

A  
MAGICKAL  
HERBALL  
COMPLEAT



⊕ PīŋO LONGCHILD ⊕

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A Magickal  
Herball Compleat:  
By  
Pino Longchild

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**Please Note:** All dates are given using the convention CE (Common Era, equivalent to *Anno Domini* or AD) and BCE (Before Common Era, equivalent to Before Christ or BC).

# Preface

This book was written to fill a need. Although there are many books on herbs, nearly all of them deal with a particular field of herbal expertise. For example, you will find books on herbs and astrology, the history of herbs in medicine, herbs and cooking, and so on. What you will not be so easily able to locate is a work that looks at herbs with regard to all the ways they can be employed. This work aims to fill that gap. The emphasis will be magickal, as one would expect from an esoteric author, but herbs have many other uses that will be explored. This book has its origins in the online course at [www.magickaschool.com](http://www.magickaschool.com) and the structure of that programme's lessons has been kept throughout; most chapters contain a topic as well as a research project. Footnotes can be found at the end of each chapter, as can any appendices. For reasons of production costs, the course exams have been omitted.

## Definition of Terms

Technically speaking herbs are seed-bearing plants without woody stems, which die down to the ground after flowering. I will not be using such a strict definition throughout this work, as this would, of course, preclude discussion of a variety of trees and shrubs with woody stems that do not die back substantially. The book looks at many different types of plants that can be used for the benefit of humans and will not follow the standard dictionary explanation of the word "herb".

Pino Longchild

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Chapter One:  
A Brief and  
Selective History  
of the Use of  
Herbs

# A Brief and Selective History of the Use of Herbs

## Welcome

In this chapter a brief general introduction to the book will be given.

You will then learn about the history of the use of herbs.

At the end, there is a research project.

## Introduction

*And God said, "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth." Genesis 1:29.*

The history of the use of herbs is a vast and fascinating subject, deserving of a book all to itself. It is outside the scope of this work to give anything like a comprehensive account and, because of this, I have decided to concentrate nearly exclusively on herbal practices in Western European history, touching only briefly on influences from farther afield. Even with such constraints I have had to be selective and there is much that this chapter has omitted, although I hope that many of the major European strands of herbal history have been at least touched upon. I trust that this will not unduly disappoint the reader, for whilst researching the material for this chapter I discovered many things that will be of great interest and perhaps even surprise.

## Herbs in Pre-History

There is evidence to suggest that many animal species make use of herbs for healing. Scientific observation of chimpanzees, chickens and sheep show that they tend to forage plants rich in chemical compounds (especially tannins and alkaloids), which are useful in combating parasites and diseases [1], and, further, some birds choose nesting material plentiful in antimicrobial agents which seem to keep their offspring from harmful bacteria [2]. Given that animals make use of herbs it is hardly astonishing that plants containing these chemicals have been used for all recorded human history, and that they were employed a long time before that as well.

Some scientists feel that compounds derived from herbs were first used to kill, and conjecture that alkaloids were extracted for arrow and spear tip poisons before they were found to have healing properties [3]. However, there is some evidence to suggest that over 60,000 years ago Neanderthals (predecessors of *Homo Sapiens*) made use of curative plants, for a body has been found in the Shanidar Cave in Iraq that was buried with eight plant species that are still used widely for medicinal purposes today [4]. Also, humans using herbs for healing are believed to have been depicted in the cave paintings at Lacaux (found in present day France) and have been carbon dated to between 13,000 and 15,000 BCE [5]. Later still, but within the bounds of European pre-history, the intestinal contents

of the “Ice Man” found frozen in the Swiss Alps, who died more than 5,300 years ago, contained the remains of herbs probably used to ease a gastric complaint [6].

Given that herbs could kill and that they could heal, it is likely that they would have been seen as having magickal and inexplicable properties, and it is no surprise then that their use is often tied to mythology, religion and belief in magick. Especially when it was realised as well that their use could induce altered states and visions.

## First Mentions of Herbs and the Ancient Egyptians

The first mention of the use of herbs may have been by the legendary Chinese Emperor Shenong, five thousand years ago. He supposedly taught China agriculture and wrote the *The Divine Farmer's Herb-Root Classic*, describing the medical properties of three hundred and sixty five plants that he personally tested. That this work was only compiled for the first time some three thousand years later means that this attribution may be nothing more than a myth [7]. Given this, the first record of herbs that have come down to us seem to be on Assyrian clay tablets written in cuneiform some 4000 years ago [8], which list around two hundred and fifty plants and their uses. However, it is with the Ancient Egyptians that we have our first substantial body of surviving medical works, including documents about herbs.

Records of Egyptian medicine seem to go as far back as 3000 BCE, as some of the information contained in the *Edwin Smith Papyrus* (which dates from 1600 BCE) may come from this period. The papyrus is the oldest known written record of medicine anywhere and concerns the treatment of trauma surgery [9]. Some say it was originally written by Imhotep, High Priest of the Sun-god Ra, during the reign of Djoser in the 2640s BCE. The work is widely admired for the way in which it details cases and gives specific procedures for dealing with them.

However, the earliest surviving mention of herbs within this culture is to be found in the *Eber Papyrus*, the second oldest medical tract anywhere in the world, dating from around 1550 BCE. This work is of rather a different character, brimming as it is with spells, magickal words of power and unpleasant concoctions meant to repel disease-causing demons.

Written in hieratic script, the hundred and ten page scroll lists seven hundred cures and magickal incantations, although here too there is much evidence of observation and careful use of empiricism. There is a treatise on the heart, writing about mental disorders such as dementia and depression and it also contains information on pregnancy, contraception, intestinal disease, gynaecological concerns, parasites, skin and eye problems, dentistry and a variety of surgical treatments.

Not all the remedies would have been efficacious; a cure for death (the Egyptians evidently believed that death could be cured) was “half an onion and the froth of beer”; a mixture designed to evacuate the belly (“Cow’s milk 1; grains 1; honey 1;

mash, sift, cook; take in four portions”) seems to have made quite a pleasant but ineffective drink. A more likely remedy for asthma involved the burning of certain herbs on a brick, with the idea that the patient should inhale the fumes. Whatever the quality of some of these recipes, it is undeniable that the *Eber Papyrus* used many of the ingredients familiar to modern day herbalists: cannabis, fennel, cassia, senna, thyme, henna, juniper, linseed, aloe and castor oil are all mentioned as well as opium, frankincense and myrrh.

In addition to this famous papyrus we also have much evidence from a whole plethora of resources about how the Ancient Egyptians used herbs. For example, their use of garlic is legendary. Cloves of garlic have been found in temples such as that of the sacred bull at Saqqara and in tombs, most famously that of Tutankhamen. The “father of history”, the Greek Herodotus, who lived in the fifth century BCE, relates that on inscriptions he noted that labourers, employed by the Pharaoh Khufu in constructing his pyramid, ate large amounts of garlic, onion and radishes [10]. Quite why this was the case Herodotus does not say, (it must have made working conditions rather pungent by today’s standards) although it is likely that they would have been seen as good for the general vigour of the work force. There is at least one classical writer, Pliny, who talks of garlic as being a useful preventative herb of many ailments, including respiratory problems which may have been caused by the amount of dust generated by building work in the desert [11].

Perhaps the herb most famously associated with the Ancient Egyptians is *Nymphaea caerulea*, better known as the blue lotus or blue water lily. Blue lotuses, as well their white relative (*Nymphaea lotus*), were widely cultivated throughout the lands of Ancient Egypt. Along with the papyrus flower, they can be found widely in evidence in tombs and temples representing the joining of Upper and Lower Egypt. Perhaps because the water lily opened up every morning to reveal an intense golden centre set against its blue petals (and releasing a sweet perfume), the flower seems to have become linked with the daily rise and fall of the Sun, as well as the Sun god Ra and the story of creation, where the flower head was seen to be a container of Atum, the Egyptian primal creator [12]. No wonder, then, that many Egyptian temple columns had water lily capitals at the top, proclaiming to the world the importance of this plant.

Growing wild in the Nile Lowlands and containing aporphine, a substance similar to the alkaloid apomorphine, a five to ten gram dose of the flowers is said to induce enhanced visual perception, mild hallucinations and altered thought processes, especially if having been ingested after the flowers have been soaked in wine for a few days [13]. This may explain their suspected use by the Ancient Egyptian priests during religious ceremonies, and their apparent popularity at celebrations [14].

Perhaps because of its association with creation, the flower became linked to human fertility and sex. For example, it may have been that women were given the flowers as an aphrodisiac as this Nineteenth Dynasty (1292-1182 BCE) love poem [15] seems to hint:

*And I will say to Ptah, Lord of Truth:*

*"Give me my fair one tonight."*

*The river is like wine.*

*The god Ptah is its tuft of reeds,*

*The goddess Sekhmet is its bouquet of flowers,*

*The goddess Wadjet is its water lily bud,*

*The god Nefertem is its opened water lily.*

*My love will be happy!*

*The dawn illuminates her beauty.*

This view can be supported by the fact that in many examples of Egyptian art there are images of men and women holding the flower hinting, perhaps, at sexual potency, desirability or fertility.

But the flower wasn't just seen as being efficacious in this life; it also seems to have been used as a symbol of rebirth after death. The fact that in 1922, blue water lily petals were discovered in Tutankhamen's inner gold coffin is often cited as suggesting this, and there are many mentions of it in *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* [16]. Further, the four Sons of Horus who guarded the canopic jars, were often depicted standing on blue water lily flowers and were present at the judgement of the dead in the Halls of Ma'at, where they stood in front of Osiris on half opened versions of these plants [17].

From all this we can see that the blue water lily was used throughout many areas of Ancient Egyptian life and was unusual in its pre-eminence in religion, art, politics and sex.

Other herbs more familiar to us today were used much as they have been in Europe for centuries. The Egyptians were familiar with the cooking and healing properties of aloes, anise, black seeds, calendula flowers, celery, chamomile flowers, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, henna, hibiscus, marjoram, onion, parsley, peppermint, sage, sesame seed, spearmint, sunflower seed and tamarind.

## **Herbs, the Greeks and Ancient Romans**

Greek medicine and the use of herbs as a healing tool has its roots in the mythological figure of an Ancient Greek demi-god, known in Latin as Aesculapius, who is often identified with the distant Egyptian figure of Imhotep. Traditionally he symbolised the healing processes, while his six daughters Hygieia, Meditrina, Iaso, Aceso, Aglæa and Panacea represented the forces of cleanliness, medicine and healing. His sanctuaries were to be found widely throughout the Greek world and it is just possible that Hippocrates [18] (c. 460 - c. 370 BCE), one of the most famous and influential Greek physicians, began his career on the island of Kos, where there was a famous *asclepieion* or healing temple.

It was from Hippocrates that the Greeks developed a humoural system of medicine, where treatment was based around the need to restore the balance of

humours within the body. These were fluids known as black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood. The Ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as later Western civilizations that followed Classical medical thought, believed that the humours would rise and fall in a body depending on dietary intake and activity. An imbalance of these fluids supposedly affected a person's well-being and personality. This was significant for the use of herbs, which became seen as a way of balancing humours. In fact, for the next two thousand, two hundred years, Hippocrates ideas were to form the basis of the standard medical view and are readily met with in Culpeper's *English Physician* [19] (the British Isles' most famous herbal) written in the mid seventeenth century, and in medical thought up until the nineteenth. Hippocrates' ideas were reinforced by Galen (129 - c. 200 or 216 CE) who also emphasised that health was maintained by diet and hygiene. Interestingly we get our word "hygiene" from the Greek goddess of health, Hygeia.

Importantly for herbalists, it was the Greek Theophrastus (370 – c. 285 BCE) who founded the science of botany with his *Historia Plantarum* (History of Plants), which as well as detailing the detection of germination also contained much information about the features of plant life and their cultivation.

However, perhaps the most well known of the Greek herbalists is Pedanius Dioscorides (c. 40 -c 90 CE) who brought together a large compendium of herbals in the first century CE that ran to five volumes. Known in Latin as *De Materia Medica* [20], this work contains over five hundred plants, which are defined and explained in terms of their medicinal properties. Dioscorides was a physician, pharmacologist and botanist born in Anazarbus in Asia Minor. During the reign of Nero he practiced in Rome and seems to have travelled widely in search of medicinal materials from all over the Roman and Greek lands. The *De Materia Medica* was consulted by the medical professions up until the 1600s CE (with a number of minor revisions and additions from the Arab and Indian worlds) making it probably the most influential herbal ever put together. Because its contents were amassed from all over the ancient world, Dioscorides' compendium gives us a wide knowledge and fascinating insight into herbal practice of two thousand years ago.

From works such as these we can glean much about how herbs were used in every area of ancient civilised life. Roman soldiers reportedly placed a leaf of plantain in their sandals before a long march in a bid to help stave off blisters. Legionaries were also frequently given garlic as a way of ensuring invigoration. Sweet perfumed herbs that repelled insects were put down on the floors of homes and offices, and the same herbs were then burnt the next day in Roman under-floor heating systems. Dill was often the herb of choice to freshen the air when dining. Both Greeks and Romans crowned their victorious sporting or military heroes with laurel, and Greek athletes used bruised mint leaves on aching or stiff joints after bathing.

In these civilisations herbs were also put to other uses than healing, dietary supplement and air purification. They were used too in magickal and religious workings. For example, henbane, perhaps better known as stinking nightshade,

was used by the Ancient Greeks to induce visions and oracles from the priestesses of Apollo, if the writings of the Roman Pliny the Elder (23CE - August 24th, 79CE), in his *Naturalis Historia* [21] are accurate. Pliny also records the fact that Greeks believed in the powers of some herbs as revealed by their gods. For example, they thought that parsley grew from the blood of Archemorus, the “forerunner of death” [22] who was supposed to appear before someone died and, as a result, parsley was chiefly used to make wreaths for the dead and to decorate their tombs. Sage, as one might expect, was used for purification and the warding off of unwanted spiritual forces. Herbal magick even appeared in fiction; in book ten of Homer’s *Odyssey* he describes an encounter between Odysseus and the Titan Circe (“She who is sister to the wizard Aeetes, both being children of the Sun...by the same mother, Perse the daughter of the Ocean”) on the island of Aeaea. Circe used a magickal wand against Odysseus and his men, and he was forced to defend himself with a secret herb called moly, knowledge of which was given to him by the god Hermes [23].

## Herbs in the Middle Ages

It seems that uses of plants for medicinal purposes evolved very slowly over the Middle Ages, and we can conjecture that in an increasingly Catholic Europe use of herbs for magickal purposes would have been a dangerous thing. The Church in any case preferred faith healing, but this is not to say that the herbal knowledge of the Romans and the Greeks was not preserved by hand copying of manuscripts in scriptorium all over Christendom. Although each country would have had its own local knowledge of herbs, there is little written record of this throughout the medieval period. Talk of wise village men and women who knew of the curative properties of certain plants is often made and, of course, may well have been the case, but documentary evidence of this is hard to come by until the Witch trials, where much was made of simples and potions being the work of the devil.

That there is little written about such people and their practices was largely due to the fact that the art of writing was in the hands of only a select few, the preserve of either the very rich or the monasteries (many of which were fabulously wealthy as well). Detailed herbal knowledge came to be kept by these privileged classes who were heavily influenced by the writings of the Ancient Greeks and were responsible for the translation of their herbal works into Latin (although some copies were made in Greek). To us living in the twenty-first century, it is hard to imagine a world where knowledge was disseminated at a slow pace. Not only were books extremely rare and precious throughout the Middle Ages but they were also laboriously copied by hand. Few could read them in any case, and those that could access their contents would often make journeys of hundreds of miles to visit a library with a few hundred books.

The fact that Dioscorides and Theophrastus were copied at all is testament to the esteem in which these books were held. Dioscorides’ work, in particular, became the standard text on herbs during this period. One of the earliest surviving copy manuscripts of the *De Materia Medica* was created in the early sixth century for the

Byzantine-Romano princess Juliana Anicia, daughter of the Roman Emperor Anicius Olybrius. Originally designed as a luxury copy it was full of splendid art work accompanying the text, the book's fate, however, was not to remain in such illustrious circumstances and later markings reveal that it had a whole host of owners in many lands [24].

More typically though, *De Materia Medica* was copied and preserved in monastery libraries and these great medieval institutions became local centres of herbal and medical knowledge, where their herb gardens stocked many of the plants with which to treat a wide range of ailments.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy of the herbal works to come out of this kind of religious environment was written by Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098 - 17 September 1179 CE), founder of two women's religious communities under the auspices of the abbot of the monastery at Disibodenberg. Hildegard was an exceptional medieval woman who, among her achievements, could list works of art, music, poetry, drama and philosophy as well as being a medical practitioner and theologian. She was the presumed author of *Liber simplicis medicinae*, or *Physica*, one of the documents of which survives in a thirteenth century manuscript known as *Cause et Cure*. The general thrust of the work accepts the Four Elements of Fire, Water, Air and Earth as being essential to all life, and incorporates the Hippocratic ideas of the Four Humours. Hildegard goes on to prescribe ways to harmonise the humours, many of which involve the use of plants such as a concoction of bear fat and wheat to treat hair loss, and sage and vinegar to ease migraine headaches.

By the eleventh century medical schools began to exist again, which based their practices on the knowledge of the Ancient Greek and Roman Worlds. At the same time in Europe the Arabs, who had conquered much of present day Spain and were more advanced in scientific matters, could access herbs and herbal knowledge from places as far afield as India and China. These developments meant that there was a steady influx of herbals and medical texts into the West at the same time as the rise of the European universities. The stage was therefore set for an explosion of herbal learning.

## **Culpeper and the Golden Age of Herbals**

In 1440 Johannes Gutenberg developed European printing technology in the city of Mainz. Among the first books to be printed were Theophrastus' *Historia Plantarum* and Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*, indicating just how important these herbal works were to the world of the Renaissance. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries hundreds of herbals were published and for the first time they began to appear in vernacular languages rather than Latin and Greek.

In English, the first herbal to be published was the anonymous *Grete Herball* of 1526. However, the most widely known works from this golden age were *The Herball or General History of Plants* by John Gerard, which appeared in 1597, and *The English Physician* by Nicholas Culpeper, published in 1652. Culpeper's work was to go on to become the most famous herbal in English, while Gerard's tome has



languished in obscurity -a deserved fate, perhaps, when it is considered that it is substantially a plagiarised translation of a work by a Belgian herbalist known as Dodoens, and also contained illustrative plates taken from a German botanical work.

In contrast, Culpeper's *English Physician* was a heady mix of astrology, folklore and medicine and explains the book's great popularity in its day (where it was sold as far away as colonial America) as well as the fact that it is still widely available from many booksellers. Culpeper was a radical republican and felt that medical knowledge should be spread as far as possible, a stance in marked contrast to the College of Physicians, a powerful London based medical organisation, individuals from which strongly opposed such views [25].

The man has a real importance in the dissemination of the healing properties of plants discovered in the New World. For about a hundred years Europeans had been bringing back herbal knowledge from the Americas. The first manuscript containing such learning was the *Libellus de Medicinalibus Indorum Herbis* [26] (Little Book of the Medicinal Herbs of the Indians), which spoke of Aztec cures and arrived in Europe in the 1550s. However, such material often did not impact on sixteenth century society and could end up in library collections where it would remain unread - in fact the *Libellus de Medicinalibus Indorum Herbis* did not surface again into the public eye until 1929, when it was found in the Vatican. Culpeper saved at least one work from this fate as he translated the 1557 work *Joyful News Out of the New Found World* from the Latin of a Spanish physician, which was based on plants from the Americas. By translating this work, Culpeper made herbal knowledge, from a new and mysterious continent, available to the English speaking peoples [27].

## **The Decline and Rise of Herbs**

By the mid seventeenth century use of herbs seems to have been at its height. The invention of printing in Europe had meant that Classical herbal texts, as well as new writings on the subject, had been widely published throughout Europe and its colonies. In London their popularity meant that herbs had their own market at Leadenhall, a feature built into its fabric after the Great Fire of 1666 [28]. And yet, despite their popularity in cooking and in medicine, the seventeenth century also carried the portents of their decline in use.

In the fifteenth century Paracelsus [29], famous alchemist and astrologer, seen as the forefather of modern chemistry, had already been experimenting with active chemical drugs such as arsenic, copper sulphate, iron, copper, sulphur and mercury. This was built upon in the late seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a succession of scientists who rapidly developed chemistry and other physical sciences, which led, amongst many other things, to the rise of chemical medicine. At the same time Europe and her colonies became increasingly industrialised, which brought about mass migrations from the countryside into the cities, and inevitably brought with it the loss of herb lore based on an agrarian

economy. This affected use of herbs in medicine and in cooking as well, where, within the dark overcrowded slums of early urban life, they were less easy to find. It is perhaps no accident that Britain, the first and the greatest of the early industrialised nations, became well known for the lack of herbs within its food preparation; something that only relatively recently has become fashionable again [30].

These days there often seems to be a losing battle between herbalists, multi-billion dollar drugs companies and government regulatory departments, where those who produce pharmaceuticals do their best to downplay the benefits and expose the “dangers” of using herbal preparations, whilst simultaneously lobbying to have herbs legislated out of existence [31]. Modern medicine attempts to be as exact a science as possible and to this end tries to give standard and precise drugs, in well defined combinations, to cure disease and illness. Herbs by their very nature are often seen as being difficult to administer in such a precise way and, because of this, have tended to play little part in orthodox medicine. Throughout most of the twentieth century, herbal preparations used for therapeutic effect were relegated to being seen in varying degrees as “alternative medicine”. However, as use of pharmaceutical drugs has become ever more widespread, and tales of harmful side effects better known, more and more people have revisited the knowledge of the past. Many modern herbalists, whilst acknowledging the difficulty of precise herbal doses, stress that herbs often act far more gently on the human body and that the plants also contain many other ingredients that are beneficial, besides those that have the specific curative property required.

There is also something slightly counter-cultural about being interested in herbs. Many drugs companies are seen as fleecing poorer nations, or, in effect, withholding medicines from those who cannot afford them in developing countries by making drugs prohibitively expensive. At the same time there is suspicion that big drug’s money seems to hold such sway over the political institutions of Westernised nations and considerable concern over their dealings with genetically modified plants, the patenting of seeds and so on. For many, the choice to use plants grown freely in nature to effect cures is not only about the perceived superiority of natural medicine, it is also a stand against monolithic and virtually unaccountable big business that seems to threaten not only human life but the well being of the planet itself. It is therefore no surprise that herbalism is often strongly identified with what it means to be a Witch or a Pagan, both of which are strongly counter-cultural religious choices that stand in part for a desire to see a more harmonious use made of Earthly resources. And for these groups especially, herbs are not only seen as having practical medicinal uses, or as a nutritious and wholesome way of flavouring cooking, they are also recognised as having important properties that enhance mystical visions and aid magickal workings. Modern Pagans often see herbs in a similar way to how many of our ancestors would have done in pre-industrial or ancient cultures, where they were valuable and amazing forms of plant life that could do incredible and little understood things in many areas of life. Today we can explain herbal curative properties with science, and their use in magick has often become standardised

and quite formulaic, but the sense of wonder has not been diminished and, in fact, our greater understanding of herbal properties on human life has just added to their effectiveness and ease of use.

## Research Project

Now you have reached the end of the chapter I would like you to find out about the use of herbs in a period of history or culture that you are drawn to. As was made clear in the above, I have only concentrated on the use of herbs in what, for want of a better term, might be classed as Western Europe and its culture; a small section of the world -with an important influence it is true- but a small part nonetheless. It may well be that your main interest lies with a culture and a time from this location, but herbs have been used all over the world and you might wish to study their use in regions that I have done little more than allude to. Chinese and Indian herbalism are obviously deserving of attention, as are use of herbs amongst the Inca and the Aztecs. And what about African or Aboriginal herbal practice?

If studying such broad topics seems a little daunting, why not study just one thing in depth from the chapter? As I did my research in bringing this work to you I discovered the incredible tale of a Byzantine princess's luxury copy of Dioscorides' herbal. If you checked out the attendant footnote in the chapter you will find that the story of this one book is something really amazing as it fell through the centuries from empire to empire and into the hands of a variety of powerful and rich owners. Even more amazing is that all of us can gaze on it today as many of its pages are on the Internet. What, I wonder, would Juliana Anicia have made of the fact that her book still exists well over one thousand years after it was made? And what would she have thought about the fact that anyone on the planet with a computer can now access it?

