and keeping skin soft. Infused oils can be used “as is” for many health concerns—warmed mullein oil dropped in the ear for earaches, St. John's wort oil applied along nerve pain or for bedsores, calendula oil on sore mama nipples, eczema, and rashes. Or, you can use your herbal oil as a base for other products—salves, lip balms, massage oils, creams, etc.

**Note:** Herbal oils are NOT the same as ESSENTIAL OILS (EOs). An EO is made through distillation in a

process that is not available to most home herbalists unless you have some fancy equipment. EOs are highly concentrated due to their processing, so their medicinal value is often increased or changed compared to home herbalist preparations of the same plant. They're also more apt to pose health risks—EOs are often extremely toxic when taken internally, particularly in doses more than a drop or two. Even topically, most EOs need to be diluted to about 2%. Herbal oils are much gentler, bring out different constituents, and have a much more mild fragrance. You can certainly dilute an EO in an herbal oil to combine their healing effects.

There are MANY methods for making an herbal oil. Some of it is personal preference. Also, some herbs extract better through different methods.

**Michael Moore Method:** 1 day with alcohol & a blender

- 1 oz of dried herb, ground coarsely in the blender or food processor
- 1/2 oz whole grain alcohol (vodka can be substituted, but it will add water to the mix)
- 7 oz olive or other carrier oil

In a Pyrex container, mix dried herb with alcohol. Let sit, covered, for 2-24 hours.

Place the mix into a blender, add oil, and slowly blend the mixture. Increase the speed. Let blend until the blender gets warm, about 5 minutes.

Strain through cheesecloth, muslin, and/or a coffee filter to desired clarity.

Store in glass in a cool, dark place. Should keep for 6-12 months.

**Note:** I often like to combine this method with Simple Method #2. After I blend it in the blender, I put it all in a mason jar and let it sit in the car for a few days, then strain it out.

**Simple Method #1:** 2 weeks in mason jar

- 4 oz dry herb or 6 oz of fresh wilted herb
- 8 oz of olive or other carrier oil (or enough to completely cover the herbs)

Place all ingredients in a mason jar and leave in a warm spot for 2 weeks. Shake daily. Strain through cheesecloth or muslin. (Watch for mold if using fresh herbs.) Store in glass in a cool, dark place. Should keep for 6-12 months.

**Simple Method #2:** 1 day on stove or in crock-pot, or a few days in a warm, sunny car

- 4 oz dry herb or 6 oz of fresh wilted herb
- 8 oz olive oil or other carrier oil

Place ingredients in crock-pot or in pan on stove top. Bring to 90-100 degrees (this can be difficult to maintain with most kitchen equipment) or as low as possible. Let warm gently for 2-6 hours or overnight, stirring occasionally. Use caution not to cook the herbs or smoke the oil. A warm, sunny car can range from 100-200 degrees depending on the outdoor temps, sun exposure and where you place the oil (windshield, floor, shady spot). Strain with cheesecloth or muslin. Store in glass in a cool, dark place. Should keep for 6-12 months.

**Shelf Life & Rancidity:** Infused oils generally last for up to one year on the shelf. Toss it if it gets cloudy, smells funny or goes “tsss” when opened. These oils are not recommended to be consumed as food.

## **Great Herbs for Oils... and other topical remedies**

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Leaves and flowers most readily lend their properties to oil. You can use “harder” parts of the plants like roots, bark, and nuts, but they may not extract as well. If you only keep two herbal oils in your pantry, make them calendula and St. John's wort. In my opinion, they're the most useful and “miraculous.”

⚙️ *May have slight SPF action.*

- **Calendula flowers (*Calendula officinalis*)** – This is one of the most common herbal oils, and it can be purchased by the ounce in most natural food stores. Use dried bright yellow or orange blossoms, which make a golden oil. Calendula flowers have slight antimicrobial properties and are soothing to inflamed skin. It's great in formula's for baby's skin, itches and rashes, superficial wounds, and some cases of dermatitis, eczema, and psoriasis. Dry or fresh (wilted) herbal oil infusion.