Why not research something like that? Once you get into it, the subject of herbs can lead you into some very unexpected places indeed.

## Footnotes

[1] *Wild Health: How Animals Keep Themselves Well and What We Can Learn From Them*, Cindy Engel, Houghton Mifflin, 2002.

[2] According to Jan Ichida, reported in *Birds Use Herbs to Protect their Nests* here: <http://www.scienceblog.com/cms/node/2776>.

[3] See M. F. (Margaret F.) Roberts, Michael Wink, *Alkaloids: Biochemistry, Ecology, and Medicinal Applications*, p.1, Springer, 1998.

[4] See *Medicinal Plants in a Middle Paleolithic Grave Shanidar IV*, Lietava J., *J Ethnopharmacol.* January 1992, pp.263-6. A synopsis can be found here: [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list\\_uids=1548898&dopt=AbstractPlus](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?cmd=Retrieve&db=PubMed&list_uids=1548898&dopt=AbstractPlus).

[5] A virtual tour of the caves can be made here: <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/>. For confirmation of dating see <http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/arcnat/lascaux/en/>.

[6] See *5300 Years Ago, the Ice Man used Natural Laxatives and Antibiotics*, Capasso L., *Lancet*, 1998. Further details can be found here: [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list\\_uids=9851424](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?cmd=Retrieve&db=pubmed&dopt=Abstract&list_uids=9851424).

[7] The earliest compilation of the *Farmer's Herb-Root Classic* belongs to the Han dynasty (206BCE-220CE).

[8] M. F. (Margaret F.) Roberts, Michael Wink, *op. cit.*, p.12.

[9] A translation of the surviving text can be found here: <http://www.touregypt.net/edwsmithsurgical.htm>. The papyrus is regarded as a copy of several earlier works.

[10] The relevant quote in George Rawlinson's translation reads: "There is an inscription in Egyptian characters on the pyramid which records the quantity of radishes, onions, and garlic consumed by the labourers who constructed it; and I perfectly well remember that the interpreter who read the writing to me said that the money expended in this way was 1600 talents of silver." These are lines from the second book. The whole translation is available Online for free at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/h/herodotus/h4/>.

[11] Pliny the Elder cites its use in his *Natural History* xix. 32.

[12] See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymphaea\\_caerulea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nymphaea_caerulea).

[13] The final part of a BBC series called *Sacred Weeds*, broadcast in August 1998, investigated the blue water lily, which had never before been tested for psychoactive properties. A video of the documentary can be watched here <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5760375070244574893&q=sacred+weeds/>.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Harris 500 Papyrus*.

[16] *The Book of the Dead*, more properly known as *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* can be found at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/ebod/>.

[17] For those who are interested, the four sons and their duties are Imsety, human headed protector of the liver, Hapy, baboon headed protector of the lungs, Duamutef, jackal headed protector of the stomach and Qebehsenuef, falcon headed protector of the intestines. The canopic jars contained these body parts after a body's mummification.

[18] The original version of the famous Hippocratic Oath opens with "*I swear by Apollo the Physician and by Asclepius and by Hygieia and Panacea and by all the gods . . .*"

[19] Available for free here:

<http://www.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm>.

[20] Plates from this work may be viewed here:

<http://www.bnonline.it/biblivir/dioscoride/index.htm>.

[21] An Online copy of this work is available here in English translation: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Plin.+Nat.+toc>. On this point see also M. F. (Margaret F.) Roberts, Michael Wink, *op. cit.* p.31.

[22] Archemorus was the child of Lycurgus and Eurydice, who met his end at the hands of a dragon.

[23] *Odyssey*, X. 27.

[24] The book was amended in Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew. After the fall of Constantinople, capital of the Byzantine Empire in 1453, it fell into Turkish hands and was later owned by the Jewish physician to Süleyman the Magnificent. There is also an annotation in French, which may have been made after the sack of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade. Those that want to read more about this fascinating book's history should go to [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia\\_romana/aconite/materiamedica.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/~grout/encyclopaedia_romana/aconite/materiamedica.html).

[25] In particular Culpeper was in disagreement with a College of Physicians' herbalist known as William Coles, of whom more in the next chapter.

[26] This work is also known as the *Badianus* after its author Juan Badiano.

[27] See Mike Sajna, *Herbs Have a Place in Modern Medicine, Lecturer Says*, in *University Times*: Volume 30, Number 4, October 9, 1997, University of Pittsburgh, USA.

[28] See the interesting history of this famous London landmark at [www.leadenhallmarket.co.uk/history.shtml](http://www.leadenhallmarket.co.uk/history.shtml).

[29] Philippus Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim, (1493-1541), born in Switzerland, was better known as Paracelsus and is often referred to as the father of modern medicine and chemistry.

[30] On this point see one of Britain's most famous chefs, Delia Smith at: [www.deliaonline.com/articles/food/herbs-in-urbs,1241,AR.html](http://www.deliaonline.com/articles/food/herbs-in-urbs,1241,AR.html).

[31] For an interesting article on how this process works in the USA, see: [www.associatedcontent.com/article/129670/herbal\\_medicine\\_and\\_the\\_fda.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/129670/herbal_medicine_and_the_fda.html).





Chapter Two:  
Pre-Scientific  
Theories about the  
Use of Herbs in  
Medicine

# Pre-Scientific Theories about the Use of Herbs in Medicine

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn about pre-scientific theories on the use of herbs in medicine.

Continuing on, there is a research project.

And, finally, there are a number of appendices.

## Introduction

Just about everything that will be explored in this chapter is firmly rejected by modern science. Given this, many will ask whether pre-scientific theories of herbs and medicinal properties are worth exploring at all. Hasn't nearly all ancient thought on the use of herbs been superseded by science? And isn't the combination of unscientific subjects like astrology and herbs just so much nonsense? I don't propose to get into a huge debate about these things; those of a scientific mind are free to reject the theories outlined in this work and treat of them as dated ideas that are now completely invalid. Others will be more accepting of ancient ways and premises and, whilst not agreeing with everything that in the past seemed certain or likely, will incorporate some of the ideas in their herbal practice. I hope, though, that all readers will find the material interesting, and can respect that many learned men and women genuinely believed in such theories as will be outlined, and that at the time they seemed to be the best explanation of observed phenomena. The material in this chapter explores the theoretic basis of herbal medical practice over two millennia.

Broadly speaking, the pre-scientific theories of herbs and medicine fall into four distinct areas:

1. Herbs and the Four Elements
2. Herbs and the Four Humours
3. The Doctrine of Signatures
4. Herbs and Astrology

We will now explore each of these parts in turn.

## Herbs and the Four Elements

In most encyclopaedias the origin of the concept of the Four Elements is credited to Empedocles (490-430 BCE), a citizen of a Greek colony in Sicily, although it should be stated that there is evidence of similar ideas before his time in both India and China. He referred to Fire, Water, Air and Earth as the "four roots" and it was Plato who later coined the term "Elements" [1]. For the Ancient Greeks these were supposedly the building blocks from which everything known was created and by which all things could be classified. The Classical view of the properties of the Elements is as follows:

- Fire is primarily hot and secondarily dry.
- Water is primarily cold and secondarily wet.
- Air is primarily wet and secondarily hot.
- Earth is primarily dry and secondarily cold.

An object or thing could be seen to have the quality of a particular Element, or a combination of them, and it would have been natural to classify herbs in this way. For example, chilli, which produces a hot sensation on the skin or when tasted, would generally be seen as having fiery qualities; whilst lavender would be attributed to Air because of what was seen as the airy nature of its many leaves. Detailed tables could be made of all manner of plants attributing them to Fire, Water, Air and Earth. These attributions were always more of an art than a science, although over time standard agreement appears to have been reached [2] (see Appendix One).

Incredibly, classification of herbs and herbal cures, designed with reference to the Four Elements, are to be found in Ancient Greek herbals all the way up to the work of Nicholas Culpeper, and have been present in many European and some non-European cultures for over two thousand years [3]. For English readers, Culpeper's work is the most readily accessible and within the pages of his *English Physician* [4] he divides herbal preparations according to their Elemental properties, be they hot, cold, moist or dry.

## Herbs and the Four Humours

How, though, could knowledge of the relationship between herbs and the Elements be used medicinally? The answer is through finding meaningful correspondences. The Roman medical practitioner, Galen, records that Hippocrates used the properties of the Four Elements when formulating his ideas about the Humours of the human body [5]. These were Yellow Bile (seen as fiery in nature), Phlegm (seen as watery), Blood (airy) and Black Bile (earthy). Thus the Elements were seen to directly correspond to the Humours. The trick to maintaining health was in keeping the Four Humours as balanced as possible. If an imbalance occurred then it could be treated with substances designed to restore harmony. An imbalance in Yellow Bile could be cured with the use of a medicine that counteracted its fiery properties, and this could mean that an herbal preparation with watery qualities was indicated. Similarly, an imbalance caused by Black Bile might be treated through the use of a tonic created from airy herbs, and so on.

## The Doctrine of Signatures

Another plank of the pre-scientific theories of the medical properties of herbs was provided by the Doctrine of Signatures. This was the idea that objects from the natural world, resembling human body parts in colour or form, might be useful in curing ailments or enhancing certain bodily functions. There are hints of thoughts along these lines in the writings of the Galen [6] but the notion really began to

develop with the rise of Christian European metaphysics, which had its roots in the writings and proclamations of the Fathers of the Church, in the early centuries of the Common Era [7]. For them, symbolism could express the underlying unity in everything. Harmonies, similarities, and proportions were the glue that bound the Universe together, and these were evidenced by signatures found throughout nature [8]. It was the job of humankind to find these signs, learn of them, and use this knowledge to develop further as spiritual beings, in the hope that this would eventually bring an individual closer to God. This idea was developed more fully by Paracelsus, who, in the first half of the sixteenth century, created the Spagyric method of Pharmacy, whereby medicines were fashioned by separating, purifying and recombining the constituent parts of an herb or mineral. In the work *Liber Paragranum* he proposed that nature was in a 'raw and unfinished' state and that human beings had been given the job of evolving things to a higher level by God. Paracelsus was an Alchemist and such ideas were perfectly in keeping with the alchemical ideal of attaining spiritual perfection. For him, the 'raw' medicinal herb had to be separated into the basic alchemical constituents of Mercury, Sulphur and Salt, and all non-essential components removed. These three constituents were then recombined to create the medicine.

However, it was not until the writings of the German visionary mystic Jacob Bohme (1575–1624) that the Doctrine of Signatures became a fully fledged philosophical idea. A master shoemaker by trade, Bohme had experienced a profound mystical vision of God and Humankind as a young man, whereby the relationship between the two was to be found in all things. Inspired by this in his forties, he wrote *Signatura Rerum* (1621), known in English as *The Signature of all Things*. This had a profound effect on European religious and philosophical thought: so the argument went, the Creator had left his mark on nature and, therefore, by a process of observation, one could find not only evidence of his genius, but also a sign of the correct use of all living things. It was not long before his ideas were applied to the medicinal qualities of plants.

The herbalist immediately influenced by Paracelsus and Bohme's ideas was William Coles (1626-1662), author of *The Art of Simpling* [9] and *Adam in Eden*, and a member of the College of Physician's in London. Based on their theories he was able to make conjectures about herbs that were established through signatures found in both colour and form. Therefore, walnuts were the perfect palliative for ailments of the head because of their hard outer shells and brain like contents; the body of liverwort could be used for treating related diseases as it resembled a liver; toothwort would cure dental problems; spleenwort, splenic disorders; and lungwort, whose patchy leaves resembled the lung, could aid respiratory problems [10]. On the other hand, based on the signature of colour, jaundice could be cured by plants with yellow flowers or roots such as goldenrod; bruising by a poultice made from the purple leaves of irises; and blood disorders alleviated by plants with red hues.

The Doctrine of Signatures was to be complimented by theories of the astrological influence on herbs, made fashionable by Nicolas Culpeper. In a way, the linking of astrology and plants would have been the natural corollary of finding signs of the

divine within all life. If God could leave his imprint on plants, surely the planets must do the same. Astrology was still (just) seen as a respectable and valid science among many medical professionals in the mid-seventeenth century, but more importantly its rationale was perceived to be more worthy, accurate and scientific by those who were inclined to read popular herbals in that time. Culpeper's astrological herbal writings caught (and in certain circles still do catch) the reading public's imagination, and superseded the ideas of Cole based on a crude observation of colour and form. Incidentally, this clash of ideas led to a feud between the two men; Culpeper, of course, won the argument, as today it is his work that is vastly better known than Coles'.

## **Herbs and Astrology**

It is generally not well known or appreciated how herbs and astrology are linked by those with an interest in the occult, and this may be due to the paucity of well known modern sources on the subject. Although modern herbal works exist that will tell you which plants are attributed to which planet, they almost always fail to explain why the attributions are as they are [11]. To my view this is an important oversight, as to be able to gain mastery over the uses of herbs for magickal purposes (explored later in this work) really requires an understanding of the process of attribution. Of course, some might try to argue that the modern magickal attributions of herbs has nothing to do with the astro-pharmaceutical correspondences written of below, but the truth is that a glance at most of these books reveals that the information was taken from Culpeper [12].

Culpeper would have been cognizant of the famous maxim "As above, so below" [13], where the macrocosmic realm of the heavens was reflected in the microcosmic world of planet Earth. To a world where science was in its infancy, it seemed perfectly reasonable to look for correspondences between the perceived properties of planets, disease and herbs.

## **Astrology and Diseases**

In his *Astrological Judgement of Diseases*, Culpeper outlined his theory of how the nature of a disease may be assessed [14]. This broke down into three parts; a disease could be assessed by:

1. House, where the sixth, seventh and twelfth houses signified the nature of the disease.
2. The nature of the associated star signs, where fiery signs signified cholera, earthy signs melancholy, airy signs diseases of blood and wind, and watery signs diseases of water and salt phlegm (there were obvious correspondences here to the Four Humours).
3. Associated planets and their aspects.

Based on this rationale, Culpeper created voluminous tables detailing every kind of heavenly combination and its related effects on the human body and disease. How did this work in practice? Perhaps the easiest way to explain is to give several examples from his work [15]. If a patient was afflicted when Saturn was in Leo then “hectique fevers” could be expected, if it was in other fixed signs then “agues...and leprosies” resulted; Mars in Leo signified heart trouble; the Moon in Aries in the Eighth House “afflicts the head with a disease too hot for it to bear” and so on. Further, the length of disease might also be determined by an examination of the heavens; the Moon gave recurring illness; Saturn prolonged its stay; Mars shortened it; and with regard to Mercury no-one could say how much time an illness might last [16].

## **Planets and the Human Body**

Culpeper’s system was rendered subtler by the attribution of planets to body parts (see Appendix Two). This was important, for, depending on which part of the body was afflicted and the planet that ruled it, certain corresponding herbal cures would have to be applied. So, for example, Jupiter ruled the liver and it was thought that the juice of burdock (a plant ruled by that planet) would be good for ailments affecting it [17]. However, it was not always possible to find such a neat solution and, in this case, plants embodying one set of astrological qualities could be used to effectively treat a body part that was ruled by other celestial properties. So the throat, which was governed by Venus, could be treated with a gargle made of nettles, ruled by Mars. In such an instance one planetary property would be seen to compliment the other in effecting a cure, where warlike Mars and passive, loving Venus found their balance in each other.

## **Herbs and Planets**

The cure for ailments, then, depended on a close knowledge of the planets and their associated herbs (see Appendix Three). It should be remembered that the planets included the Sun (Sol) and the Moon (Luna) and that celestial orbs further out than Saturn had not been discovered in Culpeper’s day. The following list gives a brief overview of the planets [18], the body parts they were associated with and their corresponding herbs:

### **Saturn**

Saturn governed time and the aging process. It had influence over the skeletal structure as a whole, including teeth, and was responsible for all developments of hardening. In general, plants of Saturn were perceived to be bone healing or forming, would alleviate pain, caused congealing of the blood or were soporific. Plants attributed to Saturn had annual rings, lack-lustre leaves and bark, cooling properties and no flowers (or flowers that were dull).

## **Jupiter**

Jupiter governed the liver, the kidneys, the abdomen and the spleen. It also ruled the digestive processes and bodily growth. Plants attributable to this planet were often calming, relieved or prevented spasm, were good for the liver and killed parasitic worms. They were also readily noticeable and identifiable, full of nourishment and could be fruit or nut bearing.

## **Mars**

Mars wound its way through the Zodiac every two years and, as a result, was frequently associated with biennials. It governed musculature, sex-drive and vitality, as well as nerves associated with motor processes. Plants linked with this planet were often stimulative, affected the blood and were aphrodisiac in nature. Many were armed with prickles, spines or thorns and lived in inhospitably dry locations. Commonly they had a red colour, or were pungent, hot or acrid.

## **Sol**

The Sun had annual plants attributed to it for obvious reasons. It governed the heart, circulation and the spine. Its associated flora were Sun coloured and often sported bright yellow, orange or gold colours. These were frequently rounded as well, and some had a disposition to follow the Sun (like the sunflower). Clove and pepper were attributed to Sol as they were heat producing, as well as plants that were a tonic for the heart.

## **Venus**

Venus had plants associated with her that were perceived to have traditionally feminine qualities. They were often reminiscent of the female form in their roundness, pleasing to smell and with smooth, fresh green foliage. They were also often fruit bearing or coloured with a pink or red blush. Venus governed the skin tone and texture, the sexual organs and the cells of the body (which would have been seen as mysterious and little understood). Often the medicinal effects of her plants caused beneficial changes in the body, soothed and softened the skin and could even help prevent kidney infections. With Venus being the goddess of love, it was perhaps inevitable that many aphrodisiac plants were attributed to her as well.

## **Mercury**

Mercury governed plants that had a beneficial effect on diseases of the nervous system, the lungs, the tongue and the ears. Plants associated with the planet had a refined taste or smell and were often important foodstuffs such as cereal. Frequently they had “airy” looking leaves, which meant that they were both fine

and highly divided. Many of the plants associated with Mercury were seen to elevate mood and could best be described as pick-me-ups.

## Luna

Because of the Moon's relationship with the sea it was supposed that all bodily fluids and secretions were under her influence. Further, it was believed that the Moon was a factor in growth cycles, affected fertility and menstruation, and governed the breasts, stomach and womb. It was also seen as having power over brain function and memory. The Moon was associated with plants that were round in shape, exhibited a similar colour or echoed the appearance of one of her phases, such as a banana. They often had juicy leaves or were large, watery and possessed of a subtle flavour. Many of the plants attributed to the Moon lived in or near water.

## Culpeper's Method

With knowledge of Culpeper's ideas on astrology and medicinal herbs in place, his exposition of how to use astrological information and herbs in the curing of disease should now be intelligible. In his *Epistle to the Reader of the English Physician* [19] he wrote:

**First** Consider what planet causeth the disease; that thou mayest find it in my aforesaid Judgement of Diseases.

**Secondly** Consider what part of the body is affected by the disease and whether it lies in the flesh or blood or bones or ventricles.

**Thirdly** Consider by what planet the afflicted part of the body is governed; that my Judgement of Diseases will inform you also.

**Fourthly** You may oppose diseases by herbs of the planet opposite to the planet that causes them; as diseases of the luminaries by the herbs of Saturn and the contrary; diseases of Mars by the herbs of Venus and the contrary.

**Fifthly** There is a way to cure diseases sometimes by sympathy and so every planet cures its own diseases; as the Sun and Moon by their herbs cure the eyes, Saturn the spleen, Jupiter the liver, Mars the gall and diseases of the choleric, and by Venus diseases in the instruments of generation."

Culpeper's theories were the very apex of pre-scientific theories about the medicinal properties of herbs and how they should be employed. These were rooted in over two thousand years of observation of the effects of herbs and the development of the medical theories of the Ancient Greeks. As history shows though, time honoured traditions are all eventually surpassed, and Culpeper's *Complete Herbal* marked the zenith before the fall. Science was to increasingly show that the Greek ideas and medical practice based on the Four Humours was false. Further, astronomy was gaining precedence over astrology and the belief that the planets influenced our health was more and more open to challenge. Perhaps most



damagingly though, it was increasingly being demonstrated that basing herbal cures on “signatures” of colour, form, taste and texture was at best inefficacious and at worse positively harmful.

## **Samuel Hahnemann**

The most serious challenge to herbal astro-pharmacy was from the German Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843). Hahnemann was the founder of homeopathy, based on the idea that like cures like, through the law of similars. It was he who first tested herbal preparations in a systematic way, through a process of “provings” entailing the trial of herbal and mineral preparations on volunteer participants. This approach was not only of value to the development of homeopathy but to the wider development of herb and mineral based medicines in the nineteenth century [20].

We will explore modern ways of using herbs as cures and to promote health later on in this book, but for the time being we shall leave them so that next chapter we can investigate the religious and magickal uses of herbs.

## Research Project

**A quick note on this chapter's Research Project and Exercises:** The following are designed to lay the ground for a future chapter on herbs and magick and are necessary to undertake should you wish to properly develop the ability to practice effective herb magick. However, not everyone who reads this work will be interested in developing such skills in which case it is suggested they are merely read solely for curiosity's sake.

This chapter has deliberately concentrated heavily on herbs and astrology. Although the thrust of the writing has been to look at herbs and medicine much of the astrological information will be of great use when studying the use of herbs in magickal practice. Therefore I would like you to familiarise yourself with Culpeper's work. Fortunately this does not require that you buy a copy of the book -although it is available very cheaply from sellers such as Amazon.com- as it can be read for free on the Internet at <http://www.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm>.

The work is vast and because of this I would suggest that the areas studied are the sections on the Governance and Virtues of herbs, generally found at the end of each section on a particular plant. You need not study all the herbs in the book. Just pick between ten or twenty that you are drawn to and would like to get to know better. It may well be that you already use the herbs you have chosen in magickal practice, so much the better as Culpeper's work will expand your knowledge base about them.

In particular look at:

- Any astrological information given, especially ruling planets and body parts that use of the herb is related to.
- The way in which the herb is prepared for a cure.
- Suggestions as to which herb it can be mixed with.
- How the herbal preparation should best be utilised.

The reason for this is that it will give you an insight into a number of ways of using the herb in magickal practice that you may not have considered. It will stimulate your imagination and, as those that practice magick already know, this is one of the keys of successful magickal working. One word of caution; **Culpeper's work is no longer considered medicinally safe and be extremely careful and take professional advice if tempted to use any of his preparations.**

## Exercises

The appendices at the end of the chapter have been included for a reason; the knowledge within them is important, not merely as information to back up outdated medical theory but because much of what is written there is important to magickal practice.

I have deliberately avoided giving the reader diagrams of planets, herbs and body parts as I would like you to construct your own from the tables. This is an excellent device for getting you to learn of the correspondences. Of course, not everyone will be a great or even good artist, but that matters little, the thing I would like to encourage is a real interaction with the correspondences, as it will make using herbs in magickal practice far more satisfactory when the time comes.

## Appendix One

The table below details a handful of common plants and the Elements to which they can be related merely to give an indication of the way correspondences can be made.

<b>Element</b>	<b>Plant</b>
Fire	Bay, chestnut, chilli, garlic, fig, frankincense, lovage, mandrake, marigold, nettle, pomegranate, radish, rosemary, sunflower.
Water	Belladonna, birch, blackberry, comfrey, cucumber, dock, eucalyptus, foxglove, grape, heather, iris, ivy, mallow, pear, peach, plum, thyme, willow.
Air	Bergamot, borage, caraway, clover, hazel, hops, lavender, lemongrass, lily of the valley, maple, mint, mistletoe, parsley, ground pine, sage.
Earth	Beet, cypress, honeysuckle, oats, patchouli, plaintain, potato, primrose.