- ↳ Also try it as a wash (same as making a tea) or an herbal bath (add 1 quart of strong tea to bath).
- ✿ **St. Johnswort flowers & buds (*Hypericum perforatum*)** – The fresh yellow buds and flowers of this important weed yield an amazing crimson oil. Only fresh buds and flowers should be used (top bit of the plant, it's ok if you get a few leaves and some stem), and the oil will be stronger if you let it infuse in the SUN (this is a SUN PLANT) for a few days or weeks. You can purchase St. Johnswort in 1 to 4 oz quantities in natural food stores. It's an amazing medicinal oil for most skin conditions including burns, cuts, wounds, bedsores, radiation burns, etc. It can be applied along an inflamed nerve or muscle for pain including sciatica or shingles. It is reported to have mild sunscreen properties and also helps with sunburns. Fresh (no need to wilt) herbal oil infusion.
  - ↳ Though drying, SJW tincture can be used in a pinch.
- **Gotu Kola leaves (*Centella asiatica*)** – The dried leaves of this ivy-like vine make a vibrant green oil (it does not color the skin). Gotu kola is a wound healer and general cure-all for circulation, collagen support, and the nervous system. We are seeing it more in formulas for varicose and spider veins, cellulite, skin imperfections, and wrinkles. It is occasionally available in natural food stores in jojoba or other carrier oil. Dry herbal oil infusion. Not local, but it can be grown as an annual or indoors.
- **Plantain (*Plantago* spp), Chickweed (*Stellaria* spp), and Cleavers (*Galium* spp) leaves** – These three miracle weeds are usually only used fresh (slightly wilted) in classic folk herbalism. The three can be used separately or together for wound healing and itchy skin including eczema, dermatitis, psoriasis, and poison ivy. Fresh (wilted) herbal oil infusion.
  - ↳ These herbs make lovely fresh poultices for a variety of irritated skin conditions, bug bites, stings, poison ivy, rashes, etc. Simply mash them up with a bit of water and plaster them to the skin. Just chew a plantain leaf and apply it to bee stings and bug bites for healing in a jiffy.
- ✿ **Chaparral (*Larrea tridentata*)** – Chaparral is a supreme summer skin herb that grows prolifically in the southwest. It seems to have some sun-protective properties as well as antioxidants that may be helpful for post-burn healing. Chaparral is also amongst our best herbal antifungals, making it a nice choice for foot fungus and other “icky critter” salves. (If you'd like, you can combine it with oregano, lavender, sage, thyme, thuja, or other anti-fungal/bacterial infused oils... a few drops of essential oil would work nicely, too.) Dry herbal oil infusion. Note: Internal use is controversial.
  - ↳ Also consider chaparral as a wash or soak. For foot fungus, make a foot bath. For sunburn, make a tea, cool it in the fridge, and spray it as needed.
- **Lemon Balm leaves (*Melissa officinalis*)** – Lemon balm is our classic for the herpes virus, whether it be cold sores, chicken pox, shingles, or genital herpes. The herb appears to bind to cell receptor sites, blocking the herpes virus from entering and replicating. It's best used at the very first tingle of an outbreak. (Lemon balm tea or tincture can be taken internally as well, since it's soothing to a frayed nervous system, which often is what gave the virus an opportunity to emerge.) Lemon balm essential oil can be added to an oil or salve—it's the strongest form—but it's extremely expensive and often adulterated. Lemon balm leaves lose their essential oils quickly once dried, so it's important to make this oil as quickly after harvesting to ensure good quality. Fresh (wilted) or freshly dried herbal oil infusion. (Fresh lemon balm is apt to mold in herbal oil infusions.)
  - ↳ Also a wonderful tea, wash, bath, poultice tincture.... It's not a bad idea to take it internally (tea or tincture) since it is soothing, calming, and slightly anti-inflammatory, which usually benefits its external uses.
- ✿ **Comfrey leaf (best for salves) or root (*Symphytum officinale*, *S. x uplandicum*)** – This is a classic herb for wound healing and strengthening the skin. The primary known constituent allantoin is a cell proliferative and may or may not be extracted in oil (modern science says it's water soluble only—more so in hot water—yet herbalists have traditionally used in oil-based products). Dry herbal oil infusion. Note: Internal use is controversial.
  - ↳ Comfrey also makes a great wash, fresh or dry poultice. Taking it internally is controversial due to liver toxins in the plant.

### More Popular Herbs to Infuse...

- **Rose petals or buds** – This luxurious infused oil will have a slight scent of roses that can be augmented with a drop or two of rose essential oil (very expensive!). Roses are astringent and soothing to the skin and are often used in aged skincare recipes. Dry herb infusion.
- **Green or white tea leaves** – As we know, the tea plant is one of our most useful antioxidants. This can be helpful in fighting free radical damage including sun damage and signs of aging. Tea has astringent properties that lend it to varicose and spider vein and cellulite formulas, and can be used safely for most people. Dry herb infusion.
- **Cayenne pepper** – Hot pepper contains capsaicin, which is at least partly responsible for cayenne's "burn." This burn also depletes substance P (pain) receptors when applied topically. It's used for many different types of pain including arthritis and sciatica, as well as for the itchy pain of shingles. You'll want to dilute the cayenne oil with other oils. Initially it will burn, but once it numbs out the receptor sites, you should find your pain diminished or eliminated. Dry herb infusion.
- **Black Walnut leaves or hulls** – Black walnut is among our most popular antifungal (and antiparasite) plants. It also has some astringent properties. Dry herb infusion.
- **Thuja leaves/scales** – This evergreen tree (sometimes called white cedar or arborvitae) is a classic anti-wart remedy and may also be used for fungus. Apply several times a day, vigilantly, for at least two weeks once the wart or fungus is gone. Dry herb infusion.
- **Mullein flowers** – These little yellow flowers are usually collected slowly and added to oil since—as with St. John's wort flowers—it can be hard to collect a large amount all at once. The oil is most classically used for ear infections and ear pain. A few drops warmed and placed in the ear with cotton. It is often combined with garlic, St. John's wort, and calendula oil. (Garlic oil is also often used solo for ear infections, but it can irritate the skin.) Fresh (no need to wilt) or dry herb infusion.
- **Camphor & Menthol** – These two crystal compounds are sometimes infused with or added to oils and salves. They are highly aromatic (think Tiger Balm or Ben Gay), warming, increase circulation, and are used as a counter-irritant for pain or to clear sinuses or lung congestion. You can get the crystals and add them to the oil or use essential oils (camphor or peppermint, respectively) in your final product. Note: They can be TOXIC, particularly in large doses or if applied over a large area of the body. Best for spot-treatment.
- **Grindellia flowers** – This western plant is not well known here; however, it is probably THE BEST herb for poison ivy (not in oil form, though) and general itchiness. Fresh is best (hard to get out here), dried may not work. I generally just use the tincture in a spray formula. However, you can make a fresh (wilted) herbal oil infusion, or its runner up, a dry oil infusion.
- **Witch Hazel leaf or bark** – The bark is the most commonly used part of this highly astringent plant. However, for an oil, the leaf will work better (and lucky for us, the small tree is abundant here!). It's a common ingredient in varicose vein and cellulite formulas. Fresh leaf or dry bark infused oil.

## HERBAL SALVES:

We got the "hard" part out of the way already: making herbal oils. Salves are simply herbal oils with enough beeswax added to make them hard. Some people prefer this consistency to a straight oil, and it can stay better before rubbing off. You may also add other ingredients like essential oils, natural preservatives, vitamin E, and flower essences to increase the action of your salve. A salve can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be.