## Appendix Two

**Table Showing some of the Parts of the Body and Planetary Correspondences [21]**

Body Part	Planet
Adrenals	Jupiter
Aorta	Sun
Arms	Mercury
Back	Sun
Bile	Mars
Blood	Mars/Jupiter
Bones	Saturn
Bowels	Mercury
Brain	Mercury
Breasts	Moon
Circulatory System	Mercury
Digestive System	Moon
Ears	Saturn (L), Jupiter(R)
Eyes	Sun
Feet	Jupiter
Genitals	Mars
Glandular Tissue	Moon
Hair	Mercury
Hands	Mercury
Heart	Sun
Joints	Saturn
Kidneys	Venus
Knees	Saturn
Lips	Venus
Liver	Jupiter
Lungs	Mercury

Lymphatic Glands	Moon
Muscles	Mars
Neck	Venus
Nervous System	Mercury
Nose	Mars
Ovaries	Moon/Venus
Pancreas	Moon/Jupiter
Pituitary Gland	Jupiter
Sciatic Nerves	Jupiter
Sinews	Mars
Skin	Saturn
Stomach	Moon
Teeth	Saturn
Thighs	Jupiter
Throat	Venus
Thyroid Gland	Venus/Mercury
Tongue	Mercury
Uterus	Moon
Womb	Moon

## Appendix Three

**Table Showing Planets and Associated Plants [22]**

Planet	Associated Plants
Saturn	<p><b>Plants whose qualities are cooling:</b> tamarind, barley and comfrey root.</p> <p><b>Woody Plants:</b> pine tree (not to be confused with ground pine), elm and cypress.</p> <p><b>Others:</b> sloes, barley, quince and red beets.</p>
Jupiter	<p><b>Fruits:</b> currant, figs, olives, rose hips.</p> <p><b>Nuts:</b> almonds, chestnuts.</p> <p><b>Others:</b> sage, burdock and other dock leaves, borage, bugloss and dandelion.</p>
Mars	<p><b>Plants with thorns or prickles, such as:</b> hawthorn, nettle, barberry and cacti.</p> <p><b>Also plants with a strong acrid taste:</b> parsley, all-heal, capers, coriander, garlic, gentian, hops, horseradish, mustards, onion, peppers, radish and tarragon.</p>
Sun	<p><b>Plants resembling the Sun in shape and/or colour:</b> camomile, celandine, century, eyebright, European angelica, lovage, orange, rosemary, rue, storax and saffron.</p> <p><b>But also:</b> vine, bay tree, celery and rue.</p>
Venus	<p>Mint, bramble, plums, apples, cherry, primrose, carnation, thyme, vervain, daisies, strawberry, wheat, white rose and violet.</p>
Mercury	<p>Marjoram, caraway, fennel, carrots, dill, fennel, pomegranate, self heal, parsley, lavender, lily of the valley, marjoram, parsnips, hazelnut, horehound and mandrake.</p> <p>Cereals.</p>
Moon	<p><b>Plants similar in shape and/or colour to the Moon:</b> cucumber, white rose, banana, gourds, mango, melons, pumpkin, sweet flag and water lilies.</p> <p><b>Plants in or near water:</b> seaweed, watercress, willow and wintergreen.</p> <p><b>Also:</b> turnip, lettuce and willow.</p>

## Appendix Four

**Table Showing Parts of the Body and Star Sign Correspondences**

<b>Area of Body</b>	<b>Astrological Sign</b>
Head and face	Aries
Neck and throat	Taurus
Shoulders, arms and nerves	Gemini
Breast, lungs and stomach	Cancer
Heart, back and spine	Leo
Stomach and intestines	Virgo
Kidneys	Libra
Reproductive organs	Scorpio
Thighs and hips	Sagittarius
Bones, joints and knees	Capricorn
Circulation, lower legs and ankles	Aquarius
Feet and immune system	Pisces



## Appendix Five

### Star Signs and Herbs

Although not in evidence in Culpeper's writings, it has been mooted by some authors that star signs and herbs may be linked [23] and this idea is presented here as an aside to the chapter.

The point can be made that in temperate climates plant life follows the seasons in an obvious way, but, more than this, different plants flower, seed and require planting at varying times of the year. Given this basic fact it was hardly surprising that plants became tied to human notions and divisions of time. Moreover, it must have seemed natural to extend this to zodiacal correspondences once herbal properties are compared to the qualities of the various star signs and their planetary rulers. It can be seen to make perfect sense, for example, to attribute most plants of Mars to Aries and plants of the Moon that grow in water to Pisces.

**Table Showing Star Signs and Associated Plants**

Star Sign	Associated Plant
Aries	<b>Most plants ruled by Mars including:</b> betony, lichen and rosemary. <b>Also:</b> bramble.
Taurus	<b>Rules most plants governed by Venus and the Earth:</b> mushrooms and root vegetables (potatoes, carrots and turnips).
Gemini	<b>Rules the plants of Mercury as well as:</b> tansy, vervain and mosses.
Cancer	<b>Rules many plants governed by the Moon as well as:</b> cucumber, lettuce, water plants, alder, lemon balm, honeysuckle, hyssop and jasmine.
Leo	<b>Plants governed by the Sun also including:</b> borage, bugloss, peony and poppy.
Virgo	<b>Rules cereal grains:</b> barley, oats, rye, wheat, grasses and sedge.
Libra	<b>Rules many of the plants related to Venus as well as:</b> white rose and other brightly coloured flowers.
Scorpio	<b>Rules all the plants governed by Mars, also including:</b> basil, bramble and palms.
Sagittarius	Rules oak, beech and elm, mallows and feverfew
Capricorn	<b>Rules all plants governed by Saturn, including:</b> hemlock, nightshades and yew.
Aquarius	Frankincense and myrrh.

Pisces	Algae, seaweed and water mosses.
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## Footnotes

[1] See Plato, *Timaeus*, 48b, “We must gain a view of the real nature of fire and water, air and earth, as it was before the birth of Heaven, and the properties they had before that time; for at present no one has as yet declared their generation, but we assume that men know what fire is, and each of these things, and we call them principles and presume that they are elements of the Universe...”

[2] Much of Nicholas Culpeper’s work, for example, is testament to such connections being made and he is by no means exceptional.

[3] The writings of the Greeks Dioscorides and Hippocrates, as well as the Roman Galen on the Four Elements were influential in Jewish culture as well, where the works of the physician known as Asaph (probably alive in the tenth century CE) reflect and incorporates their ideas. On this see, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1877&letter=A>

[4] In Culpeper’s work they may be found in his chapter entitled *A Key to Galen’s Method of Physic*, where he also refers to the ideas of Hippocrates. See *Culpeper’s Complete Herbal*, Wordsworth Reference Series, 2007, pp. 555-560.

[5] See Galen, *On the Elements According to Hippocrates* translated by W. J. Lewis, with the assistance of J. A. Beach and S. Rubio-Fernaz, <http://www.medicinaantiqua.org.uk/Medant/Elem.htm>.

In lines 471-473 he explains how the Elements counter each other within the body: “For if it were completely consumed by fire, the cold element would be destroyed, and if it were completely chilled, the hot element would be destroyed. And thus, if you were to completely dry the body, you would thoroughly destroy the wet element, and if you were to make it completely wet, you would destroy the dry element. So that this is the opposite of what they say, and one of the elements is always removed and is added. This occurs in a balanced way for those who do not wish to destroy the creature, for the unbalanced use of these elements results in destruction.”

[6] See Tamara S. James, *The Doctrine of Signatures* available here: <http://www.holysmoke.org/wb/wb0081.htm>

[7] These were a group of influential Christian theologians from the first five centuries CE.

[8] See *Analogy in Patristic and Medieval Thought*, at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/ot2www-dhispecfile=/texts/english/dhi/dhi.o2w&act=text&offset=570154&query=++signatures&tag=ANALOGY+IN+PATRISTIC+AND+MEDIEVAL+THOUGHT>

[9] Available in a modern edition by Kessinger, 2004.

[10] *Wort* is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning plant.

[11] Good examples of these kinds of works are *Llewellyn’s Herbal Almanac*, Llewellyn 2007 (published annually) and Scott Cunningham, *Cunningham’s*

*Encyclopaedia of Magickal Herbs, Expanded and Revised*, Llewellyn, 2003 both of which contain astrological information but lack explanations of why the astrological attributions are as they are.

[12] For example, this seems almost certainly to be the case with regards to the herbal works of Scott Cunningham, where the astrological information closely follows that of Culpeper. Cunningham also includes a number of plants that are not in the *English Physician*, where the attributions may be his own.

[13] Hermes Trismegistus was purportedly the author of the alchemical work, *The Emerald Tablet* in which the phrase can first be found. This was later taken up by the famous physician Paracelsus (1493-1541) who popularised the idea in Renaissance Europe. He was also famous for the idea that “like cures like”, which has importance for the astrological properties of herbs and how they relate to the human body.

[14] Nicholas Culpeper, *The Astrological Judgment of Diseases from the Discomfiture of the Sick*. Today published by Kessinger, 2004. See p. 89 for an outline of how the nature of a disease may be found out.

[15] The examples are drawn from *ibid.* pp. 90-91.

[16] *Ibid.* p.96.

[17] Modern herbalists generally agree that burdock can be effective for some liver complaints and has an inner cleansing action effective for boils and abscesses, which can be caused by the organ working improperly. See Nicola Peterson, *Herbs and Health*, Bloomsbury Books, 1989, p.31, 77, 81.

[18] The planets are given in their magickal Kabbalistic order. Neptune, Uranus and Pluto have not been included as they were discovered later than the C17th and have only relatively recently been associated with plants.

[19] The extract is taken from *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*, Wordsworth Reference Series, 2007, p.ix.

[20] On this point see Peter Morrell, *British Homeopathy During Two Centuries*, unpublished M. Phil. thesis available online for free at <http://homeoint.org/morrell/british/index.htm>. The relevant section is Part One: *Origins, Homeopathy and Hahnemann*.

[21] This table and Appendix Four was mainly based on information contained in Julia and Derek Parker, Parker's Astrology, *The Definitive Guide to Using Astrology in Every Aspect of Your Life*, DK Publishing 2003.

[22] The majority of the correspondences in this table are based on Nicholas Culpeper, *op. cit.* and his full list can be found here: <http://www.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/plants.htm> It should be noted such categorisation was never seen as an exact science and it is quite possible to classify some of the above plants differently.

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[23] See W. B. Crow, *The Occult Properties of Herbs and Plants*, Aquarian Press, 1980, p. 51.

[24] Those that want complete tables should consult Scott Cunningham, *Encyclopedia of Magickal Herbs, Expanded and Revised*, Llewellyn, 2003, pp. 274-6.



# Chapter Three: Use of Herbs in Religious and Magickal Practice

# Use of Herbs in Religious and Magickal Practice

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn about a variety of religious and magickal uses of herbs.

At the end there is a research project.

## Introduction

As was learnt in the previous chapters the effects of herbs and other plants were little comprehended in a scientific way before modern times. Although certain plants seemed to have an effect on curing certain ailments (as well as killing both humans and animals), there was no real systematic testing or measuring. And although at different times there were theories of how herbs, the body and the planets all interacted, there was little hard qualitative evidence that proved how herbal preparations worked. Throughout much of human history the healing properties of plants were therefore mysterious and, for many people in many times, who did not have the benefit of the theories of men of learning, it is likely that they must have seemed really quite inexplicable. When coupled to the fact that many plants are able to affect the mind and perception to varying degrees, it is possible to see why herbs were used in magickal and religious practice throughout many cultures and times. This chapter explores their uses within these contexts. A comprehensive survey would fill many volumes and because of this I have had to be selective in terms of range of cultures considered within each section. Once you have completed these first three chapters, you will have a wide-ranging knowledge of how herbs have been used in the past. This will give you a solid basis from which to explore practical modern applications and in many instances will let you appreciate why things are as they are, especially with regard to magickal and ritualistic practice, although it will also be of use in medicinal preparations.

Magick and religion are not the same. For the purposes of this chapter the best way to explain the distinction is that religion is about the worship and celebration of a deity or deities. Magick, to use Aleister Crowley's famous definition is "the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the will". To be religious you don't have to use magick and to be a Magician you don't have to have a religion. However, often the two go hand in hand and throughout history many priests and priestesses have practiced magickal arts. Whether combining religion and magick, or practicing them separately, herbs and other plants have frequently been utilised to enhance the individual or group experience.



## Plants as Symbol

One of the most important and powerful ways a plant can be used is as a symbol. Plants have always been used to reveal certain ideas and concepts about the way that divinity and the physical world are combined. Frequently they can be employed to show a way in which to frame the World on all its levels and become, in effect, paradigms providing a framework of religious and magickal reference. Once you look for them, these kinds of symbols abound in religious and magickal iconography. One need go no further than the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, *The Bible's* Tree of Knowledge and the Norse *Yggdrasil* or World Tree. At heart these symbols use the constituent parts of a plant to express the connection between physical mundane reality and the rarefied realm of the god head. With their roots in the loam of the Earth and their branches stretching to the heavens, trees have often played a central part in religious or magickal practice. Think of the sacred oak groves of the Druids entwined in the even more sacred mistletoe, the Celtic Tree Calendar [1], the various trees assigned to the Greek, Egyptian and Hindu pantheons [2], the Bohdi Tree of the Buddhists, the Oak and Holly King of many Witches and so on.

But it is not only trees that famously express connection to the divine. Floating out on the primeval waters of Hindu and Egyptian creation myth, the lotus flower, or water lily, spreads wide its petals to reveal the centre of all things. The Syrian Neoplatonist, Iamblichus (c.250 – c. 330), stated that the plant's leaves and round fruit were symbolic of intelligence; its rising from the earth displayed the superiority of mind over matter; divinity was to be found on the flower head; and the surface of the water, on which it floated, represented all that the intellect could rule[3]. Although not all cultures would necessarily have seen the plant in these terms, Iamblichus gives us a useful insight into how the Lotus could be used to express a relationship between humans and the divine, and no wonder, then, that the flower has been seen as sacred throughout India, Tibet, China and Ancient Egypt.

In the Western Magickal Tradition perhaps the best known symbolic flower is the rose. Its use seems to have derived from the Rosicrucians. The beginnings of this international fraternal organisation are shrouded in mystery, some say that it began in Ancient Egypt and maintained its secrecy through the eons. This is unlikely as the first Rosicrucian records belong to early seventeenth century Germany and the publication of the pamphlets *Fama Fraternitatis* and *Confessio Rosae Crucis*. These works detailed a journey into the Orient by Christian Rosenkreuz, who supposedly founded the order to share the wisdom he gained. Today Rosicrucian teaching imparts a synthesis of Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Egyptian Hermetism and other occult beliefs and practices. It was a considerable influence on the founding members of the Golden Dawn, particularly S.L. MacGregor Mathers, and helps to explain why the Rosy Cross is a central symbol of that organisation and used by offshoot societies. Combined with the Cross, the rose is used as a symbol of all things from the Divine to the mundane, through integrating Kabbalistic and Alchemical keys [4].

Of course, all manner of plants have been used in a variety of symbolic ways; one of the most common is through their attribution to a god or a saint, where they are intended to show qualities that reflect on the figures and vice versa. These symbolic correspondences can be easily found with a little research on the Internet or by consulting a magickal herbal and, for example, a quick list of attributions from a variety of religions might include wheat for Ceres, dead-nettle to Diana, mint to Proserpina, aconite to Cerberus, wormwood to Isis, violet and rosemary to Mary, rose to Mary Magdalene, St. John's wort to St. John, St. Barnaby's thistle to Saint Barnaby and shamrock to St. Patrick.

Nice distinctions in the use of plants attributed to a god or saint are difficult to make but, to generalise, often when used in a religious sense they become meditative focal points with which to begin communication with the Divine or an intermediary (such as an angel). When employed in a magickal sense the plant becomes a symbol of the qualities of the god or saint that an individual desires to work with, to help bring a goal into reality.

Not only though are plants used as part of the symbolism surrounding a deity, they can also stand for glyphs of a particular quality that may have a religious or magickal significance. Plants can be used to represent abstract concepts as well as virtues and vices. Fairly standard correspondences are laurel and the palm representing victory, the olive branch as a symbol of peace, myrtle as a token of compassion and the rose to show charity. Think too of the plants that appear in the Waite/Smith Tarot (also known as the Rider-Waite Tarot). Here roses can represent passion and desire, white lilies purity, the pomegranate infinite mysteries, the iris a pathway to the Divine, the vine plenty and the power of nature. In *The Bible*, mustard seeds represent the great potential within the smallest of things:

*The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches [5].*

But not all plants represent laudable qualities or aspirations, they can just as well be used to stand for vices, chief of which are the Seven Deadly Sins, where the avocado represents lust, the stinging nettle gluttony, auricula avarice, basil anger, the poppy sloth, cedar pride, and the bramble envy [6].

It is important to remember that the properly understood magickal and religious utilisation of herbs and other plant life are incredibly powerful. As you may have learnt elsewhere on courses at Magicka School, symbols can readily and effectively be employed to tap into the resources of your mind and draw down an Infinite Intelligence that is capable of being used to organise any wish or desire.

## **Plants in Ritual**

Because plants can be so powerfully symbolic they can be effectively used in ritual as well as in spellwork. Not everyone who reads this book will be familiar with what a ritual is, so I hope those that know will forgive my explaining before we

move on. A ritual can loosely be described as a previously thought out set of actions and statements within a tradition and established by precedent. Often rituals are used for religious and magickal purposes, although this isn't always the case (rituals are part of many non-religious and non-magickal fraternities and societies, even the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have rituals). Some cultures have very formal and rigid ritualistic procedures, sometimes literally carved in stone. For Witches and Magicians - and most of the readers of this work will be Witches or Magicians- the process is often a creative one and spontaneity encouraged; that said though, ritualistic patterns can be observed, including things such as opening and closing a magickal circle and certain processes within it. Rituals can be used to celebrate the seasons, to work with deities and often (but not always) in the working of magick.

## **Ritual Purification**

As anyone who has cast a circle knows, the most important things you do before beginning are to purify the space in which the ritual will take place, purify the people who are going to take part and purify the tools (including icons) that are to be used. For some there is the belief that an actual purification of unwanted "energies" (however they may be defined) takes place. Others see that the cleansing is a symbolic one designed to convince the mind that purity has been created. Such distinctions matter little in practice; whether symbolic or actual, the purification of the space, person or object creates a safe atmosphere within which a ritual can take place. Different cultures have different ways of achieving this effect, but many use plants or plant extracts, a few examples should serve to show the range of possibilities:

Groups of indigenous American peoples use smudge-sticks to clear ritual space; these are a bundle of herbs, most frequently of white sage but often containing other plants such as cedar, lavender, and mugwort, which are burnt to produce smoke that purifies the area to be used. In ancient Hebrew tradition the herb known as ezob [7] was mixed with water and sprinkled on individuals during the purification for the Red Heifer ritual [8]. And, in Hindu culture, during the abhisheka, or sprinkling, a deity's image is ritually bathed with a mixture of water, curd, milk, honey, ghee and rosewater to enhance purity.

## **Incense and Oils**

Incense, and to a lesser extent oils, created from herbs and plants, are also widely used to achieve purification within rituals, but they also have effects on the mind that can serve to enhance ritual and/or magickal work. Aromatic substances have been employed for millennia in many of the great religions of the world: from the Taoist, Shinto and Buddhist shrines of the Far East to the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches; from incense offerings to the Hindu deities Krishna and Rama, to the meditations of the Sufi sect of Islam. In most religions, incense or oils at least set the tone for a ritual event and, for many modern Pagans and those

working within the Western Mystery Tradition, often there is a sophisticated set of olfactory correspondences with desired outcomes to draw upon during ritualistic work.

As well as helping to get rid of unwanted nebulous energies or enhancing meditations, incense can have practical concrete applications. Zen Buddhists for example use a compound containing citronella, a member of the grass family, to keep away mosquitoes during meditation, whilst at the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, a mixture of hardened plant resins was regularly burnt in the largest thurible [9] in the world during Medieval and Renaissance times, to purify the air of the noxious smells of those who had gone on pilgrimage.

## Embodiment

Another way in which plants or plant products are incorporated into ritual is when it is believed that they actually contain the deity being worked with. This is most famously evident within Eastern and Western Catholicism, where Christ is considered to be present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. This kind of belief, though, is not just confined to Christians. Many Wiccans, for example, believe that deity is immanent within nature; that is they believe that the God and the Goddess are present in all things. Given this, everything present within a Witch's ritual is infused with the Divine and this, of course, includes any herb or plant worked with, as well as the chalice of wine and the cakes and ale used at the end of a ceremony, which are, of course, plant by-products.

## Plants that Alter the Mind

*"Were such things here as we do speak about?  
Or have we eaten on the insane root  
That takes the reason prisoner?"  
Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act 1, Scene 3*

**Please Note:** I do not recommend or condone using mind-altering plants or plant by-products (including those that are perfectly legal to purchase [10]) and this section is for informational purposes only. It is as well to bear in mind that a number of these plants can cause death.

Many plants have mind-altering properties usually caused by a variety of alkaloidal compounds. These range from well-known hallucinogens like *Amanita muscaria*, also known as fly agaric or magic mushroom, which contains muscimol, to opiates such as *Mitragina speciosa* or kratom, containing 7-hydroxymitragynine. But there are many plants that, perhaps unexpectedly, have effects on the mind like buttercup and catnip [11]. For most of human history, the effect of chemicals on the brain has been poorly understood and explained in a variety of magickal and religious terms. Some have seen that plants contain a particular spirit, demi-god or god and that when ingested, or smoked and inhaled, the spirit becomes as one

with the individual. Others explain the effect of a plant as opening up passageways or doorways to enhanced perceptions, revelations and visions. Often this is seen as being achieved through the stimulation and awakening of the fabled Third Eye, which allows those that can see through it to comprehend reality as it truly is. However, today, for those brought up in a scientific culture, such notions can be difficult to sustain, but this does not mean that magickal interpretations of the effects of flora have completely disappeared. Many who use plants for their mind altering qualities claim that the drugs present stimulate or depress certain areas of the brain giving it access to higher levels of reality or the possibilities of extended functionality.

## Visions and Delirium Around the World

Perhaps the most famous and widely utilised plant in a magickal and religious context is *Amanita muscaria*, present for thousands of years during ceremonies and spell workings of Hindu and Greek culture to the Aztecs and Incas of South America. It may have been the key ingredient of the Divine Soma of Ancient India [12], which was drunk in religious rituals. For Hindus, Soma was a lunar underworld deity, often shown as a bull or bird and occasionally as an embryo. The waxing Moon symbolised his recreation where he was ready to be drunk again. The effects of this mysterious liquid are written of in the *Rigveda*:

*a áþma sómam amt abhmâganma jyótir ávidma devân  
c kím nnám asmân kernavad ártib kím u dbrtír amrta mártýasya*

We have drunk Soma and become immortal; we have attained the light, the Gods discovered.

Now what may foeman's malice do to harm us? What, O Immortal, mortal man's deception? [13]

Here it is obvious that not only is the plant the embodiment of a god but allows an individual to attain knowledge of the Divine.

Fly agaric was also popular among Shamans and tribes people of Northern Europe to induce trance states. Interestingly, the active ingredient of the plant is present in the urine of those who have ingested it and the toxins partially absorbed by their bodies [14]. As a result it was often a safer option to drink the urine of the Shaman, especially, apparently, in Siberia. Further, the red and white colour of the plant's caps and the fact that it was eaten in Lapland may have impacted on the Santa Claus legends, which puts the jolly present-giving saint in a whole new light.

For the Ancient Greeks the plant may have been used during the rights of Dionysus [15] and there is also a body of literature that conjectures that sex and magic mushrooms may have been influential in the development of Christianity [16]. These opinions are, however, little more than guesswork, and in the case of the latter widely dismissed.

Better evidence exists for its use in South American cultures where *Amanita muscaria* and other fungi from the genii *Psilocybe*, *Panaeolus*, *Conocybe* and *Stropharia*

were sacred hallucinogens of the Aztec, Mayan and Incan peoples, allowing them to communicate with their gods. The Spanish adventurer, Cortez, wrote of mushrooms (possibly magic mushrooms) being ingested during the coronation of Montezuma, who became ruler of the Aztec Empire in 1520 C.E. That these fungi embodied a spiritual being can be deduced by their Aztec word, *teonanacatl*, which means “flesh of the gods”. They may also be present on 3000-year-old carvings, which derive from Guatemala, centre of Mayan culture, and are a lasting testament to their importance in that land.