### Basic Salve

- 4 parts herbal oil(s)
- 1 part beeswax, crushed or grated
- whatever else you want to throw in

Combine the oils and beeswax (and any other semi-solid ingredients) in a double boiler on low/medium. Stir frequently until all the beeswax has melted. Once it's melted, remove from heat, add any other (liquid) ingredients, and quickly pour it into jars or tubes before it solidifies.

**Microwave Salves:** Herbalists hate to admit it, but you CAN (carefully) make salves and lip balm by gently zapping them in the microwave in short cycles, in a microwave-safe container, until the beeswax melts. Be careful not to overheat it—you'll compromise the shelf life and it might explode in the microwave! I find this technique useful for small batches or if it re-hardens while I'm still pouring it into containers.

**Beewax tip:** Grating beeswax is a pain! Wrap your beeswax in a clean, sturdy cloth, place it on a hard surface such as a pavement or rock, and hit it with a hammer to crush it up. You'll look pretty hard core. And, it really is easier. Beeswax that comes in pellet form may be tempting, but it's often rancid (the only form I've ever seen go rancid; usually it lasts for years). Buy good beeswax from your local beekeeper (if they sell honey, they probably have beeswax), online, or at natural food stores.

**Consistency:** 4:1 makes a desirable consistency for most climates and tastes. However, if you want it to be harder, add more beeswax. Softer, add more oils (or less beeswax). You can test the consistency during "production" by dipping a cold spoon (from the freezer) into the mix or dripping the mix onto a cool metal bowl.

**Note:** The basic salve recipe is identical to the basic lip balm recipe. It's what you do with it that determines if it's a salve or a lip balm (and some products can be used for both).

**Shelf Life & Rancidity:** Salves will generally last for a year or more on the shelf.

#### **Infused Oil Cautions: Avoiding Microbial Growth**

Many microbes thrive in the anaerobic environment that oils provide. Without harsh or synthetic preservatives, infused oils and products made from them can potentially harbor bacteria, mold, etc. Of particular concern is the botulism toxin, which can exist on almost any plant matter (roots, flowers, leaves). This is more of a concern for oils that are consumed (basil or garlic oil, for example) than ones put on the skin, and it is not all that likely to occur. However, it can happen.

Also, infused oils made with fresh plant material are at a particularly higher risk of growing nasty critters. You may want to stick to infusing oils with dried herbs; however, some herbs are only useful when fresh (St. John's wort, chickweed, plantain, cleavers). Reduce the risk: Don't let your herb sit around for more than two weeks before straining. And, wilt particularly juicy plants to 1/2 their weight before you add oil.

Make all your oils in small batches and try to use them up within a few months. (Also see the section "Avoiding mold, natural preservatives" above.) Some can last for years, but it's better not to wait.

#### **Natural Preservatives – Avoiding Rancidity, Bacteria & Mold**

- **Shelf-stable ingredients** – This may seem like a given, but it's tempting to use a little mashed strawberries or avocado. "Fresh" ingredients are fine for immediate use but not appropriate for most bodycare products. Also beware of aloe gel and lecithin products that need to be refrigerated once opened—opt for ones that have preservatives added to make them shelf stable. Some folks use liquid lecithin to emulsify oils and waters in lotions—which creates a creamy consistency—but this can mold after a few months.
- **Clean containers** – If you are reusing jars, sterilize them and use new caps to avoid the introduction of bacteria. I get most of my bottles and jars from [www.SKS-bottle.com](http://www.SKS-bottle.com). If you really get into it, you can buy just the lids. I tend to use new jars and lids for gifts, classes, and clients, rather than re-use.
- **Keep fingers out** – Opt for containers that pump into the hand rather than jars you dip your fingers into. This'll reduce the likelihood that you introduce bacteria or germs into the product. (But not easy with salves.) Or, keep a small jar for use and leave the rest in a container that you refill from.

- **Carrier oils with long shelf lives** – particularly olive oil, also coconut, sesame and grapeseed oils and cocoa butter. Avoid overuse of almond and avocado oils.
- **Honey** – sweet addition to lip balms, though it can make the product more sticky and may separate.
- **Vitamin E oil** – Easy addition to any oil-based product, also wound-healing. Some products can be smelly but this will generally be covered by other ingredients.
- **Grapefruit Seed Extract (GSE)** – This liquid can be added to any oil- and/or water-based product to prolong shelf life and reduce mold. Note: It is NOT as natural as it purports to be.
- **Essential Oils** – Most essential oils have antioxidant properties that help slow the oxidation (rancidity) of oils and antimicrobial properties that help prevent mold or bacterial contamination. Rosemary, lavender, eucalyptus, thyme, oregano, and clove are particularly useful. (Note: clove can irritate the skin, use with caution.)
- **Reduce the following:** Exposure to air, heat, and light, all of which increase rancidity and decrease freshness.

## Essential Oils

**Essential Oils for Healing Salves:** By far the most popular healing essential oil is lavender. It's soothing, anti-inflammatory, relaxing, and antiseptic. Tea tree or oregano essential oils may be used for their antiseptic properties. Thyme, rosemary, peppermint, and/or eucalyptus may be added to antiseptic or congestion-clearing formulas. Chamomile (varieties that make a blue essential oil) is soothing and anti-inflammatory. Lemon balm helps fight the herpes virus (prevents it from replicating) but the essential oil is expensive. You could use lemon balm (freshly dried) infused oil instead. Rose, jasmine, neroli, ylang ylang, lavender, chamomile and rose geranium are often used in skin care products.

**Read up on your essential oils before adding them to products.** Some, like citrus and spice essential oils, can irritate the skin. Add the essential oils slowly and work up to your desired fragrance level. Some oils, like lavender, can be added liberally. Others, like peppermint, quickly overpower a recipe. Visit [www.oshadhiusa.com](http://www.oshadhiusa.com) or [www.auracacia.com](http://www.auracacia.com) for each oil's properties and safety data.

### Cautions for Common Essential Oils:

- **Clove** and **cinnamon** are skin irritants. Use only in very dilute amounts or not at all for topical products.
- **Citrus oils including orange, lemon, grapefruit, tangerine, and bergamont** react with the sun and can burn the skin. Never use undiluted and use caution in products that may be exposed to the sun—for example, don't put it in your suntan oil.
- **Peppermint** is strong and can burn or irritate the skin if used undiluted. Use in lesser amounts than other oils—it's quite strong.
- **Rose, jasmine, neroli (orange blossom), chamomile, vanilla, lemon balm,** and—to some extent—**sandalwood** essential oils are lovely but extremely expensive. If you find them cheap, they're probably adulterated. Oshadhi sells them in very small quantities of 1 ml, which can make them more affordable (\$20-30 instead of \$50-100) if you really want to use them. Only a drop or two will do it!
- Essential oil brands vary greatly in quality. The better brands tend to cost quite a bit more. Use your nose to find the best quality essential oils—it doesn't take an expert to tell what smells good. Oshadhi (in stores) is one of my favorites, many people like Young Living oils (multi-level marketing). Mountain Rose Herbs (online) are not high-end, but their quality is still pretty good, and the prices very reasonable. Aura Cacia is an ok brand with a good price range for the newbie.

## HERBAL CREAMS & MORE!

### Perfect Cream

This recipe is adapted from *Rosemary Gladstar's Family Herbal* (Storey Books, 2001) recipe "Rosemary's Perfect Cream" (recently reprinted in softcover as *Rosemary Gladstar's Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health* (Story, 2008)). I highly recommend her book for herbal bodycare, medicinal, and lifestyle recipes. The tricky part about creams is that 1. it's hard to get oil & water to blend perfectly and stay suspended, and 2. it can mold if not made or stored properly. I wouldn't recommend creams as your first bodycare recipe ever, but is

a nice, less greasy, twist on things. And, Rosemary's recipe really does make a Perfect Cream, recreated by herbalists across the country. This recipe is not exactly her original. I've changed it a little. This recipe does not need to be stored in the refrigerator.