Other widely used plants in South America include peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*), morning glory (*R. corymbosa*) and datura (*Datura stramonium*). When the Christian Spaniards overran Aztec Mexico in the early sixteenth century they found all these hallucinogenic plants being used in religious ceremonies and throughout their rule took repeated steps to ban them. Peyote in particular was an important plant and remains so to this day in a number of cultures, where usage persists in the Native American Church in the USA and western Canada, as well as amongst the Tarahumara Huichol indians of Mexico. More familiarly perhaps, peyote has entered the consciousness of European culture through the writings of Carlos Castaneda, whose teacher in the use of the plant, Don Juan Matus, described the spirit Mescalito who could show the user how to live their life well, provided Mescalito accepted them.

From all these examples it can be seen that plants have been widely used throughout the world for their mind-altering qualities in the practice of magick and religion. What, though, about their specific use in Witchcraft?

## The Plants of Witchcraft

Mandrake, henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*), deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*), monkshood (*Aconitum*) and hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) have all been associated with Witches in Europe over the last five centuries. That this is the case is no doubt due to popular writings in the Witch-crazed Europe of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A number of diabolical practices were associated with the profane and it was generally supposed that these arts were made possible through the unholy use of various unguents and ointments. In the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, or *Hammer of the Witches*, Heinrich Kramer (c.1430-1505) and Jacob Sprenger (c. 1436-1494) wrote of how Witches were able to take to the skies:

*The way of flying is the following: ...the Witches have to prepare a salve from the boiled limbs of children, especially from those whom they have murdered before baptism, and rub it onto any chair or piece of wood following the instructions by the demon, whereupon they immediately rise into the air...* [17]

Whilst in the earlier *Book of All Forbidden Arts*, 1456, Johannes Hartlieb detailed the use of herbs in this unsavoury concoction:

*For these rides men and women, especially the demons, use a salve called ‘unguentum pharelis’. They prepare it from seven herbs, each of which is collected on the day belonging to the herb. On*

*Sunday, they pick and dig Solsequium, on Monday Lunarium, on Tuesday Verbenam, on Wednesday Mercurialem, on Thursday Barbam Jovis, on Friday Capillos Veneris. They make the salve by mixing these with quite a lot of birds' blood, and also animal lard. I do not write down details, so as to harm no one. Whenever they want to, they rub it on benches or chairs, rakes or oven forks and fly away. This is nothing but necromancy, which is strongly forbidden* [18].

Not only was flight supposedly possible, but for a long time in Europe the art of shape-shifting was attributed to Witches. The earliest surviving account of this is written of in the second century C.E. work, *The Golden Ass* by Apuleius:

*On a day Fotis came running to me in great fear, and said that her mistress, to work her sorceries on such as she loved, intended the night following to transform herself into a bird, and to fly whither she pleased. Wherefore she willed me privily to prepare myself to see the same. And when midnight came she led me softly into a high chamber, and bid me look through the chink of a door: where first I saw how she put off all her garments, and took out of a certain coffer sundry kinds of boxes, of the which she opened one, and tempered the ointment therein with her fingers, and then rubbed her body therewith from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, and when she had spoken privily with her self, having the candle in her hand, she shook parts of her body, and behold, I perceived a plume of feathers did burgen out, her nose waxed crooked and hard, her nails turned into claws, and so she became an owl. Then she cried and screeched like a bird of that kind, and willing to prove her force, moved her self from the ground by little and little, til at last she flew quite away* [19].

But, apart from a handful of sensationalist works that purport to give true Witch recipes or more literary musings, there is a lack of first hand accounts from those who were supposed to have used the ointments. This is the age-old problem of finding primary evidence for practices associated with Witchcraft and, as usual, there is a lack of documentation.

However, a great deal of evidence of the use of powerful hallucinogenic plants in Europe exists, except that they are mentioned without reference to Witches. For example, henbane had long been used by Germanic peoples to make their ale more intoxicating [20] until it was eventually banned as an ingredient of beer in early sixteenth century Bavaria. Deadly nightshade, or *belladonna* (which means beautiful woman), was used throughout Renaissance Italy in the form of eye drops designed to dilate pupils and make women more sexually attractive. And mandrake (*Mandragora officinarum*), perhaps the most famous plant associated with Witches, was frequently used for its medicinal purposes. Because the root could so often look human in form it was thought to contain a spirit of good fortune and later, because of the Doctrine of Signatures, was considered to be an especially potent cure-all.

Not to mention, of course, that all these plants and many of their effects were widely written of during the Golden Age of Herbals. For example, the Bavarian Leonhart Fuchs (1501-1566) wrote in *De Historia Stirpium Commentarii Insignes* (Notable Commentaries on the History of Plants) [21] that the:

*...internal use of Mandrake is very dangerous, it is better to bring about the sleep if need be using the apples and fruits of it, by just tasting them and not taking them into the body.*

And, about henbane:

*...ground freshly alone or mixed with malted barley and applied takes away all sorts of pains. The juice pressed from the herb a handkerchief wetted therein and put onto the hot running and painful eyes quenches the heat stops the flow and their pain. The juice or the seed oil put into the ears quenches the stinging therein and the pain. But use these with great care...*

So, we can see then that there is little evidence to show that Witches actually used plants in the way that is attributed to them. Although they are written widely of in the literature from the time of the Witch-Craze, it is usually with reference to the preparation of drink, beauty products or medicine and there is no hard evidence of more diabolical uses.

## **Plants of Oracular and Divinatory Importance**

Many of the hallucinogenic plants already written of could be used in oracular and divinatory work. Oracles are advice or prophecy from a divine source. They require the use of a medium who transmits often ambiguous advice, which must be interpreted by mortals. For example at Delphi, the pythia, or female medium, would inhale the fumes of burning Henbane seeds before uttering god-given prophecies that a male priest would arrange into hexameter verse [22]. Similarly, shamanic trance-work in Northern Europe, aided by fly agaric, would also allow the gods to communicate with the worldly and let them know what may be.

Divination, however, is the examination of patterns either in the heavens or on Earth and deducing what will come to pass. So, for example, hazel nuts roasting in a fire will either pop or burn and can be used to decide the answer to simple questions such as, "Does he love me?" Where a popping hazel confirms he does and a roasting one that he does not. Such fairly infantile divinatory methods abound in folklore; another equally specious example is of maids during the Michaelmas season carving a variety of possible suitor's initials into crab apples, then leaving them for sometime and coming back later to examine the state of decay [23]. The idea being that the least rotted initials would be those of the best suitor. A more sophisticated method of divination would be that of using complex patterns of twigs or stalks, where certain patterns have already established meanings, such as with regard to the *I Ching*, which, of course, uses yarrow stalks [24].

## **Plants of Enchantment**

The use of plants in matters of love falls into two distinct areas; love philtres, where the idea is to utilise herbal preparations [25] to cause two people to come together through the employment of occult forces, akin to a charm; and aphrodisiacs, where the idea is to stimulate the sexual instinct through the physiological effect of plants.



## Love Philtres

Use of love philtres goes back to the time of the Ancient Greeks and may have been brought into Western Europe by the Romans. In the second century C. E. Apuleius, the author of *The Golden Ass*, referred to Witches gathering herbs to make *philtrum* during a speech he made when defending himself against the use of magick. Love-philtres are also referred to in the work of comic playwright, Lucius Afranius [26]. It is conjectured that transmission to the Romans of such arts may have been through Greek slaves, some of whom ended up as high-class Roman prostitutes and used magick to entice wealthy male citizens of the Empire [27]. However this may have been, it is certain that love philtres have been a common feature throughout Europe since those times and crop up in many instances of art and literature. In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon asks Puck to procure:

*Love in idleness.*

*Fetch me that flower: the herb I showed thee once.*

*The juice of it, on sleeping eyelids laid,*

*Will make or man or woman madly dote,*

*Upon the next live creature that it sees.*

Whilst in *The Love Potion* by Pre-Raphaelite painter, Evelyn de Morgan, a sorceress was shown preparing a phial of liquid.

## Aphrodisiacs

Although not magickal in nature, use of aphrodisiacs was often made alongside spells and enchantments to stimulate the sex drive. Named after Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, herbal aphrodisiacs could include garlic, onion, cabbage, beans, carrots and celery. To our modern ears such a list seems more likely to encourage flatulence and bad breath, but then perhaps this was preferable to other alternatives such as small doses of the lethal drug strychnine, derived from the seeds of the tree *Strychnos nux vomica*, which had the effect of tightening pelvic muscles and must have seemed like an ancient form of Viagra.

## End Comments

This concludes our look at herbs in history. In chapter one we learnt of their uses throughout many times and cultures up to the present day, in chapter two we concentrated on pre-scientific theories behind the use of herbs and in this chapter we have considered plants from a religious and magickal point of view. As has been stated earlier, this groundwork has been entirely necessary, unlike many magickal herbals that concentrate solely on practical magickal application; you have been given a deep and broad background on which to establish a solid herbal practice.

## Research Project

The two most important sections of this chapter are “Plants as Symbol” and “Plants in Ritual” as, in a religious and magickal sense, these are the areas that you are more likely to be dealing with if you are a Witch or Magician.

Take some time to think about how you have been using plants in a symbolic way. Some of you will be at a more sophisticated stage than others in this respect. Maybe you use the cycle of the Oak and Holly King; perhaps you follow the cycle of the Celtic Tree Calendar, maybe you meditate using lotus flower imagery, or the branches of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life and more. Alternatively you may do none of these things. I am willing to bet, though, that whether you are an expert or a complete novice in this respect there are things that you have wanted to develop but haven't yet given yourself the space to do it. When carrying out this research project try to make a commitment to researching another area of symbolic usage.

## Footnotes

[1] That the Celts had a Tree Calendar was first put forward in *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves, originally published in 1948. Many modern scholars refute Grave's ideas and although acknowledging his often brilliant arguments have found little solid evidence to back his claims, see Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Fabrication of 'Celtic' Astrology* at <http://cura.free.fr/xv/13ellis2.html>. That said, the Tree Calendar is used by many Celtic revivalists and for religious and magickal reasons.

[2] For example, Oak for Zeus, Fig for Pan, Laurel for Apollo, Acacia to Osiris, Peach to Harpocrates, Sycamore to Nuit and Hathor, Wood Apple to Shiva, the Fig to Vishnu.

[3] This point is made by W.B. Crow, *The Occult Properties of Herbs and Plants*, Aquarian Press, 1980, p.58.

[4] For an explanation of this symbol you can do no better in print than Lon Milo DuQuette, *Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot*, Weiser, 2003, pp. 38-57.

[5] *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, Chapters 13, verses 31 and 32, *The Bible*, King James Version.

[6] I have been unable to find the origin of such correspondences but on many wedding sites on the Internet plants are listed along with their qualities and also appear in many modern herbal works. See, for example, [http://www.vegasweddings4u.com/Flower\\_Meanings.html](http://www.vegasweddings4u.com/Flower_Meanings.html) and W. B. Crow, *The Occult Properties of Herbs and Plants*, Aquarian Press 1980, p. 75. The problem with such correspondences is that they are not always standardised and, for example, in other works such as Scott Cunningham's *Encyclopedia of Magickal Herbs*, Llewellyn, 2003, nettle is listed as lust and basil as love.

[7] Scholars are divided about what herb ezob would be known by today. Some say that it is hyssop, others that it may be marjoram, oregano or thyme.

[8] A ritual designed to purify those who have had contact with the dead, involving the sacrifice of a young cow.

[9] Various estimates for the weight of the thurible or Botafumeiro exist, giving its weight as between 87 and 160 kilograms.

[10] For an interesting discussion of legal mind altering drugs see the New Scientist article *Mind Altering Drugs: Does Legal Mean Safe* at <http://www.newscientist.com/channel/being-human/mg19125711.000-mindaltering-drugs-does-legal-mean-safe.html> or from issue 2571 of New Scientist magazine, 29 September 2006, page 40-45.

[11] See Steve Andrews, *Herbs of the Northern Shaman: A Guide to the Mind Altering Plants of the Northern Hemisphere*, Loompanics, 2006.

[12] Other contenders include honey, blue lotus and cannabis.

[13] *The Rigveda* 8.48.3, trans. Griffith.

[14] Muscarine, responsible for sweating and twitching side effects is removed.

[15] See Robert Graves, the foreword to *The Greek Myths*, QPD, 1991.

[16] See, for example, John Marco Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1970.

[17] Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Strasbourg 1486, Part 2, Ch. 3, see [http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/part\\_II/mm02a03a.html](http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/part_II/mm02a03a.html). A complete translation is available for free here: <http://www.malleusmaleficarum.org/index.html>.

[18] *The Book of All Forbidden Arts*, Munich 1456, Ch. 32.

[19] The whole of this text can be downloaded here for free: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1666>.

[20] See Max Nelson, *The Bavarian's Beverage: A History of Beer in Ancient Europe*, Routledge, 2004, pp. 11-13.

[21] Leonhart Fuchs was one of the founding fathers of Botany. Beautiful plates taken from his works can be viewed here: <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/exhibns/month/oct2002.html>. A photographed edition of the entire work can be seen at: <http://www.rarebookroom.org/Control/leodeh/index.html>.

[22] See the article *The Spartans, An Enemy of Change* at <http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/H/history/a-b/pdf/spartans3.pdf>.

[23] W. B. Crow, *The Occult Properties of Herbs and Plants*, Aquarian Press, 1980, pp.20-21.

[24] The *I Ching* can just as well be used with coins.

[25] It should be noted, though, that love-philtres were often made exclusively of animal and human products including bodily secretions, hair and even spiders.

[26] See Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, Routledge, 2003, pp. 131-2.

[27] *Ibid.*, p.132.

# Chapter Four: Using Herbs to Heal

# Using Herbs to Heal

## Welcome to the Class

In this chapter you will learn about using herbal preparations and how they can be used to heal a variety of common complaints.

Continuing on, there is a research project.

At the end there is a copyright free appendix to use as you see fit [\[1\]](#).

## Introduction

Now that you have had a wide ranging look at the theories behind the use of herbs from ancient to early modern times we will spend the next couple of chapters taking a look at how herbs are used today, not only for healing but their magickal and religious uses as well. In this chapter we will be looking solely at how herbs can be used in a medicinal sense.

## How Herbs Act on the Body

As has already been established, herbs contain tannins and alkaloids that can have some powerful effects on humans and animals. That they can be utilised to effect cures is down to the physiochemical make-up of flora and fauna and how they interact. There are some obvious and crucial distinctions between these two forms of life. Plants rely directly on sunlight to survive and use the process of photosynthesis to convert solar energy into sugar, which cellular respiration then turns into ATP, a nucleotide/phosphate compound or type of plant “fuel”. Plants generally don’t move and reproduce through their seeds. On the other hand, animals -and that includes humans- are not static and derive their energy from eating plants and other animals. They need to move to find mates and reproduce.

Although plants and animals make use of carbohydrates, fats and proteins the distinctions between their mechanical natures (i.e. plants are static and animals are not) means that the way these substances are used is fundamentally different. Plants primarily use carbohydrate to produce cellulose, which gives them their physical structure. The basic structural element for animals is protein; protein for building muscles, protein for immunity, protein for cell adhesion, protein for a number of hormones and protein for enzymes. This protein is highly responsive and easily stimulated. When animals process food, fat and carbohydrate are used for energy production and they absorb similar forms of protein. Herbal medicinal preparations have the effect of modifying the structure of animal proteins in a beneficial way, so that the correct structure of body proteins are restored.

Further, herbal medicine has one big advantage over its pharmacological cousin; the active ingredient is present in relatively small doses and is combined with the plant matter. In general, this means that herbal medicine acts more gently on the

body and that there are fewer risks of side effects. However, when using these plants or plant extracts it should always be borne in mind that you are introducing chemicals into the body and, although this work will only be dealing with herbal preparations that are tried, tested and safe, it is as well to remember to look out for any adverse reactions.

## **The Categories of Healing Herbs**

Herbs that can be used for healing fall into three broad categories:

1. Bitter Herbs
2. Astringent Herbs
3. Nutritive Herbs

Of course, these categories can overlap, so, for example, it is possible for an herb to be both bitter and nutritive.

### **Bitter Herbs**

Bitter herbs include alkaloids, phenols and saponins. This group of plants is especially useful in aiding the dissolution, liquefaction and expulsion of poisonous substances from the body. Laxatives and diuretics including senna, cascara, dandelion and juniper are to be found in this category. Also painkillers, such as white willow bark and herbs with antibiotic properties, including echinacea and golden seal, belong here.

### **Astringent Herbs**

Tannic acids are present in astringent herbs that can be utilised to prevent bleeding and diarrhoea, as well as providing the means to tone and tighten soft tissue. They are good for fortifying blood vessels, preventing and lessening the effects of varicose veins, as well as soothing haemorrhoids. In this group can be found nettle, which has anti- haemorrhaging properties; Black plum, which is good for astringing the lungs, stopping coughs and restraining the intestines to check diarrhoea; and horse chestnut which eases varicosity.

### **Nutritive Herbs**

Finally, nutritive herbs contain the protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals that the body depends on for its well-being. Often this category of herbs is brimming with these qualities as the table below helps to make clear [\[2\]](#).

Nutrient	RDA	Spinach	Kale	Nettles	Dandelion
Vitamin A	4000IU	8920	9130	15,700	58,335
Iron	18	2.96	1.8	41.8	29
Calcium	800	102	206	2900	4223
Magnesium	300	96.8	37.4	860	157
Potassium	5225	518	244	1750	2757

Numbers indicate milligrams per 100 grams.

Surprisingly perhaps, nettles and dandelion, considered by many to be weeds of no worth, are some of the most nutritional foodstuffs and here in Italy they are regularly used in bakes and salads. More than this though, many nutritional herbs have gentle medicinal effects as well. Some, like broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower even have cancer preventative properties.

## The Consultation Process

**Please Note:** It should always be remembered that this book will not turn you into a doctor and that in the first instance any person with a complaint should seek the advice of properly qualified medical practitioners. The material in these chapters is very much complimentary and you should always ask the advice of a doctor before using any herbal preparation. This should also be made clear to anyone you are going to treat.

Whether using herbs on yourself, your family, or those in the wider community, it is an excellent idea to get as full a picture of the complaint to be cured as possible. One of the skills that modern medicine is most lacking in is taking the time to talk with a patient in depth about their ailment. In fact, just the process of a detailed, in-depth discussion appears to have some healing benefits in itself. This may be for several reasons. The patient feels cared for and listened to, they begin to establish a rapport with you and trust in what you have to offer. More than this, other lifestyle factors and choices, that may be affecting the condition, are often brought to the fore. For this reason I have included copyright free questionnaires in the appendix to this chapter that can be used whenever you have need.

If you are going to use herbs to help others, give some thought to how you will use the questionnaire. A hurried consultation in a cluttered room will be of little benefit to anyone. Make sure you have enough paper and working pens to hand. I know this advice seems blindingly obvious, but you will be surprised how many people who are involved in this kind of work try to get away with charging huge sums for a really unbelievably poor service. Make sure that the patient understands that the consultation process comes first and that the herbal preparation will follow in a few days time. This is important; you must allow yourself space to go away and consider what has been revealed by the patient.



Will you be going to the patient's house or will they come to you? Either way, put your own safety first and make sure that if dealing with strangers that you have thought about how and where you will meet.

Once the questionnaire is completed, think carefully about which herbs and herbal preparation to use, think too of any lifestyle advice. Does the patient drink lots of caffeine and/or alcohol; do they eat little fruit and vegetables etc?

## **Some Common Herbal Preparations**

Herbs can be prepared in a variety of ways to effect healing. At first the range of these may seem a bit daunting and in my opinion the easiest way to learn the following preparations is to use them as required.

### **Infusions**

Perhaps the simplest way of ingesting herbs for medicinal purposes is through making a tea or tisane from dried herbs consisting of the leaves, berries or flowers of the plant. The quantity of herb used depends on whether the infusion is to be weak or strong and typically ranges from 2 teaspoons to 1/2 a teaspoon upon which is poured 200ml (1/3 of a pint) of boiling water. Often honey or fruit juice are added to make the drink more palatable.

### **Decoctions**

A decoction is the name given to heating an herb in water to extract the essence and is a good way to prepare tough, fibrous herbs. When using roots or barks 900ml (1 1/2 pints) of water is added to 25g (1oz) of the substance and together the ingredients are simmered for around 15 minutes until just 600ml (1 pint is left).

### **Dosages**

With both infusions and decoctions, children under five should be given one quarter of the adult dose; children between five and eleven should have half the dose.

### **Tinctures**

A tincture is an extract of an herb prepared in alcohol and water. To create a tincture use at least 40% alcohol and have a clean dark glass bottle or jar with an air-tight seal to hand.

Use 50g (2oz) of dried plant material for every 200g (8oz) of liquid. Place the herb into the glass container. Pour 100g (4oz) of distilled water and 100g (4oz) of 80% proof alcohol (an alcohol such as vodka is fine) into the container. Seal the

container and store it at room temperature in a dark place. Shake the bottle once daily for two weeks (larger woody herbs may need to soak for twice as long). At the end of the period, filter the tincture through a strainer to separate the plant pieces and decant into a clean glass container and seal.

Typical dosage for tinctures is 1-2 millilitres, two to three times a day. The tincture can be swallowed as is, or taken in a small amount of water. For children mix the dosage in 50g (2oz) of water just off the boil to evaporate most of the alcohol and give to the child when cool.

## **Poultices**

Poultices are packs that are applied over an affected area and are used to treat sore muscles, inflammations, arthritic pains and bruises. A paste is made with hot water and herbs, to which is often added a binder like linseed meal or slippery elm powder. The paste is spread onto a clean handkerchief or flannel and applied straight onto the skin. To keep in the heat it can be covered with a thick cotton towel. Once cool or dry the poultice may then be removed.

Poultices are not indicated for us on broken skin, where their moisture and warmth can encourage bacteria to breed. However, they can be used effectively on abscesses and boils to bring out infection.

## **Lotions**

A lotion is created by straining an infusion or a decoction through coffee filter paper or a fine cotton cloth. Special care should be taken when preparing a lotion for the eyes or ears as even small pieces of herbs can damage these body parts.

## **Inhalations**

Steam inhalations are made by adding 300ml (1/2 pint) of a strong infusion to 600ml (1 pint) of water that has just come off the boil and poured into in a bowl. The individual covers their head with a large towel and, bending over the bowl, breathes in the vapours through the nose and mouth. This is an especially effective method for treating respiratory problems of both the nose and chest.

## **Compresses**

Put 1 or 2 drops of essential oil into a bowl of either cold, lukewarm or hot water depending on the condition being treated. A clean cotton cloth such as a handkerchief should be used to pick up the film of essential oil on the surface of the water and applied to the affected body part.

## **Massage oils**

Use a 2 1/2 percent dilution. Just 10 drops of essential oil to 2 table spoons of virgin olive oil.

## **Baths**

Use 5 to 10 drops of essential oil to 2 tablespoons of full fat cow's milk. Stir the bath water well to make sure the mixture is dispersed.

## **Keeping a Herbal Medicine Chest**

As you will see in the next section there are many herbs that are of benefit to a variety of common conditions and it makes sense to keep a stock of these around the house, either in dried form, live plants, capsules or tablets etc. As with all medicines, though, make sure that these are kept well out of the way of inquisitive youngsters -an overdose of herbal supplements can be life threatening.

A typical household list might include:

Aloe vera  
Calendula  
Cat's claw  
Cat nip  
Chamomile  
Cinnamon  
Cranberry  
Dandelion  
Echinacea  
Elderberry  
Eucalyptus  
Garlic  
Ginger root  
Ginseng  
Golden seal  
Hops  
Horse chestnut extract  
Lavender  
Lemon balm  
Nettles  
Peppermint  
Rosemary  
St John's wort  
Tea tree  
Thyme  
Valerian  
Witch hazel

This list deliberately contains easily found or grown herbs that are readily stored. With just this small collection it is possible to treat nearly every condition in the following section to some degree.

## Healing and Spells

A powerful way of using herbs is to combine magickal and healing work. If you are preparing a cure for yourself or for others carry out an appropriate spell or ritual to act alongside the infusion, decoction, lotion or rub that you are using. You may be surprised at how effective the two things can be when they work in unison. The herb will directly act on a physical level whilst an accompanying spell will help to focus energy and intention (if doing this for someone else, make sure you have their permission). This is one of the most effective ways of curing that a Witch can perform.

## Common Ailments and Cures

**Please Note:** If you are pregnant or taking a course of drugs great care should be taken when using herbal remedies as they can have detrimental effects. If in doubt, always consult a medical practitioner. And, if advising others, always make sure that they are aware of this warning.

Typically herbals list the plants in alphabetical order and beneath each entry there is a section on a plant's medicinal properties. This makes it very difficult to look up a particular ailment and its cure. Because of this I have decided to list the illnesses in alphabetical order and give the types of herbs and treatments that may help to ease the condition alongside. It will be noted that this list is hardly comprehensive, it would be necessary to create a list several hundred pages long if it were. Rather, I have just concentrated on some of the most common complaints and the reader will have to fill in the gaps themselves.

### Acne

In general, acne is a result of too much sebum being secreted by the sebaceous glands at the base of the hair follicles. When an excess of sebum is manufactured by the body hard plugs of it form causing pores to become blocked and the production of spots. If these plugs burst below the skin a local bacterial infection can develop. An excess of sebum can be caused by hormonal imbalance, the menstruation cycle, pregnancy, stress, food allergies, skin irritation and some medications.

The condition can also be brought on by a sluggish or dysfunctional liver.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Aloe Gel	Used topically this preparation has astringent and antibacterial qualities.
Calendula	Can be used as a cream. A strong infusion may also be applied to the face or used as a steam treatment. Good for healing skin tissue.
Echinacea	Taken internally aids healing and lessens inflammation.
Goldenseal	An antimicrobial that prevents seepages.
Lavender	When used as a compress lavender will ease inflammation.
Milk Thistle	A common cleansing and strengthening agent for the liver that aids the removal of excessive hormonal build-up.
Tea Tree Oil	Use only in a diluted form on the skin, a powerful, natural antiseptic.
Witch Hazel	Commonly available as a gel. Witch Hazel is antibacterial and an astringent.

## **Allergies**

In the Western World allergies are now a common place phenomenon.

Allergies can be caused by dust, dust mites, pollen grains, food, mould, chemical substances used around the house, cosmetics and medicines.

Common symptoms include runny nose, watery eyes, bouts of sneezing, prolonged coughs, shortness of breath, wheeziness, sinus headaches, rashes, hives other skin conditions.

Symptoms may also include chronic indigestion, nausea and diarrhoea.

Frequently a link is made asthma and allergies.

Perhaps more than most conditions life style should always be taken into account when treating allergies.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Chamomile	Can lessen the duration of hayfever bouts when taken as a tea. Use with caution for although often thought of as calmative Chamomile can agitate sensitive users.
Eucalyptus	Eases congestion when used as a steam inhalation.

Eyebright	Often sold in capsule form or prepared as a tincture. Lessens the symptoms of hay fever.
Ginger Root	A powerful antimicrobial that reduces inflammation.
Liquorice Root	Antibacterial, antiviral and reduces inflammation.
Nettle	An expectorant, eases sinus inflammation.
Roobios	Prepared as a tea this antihistamine may relieve symptoms.
St. John's Wort	Taken in capsule form will soothe a sinus headache.

## Anxiety

There are two main forms of anxiety: A chronic anxiety where there is a general sense of worry and relatively mild symptoms. And an acute form, known as a panic attack, that can often be swift and unexpected and characterised by a sensation of not be able to draw sufficient breath. Although these symptoms may disappear fairly rapidly they can nonetheless be frightening.

Either types of anxiety may be brought on by a stressful event such as bereavement, an accident or a divorce. But, then again, there may be no obvious cause.

There is also evidence to suggest that biochemical imbalance or overproduction of stress hormones by the adrenal glands and brain.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Catnip	Can be used as a soothing tea that relieves anxiety.
Fennel	Eaten raw or used as a tea eases gastrointestinal problems caused by anxiety.
Hops	When breathed in calm the nervous system.
Kava	Lessens anxiety in capsule or tincture form.
Motherwort	Steadies and calms emotions when used as a tincture.
Passionflower	Calming and relaxing when used as a tea or tincture.
Skullcap	Relaxes the nervous system and aids sleep in capsule or tincture form.
St. John's Wort	Restore and steadies emotional balance, eases depression. Use as a tincture.
Valerian	Helps restful sleep when used in capsule or tincture form.

## Asthma

Asthma is a chronic condition affecting the respiratory system where the airways sometimes constrict, are inflamed and lined with too much mucus.

The cause of asthma attacks are varied and may be brought on by allergens, exercise, stress, warm air, moist air, cold air and viral illness, especially common colds.

Symptoms include tightness of the chest, shortness of breath, coughing and wheeziness. These symptoms can range from mild to life threatening.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Chamomile	An antihistamine, drunk as a tea.
Elderberry	Will relieve congestion of the nasal passages when used as a steam inhalation.
Ginger Root	Helps reduce allergic reactions responsible for asthma.
Green Tea	Opens the bronchial passageways.
Hyssop	Drunk as a tea eases congestions in the respiratory tract.
Lobelia	In tincture or capsule form will aid the reduction of inflamed passageways and soothe the bronchial tissue.
Mullein Oil	Eases coughs and aids the clearing of bronchial tubes
Nettle	As a tea will relieve respiratory problems if used regularly.

## Athlete's Foot

Athlete's Foot is a fungal infection just underneath the skin in the moist environment of the foot.

To begin with there is scaly skin between the toes which then becomes moist. Next the skin flakes and peels and sometimes blisters. Any new skin that follows is often red and sore.

The infection can spread to the nails and these can crumble and smell unpleasant. Sometimes the fungus will also spread to the hands and fingernails.

Essential oil therapy can be very effective because it penetrates into the cell membranes.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Calendula	Used as a cream and applied on the skin will promote healing.
Goldenseal	Can be used either in tincture form or as a poultice. Contains powerful antibacterial properties.
Olive Leaf Extract	Powerful anti-fungal.
Pau d'Arco	Can be used as a tea or tincture. Powerful anti-bacterial.
Tea Tree Oil	Use diluted in a benign oil and apply topically. Powerful anti-fungal and anti-bacterial.
Thyme Oil	Anti-fungal which relieves fungal infections.

### **Bladder Infection (Cystitis)**

Bladder infection is caused when bacteria, usually from outside the body, infects the urethra and bladder. Allergies or sensitivity to certain foods can imitate the symptoms of this condition and if it does not respond to any of the herbs outlined then try eliminating foods that are eaten frequently one at a time to see if there is an improvement.

This can cause painful cramping in the lower abdominal area and frequent urinating which may be painful.

If the infection is mild then the bladder may be irritated but without the pain or cramps.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Barberry	Stimulates the immune system.
Birch Leaves	Powerful diuretic that will flush toxins from the bladder and relieve pain.
Cranberry Juice	Acidifies urine and reduces bacterial growth.
Dandelion	Diuretic that also helps detoxify the bladder.
Garlic	Antibiotic that also stimulates the immune system.
Uva Ursi. Known also as Bearberry	Powerful diuretic and antiseptic acting on the urinary tract and bladder.



## Bronchitis

There are two types of Bronchitis: acute Bronchitis brought on by viral and bacterial infections, lasting a few days or weeks, and chronic bronchitis, caused by tobacco smoke and infection, which lasts for months or years.

The risk of both types occurring is exacerbated by irritants including chemical fumes, dust, smoke or other air pollutants as well as asthma, poor diet, inclement weather, and chronic pulmonary disorders.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Astragalus	Useful antibiotic for adding the fortification of the immune system.
Coltsfoot	Soothing for coughs.
Echinacea	Enlivens the immune system and shortens the length of the illness.
Elecampane	Good for clearing mucus from the lungs.
Elderberry	Brings down fever and relieves nasal congestion.
Eucalyptus	Best used as a steam inhalation to alleviate nasal and pulmonary congestion.
Fenugreek	Lessens mucous flow.
Ginseng	Aids the clearing of bronchial passages.
Goldenseal	Alleviates throat, nose and sinus inflammation.
Lobelia	Clears bronchial passages and prevents wheezing.
Mullein Oil	Relieves congestion of the bronchia and enhances circulation within the lungs.

## Burns

Only first and minor second-degree burns are suitable for treatment without the aid of qualified medical support.

A first-degree burn is where the skin is red but not broken. A second-degree burn is where blistering is present.

Initial treatment comprises of placing the burn area in cool water for around 15 minutes taking care not to burst any blisters.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Aloe Gel	Alleviates pain and reduces inflammation. Quickens the healing process. Helps prevent infection. Applied topically.
Calendula	Powerful antiseptic that will also reduce inflammation. Helps prevent infection. Applied topically.
Comfrey Ointment	Helps skin heal and prevents scarring. Applied topically.
Witch Hazel	Eases pain and reduces swelling. Applied topically.

## Candida

Candida Albicans is a type of yeast infection that causes a number of infections called *candidiasis* or thrush.

Present in the gut flora Candida normally poses no problems but when an unhealthy lifestyle and diet is pursued (stress, high sugar and unrefined carbohydrate foods) then it can overgrow in the body. Antibiotics, cortisone and the pill can also cause an outburst.

Typically, when this happens toxins are released into the body and the immune system struggles to cope. Lethargy and illness can follow.

Symptoms include emotional instability, depression, headaches, pains in the joints, thrush and fungal infections.

A detox regime followed by a well balanced diet is crucial to bringing Candida back under control.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Aloe Juice	Drunk daily will kill yeast.
Barberry	Antifungal also good for killing off yeast.
Cinnamon	Taken as a decoction gargle will ease thrush in the mouth and throat.
Garlic	Powerful anti-fungal properties. To be added in food.
Lavender	Add to a bath or apply to infected skin.
Olive Leaf	Strong antimicrobial. Use tincture preparations internally.
Pau D'Arco	A great booster of the immune system with anti-fungal and antibiotic properties.
Peppermint	Use as an infusion. Powerful anti-fungal.

Rosemary	Anti-fungal to be added to food.
Thyme	As oil can be used topically on skin conditions. Also add to food.

**Cold Sores**

Contagious cold sores are created by the herpes simplex virus. Typically they appear on the side of the mouth, although they can also form on the chin, in the nose or inside the mouth.

At first a tingling sensation is noticed followed by a red blister that is filled with fluid. They can last for up to 20 days but often disappear in half that time.

The virus stays in the body’s system once a first cold sore has been caught and can reoccur periodically. This can be triggered by stress or menstruation although sometimes they can reoccur for no obvious reason.

They appear less in those with a healthy immune system and herbal remedies concentrate on aiding the immune system as well as disinfecting the sores.

As cold sores are contagious it is a good idea to limit the spread of the infection by taking simple precautions.

Replace or sterilise your toothbrush, keep hands clean, avoid kissing and take care around those who have weakened immune systems.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Aloe Vera	Juice can be applied to the sores as well as being drunk.
Black Walnut	Rich in iodine the extract can be used either externally, whilst as a dried herb it can be used internally.
Comfrey	Use as a salve externally.

**Common Cold**

The common cold is a virus affecting the upper respiratory tract. It hardly need be said that symptoms include sneezing, a sore throat, coughing, runny nose, watering eyes and nasal congestion and that they last for up to two weeks.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Astragalus	Protects the nasal passages from viruses and fortifies the immune system.

Cat's Claw	Helps expel viruses from the body.
Elderberry	Useful as an infusion if fever is present, and will help sweating and thus expel toxins more quickly.
Ginger Root	Good for head chills and relieving head and chest congestion.
Thyme	An infusion clear mucus in the nose and will soothe a sore throat.
Tilden Flower Tea	Relieves sore throat and coughs.

## Constipation

Constipation can be brought on by poor diet, stress, lack of fluids or not exercising and because of these factors affects many people.

Chronic constipation may be caused by colon cancer, irritable bowel syndrome, thyroid problems, diabetes or depression and a qualified medical practitioner should be consulted.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Aloe Juice	Laxative effects.
Buckthorn	Laxative effects.
Dandelion	Taken as a tincture will boost bile flow to the large intestine.
Ginger Root	As an infusion prevents muscle spasms.
Hibiscus	Softens stools.
Milk Thistle	Boosts flow of bile to the large intestine.
Psyllium Seed	Bulking agent.
Senna	Laxative effects.

## Cough

Coughing is a necessary bodily function that clears our passageways of mucous and other unwanted material. Coughs are bothersome of course when they are uncontrollable. Chronic coughs and can be symptomatic of serious illness or infection and you should consult a qualified medical practitioner.

They fall into two types: dry and non-productive, i.e. they bring up no sputum or fluid and wet and productive which expel mucous, germs and other debris.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Coltsfoot	Helps prevent congestion.
Echinacea	Antibacterial and anti viral properties.
Lobelia	Soothes dry coughs.
Marshmallow Root	Soothes dry coughs.
Peppermint	Suppresses the cough reflex.
Slippery Elm Bark	Soothes throat.
Wild Cherry Bark Syrup	Expectorant.

## **Depression**

Depression is a serious and prolonged condition where an individual can feel sad and hopeless. In severe cases these feelings are accompanied by suicidal thoughts, if this is a case then professional help should be sought.

Depression is often thought of as symptomatic of other conditions. There can be many causes such as exhaustion or hormonal imbalance, loss of someone close, lack of love and lack of light.

As well as herbs, it may be a good idea to try vitamin and mineral supplements to make sure that there is an adequate balance of vitamins B and C as well as Calcium and Magnesium.

The following herbs may help to relieve mild cases, but please check with a qualified medical practitioner before using them alongside anti-depressant drugs.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Lemon Balm	Used as a tea it can calm nerves and provide relief from an upset stomach.
Kava	Promotes sleep and reduces anxiety.
St. John's Wort	Relieves tension and exhaustion.

## Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is symptomatic of other conditions, often as a result of dietary changes, viral or bacterial infections, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease and Colitis.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Agrimony	Take as a tea at initial onset of symptoms.
Cayenne	Aids the prevention of loose stools.
Fenugreek	As a tea will have a soothing effect on the intestines.
Marshmallow Root	A similar soothing effect.
Psyllium Seeds	Will absorb the water from loose stools.

## Ear Infections

Ear infections are frequently caused by colds and other infections that affect the upper respiratory tract. Fever may be present as well as other symptoms associated with colds.

It is often said that you should never place anything smaller than an elbow inside the ear. Two of the remedies below make use of cotton wool and care should be taken that the amount of wool is large enough so that it does not fall down the hole.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Echinacea	Use as a tincture to quicken healing and improve drainage.
Garlic oil	Will help fight infection when placed on cotton wool and put inside the ear.
Golden Seal	Fortifies the immune system and aids a quick recovery.
Green Tea	Helps fight viruses.
Mullein oil	Soothes the ear canal lining. Apply to cotton wool and place inside the ear.
St. John's Wort	Useful for combating viruses and reduce inflammation.

## Eczema

Eczema is a condition that causes dry, red, inflamed patches of scaly skin that are often itchy. Rashes and lesions may appear on the behind the knees, the back and

front of the elbows, the wrists, scalp and face. There are many types of eczema and equally varied causes; these can include allergy, stress, histamine levels and disease. Some types of eczema have currently no medically identifiable cause.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Aloe gel	Soothes inflamed skin.
Burdock Root	Helps keep skin cells healthy.
Calendula cream	Soothes inflamed skin.
Chamomile	Apply as a poultice, reduces itching.
Chickweed	Applied as a poultice, also reduces itching.
Rosemary	Good for skin circulation when added to a bath.
Walnut leaf	Washing with an extract of this plant helps guard against infection.
Witch-hazel	Anti-septic and anti-bacterial properties, also reduces inflammation.

## **Fever**

Generally, fever is defined as the body having a temperature above  $36.8 \pm 0.7$  °C or  $98.2 \pm 1.3$  °F. An individual's temperature varies depending on when and how the temperature is taken.

The temperature level in adults typically reflects the seriousness of an illness, it should be borne in mind though that this is not always the case with children and a low grade fever may be symptomatic of a serious illness.

Fever has many causes and these can include infection by a virus or bacteria, allergic reaction, toxic reaction, bites and stings, dehydration and too much exercise.

A raised temperature boosts white cell production and the swiftness of their response when fighting infection.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Catnip	Helps alleviate fever and increases sweating.
Echinacea	Drunk as a tea will help bring down temperature.
Hyssop, Liquorice and Thyme combined	Will also alleviate fever.

## Hay Fever

Hay fever is an allergic condition caused by pollen and airborne dust and chemicals. It is most common at times when pollen count is high. Symptoms are similar to the Common Cold and include runny nose, watery eyes, coughing and a sense of irritation in the throat, eyes and nose. Sufferers can also report nosebleeds, tiredness and itchiness.

The causes of Hay Fever are unclear but may include environment and hereditary factors.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Chamomile	Drunk as a tea may shorten the duration of the illness.
Eucalyptus	When used as a steam inhalation will relieve congestion.
Eyebright	Relieves symptoms when used as a tincture.
Ginger Root	As always helps to reduce inflammation.
Nettle Extract	Expectorant and alleviates inflammation of the sinuses.
St. John's Wort	Relieves sinus headaches in capsule form.

## Haemorrhoids

Haemorrhoids are swollen blood vessels that can occur either inside the rectum or around the opening to the anus. Both can bleed after bowel movements and the latter type are often painful.

Cause include straining when on the toilet, sitting or standing for extended periods, pregnancy, obesity and inserting foreign objects into the rectum.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Aloe gel	Soothes the sensation of pain, apply topically.
Calendula	Again relieves pain and reduces inflammation. Can be used as a cream or made into an infusion and used while bathing.
Dandelion	A tincture will soften stools.
Horse Chestnut	Lessens swelling, and encourages flexible blood vessels.
St. John's Wort	Used topically will improve swollen tissue.
Witch Hazel	Will help prevent bleeding when used as a suppository.



## Hives

Hives are red and often very itchy welts on the skin that can develop rapidly. They are frequently caused by allergens, stress, viruses, caffeine and alcohol. Many times they will clear up by themselves, although prolonged, more serious cases require medical attention.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Aloe gel	Reduces inflammation and the risk of infection.
Calendula	Soothes itchiness.
Chamomile	Bathing in this herb will lessen inflammation.
Nettle juice	The juice appears to speed healing.

## Indigestion

Indigestion is symptomatic of the body having difficulty breaking down foods and assimilating them into the body. In the Western World this is one of the most common complaints and often originates in a diet of processed or refined foods and inappropriate food combinations that exhaust the digestive organs.

However, there can be many contributing factors, such as caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol, eating too quickly, eating when stressed, allergies to specific foods and excessive liquid intake during mealtimes that dilute the digestive fluids.

One of the most effective treatments for indigestion is food combining where at a meal starchy foods are not eaten with protein rich foods.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Angelica	Helps prevent flatulence and discomfort in the digestive system.
Cinnamon	Eases bloating and cramps.
Dandelion	Breaks down gas.
Fennel	The tea will ease gas and burping.
Hops	Eases stress.
Ginger Root	A weak tea will soothe an irritated stomach.
Peppermint	As a tea will ease bloating and relieve trapped gas. A stimulant not indicated before bed time.

## Influenza

A highly contagious infection affecting the respiratory tract usually lasting three to five days but can last as long as ten days to two weeks. Symptoms comprise fever, headache, aching all over, tiredness and poor appetite.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Anise	A tea will bring comfort to the lungs and throat through the stimulation of mucous.
Catnip	Helps reduce fever and has a calming effect.
Echinacea	Will fortify the immune system.
Elderberry	Lessens the length of symptoms.
Ephedra	Opens the bronchioles.
Garlic	Great antibacterial, but because fever means the patient will be sweating a lot can create a rather pungent environment.
Ginger Root	A tea will ease a sore throat and congestion.
Tilden Flower	Eases sore throats as well as aches and pains.

## Insect Bites

**Please Note:** The following remedies are for mild stings and bites they are not indicated for the treatment of serious allergic reactions that require emergency treatment.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Aloe Gel	Soothes inflamed skin.
Calendula	Soothes sore skin.
Citronella oil	Used in garden torches or candles repel insects.
Tea Tree oil	Antiseptic.

## Insomnia

Insomnia is the inability to sleep or not be able to get back to sleep for extended periods. Often a symptom of stress or underlying illness, serious prolonged cases

can be exhausting and debilitating and chronic conditions of this sort require the advice of a qualified medical practitioner.

The minerals Calcium and Magnesium are also indicated.

**Please Note:** Be very careful when using herbs to treat other sleeping disorders such as sleep apnoea and take the advice of a qualified herbalist who you have directly discussed the condition with.

Indicated Herbs	Use
Chamomile	As a tea, often promoted for its sedative properties. However, some individuals are stimulated by it with the result that the condition worsens.
Hops	A tea will aid the reduction of stress.
Lemon Balm	Encourages sleep when used as a tea.
Passion Flower	Encourages sleep when used as a tea.
St. John's Wort	Encourages deep sleep. Not to be used by those who suffer from sleep apnoea.
Valerian	Encourages sleep.

### **Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)**

Along with indigestion, IBS is one of the most common illnesses; it affects more women than men. IBS is a bowel disorder that can entail abdominal cramps and pains, flatulence, vomiting, diarrhoea (or, conversely, hardening of the stools), constipation and tiredness. Any of these symptoms if prolonged over a period of time may be indicative of other illnesses and a visit to a qualified medical practitioner should be made.

The causes of IBS are not fully understood, although there are strong indications that living in the stressful Western World, food allergies and making poor dietary choices may be the root cause.

Given this it is essential that a number of steps are taken alongside herbal remedies.

1. The patient should be encouraged, through a process of elimination, to find out which foodstuffs they may be allergic to. Obvious ones to test for in this regard are dairy products, wheat, rye, oats, gluten (found in these grains listed and often used in many processed foods) soy and citrus foods. Check all processed foods as all these products appear in some unexpected places.

2. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and cigarettes.

3. Avoid sugar.

4. Take steps to reduce stress
5. Insure a healthy bacterial balance in the gut through diet.
6. Insure the body has sufficient enzymes to break down food through diet.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Angelica	Helps prevent flatulence and discomfort in the digestive system.
Cinnamon	Eases bloating and cramps.
Dandelion	Breaks down gas.
Fennel	The tea will ease gas and burping.
Hops	Ease stress.
Ginger Root	A weak tea will soothe an irritated stomach.
Peppermint	As a tea will ease bloating and relieve trapped gas. A stimulant not indicated before bed time.

### **Migraine**

Migraine is a type of severe, pulsating headache that lasts for prolonged periods, from several hours to days. Migraine tends to affect women more than men. The causes can be varied and may be brought on by stress, diet, variation in blood sugar, caffeine, hormones, blood pressure, excess light, eye strain, poor sleep patterns and poor posture. There is some evidence to suggest a hereditary factor as well. Migraine may be symptomatic of serious underlying medical conditions and, again, consult a quailed medical practitioner if you suffer from this condition.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Feverfew	As a tea will help thwart migraine and ease symptoms.
Passion Flower	Reduces tension and anxiety.
Gingko	Increases blood circulation to the brain.
Ginger	As a tea eases migraine headache, especially if at the front of the head.
Kava	Lowers stress.
Tilden Flower	Lowers blood pressure.

## **Premenstrual Tension (PMT, also known as Premenstrual Syndrome or PMS)**

A common ailment suffered by women up to two weeks before a period. Symptoms include emotional swings and outbursts, cramping, skin conditions such as acne, depression, water retention and swelling, tiredness and cravings for specific foods. In severe cases this can be debilitating and ruin the quality of a woman's life.

A balanced diet containing adequate fibre, complex carbohydrates and protein is often essential to tackling this condition as it will help to alleviate stress, ensure the expelling of estrogens from the body and help maintain a correct balance of hormones.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Birch Leaf	Helps expel fluid form the body.
Chamomile	Helps ease cramps.
Dandelion	Anti-diuretic.
Fennel	Helps with cramping.
Peppermint	Helps keep an even temperament.

## **Sinusitis**

Sinusitis is a painful condition that affects the sinuses (of which there are several) and may generate headaches, eye ache and toothache. It generally sets in after an upper respiratory tract infection and is characterised by the production and discharge of dark green or yellow mucous. Fever may also be present.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Anise	Good for clearing congestion when used as a tea.
Cat's Claw	Soothes inflammation and combats bacterial infection.
Elderberry	As a tea helps relieve congestion.
Horehound	Also relieves congestion as a tea.
Peppermint	Used as an inhalation relieves congestion.
Thyme	The same.