*Waters:*

- 2/3 cup distilled water, vanilla &/or rose water
- 1/3 cup aloe vera gel (shelf stable form)
- 1-2 drops of essential oil of choice (or more)
- Vitamin A or E as desired

*Oils:*

- 3/4 cup "liquid oils" (grapeseed, infused olive oil, almond oil...)
- 1/3 cup "saturated fats" (coconut oil, cocoa butter, shea butter...)
- 1/4 teaspoon lanolin, optional (I don't use)
- 1/2 to 1 ounce grated or smashed beeswax

1. Combine waters in a glass measuring cup. Set aside
2. In a double boiler over low heat, combine the oils. Heat just enough to melt.
3. Pour the oils into a blender and let them cool to room temperature. The mixture should become thick, creamy, semisolid, and cream colored.
4. When the mixture has cooled, turn the blender at its highest speed. In a slow, thin drizzle, pour the water mixture into the center vortex of the whirling oil mixture.
5. When most of the water mixture has been added to the oils, listen to the blender and watch the cream. When the blender coughs and chokes and the cream looks thick and white, like butter cream frosting, turn off the blender. The cream will thicken as it sets.
6. Pour into cream or lotion jars with clean caps, preferably sterilized to discourage mold and bacteria growth. Best stored in a cool, dry place.

### **Simple Massage or Body Oil**

- 8 oz of carrier oil (jojoba, almond, apricot, sesame, grapeseed, and/or avocado oil) or infused oil
- 1/2 teaspoon vitamin E oil, optional to prevent rancidity
- 20-50 drops of essential oils, optional for scent, as a natural preservative, or for healing properties

Mix all ingredients and essential oils of choice. Pour into bottles with screw or pump tops. Use for massage or as a moisturizing body oil.

### **Sample Healing Combinations**

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**Anti Itch:** Calendula, Chickweed, Plantain, and/or Grindellia infused oils. Lavender EO.

**Eczema/Psoriasis:** Calendula, Comfrey and/or St. John's Wort infused oils. Shea butter. Rescue Remedy.

**Healing Wound:** Calendula, St. John's wort, Gotu kola, Comfrey and/or Plantain infused oils. Rescue Remedy.

**Light Sunscreen:** Chapparral and/or green tea infused in sesame oil.

**Herpes/Cold Sores:** Lemon balm, St. John's wort and/or Calendula-infused oils. Lavender or lemon balm EO.

**Luxury Skin:** Rose, vanilla and/or green/white tea infused in coconut or other oil. Neroli or rose EO.

**Varicose Vein or Cellulite:** Witch hazel, gotu kola, and/or rose petal infused oils. Rosemary EO.

**AntiFungal:** Black Walnut, Thuja, and/or Chapparral infused oils. Oregano or tea tree EO.

**Ear Oil:** Mullein, St. John's Wort, Calendula and/or fresh Garlic infused oils.

**Pain:** St. John's wort\*, Menthol/Camphor, and/or Cayenne\* infused-oil. Menthol or camphor EO (optional).

(\*more often used as simples than in combination formulas.)

*To make a salve, simply add 1 part crushed beeswax to 4 part oil(s). Add natural preservatives if desired.*

*To make an ointment, use less beeswax. For example, 1 part beeswax to 8-16 parts oil(s).*

*To make a cream, see the above "Perfect Cream" recipe and use it as a guide.*

Feel free to eliminate/add ingredients as you like.

As Michael Moore would say: "This isn't lab science. It's herbology!"

Label your products with the ingredients & the date it was made. Reduces questions later!

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Visit the Links page of **www.WintergreenBotanicals.com** for Local & Online sources for *bottles, jars, herb supplies...* as well as *recommended books & links to informative websites.*

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