## Stress

Stress is a common condition and is the body's response to overwhelming emotional, physical and environmental factors. It can be brought on by a sudden loss or a major life event but is also often caused by lifestyle choices and diet, which have a gradual detrimental effect. Given regular stressful conditions mental and physical health can suffer greatly as high levels of stress hormones exhaust the body by depleting energy reserves and nutrients. The immune system becomes less effective at combating illness and disease, blood pressure and cholesterol levels become raised, sex drive lowers and the stomach produces excess acid.

<b>Indicated Herbs</b>	<b>Use</b>
Catnip	Calming tea.
Cat's Claw	Helps rebalance the nervous system.
Chamomile	Calming as a tea for some people (can stimulate others).
Ginseng	A tincture helps fortify the nervous system.
Lemon Balm	An infusion soothes the muscles.
Resihi	An extract helps emotional stability.

## Research Project

As has already been said, the list of ailments in the previous section is hardly comprehensive, although it does cover some of the most common afflictions. It is intended to be a solid start in building up one's knowledge of herbal cures. So for this chapter's research project (yes, you guessed it). I would like you to spend some time investigating herbal remedies for other conditions that have not been listed or researching those that have but looking at them in more detail. As you investigate why not begin to put together your own herbal as well? Often within families certain medical conditions run and a customised herbal tailored to their needs can be an invaluable resource for generations to come.

Now is also a good time to begin to think about getting together your own stock of herbs and thinking about whether you will grow your own or buy them in dried form from an herbalist. A good starting point is indicated in the main part of the chapter and really everyone who is working through this book should try to assemble at least these basic herbs.

## Appendices

The following appendices are copyright free and can be used however you wish. I would request, though, that if using them in any published form (either in print, on the web or in any other way) that the source is acknowledged and that [www.magickaschool.com](http://www.magickaschool.com) is also mentioned.



# Appendix One

## Preliminary Questionnaire

To be used to get a general overview of a patient. Please make sure the patient understands that they don't have to answer a question should they feel it is too intimate.

### General

Name

Sex

Date of Birth

### Living circumstances

Single/partner

With children/without children

Type of accommodation

Location of accommodation? Elicit if they live near a busy road, electric power plants, pylons, factories etc. or if they live in the country, near water etc

Does the client feel their housing meets their needs?

### Childhood

Invite the patient to comment on their childhood. Was it happy? Were there any disturbances? Were there any dissatisfactions (the word is deliberately vague so as not to lead a patient)?

### Education

Invite the patient to tell you what education they received.

### Present

What kind of job do they have? Include homemakers as a job.

How do they regard their work?

What are they satisfied with?

What are they dissatisfied with?

Do they have something else they would rather be doing?

What would their ideal week be like?

### **Social Life**

How would they describe their social life?

### **Sex Life**

How would they describe their sex life?

What works well?

What doesn't work well?

### **General Indicators**

What is their favourite colour?

Favourite season?

Favourite time of day?

What is their sleep pattern like?

### **Diet and Exercise**

Do they exercise?

How often?

Do they feel the exercise they do benefits them? And how?

Do they drink caffeine (tea, coffee, Coke, Red Bull)?

Do they eat sugar?

How often do they eat fruit and vegetables?

How often do they eat red meat, white meat and fish?

### **Sleep**

Generally when do they go to bed and wake up?

How do they sleep?

Where do they sleep?

Which direction do they sleep in (i.e. compass direction)?

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Asking wide-ranging questions such as these allows the healer to build up a fairly comprehensive background picture about the patient. And will identify many areas of their life that may be influencing their health negatively.

Having asked these preliminary questions the healer can then go on to inquire about the patient's health.

# Appendix Two

## Patient's Health Questionnaire

This section of analysis is divided into two; the previous medical history of the patient and their current concerns.

### Previous Medical History

Childhood, up to 13

Ask the patient to list any diseases, illnesses or injuries they sustained. Ask them to be as specific as possible.

How satisfied were they with the way they were dealt with?

Do they have any feelings that these illnesses affected them later in life? If so, how?

### Adolescence, up to 18

Now do the same for adolescence.

Ask the patient to list any diseases, illnesses or injuries they sustained. Ask them to be as specific as possible.

How satisfied were they with the way they were dealt with?

Do they have any feelings that these illnesses affected them later in life? If so, how?

### Adulthood

Now do the same for adulthood

Ask the patient to list any diseases, illnesses or injuries they sustained. Ask them to be as specific as possible.

How satisfied were they with the way they were dealt with?

Do they have any feelings that these illnesses affected them later in life? If so, how?

### Current Health Issue/s

What symptoms does the patient have?

How are the symptoms affecting them?

What part of the body seems to be most affected?

When did they first notice the symptoms?

How did they initially manifest?

How would they see themselves if completely cured? What would they be able to do that they cannot currently?

## Footnotes

[1] I would ask that if using the appendix materials in a published form that the source is acknowledged, including the web address of [www.magickaschool.com](http://www.magickaschool.com)

[2] A comprehensive breakdown of all food substances by the American government food agency can be found here for free  
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=8964>.

Chapter Five:  
Herbs and  
Practical Magickal  
Work

# Herbs and Practical Magickal Work

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn about how to select herbs and use them for a variety of areas of practical magickal work.

At the end there is a research project for you to complete.

## Introduction

As has already been discussed in Chapter Three, for centuries herbs have played an important part in magickal experience. Having there surveyed some of the various ways in which they have been employed in the past, we will now turn to practical applications and the ways herbs can be utilised by the modern Witch or Magician.

In all magickal work a number of things can be seen to govern the choice of herbs for any given work. Different Witches and Magicians will give varying advice here, but, broadly speaking, choice is dictated by the properties of the herb itself, astrological considerations and Kabbalistic correspondences. A good command of common herbs and these areas is therefore advisable if success in their magickal use is to be enjoyed.

## The Magickal Qualities of Thirteen Herbs

Knowledge of the magickal qualities of plants is only something that can be built up over time. In this section, though, I give an outline of the generally agreed properties of thirteen common herbs. You will need to add to this list as you progress, but at least a solid foundation for further exploration will have been presented.

### General Properties

General properties are perhaps the cardinal consideration when using an herb for any magickal work. What is the herb most frequently used for? What applications have its centuries of use shown us?

**Sage** – An herb with a long history of use in purification and healing work. Associated with protection and often considered as a powerful binder of spells.

**Garlic** – An herb of bodily cleansing, with a similar long history as a powerful healing plant that instils vigour and strength. The choice of exorcists, with strong protective properties. Also seen as a promoter of lust.



**Rosemary** - An herb of cleansing and purification that can be used before the casting of spells and other magickal work. Said to ensure peaceful sleep when placed under a pillow.

**Thyme** – Frequently seen as an herb that helps facilitate love, but also widely used for purification. Promotes psychic powers and bravery.

**Parsley** – Sometimes associated with funerary work. Although also an herb of love, lust and protection.

**Dandelion** – An herb of joy and happiness, seen as a plant that helps promote health and vitality. Its sunny disposition is often thought to help lift gloom and anxiety over a hex.

**Barley** – A dietary staple, essential life giving qualities, reliable, sure and steady. Good for promoting life-long love and protection.

**Chamomile** – Herb of happiness and delight, curative and restorative. Useful for spell work about monetary issues.

**Mint** – Stimulant and awakening. Another choice for exorcism and protection. Will also aid the acquisition of money.

**Wheat** – A dietary staple with long associations as an important plant of the gods encapsulating the mystery of life. Because of this it is often suggested that the plant will encourage fertility and money.

**Fennel** – Herb of communication, healing and protection. Good for the digestive system.

**Willow** – Herb of healing and protection. Its melancholic and watery nature mean it has empathetic qualities with problems of love.

**Nettle** – Powerfully protective, used in exorcism and for lifting curses. Also seen as a promoter of lust.

## **Astrological Considerations**

**Sage** – An herb of Jupiter and associated Goddesses and Gods such as Juno (sister and wife of Jupiter) and Zeus.

**Garlic** – Herb of Mars and linked to this warlike God.

**Rosemary** – Herb of the Sun and associated with Aries.

**Thyme** – Corresponds to Venus.

**Parsley** – Corresponds to both Mercury and Mars.

**Dandelion** – Herb of Jupiter (although for obvious reasons often associated with the Sun) and corresponds to Leo.

**Barley** – A Saturnine herb, corresponding also to Virgo.

**Chamomile** – Chamomile's bright flowers help link it to the Sun.

**Mint** – An herb of Venus.

**Wheat** – Also an herb of Venus.

**Fennel** – Associated with Mercury.

**Willow** – Linked to the Moon and Cancer.

**Nettle** – An excellent Martian herb.

It will be noted that parsley can be seen to correspond to both Mercury and Mars and that dandelion can be seen to have Jupiterian and solar qualities. Where this is the case with herbs, they are seen to have a blend of qualities that can add a subtle mix to magickal workings.

## Kabbalistic Correspondences

Why bother thinking of Kabbalistic Correspondences when considering which plant to use for specific work? The answer, of course, lies in the fact that the Tree of Life underpins the Western Magickal Tradition and governs the links and correspondences to be found in much magickal work. By linking an herb to a particular location on the Tree one is also linking it to all that a particular Sephirah or path stands for, and can also see how those qualities are also linked to other areas of life represented by the paths and other Sephiroth.

Kabbalistic Correspondences are never an exact science and much depends on the individual's perception of where associations lie. Often the whole point of magickal work is to produce desired changes in the mind of the Witch or Magician so that they may effect external change in the world. The correspondences that the individual is satisfied with are therefore the ones that matter most. However, this is not to say that there aren't some agreed guidelines. Of particular use here is Crowley's 777. Crowley linked all manner of things to the Tree of Life and based his notions on a lifetime of experience.

The following list is partly based on his writings and partly on my own thoughts (as always though, don't feel obliged to follow Crowley or I; if you can think of correspondences that suit you better then use them:

**Sage** – 777 is silent about how sage should be linked to the Tree of Life. Its qualities of purification would seem to suggest a link to Tiphareth, whilst its attribution to Jupiter would link it to Chesed.

**Garlic** – Readily attributable to Geburah, not only because of its correspondence to Mars but because of its acidic and powerful internal purifying qualities.

**Rosemary** – The fifteenth path from Tiphareth to Chockmah. Here, rosemary's solar qualities and links to Aries suggest that it should be associated with the Emperor Tarot card.

**Thyme** – Linked to Netzach because of its associations with Venus and love.

**Parsley** – Geburah because of its protective properties.

**Dandelion** – All diuretics are linked by Crowley to the 28th path between Yesod and Netzach. However, because of its astrological correspondences to Jupiter and the Sun and because of its emblematic shape and colour it could just as well be associated with Chesed or Tiphareth.

**Barley** – Linked to the Sefhirah Malkuth by Crowley, along with all grains. However, those who are Kabbalists will understand that Malkuth has some particular ties with Binah where the bride of Malkuth is associated with Ama and Aima, the dark sterile and bright fertile mother - this correspondence sits well with barley's astrological attribution to Saturn [1].

**Chamomile** – Tiphareth, because of its solar and healing properties that also suggest a link with Raphael [2].

**Mint** – Hod, through associations with Mercury.

**Wheat** – Crowley identifies wheat as pertaining to Malkuth [3], he speaks of it being the foundation of the pentacle. The idea behind this is complicated, but at root I believe it helps if one bears in mind that wheat has Yod like qualities, it is the seed par excellence (see Crowley's Hermit Tarot Card for a pictorial representation of this notion).

**Fennel** – Hod, again through associations to Mercury.

**Willow** – In 777, willow is associated with Malkuth because it is the tree of the neglected maiden or Malkuth unredeemed [4]. Its lunar qualities also mean that an attribution to Yesod would be satisfactory.

**Nettle** – Crowley links this plant to Tiphareth on account of its sting [5], although its Martian characteristics also suggest a correspondence with Geburah.

It will be noted that many of the associations above are based on astrological considerations, which are often a helpful indicator of where certain herbs should be placed on the Tree of Life. Dandelion appears to sit comfortably in the Sefhirah Chesed (the Sefhirah associated with Jupiter) and arguably would also correspond to the heart of the Tree in Tiphareth (Sefhirah of the Sun). The astrological qualities serve to show that it would be no good just placing dandelion willy-nilly in Yesod or Kether for example. We can see that through its associations with the Sefhirahs Chesed and Tiphareth that it is closely allied to the Archangels Tzadkiel and Raphael, the heart Chakra, the fours and sixes of the Tarot cards, sacrificial gods, the notion of majesty and so on.

## **Putting it all Together**

Having knowledge of all the above properties is only half the task, for one must now use this information in practical work. Here a single herb may be chosen or the qualities of several can be blended. So, for example, for a purification ritual I might only choose sage, but if working a spell of protection I might choose garlic, nettle and dandelion. The two Martian and protective herbs will ward off unpleasant influences whilst dandelion helps to maintain cheerfulness at a difficult time. However, exact use of the herbs is very much down to an individual's inclinations although they will not be randomly chosen but firmly based on an individual's understanding of their qualities. In the next section I discuss some of the different ways that a wide variety of herbs can be used by a Witch or Magician.

## **Practical Applications**

Having selected the right herb for a given task the next step is to choose the correct application for a desired effect. A number of methods of employing herbs are considered below:

### **Making Herbal Charms**

Perhaps the most common technique regularly used by Witches is that of the herbal charm. These consist of small pouches of herbs that frequently contain other objects used to centre the power of the mind on a given outcome. All the herbal associations written of in the preceding section come into play and help to create a compelling way of reinforcing the will and achieving a desired result. That they work is not so much because the herbs (or other objects included in the pouch) have an intrinsic magickal value in themselves. Rather, because they are thought of as corresponding to certain areas of life they are, in a way, glyphs of things one may want to realise. By focussing on a symbol one attunes to its properties, creating powerful associations in the mind that reinforce the resolve to follow through an intention. Herbal charms can, therefore, be incorporated into an overall magickal strategy to achieve something.

And it is not just herbs and the things placed in the pouch that have a symbolic importance; choice of the colour of fabric for their wrapping is also significant. Different colours have different effects on the mind, and a Witch will think carefully about the best hues to use for the work in hand.

The table below gives a few basic herbal and colour correspondences although there are many others that space does not permit to tell of. Please be aware, though, that the information given is the generally agreed associations, some individuals will find that they need to use differing herbs and colours to achieve certain effects.

## Some Areas of Life and their Associated Herbs

<b>Matters of:</b>	<b>Herbs</b>
Aspiration	Oak, acorns, gorse
Communication	Lime, fennel, hazel
Courage	Oak, acorns
Flexibility	Ivy
Healing	All-Heal, myrtle, white rose, willow
Love	Rose, lavender, jasmine, peach, apple
Money	Lavender, borage
Moon Magick	Hazel
Overcoming Obstacles/Winning Through	Laurel (bay)
Protection	Nettle
Purification	Garlic, rosemary, sage
Resolution	Oak, acorns, holly and its berries, mistletoe, vervain
Sexual Energy	Ginseng, mandrake
Sexual Love	Fig
Solidity and Stability	Cereal grains, especially wheat

The colours and their properties in the following table are based on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life.

## Colours and their Associated Properties

<b>Colour</b>	<b>Property</b>
White	Purification, purity, spirituality
Grey	Wisdom
Black	Understanding, consideration, time
Blue	Peace and stability, wisdom, service to others
Red	Protection, warning, courage, energy
Yellow/Gold	Beauty, harmony, balance, aspiration

Green	Love, change, play, instinctive energy
Orange	Truth, communication, quest for knowledge
Violet	Independence, unconscious energy, dreams
Olive, citrine, russet and black	Positive choices, solidity, faithfulness, reliability

It is possible to mix and match the herbs and colours. So, for example, if aspiring to something that takes great courage, acorns in a red pouch might be used. If aspiring to something that requires wisdom and flexibility, then acorns and ivy could be placed in a grey pouch.

There are no set recipes and every Witch will make up their own depending on their understanding of the correspondences and the effects these have on them.

### **Charging a Herbal Charm**

The pouches of herbs are taken in hand and concentrated on. Words are then spoken over the charm and directed towards them with a wand or athame. Other Witches may consecrate the pouch using salt water left over from the Opening of the Temple, or leave them out to charge by the light of the Moon. Quite what is done is up to you, but is important to do something, for this imprints in your mind that the pouch and its contents symbolise something significant and valuable.

Over the next few weeks, have a go at making up some herbal charms that are appropriate in helping you with a desire you may have. Remember, their function is to reinforce the taking action over an intention. Without action on your part nothing will happen.

### **Herbal Spell Work**

As always it should be remembered that the most effective spells are those that the individual has made for her or himself and for this reason I am not going to give you recipes that you have to slavishly follow. How you use the herbs for this kind of work is up to you. T

hink about the spell work that you wish to carry out. Given the lists earlier in the chapter of astrological and Kabbalistic properties which herbs would be most appropriate to use? Are you going to use the herb as incense through the casting? Will it be merely placed on the altar or within the circle? Will it be placed in a posy to be buried or kept on a person?

## Herbs for Incense

Incense is a created from aromatic material that derives from living sources. It may be fashioned from a blend of herbs or a single plant, as well as other combustible material. A joss stick, a cone, heated essential oils or a switch of dried herbs can all be effectively used. Sometimes it will be appropriate to create a hazy or smoky atmosphere that burning plants achieve and other times essential oils will provide a cleaner aromatic backdrop.

As those who have read *Wicca Revealed* will be aware, where the circle is concerned incense is often perceived to represent the element of Air. Some pundits [6] claim that incense represents all Four Elements, this is based on the fact that it is burned by Fire, created with Water, the smoke represents the Air and the substance itself is made from Earth products - valid though this may be, these correspondences can be made for any other ritual tool. For example, the Chalice is forged in Fire, holds Water, is passed through the Air and is made from Earth products. Therefore incense is no more especially of the Four Elements than anything else, and the fact remains that it is chiefly suitable for an attribution to Air.

Incense has a variety of uses in the context of the circle. First and foremost, of course, it is used to set up the ritual space, where it is passed around the perimeter and is used as a representative of one of the Elements. The type of incense used will depend on individual or coven tastes and there are no set standards.

More than this though, incense plays an important sensory role within ritual and creates different atmospheres to work within. A heightened mental state is often useful for magickal, meditative or trance work and smell is an ideal way to achieve various conditions. Different aromas can affect individuals in varying ways, although the fact that they have been used for hundreds of years means that common effects have been documented and allow for correspondence tables to be created similar to the one below:

Herb	Effect
Acacia	Good for meditative work and the stimulation of psychic powers
Bergamot	Protective
Carnation	Replenishes energy
Cinnamon	Stimulative and arousing
Eucalyptus	Purifying
Frankincense	Purifying
Hyacinth	Peacefulness
Jasmine	Relaxing



Lilac	Aids past life regression
Musk	Sexual Attraction
Patchouli	Wards off malignancy. Attracts right influences
Rose	Love
Sandalwood	Protection and healing

It is believed that not only does the incense work on the mind of the Witch but that it provides a suitable environment within which to invite the Goddess, God and the Archangels or Guardians of the Watchtowers. Again, the choice of incense can vary depending on the time of year, the nature of the ritual or the Archangelic presence to be primarily worked with. There are no standard choices and a practitioner will choose those that they feel to be most appropriate.

Lastly, the smoky haze that lingers in the air is often thought of as an ideal place for spirits that have been evoked to appear. As I have stated in other works, I am uncomfortable explaining how to evoke spirits as this can be a troublesome area and isn't really suitable for a book, it is in any case something more frequently carried out by Magicians and not Witches [7]. The idea, though, is to command the spirit to appear (command, and not invite, as you are evoking a lesser being) and to make them metamorphosise within the incense fumes where they can be seen and directed.

In all the above areas there are no rigid set formulas and perhaps the best advice that can be given is to try out a variety of ready made incenses to be burnt and essential oils to be heated. Experiment and use a variety for your magickal work. Which plants are most effective for clearing psychic space, which are best for casting the circle, which are best for inducing a meditative state, which create excitement and energy that can be channelled into spell and magickal work? There will be a whole chapter on Aromatherapy later in the book and as part of that we will explore how you yourself can create incense and essential oil blends.

## **Herbs in Sabbats and Ritual**

Herbs are readily incorporated into all manner of rituals and celebrations where their energies and associations give added magickal and symbolic depth to these events. They may be used to purify the space, perfume the air, as displays, to adorn costumes, decorate the hair or be incorporated as a central part of a ritual act. There are no set uses and imagination is the only limit. I am a fan of using plants that grow naturally in a locality and because of this I avoid going to the florist, supermarket or herbalist to buy imported flowers and herbs for ceremonial work [8].

Below I have provided a breakdown of ideas solely for the Sabbats. These will give you some useful starting points and hopefully encourage you to come up with your own herbal ideas for other ceremonies.

## The Greater Sabbats

### Imbolg

The beautiful ceremony of Imbolg marks the first flickering return of the light after the winter months. The infant Oak King stirs abroad and use of oak leaves and acorns are quite appropriate. Now it goes without saying that at this time of the year oak trees are devoid of foliage, but there is no reason why the brown leaves from last year can't be picked off the ground, painted gold and worked into headdresses or used as an altar display as if the old king welcomes in the new. As for representing the Goddess, February provides a number of flowers and budding shoots that can be used. Snowdrops and crocuses will likely already be out and in some years (increasingly so because of global warming) daffodils are often to be found. Pussy willow and cherry blossom are also out earlier and earlier.... Pussy willow, in particular, is readily fashioned into a crown and makes an ideal headdress for the women of a coven, who can be complemented by oak leaf crown wearing males. As for perfuming the air, hyacinth bulbs that have been kept indoors may well be in flower and their sweet heady scent makes a perfect choice. This year in London I noticed the vanilla smelling laburnum was out and when in Italy I make use of winter honey suckle.

### Beltane

By the time of Beltane vegetation is in abundance. Showers of green are to be seen everywhere and Witches are spoilt for choice for using plants in ceremonial work. Blossoms of later flowering trees and shrubs will be out, often including hawthorn and whitethorn. These two plants in particular have a long association with folk and Pagan practices having long been incorporated into the festivities of this season [9]. Both make ideal floral displays, and can even be used for crowns, if one is careful to remove the thorns first. The white flowers beautifully symbolise the young maiden and compliment the male-inspired fiery antics of rolling flaming wheels down mountainsides that proclaim the vigour of the new God. Of course, Beltane is a time of love as evidenced by the May Pole dances where suitors would entwine themselves in coloured ribbons. And here, at this time, herbal love charms are often employed. Be aware though that any spells said over such charms should not be used to influence the behaviour of another, much better to concentrate instead on making oneself lovable than trying to ensnare another who may not wish to be so caught. Appropriate sprigs of herbs to wear are parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme. This echoes the famous lyric of Scarborough Fair, a song that commemorates an actual event that took place from late medieval times in the United Kingdom [10]. It has been conjectured that the herbs would have represented a kind of coded message. Parsley signified "I'm yours", sage "I'm dependable", rosemary "remember me" and thyme "I want to bear your children". These are all sentiments in keeping with the tradition of "greenwood marriages" where the young folk would take to the woods in passionate embrace.

## Lughnasdah

The season of the harvest Moon in late July/early August conjures up images of field mice scampering through poppy strewn cornfields. Lughnasadh is often perceived as a celebration of the mysteries of the corn crop. To those of us living in prosperous countries in the twenty first century it is hard to imagine how vitally important grain is to human life. For centuries it had provided the bench mark for the economies of empires whose rise and fall might depend on its success. No wonder then that it has been revered through time and has been represented in cultures across the planet by a succession of powerful gods and goddesses. At the Ancient Egyptian temples at Dendera and Mendes, models of divine bread were fashioned of the dismembered Osiris [11], echoes of which may exist in the sacrament of the Roman Catholic Church. The corn god of the Aztecs was Centeotl, charged with guarding the crop, whilst similar duties were performed by the Greek goddess Demeter and the Roman Ceres. For the Kabbalists, wheat's yod-like seeds are seen as being highly symbolic and it is no accident that the plant appears on Crowley's Hermit Tarot card, brimming as it is with symbols of that Hebrew letter.

Corn, then, is a symbol of life itself, and it is fitting that it often plays a central part in Wiccan rituals and folk celebrations, where corn dollies seem to embody the very spirit of the land. Of course, it is not the only plant that would be appropriate to use at this time. Other harvest fare can easily be incorporated. Early apples, fashioned into apple dolls make a great compliment to the grain dollies. Poppies can be woven into headgear; a favourite of mine is to entwine holly switches and poppies (the Holly King after all began his reign at midsummer). Other appropriate plants for display are monkshood, lavender, dandelion, lilies, daisies, rosemary, thyme, nettles and camomile and many of these have great summery fragrances perfect for use in a censer.

## Samhain

Misty and smoky autumn nights, darker evenings and creeping cold all provide the backdrop to what, by the general public at least, is often perceived to be the greatest of the Witch festivals. The goddesses and gods of the Underworld are abroad on this magical night and the spirits of our ancestors can be more readily reached when the veil between the worlds is at its thinnest. Pumpkins carved out with candles inside are hardly worth mentioning here, along with other gourds. But what about using black violas or the even darker bat flower for floral display? The aptly named death lily, silver deadnettle and twisted willow all make for great shows of Hallowe'en splendour. And for splashes of bright colour you could try the foliage of the crab apple, hedgehog rose, fire thorn and clematis. Herbs that sanitize and cleanse are perhaps used more widely during the rituals of this time, for when the spirit world is at its most active it is easier for those who practice magick to become prey to unwanted influences. Censers containing the nine herbs of purification recommended by *The Key Of Solomon the King* are the order of the

day, these being vervain, fennel, lavender, sage, valerian, mint, basil, rosemary and hyssop.

## **The Lesser Sabbats**

### **Midwinter Solstice**

At midwinter the God is re-born. For those that use the Oak and Holly King system, it is, of course, the beginning of the Oak King's reign.

The evergreens holly and ivy are the popular choice for decorative purposes during this season, but spotted laurel, juniper, mexican orange blossom, love-in-the-mist seed heads, red barked dogwood, rubus, corkscrew hazel, snakebark maple, winter jasmine, winter honeysuckle and viburnum will all add splashes of colour and texture to any winter display.

### **Spring Equinox**

With day and light in balance and the Sun gaining in strength, the Goddess begins to clothe herself in green and bright colours explode onto the landscape, many flowers are out and trees are in full blossom. Crab apple, flowering cherry, flowering dogwood, laburnum, daffodils and tulips can all be effectively utilised during this period.

### **Summer Solstice**

Summer is at its height and the long days of June pay homage to the newly crowned Holly King. Rose, rosa mundi, geranium, fuchsia, penstemon, marguerite, mint, verbena and jasmine provide fragrant altar displays, and can be used in floral showers or as sprigs for decorating clothes and hair.

### **Autumn Equinox**

As the nights begin to draw in and the autumn season begins, shows of barberry, witch hazel, smoke tree, Japanese maple and sweet gum, all begin to exhibit colourful foliage heralding the decline of the year.

As for other ceremonies it should now be easy to see how suitable plants can easily be chosen from the above lists when celebrating Wiccanings, Handfastings and the life of one now departed, as well as other ceremonies.

## Ritual Baths

Ritual baths are an important way to cleanse the mind as well as the body and allow the individual to better commune with spirit. This type of cleansing has been featured in many religions from all over the world and throughout history. More than just an exterior cleaning, the idea behind it is to rid your self of unwanted or negative energies that clog up body and tend to hinder magickal work. As this type of bathing is a ritual it can be made more effective by giving it a meaningful structure.

Usually ingredients are added to the bath water. These add to the sensate experience but their properties are also often absorbed through the skin and have certain physical effects on things such as blood flow and inner bodily heat. Quite what these additives are will depend on the work in hand. The table below gives just a few suggestions of common options, but the more that you find out about herbs and essential oils, the more you will be able to experiment for certain effects.

**Please note:** Those who are pregnant or suffer from sensitive skin should consult with a qualified medical practitioner before using herbs or essential oils in baths.

Bath Additive	Property
Sage	Herb of purification.
Peppermint	Powerfully stimulative. Good if you want to heighten perception or will perform magick that requires exciting the mind. <b>Not to be used by pregnant women or those with sensitive skin.</b>
Lavender	Protective and calming. <b>Not to be used by pregnant women.</b>
Ylang Ylang	Creates a sense of arousal. Again good for magick that requires a stimulated mind and body.
Thyme	Lifts the spirits and purifying. The essential oil should be well diluted and never used neat (a safer option is to use fresh leaves). <b>Best avoided by children and those who are pregnant.</b>
Kelp or Bladderwrack	Stimulative, balancing and purifying.
Rosemary	Similar to peppermint. <b>Pregnant women may wish to avoid using it.</b>
Bergamot	Calming. Great for inducing a sense of peace.

Any herbs to be used are probably best contained in a little net bag. This will allow their properties to flow into the bath but make it easier to clean up when the bath

is finished. Some people like to burn incense and, if you wish to do so, prepare a censer and some matches before hand. Others like to light candles. Another nice touch can be to play some relaxing meditation style music. There are in fact many meditative techniques that can be used during a ritual bath and a standard method is given below. Light the candles and then put out the lights. Fill the bath with water and add any herbs, essential oils or salt. With your hand, wand or athame draw an invoking pentagram of Water.



Notice that all the Elements are present during this ritual. Fire is represented by the candles, Water by the bath, Air by the incense and Earth by the herbs. Surrounded by these Elements, climb into the bath. As you lie down in the water let your self relax. Using a breathing pattern here may be of help. Next visualise a clear blue light above your head. See it gently spinning and pulsating. Watch it in your mind's eye for a while. Bring the light gently into your head, your neck and your shoulders. As you do so, consciously relax your face muscles and allow the tension to dissipate from your shoulders. Draw the light further down your body, each time relaxing the places that it travels through. It should flow down your arms and through your fingers into the water, down through your chest, your stomach and sex organs, down through your legs and out from your feet. You will find that if you repeat this two or three times that a wonderful sense of relaxation will come upon you. Cleansed from all tension and worries, you now have a calm space upon which to think about a coming ritual or piece of magickal practice. Your focus will be sharper and your will more effective. When you judge the time to be right, release the water from the bath and, as you do so, see all your anxieties, fears and tensions drain away down the plug-hole.

If you wish you can then do a blessing. This one is from the *Gardnerian Book of Shadows*:

*“Blessed be thy feet, that have brought thee in these ways.  
 Blessed be thy knees, that shall kneel at the sacred altar.  
 Blessed be thy womb (phallus), without which we would not be  
 Blessed be thy breasts, formed in beauty  
 Blessed be thy lips, that shall utter the Sacred Names.”*

If desired, this can be easily adapted to include other body parts as well such as the eyes and the mind. Try out a number of ritual baths and herbal and essential oil combinations; see what works for you. Most importantly, combine the baths with a ritual or some other magickal work. Can you see a positive effect? Has your experience of magick been enhanced? As always, make sure that you record what you have found, for only by doing this have you got an accurate record against which to base any future changes that you may wish to make. When carrying out this kind of work take into account the astrological properties of the herb. Below is a table that gives a general indication of how herbs may function in this respect.

<b>Herbs of:</b>	<b>Uses</b>
Saturn	Can be used when things need to be slowed, issues of reaching a crossroads in life, matters surrounding death.
Jupiter	Can be used when things need to be increased or expanded. Promotes joy. Good for vitality and wealth.
Mars	Can be used for issues of determination, dogged resistance and conflict.
Sun	Good for health, vitality, strength. When one wants to be noticed or glamorous. Issues of pride.
Venus	Issues of love and mentoring.
Mercury	Issues of communication change and speed.
Moon	Psychic matters, feminine health and regulation. But also issues of fickleness, changeability and jealousy.
Earth	Issues of stability, calmness, steadiness.

Over the coming month try taking ritual baths before any magickal work is carried out using a variety of essential oils or fresh leaves and flowers. Remember though that some essential oils can be harmful to pregnant women and that others are not indicated for sensitive skin. Experiment with any that take your fancy. Try them alone or in combination. Make sure that you record the herbs you have used and the effects that they have had on you. Some will make you feel invigorated, others calm and dreamy, some may have no noticeable effect at all. When you have taken the bath try out some magickal work that you have tried before. At its conclusion write down in your Book of Shadows how things went and compare it with your record of the time before. How did the work go this time? Have the herbs caused

a difference? Was the change positive? Over time you will build up a useful record of which herbs are useful for you in your magickal work.

Look carefully at the herb's astrological or Kabbalistic associations. Is there a connection between this and the work in hand? Given the planet or star sign the herb is associated with has the effect been what might have been expected? Be honest with yourself, though, for there might have been no noticeable correspondence at all.



## Research Project

This chapter there is a lot for you to be thinking about and getting involved in. You may wish to start building up your knowledge of herbs in terms of their general properties, astrological considerations and Kabbalistic correspondences. This can be a daunting work and for much of it there is no standard reference that can be easily consulted that will cover all of these areas. Cunningham's *Encyclopedia of Magickal Herbs* will be useful in part, but it is completely lacking in associations with the Kabbalah and much of the astrological information appears to derive from earlier fuller sources like Culpeper. There is no way round it but to do some research. You may like to start with the thirteen herbs that I outlined and build up fuller correspondences, or you may wish to go on and choose your own.

I would also suggest some practical magickal work. Begin to experiment with herbal charms, herbs for ritual baths and herbs for use within the circle.

If you are reading this near one of the Sabbats then you might also like to think about how you will use plant matter within the context of ritual and celebration. What things will you use for decoration? What will you make to be worn? How will herbs add depth to your festivities?

## Footnotes

[1] Binah is, of course, linked to Saturn.

[2] Not all feel that Raphael is the Archangel of Tiphareth, some prefer Michael.

[3] Aleister Crowley, *Aleister Crowley, 777 and other Qabalistic Writings*, Weiser Books, 1986, p.98.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid, p.96. Presumably by this Crowley was referring to the experience of attaining one's Holy Guardian Angel and the idea of purification.

[6] See, for example, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious\\_use\\_of\\_incense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_use_of_incense).

[7] Some link these acts with Satanism, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious\\_use\\_of\\_incense](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_use_of_incense). Although Satanists may use such procedures they are not the exclusive preserve of those engaged in Dark Arts. They are most commonly practised by High Magicians.

[8] Medicinal work is different and if I cannot find an herb needed for a cure locally then I have no qualms about buying from imported sources. Some Witches would disagree with this and taking a "deep green" attitude would see that importing herbs is not good for the environment, a point that is difficult to argue with. It is also worth making the argument that if choosing to use wild flowers, shrubs or trees, then the impact of this on a location should be considered. Gangs of Witches denuding the countryside of natural beauty are going to be deservedly unpopular and can damage a local ecology.

[9] One only need consult Frazer's *Golden Bough* to see that this is the case.

[10] Scarborough Fair was an August event. Nonetheless, the herbs it speaks of are appropriate to the Beltane period of late April and early May. For more on the Fair see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarborough\\_Fair](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scarborough_Fair).

[11] For more information on this see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osiris>.

# Chapter Six: Herbs and Aromatherapy

# Herbs and Aromatherapy

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn about herbs and aromatherapy.

At the end there is a research project.

## Introduction

Closely allied to the magickal use of herbs is their employment in aromatherapy. Aromatherapy is the art of using volatile liquid plant oils, known as essential oils, as well as other plant compounds, to influence an individual's feelings or health.

On one level certain blends of herbs can be created which smell pleasing to the human olfactory senses. But aromatherapy is far more than the art of creating pleasant odours.

When used in a magickal sense, it is a powerful gateway to the mind and an important aid in achieving desired outcomes in line with the will. When used as an alternative therapy it helps promote physical and mental well-being.

In this chapter we will be exploring what exactly the sense of smell is, why aromatherapy is important to magickal work, why also it is important to the promotion of health, and how aromatic preparations can be used. But first, let us take a look at its origins.

## Aroma in History

The use of aromatic preparations in religious practices, perfume and health matters have an ancient lineage that can be traced to some of the world's oldest civilizations. Claims have been made as to their employment that reach back to the time of the Egyptian physician and god of medicine, Imhotep, (likely to have been alive in the early 2600s BCE) who has been attributed as recommending sweet smelling oils for embalming, massage and bathing [1]. Whether or not this dating is correct, herbal preparations were certainly used by the Ancient Egyptians for their aromatic properties [2] during the processes of mummification. This method of bodily preservation reached its height during the period of the Middle Kingdom between 2050BCE and 1800BCE where frankincense, myrrh, cinnamon, cedarwood, galbanum, spikenard and juniper were all utilised to prepare the pharaohs for the Afterlife [3].

Also from the Ancient world come the world's oldest known perfumes. In Pyrgos, in Cyprus, evidence of a perfumery has been discovered which dates back some 4,000 years -here lavender, bay, coriander, rosemary and pine were used to create fragrance for generations [4]. Perfumes were also widely used in Egyptian society, where women adorned themselves with fragranced wax cones that would melt in

the African Sun and infuse the air around them with marvellous aromas [5]. However, the earliest recorded perfume maker belongs to Mesopotamia, where the trade of an individual known as Tapputi-Belatikallim is carved into a cuneiform tablet from around 1200 BCE [6].

Later, the Greek father of medicine, Hippocrates, was credited with using aromatic baths and fragrant massage in his treatments, as well as scented fumigations to expel plague from Athens [7]. This use of aromatic preparations was transmitted to the Roman world, where it is found in the work of the physician Galen, and from Latin civilisation such practices seem to have spread all over Europe. However, exact lines of transmission are hard to discern from the available historical records. For example, was the tenth century British Saxon manuscript known as the *Leech Book of Bald*, which contains information on herbal baths (along with much superstitious lore) [8], influenced by the knowledge of the Romans? Or was the information based on other sources? It is hard to say.

Further on in time, contact with the Mediterranean and Eastern world made through the Crusades seems to have been significant in bringing to the West new perfumes [9] and other aromatic preparations, such as the fashion for the washing of hands with rose water [10].

In the first English herbals the aromatic benefits of plants appears to have been written of fairly extensively. In Culpeper we come across references to preparations that seem similar to those of modern aromatherapy. For example, he writes of poultices to be made of violets and the oil of roses, the smell of rosewater aiding sleep and the oil of lavender being good for grief [11].

However all this may be, aromatherapy proper -that is the use of distilled volatiles- although based on the past uses of aromatic oils, is a twentieth century invention.

## René-Maurice Gattefossé

The term *aromathérapie* was coined by René-Maurice Gattefossé (1881-1950). Gattefossé became intrigued in the healing possibilities of essential oils after an accident in his perfume laboratory, where he set his arm on fire and doused the flames with lavender oil. The healing process was remarkably swift and the wound disappeared without scarring. This discovery eventually led to the seminal text *Aromathérapie: Les Huiles essentielles hormones vegetales* [12]. Later, Gattefossé's work would be built upon by Jean Valnet who used the essential oils of clove, chamomile, lemon and thyme to treat gangrene during World War Two. In time he would experiment with using essential oils to treat psychiatric problems, which he recounted in part in the work *Traitement des Maladies par les Essence de Plantes* [13]. Gattefossé and Valnet's work was to directly influence Robert Tisserand in the late 1970s who wrote *The Art of Aromatherapy* [14], the first work on the subject in English.

## The Scientific Background to Smell

In the first century BCE it was conjectured by the Roman philosopher Lucretius that different smells are caused by varying shapes and sizes of particles entering the nose. Today we now know that odours are caused by different molecules and that these are then picked up by sensor proteins in the olfactory organ. These proteins are to be found in a cluster of nerve cells in a small area of tissue high inside the nose at about the same height as the eyes. From each cell extends a small hair and the protein receptors are found on the end of these. It has been reported that the nose is capable of identifying between 5 and 10,000 different scents. These statistics have surprised scientists for there are thought to be merely around 1,000 sensors in the human nose. It turns out that each of these protein receptors are able to recognise a number of smells and that this accounts for the wide range of odours that the nose can detect [15].

When a smell fuses with the protein receptors the nerve cell sends a message to the olfactory bulb, an area of the brain located just above the eyes. From here the nerves transmit information about scent to the areas of the brain that consciously distinguish between smells as well as to parts of the mind, such as the amygdala and hippocampus, responsible for our range of emotions and memories. This last fact is of particular interest to those who would work magick for reasons that I will come to later.

Although sensor cells in the nose live no longer than around 60 days, we remember smells and how we feel about smells for periods up to a lifetime. This is because new nerve cells send out extensions that return to the same areas in the olfactory bulb, where previous cells were to be found, and the odour mapping of the mind remains the same [16].

## Smell and Memory

Anecdotally we can readily see the effects of smell and memory in humans. For example, a particular perfume that one's mother wore decades ago when still alive will bring back sudden recollections of childhood that have been long forgotten, the whiff of Lilly of the Valley brings back early memories of playing in a park, the scent of coal smoke and fallen leaves a vivid remembrance of an autumn playground...we all have such correspondences: there is evidence to suggest that the majority of pleasant "olfactory-evoked recollections" of childhood, in the USA at least, are caused by baked food and especially bread. The reasons for this may be that for centuries bread has been a staple of the US diet. The second largest group of nostalgia inducers are other cooking smells, such as bacon or even pasta. There is also evidence to suggest that in those born before 1930 smells associated with the countryside are significant, which perhaps reflects the march of urbanisation, making these odours less important in later generations [17].

For the female Witch it will be of interest to note that women of reproductive age have a stronger sense of smell than men [18] and that this is most marked during ovulation [19].

## The Magickal Theory of Aroma

So, we have established how smell works and how it connects to the mind. Let us go on now to explore how aroma is linked to magickal practice. As was mentioned above, smell, memory and emotion are inextricably linked. And, as has been written elsewhere in *Magicka School works*, the art of magick is all about making changes within ourselves to effect transformations without. As beings we exist between memory and aspiration. We are alive in the “now”, the present that sits between past and future. How we perceive our memories in the present affects our future aspirations and things that we will achieve with our lives. Let me explain this a little more fully and you will see why this apparent platitude is of such great importance.

As creatures, our conscious perception of ourselves is constructed of all that we can remember and our sense of where we will be going next. If we are to get the most out of life controlling both these areas is our key to success. Simple this may sound, simplistic even, but it is a surprising fact that many people live their lives with few aspirations and spend their time playing unpleasant memories over and over again in their minds. As a result, their lives are full of a sense of dissatisfaction and even despair.

Magick offers a way to break this disheartening negative cycle, through its processes it offers powerful symbolic and meditative methods that allow one to induce positive states and utilise helpful memories and affirmations. These create a sense of well-being in the present and allow the achievement of a worthwhile future. It is also worth noting that such positivity helps to create good health.

If you took the *Wicca Revealed* course or have read the book [20], one of the ways to make magic is through manipulation of the olfactory senses and this is the reason why the use of incense and essential oils is nearly always present during Wiccan ritual and spell work.

Different aromas have specific effects on the mind of an individual. They can be used to directly affect the emotions, allowing a Witch to induce useful states within the mind. These states can be varied depending on how a Witch chooses to work. Much magickal effort centres around the releasing of an intention successfully into the subconscious, from where it will begin to order the things necessary to the completion of a goal.

It is important that the intention is released correctly and for that to happen there must be a void, an area of divine nothingness created. There are two main ways that this can be done [21]; the first seems obvious, the other is more difficult to understand. One way of creating space is through inducing a sense of complete calm, a stilling of the mind, which will go from a wave filled lake to a flat, featureless pool when influenced by the art of meditation. The second way is through creating a physical and mental frenzy where the mind is so charged that it quite literally forgets itself and a void appears like the eye within a hurricane. This state is usually created through dance and the chanting or shrieking of words of power.

Why is a void important? Because, when an intention is allowed to float within a calm environment it quickly and efficiently travels into the subconscious, which then goes about changing our behaviour to create the kind of environment that will be conducive to the achievement of the thing that we have desired. It is no good releasing an intention into a disturbed space for it will become lost among the cares and worries that surround it.

Aroma can be most helpful in achieving either calm or frenzy.

It is well known that certain smells are useful for the creation of positive thoughts and aspirations in general. Sweet or pleasant smelling environments have the ability to enhance the thoughts we think and instil tranquillity and balance within us (whereas foul smelling locales create a sense of disharmony and a lack of order [22]). Others can also stimulate the mind quite markedly. I do not generally recommend the pathway of frenzy to magickal success, as it is fraught with dangers. Although smells in themselves are incapable of doing much harm, for those who have delicate minds the whole process of whipping oneself up into a frenzied state can have damaging effects that can be long-lasting.

## **The Magickal Use of Aroma**

### **Preparation and use of Aromatic Substances**

The aromas of oils and incenses that Witches use are specially chosen for specific magickal outcomes, this section of the chapter gives some accepted standards and indications as to their use. It should be borne in mind, though, that although centuries of work have shown us how they can best be employed not everyone will react the same way and therefore an element of trial will be involved.

It is perhaps also worth noting here that I disagree with those who talk about “vibrations” of herbal preparations having certain effects on the mind. I regard assertions of this ilk to be ill-defined and the worse kind of flim-flammy, which has helped to give magickal arts a bad name [23]. As I have been careful to point out earlier in this chapter, smells are hard wired into an area of the brain responsible for emotional response and memories, and certain smells stimulate the mind in relatively predictable ways. There is no need to speak of “vibrations”.

### **Oils**

In a later section preparation of essential oils is discussed in some detail and it will need to be referred to. There will be many occasions when it will be appropriate for a Witch to use these oils after they have been properly diluted such as for anointing, during ritual, within spell casting and for blessings as well.



## Incenses

Although the burning of incense is not strictly speaking within the province of aromatherapy (it being the use of volatile oils) it is nonetheless germane to the subject of aroma in magick. Incense is widely available in prepared formats such as stick, cone or blocks. It is also possible to make your own through grinding the dried herb with a pestle and mortar. Some will be readily available and easy to produce, such as sage and rosemary; others are probably best bought pre-ground.

The following table applies both to oils and incenses, although of course it is preferable to use a liquid for anointing.

<b>Fragrance and part used</b>	<b>General Effect as an aroma</b>	<b>Specific Use</b>
Almond (nut)	Clarity of mind.	Anointing, money spells.
Aniseed (seed)	Aphrodisiac and promotes milk flow.	Love spells, rituals and spells associated with motherhood.
Bergamot (peel)	Uplifting and anti-depressant	Rituals of protection, spellwork to bring prosperity.
Cedar (wood/resin)	Clarity of mind.	Meditation work.
Frankincense (resin)	Pungent and good for concentration.	Anointing
Jasmine (flower)	Aphrodisiac and calming.	Love spells, handfasting ceremonies.
Lavender (flower)	Balancing and calming.	Purification work, to arouse sexual desire.
Orange (blossom)Also known as Neroli	Calms the mind and relieves stress.	Spells of attraction and love.
Patchouli (seeds)	Calming and anti-depressant.	Anointing.
Peppermint (leaves)	Stimulative, good for clarity of mind.	Baths of purification.
Rosemary (leaves)	Stimulative, excites the mind.	Within any ritual as an energy boost. Ritual baths.
Sage	Calming and cleansing.	Rituals of protection and in baths of

(leaves)		purification.
Sandalwood (wood/bark)	Calming and mystical, beneficial on memory, gives strength to the emotions, increases confidence and sexual energy.	Anointing. During any ritual to add charge. Useful for love spells.
Ylang Ylang (flower)	Aphrodisiac and stimulative. Lifts depression.	Good for love spells. Spells to improve situations.

It is quite possible to mix and match oils and incenses to create powerful blends. For example, an influential aphrodisiac oil can be made from a blend of jasmine and neroli in an avocado oil base. Purification incense might include sage, rosemary and sandalwood. Again an element of experimentation is a good idea, for the most powerful blends will be those you make for yourself, although for those that want, a quick search on the Internet will reveal many recipes [24].

## Aroma for Health

Understood in its modern sense, Aromatherapy is used to treat and prevent disease as well as to encourage vitality and health in general. Although it is widely accepted in France where it is integrated into conventional medical practice [25], it should be borne in mind that there are few scientific “double-blind” studies into its effects and that opinions on it vary enormously. These range from those who regard it as complimentary and beneficial, to those who see some of its practices harmful or even fraudulent.

That it works is asserted on two grounds. The first is the influence of smell on the brain, explored in some detail earlier; the second is the pharmacological effects of essential oils. The molecules contained in the oils enter the body in a couple of ways: through the lungs, where they enter the bloodstream and then travel through the body; and if applied to the skin, through the blood stream via the pores. In both cases the molecules travel around the body until they are eventually expelled.

In Britain and the USA, practitioners of aromatherapy concentrate on massages, inhalations, aromatic baths, compresses and cosmetics -of which more later. In France, however, the approach is more technically centred on the antiseptic properties of the oils -we will not be exploring the use of essential oils in this sense as such application is best left to qualified professionals [26].

## Essential Oils

Essential oils are made from various types of plant material from a single source. They can be made from fruit, grass, flowers, seeds, roots, trees and leaves. The oil is extracted by the following methods: distillation, where plant material is steamed at pressure; solvent extraction an expensive technique typically used on pulped flowers which are soaked in a solvent, centrifuged to produce wax and oil and then vacuum distilled to separate the oil; or pressing (expression), useful in the preparation of citrus oils.

Pure essential oils are generally quite costly and should not be confused with the cheaper aromatherapy oils that contain a high level of base oil, which dilutes the essence. Make sure that you don't get ripped off though; the essential oils of bergamot, lavender and tea-tree are relatively cheap to produce, yet those of flowers such as jasmine and rose will be more expensive, having been prepared by solvent extraction.

When using essential oils for the practices outlined later they will need to be diluted in a base oil. This is an oil which carries the expensive essence and dilutes it sufficiently so that it can be used safely on the body. The best oils to use are first cold-pressings (known as virgin oils). These contain higher levels of vitamins and minerals and are more expensive than second or third pressings (compare, for example, a bottle of "virgin" olive oil with one that is not so labelled). Cold-pressing is exactly what it says; the plant matter is crushed to produce the oil, which is then drained off and stored. Safe popular choices are sunflower, peach kernel, apricot, avocado, evening primrose, sweet almond and soya oil.

To create a blend, the essential oil can be added into its base oil at a 2½% concentration. If you work on the basis that for every 10ml (¼floz) of base oil you will need 5 drops of essential oil, the amounts can be easily worked out for any size bottle. For children a good guide is around half that concentration.

It is possible to create a blend of essences but in general no more than two or three are recommended as the therapeutic effects may end up cancelling each other out. Remember not to exceed the concentration outlined above, i.e. if you are using three oils, combined you should not put in more than 5 drops in total per 10ml. Blending is something of an art and will depend on your knowledge of the oils, their relative strengths and properties. Be prepared for some inventiveness and experimentation!

All oils (both essential and base) should be stored in cool, dry places, out of sunlight, and preferably in dark glass bottles (not plastic) that are carefully sealed. Do not be tempted to make up large batches of diluted essential oils in a base oil as they keep less well and will not last as long. In any case, as a general rule, once opened, essential oils will only last for between one and two years, so don't rush out and buy huge stocks that you may not get round to using in that time frame. There are exceptions to this however; for example, patchouli actually seems to get better with age, a bit like a fine wine.

## Safety First

Before we go on to look at some common ailments and aromatherapy treatments it is time that we discussed issues of safety. Perhaps the first thing to be aware of is that many essential oils, such as eucalyptus, sage, cedar and hyssop, are extremely toxic if taken internally and undiluted, they can also be dangerous to pets. Further, a number of essences will irritate the skin when used without a base oil. In addition, some will also react with the sunlight and will bring your skin out in a rash or change its colour. Beyond these concerns there is some evidence to suggest that essential oils can mimic oestrogens; for example tea tree and lavender oil can cause abnormal tissue growth in the breast of boys before the onset of puberty [27], and should be avoided by pregnant women too. It is also advisable that those who breast-feed should consult a doctor before using essential oils. Likewise, if you are taking prescription medicines then you should check with a qualified medical practitioner before attempting to use essential oils topically, as a number may react with conventional drugs and cause unpleasant or dangerous side effects. Having been duly warned let us now go on to look at treatments.

## A Short A-Z of Aromatherapy Treatments for Common Ailments

The following A-Z uses the methods and doses included in the table below, unless otherwise indicated.

Adult doses and methods of treatment:

Method	Dosage of Essential Oil	Notes
Massage	5 drops per 10ml (quarter floz) of base oil.	
Inhalation	5-10 drops per bowl of steaming water, or 1 to 3 drops on a handkerchief.	When using the handkerchief method avoid direct contact with the skin.
Bath	5-10 drops diluted in a tablespoon of base oil.	Stir the oil well into the bath water.
Sitz bath	6 drops placed in a teaspoon of base oil per 2 litres of water.	One should sit in the water, which will reach the affected part.
Preparation for the face	2 and a half drops of essence per 10ml (quarter floz) of base oil.	
Compress	1 or 2 drops in a bowl of water.	Depending on the treatment the water may be of varying temperature. A clean cloth can be placed on the surface of the water to soak up the oil and it can then be placed on the affected body part.

**Please note, doses for children should be at least halved.**

Condition	Treatment(s)
Acne	<p>Facial Steam: Indicated a couple of times a week. Prepare a bowl of steaming water with 5 drops bergamot, 3 drops lavender and 2 drops geranium</p> <p>Aromatic baths: Once a week. Oils to try include eucalyptus, patchouli, rosemary and cypress.</p> <p>Cream: Apply at night. Lavender, evening primrose and patchouli at 5% dilution.</p>
Asthma	<p>Inhalation from a handkerchief: Lavender, frankincense and neroli are all indicated to help keep the bronchial tubes clear. They will also ease any symptoms of panic.</p>
Acute Bronchitis	<p>Steam inhalation: A blend of 1 drop eucalyptus, 1 drop peppermint, 4 drops lemon, 1 drop sage, 2 drops tea-tree is indicated 3 times daily.</p>
Chronic Bronchitis	<p>Steam inhalation: A blend of 3 drops eucalyptus, 4 of cedarwood and 3 of rosemary are indicated twice daily.</p>
Bruises	<p>Topical Application: Lavender can be used neat straight after the injury.</p> <p>Cold Compress: 1 drop of hyssop and 1 of fennel.</p>
Burns (minor burns only –all others require qualified medical attention)	<p>Topical Application: A couple of drops of neat lavender to the affected area are indicated.</p>
Cellulite	<p>Massage: Try either cypress, juniper, rosemary or geranium.</p> <p>Bath: Use the same essential oils.</p>
Chilblains	<p>Massage: Lavender, lemon and rosemary can all indicated.</p>
Common cold	<p>Steam inhalation: 2 drops thyme, 3 drops tea-tree, 3 drops pine, 1 drop cedarwood, 3 drops rosemary, 1 drop peppermint.</p> <p>External throat rub: Indicated if a sore throat is present. Sandalwood at 5 drops per 10ml of base oil.</p>
Cystitis	<p>Sitz Bath: Chamomile and tea-tree. 3 drops each diluted in two litres of water.</p> <p>Bath: The same essences are indicated. Can also use bergamot and sandalwood.</p>

Eczema	<p>Massage: At 1% dilution yarrow, patchouli, sandalwood, chamomile, evening primrose and avocado can be used separately.</p> <p>Bath: Try any of the same essences.</p>
Fever (Mild)	<p>Sponging: In 1 litre (2 pints) of tepid water use 4 drops lavender, 1 drops bergamot, 1 drop eucalyptus, 1 drop peppermint.</p>
Headaches	<p>Topical Application: Neat lavender essence to the temples.</p> <p>Handkerchief inhalation: Try peppermint, rosemary or eucalyptus.</p>
Indigestion	<p>Massage: Massage the abdominal area with lavender, chamomile, thyme and rosemary.</p>
Insomnia	<p>Massage: lavender, sandalwood, frankincense, neroli can all be used before bed.</p> <p>Baths: Take a bath at least 2 hours before going to bed. Although a bath with any of the essences listed above will be relaxing, baths cause core blood to rush to the skin as the body cools itself, and this is not always conducive to peaceful sleep.</p>
Nausea	<p>Light massage of the abdominal region: If caused by anxiety use lavender or neroli. If caused by indigestion try lemon or tangerine.</p>
Palpitations (seek medical advice as palpitations can indicate a serious heart problem)	<p>Massage: Despite its reputation as an aphrodisiac, ylang-ylang is ideal as it slows and regulates the heart rate.</p> <p>Baths: Short baths with lavender or neroli are calming if the palpitations are caused by nervous shock. Be careful though as some heart conditions are exacerbated by warm or hot baths.</p>
PMT	<p>Massage: Massage of the abdominal region with lavender, neroli and rose is indicated.</p> <p>Baths: Use of the same essences will be beneficial.</p>
Psoriasis	<p>Massage: Use of emollient base oils is indicated, such as evening primrose and avocado. To this add peppermint, bergamot, or yarrow.</p>

Sinusitis	Inhalations: Use 1 drop thyme, 2 drops sage, 2 drops eucalyptus, 2 drops cypress, 1 drop tea-tree. Tiredness Massage: Use peppermint, rosemary, geranium or bergamot. Bath: 1 drop peppermint, 2 drops thyme, also add cloves.
Thrush	Sitz Bath: lavender, bergamot or tea-tree is indicated.
Varicose Veins	Massage (gently): Use cypress, lavender, geranium or myrrh
Water Retention	Massage: Use rosemary or juniper

This list is merely intended as a start for your own practice, there are many reputable sources on the Internet that will give aromatherapy treatments for further conditions.



## Research Project

This chapter's research project is a fairly obvious next step.

Whether using aromas as part of your magickal work, for the promotion of health, or the combination of the two areas, you will want to have a go at exploring some of the herbal essences detailed in the chapter.

If you are a Witch or Magician have a go at incorporating the use of essential oils and incenses in a more focussed way than you did previously. Many Witches give scant thought to this area of their work, preferring instead to focus on the formulation of a spell or the actions and words of a ritual. This is a shame as by doing this they are missing out on the added charge that utilising the sense of smell will give to their efforts. So why not really get to grips with the whole process of using herbs to enhance the creation of a void within which to cast an intention, where the substance chosen fits as precisely as possible the goal you are hoping to achieve? Or give thought to using the whole sensate experience of smell in a more thought-through way within ritual.

Not everyone who will read this work is interested solely in religious and magickal applications and for that reason you may also want to look more closely at how you can use aromatherapy to promote your own health or that of those around you. An easy point to start your practical exploration is experimenting with adding essential oils to baths or creating your own blends of massage oils. You will no doubt be aware by now that Magicka School has an extensive Forum and what better place could there be (other than your own personal record of course) to post the blends that you have created along with notes of their effects?

And what about combining Magicka, aromatherapy and the healing properties of herbs for the treatment of ailments? You now know enough to combine all these elements to create truly powerful remedies that can be used alongside conventional medicines to effect cures. Remember to check with a qualified medical practitioner that any essential oils you are using will not interfere with prescription medicines. The combined effects of visualisation, backed with spell and ritual work, incorporating well chosen essential oils and appropriate methods of application, when coupled to modern medicine is compelling Witchcraft indeed, and should not be underestimated as to its efficacy!

## Footnotes

[1] See, for example, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aromatherapy>. Imhotep's reputation rests on the claimed authorship of the Edwin Smith Papyrus. There is no mention of aromatic preparations in this work (which can be consulted here: <http://www.touregypt.net/edwinsmithsurgical.htm>), and in any case the only surviving version, which may have been a copy of an older text, was written long after Imhotep's time.

[2] *Decoding Egyptian Hieroglyphs; How to Read the Language of the Pharaohs*, B McDermott, Chronicle Books, 2001, p.99.

[3] On the Egyptian uses of fragrant materials see the Museum of Spurlock's article [here](http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu/explorations/online/mummification/Pages/materials1.html): <http://www.spurlock.uiuc.edu/explorations/online/mummification/Pages/materials1.html> and on cedarwood take a look at the *Guardian Newspaper's* article at this address: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2003/oct/23/arts.science>.

[4] See <http://www.perfumerflavorist.com/news/6663832.html>.

[5] See <http://www.perfumes.com/eng/history.htm>.

[6] See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perfume>. Tapputi is referred to as being female, although I have been unable to ascertain this person's gender for certain: See <http://www1.umn.edu/ships/gender/giese.htm>.

[7] Tales of his involvement in the Plague of Athens are probably no more than just that. See <http://www.perfumes.com/eng/history.htm>.

[8] On this and other early English practices see Stephen Pollington's *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plantlore and Healing*, AngloSaxon Books 2000.

[9] The Crusades were instrumental in bringing many new things to Europe. See <http://www.middle-ages.org.uk/effects-of-crusades.htm>.

[10] See <http://www.history-science-technology.com/Articles/articles%2072.htm>.

[11] *Culpeper's Complete Herbal: A Book of Natural Remedies for Ancient Ills*, Wordsworth reference Series, 2007, p.159, p.291 and p.235.

[12] This work is available today: *René-Maurice Gattefossé, Aromathérapie: Les Huiles essentielles hormones vegetales*, Random House, 2004.

[13] Originally published in 1964, this work would later be translated in English as *The Practice of Aromatherapy*, available from Beekham Books, 1990.

[14] Available today as Robert Tisserand, *The Art of Aromatherapy*, CW Daniel, 2004.

[15] See the article here: <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/1999/04.08/smell.html>. The work of Linda Buck has been central to our modern understanding of smell.

[16] Mysteries of the mind and smell remain however; we do not yet know for sure why the scent of a rose makes us all feel good and would be described as pleasant whilst the smell of excrement is perceived as disgusting.

[17] Dr Alan Hirsch is the leading neurologist in this field and has carried out numerous studies into how our sense of smell works:  
<http://www.smellandtaste.org/>

[18] See the article here <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/1796447.stm>

[19] See the research synopsis here:  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12853171>

[20] In chapter 5, *The Art of Magick*, there is a section on the use of incense.

[21] Another way is through the use of drugs or hallucinogenic plants, which we will not be exploring in this work.

[22] It is no accident that plants associated with negative magick smell repugnant.

[23] Even the most famous of modern magickal herbals are full of such statements, see, for example, Scott Cunningham, *Magickal Herbalism, The Secret Craft of the Wise*, Llewellyn, 2006, p.99.

[24] I would recommend the Australian site <http://www.incense.com.au> which details the preparation of incense here:  
<http://www.incense.com.au/howtomakeincense.html> Also worth consulting is Scott Cunningham, *Magickal Herbalism: The Secret Craft of the Wise*, Llewellyn, 2006, pp.119-129.

[25] It is not accepted in the USA, Germany, Japan or Russia.

[26] In France doctors culture a secretion or sample of infected tissue, which is then grown in a number of petri dishes. A period of experimentation follows where the culture is subjected to a variety of essential oils to see which one will be most efficacious in inhibiting the micro-organism present in the dishes. Depending on the symptoms an essential oil preparation will be given either externally or internally.

[27] See Derek V. Henley, Ph.D., Natasha Lipson, M.D., Kenneth S. Korach, Ph.D., and Clifford A. Bloch, M.D., *Prepubertal Gynecomastia Linked to Lavender and Tea Tree Oils*, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, available here:  
<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/abstract/356/5/479>.



# Chapter Seven: Herbal Alchemy

# Herbal Alchemy

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn about the herbal alchemy and how it is believed it can be used to effect spiritual transformation.

Continuing on, there is a research project.

And finally there are two appendices.

## Plants and Alchemy

Few herbals, if any, discuss the interesting subject of using plants in alchemical practice. Part of the reason for this, no doubt, is that it is a relatively obscure topic, not often discussed in any detail outside of alchemical circles. As we shall see however, plant alchemy can be an important aspect of the Royal Art.

Allowance must be made for the fact that this is a general work on herbs and that because of this I will be offering little more than an introduction to this matter. It is hoped, though, that the chapter will be sufficiently interesting to inspire further research.

## Alchemy in History

On consulting standard reference works readers are frequently told a number of half-truths about alchemy. These are generally sufficient to lead a casual student to assume that today it is little more than an outdated and fraudulent process centred round the dream of turning base metal into gold. Such explanations appear to almost grudgingly admit that alchemists from the late sixteenth century onwards pursued the discovery of new compounds leading to the science of chemistry. But they almost always leave the impression that it has no value in the modern world other than the legacy of these chance breakthroughs.

Accounts of this nature are strange indeed when one considers the noteworthy people who were preoccupied with the seemingly bizarre writings and apparatus of alchemy. To name but a few; the role call includes Sir Isaac Newton, the forerunner of modern medicine Paracelsus, the famed theologian and philosopher Thomas Aquinas, the philosopher Roger Bacon and the Arab scientist Geber. All of these names have played a significant part in the history of Western science, medicine, philosophy and religion and are hardly the types that one might be tempted to associate with deluded or obsolete practices.

Let us assume then that there is more to alchemy than meets the eye and explore a little of its history and ideas. We will then be in a good position to look at the part that plants may play in this ancient art.

The origins of the term *alchemy* are unclear. Some believe the word points to an Ancient Egyptian source where the Coptic *kbem*, used in reference to the fertility of the flood plains around the Nile, became fused with the Arab prefix *al* to become *al-kbem*, meaning The Black Land [1]. Others have seen that the word alchemy comes from the Arabic *al-kmiya* or *al-khmiya* (اءاي ميكل or اءاي مي خلا), which is probably formed from the article *al-* and the Greek word *chumeia* meaning "cast together", "pour together", "weld" or "alloy"[2].

Some have traced the source of Western alchemy to the time of the pharaohs. So the story goes metallurgy and mysticism were tied together in the ancient world, as the transformation of drab ore into shining metal must have seemed like an act of magick governed by mysterious rules. It is claimed, therefore, that alchemy in Ancient Egypt was the domain of the priestly class. Those that expound this viewpoint generally cite the mythical figure of Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the Thrice Great) who was supposedly alive around 1900 BCE and is often portrayed as being synonymous with Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom. Hermes reportedly wrote 42 books, the most famous of which was the fabled *Tabula Smaragdina* (*The Emerald Tablet*-quoted in full in Appendix One). It was through him that alchemical knowledge was supposedly passed to the Ancient Greeks before all his works were destroyed in the destruction of the Library of Alexandria. This narrative presents a number of historical problems -not least of which is the paucity of evidence for Hermes Trismegistus and the dating of the *Emerald Tablet*, which only exists in copy form from the ninth century CE Arab world [3]. Further, accounts that alchemical practices were carried out at a later date in Egypt can also be disputed. These are based on the probably incorrect assumption that the Roman Emperor Diocletian wrote a decree against Egyptian *kimia-ists* in 296 CE [4].

Nonetheless the *Emerald Tablet* has been very influential, its main tenet states that the purpose of Hermetical science is: "in truth certainly and without doubt, whatever is below is like that which is above, and whatever is above is like that which is below, to accomplish the miracles of one thing." A belief then in the influence of the Macrocosm on the Microcosm is at the centre of Hermetic philosophy. The microcosmic human body is affected by the Macrocosm, which includes the heavens, through astrology, and the Earth through the Greek notion of the Four Elements.

Coupled to this idea were the thoughts of Aristotle that (384-322 BCE) things tended to become pure. Gold was considered perfect; therefore it was possible that it had evolved from a less perfect metal. By human intervention it was therefore theoretically feasible to take base metal and turn it into gold.

In the seventh and eighth centuries CE, Arab conquerors spread Islamic culture over much of Asia Minor, North Africa, and Spain. The Caliphs at Baghdad became active patrons of science and learning. Greek texts were translated into Arabic, and along with the rest of Greek learning the ideas and practices of alchemy once again flourished. The Arabic alchemists were in contact with China

where they absorbed the concept of gold as a medicine, as well as the Greek idea of gold as a perfect metal.

The scientist Geber (721-815), writing in the time of the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 CE), developed the idea that all metals are composed of mercury and sulphur and that it is possible to transmute base metals into gold. He encoded his work so that to the uninitiated it was unintelligible - indeed the term *gibberish*, used to describe his writings, derives from his name. He believed that lower metals could be changed into gold by means of a substance known as the Philosopher's Stone. The Stone was also believed to be able to confer immortality, and was a similar concept to the Chinese Pill of Immortality [5].

It appears that no alchemists separated their chemical experiments from symbolic or philosophical meaning, although the degrees to which these elements were emphasised varied. To them, physics without metaphysical insight may have been seen as partial and incomplete as a metaphysics without physical manifestation. Thus it seems likely that alchemical symbols and processes often had both an inner meaning, referring to the spiritual development of the practitioner, as well as a material meaning, connected to physical transformation of matter.

In the West, alchemical ideas propagated through Arab controlled Spain from the thirteenth century CE onwards. Knowledge of Greek alchemy passed through the intermediate languages of Syriac and Arabic, and was disseminated in Latin. Eventually it came to all parts of Europe. Morienus' *Book of the Composition of Alchemy* was the first alchemical tract to appear in the West from Arab transmission. Morienus had been a hermit monk in Rome in the fifth century CE who taught Prince Khalid ibn Yazid, a prominent Muslim alchemist, and his work was translated into Latin in 1144 by Robert of Chester.

Alchemy quickly became popular; the Dominicans Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) were among the first to take up the examination of alchemical theory, although they did little in the way of experimentation. However, it was around this period that the first true European Medieval Alchemist appeared. Roger Bacon (1214-94) was a Franciscan monk, famed for the depth of his knowledge evident in such works as *Dr Mirabilis*, an encyclopaedia of all science. He was purported to have written *Speculum Alchemiae* as well as a number of other alchemical texts [6].

Inevitably, though, alchemy attracted the disquiet and hostility of the Roman Catholic Church [7]. Alchemists went underground and Nicholas Flamel (1330-1417) and his wife Perenelle were among the few who pursued the Philosopher's Stone during this time [8].

However, with the invention of movable type in the mid fifteenth century CE alchemical works began to appear in increasing numbers. One of the chief figures in print from around this time was Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) who, like Flamel, changed alchemy from a mystical philosophy to an occultist magick. He kept alive the philosophies of the earlier alchemists, including experimental



science and numerology, but he added magickal theory, which reinforced the idea of alchemy as an occultist belief.

Another significant figure from around this period was Paracelsus, also known as Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus Von Hohenheim, (1493-1541). Famous for the theory that disease was caused by forces outside the body, Paracelsus founded the science of iatrochemistry (the use of chemical medicines), which is the forerunner of modern pharmacology. Both he and his followers discovered many new compounds and chemical reactions. He modified Geber's old sulphur-mercury theory of the composition of metals by adding a third component, salt, the earthy part of all substances.

Central to iatrochemistry was Paracelsus' notion of spagyric or herbal alchemy, which he wrote of in his book *Liber Paragranum* (you may recall this was written of in chapter two of this work). The term Spagyric originates from the Greek *spao* and *ageiro*, meaning to separate and combine. Looking back to Aristotle, Paracelsus saw that nature was raw and unfinished and that man had been appointed by God to evolve things to their perfected state. Thus an unrefined medicinal plant would be separated into the basic elements of Mercury, Sulphur and Salt and, having been duly purified by the removal of its nonessential constituents, these elements were recombined into a pure medicine (see the section *Practical Plant Alchemy* below).

Some of Paracelsus' ideas were picked up by the mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624) who used alchemical symbols and ideas in his poetry and writing, where for him the art was an entirely inner process of mysticism. During the Age of Reason the twin themes of chemical reactions and spiritual questions were to occupy the mind of the most famous scientist of the age, Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). He famously wrote *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* and for 300 years has been regarded as the founding father of modern physical science. Newton left a mass of manuscripts on the subjects of alchemy and although most of these were extracts a few are original. He began intensive experimentation in 1669 hoping to unravel the meaning that was hidden in alchemical obscurity and mysticism.

With the rise of science, curiosity in alchemy tailed off somewhat until the occult revival of the nineteenth century where interest was rekindled in its spiritual importance. Mary Anne Atwood (1817-1910) wrote about this transformative side of Alchemy in *A suggestive enquiry into the Hermetic Mystery and Alchemy, Being an Attempt to Discover the Ancient Experiment of Nature* [9]. Later, C.G. Jung (1875-1961) felt that there was a spiritual and personally transformative message hidden in the symbolism of alchemy that equated with his ideas of individuation. This has been seized on by many as validating alchemy and has led to its current popularity, where for those who emphasise its spiritual aspects, alchemy entails a marriage of body and soul leading to spiritual transformation.

I have spent a large part of this chapter delving into the history of the subject (although I have only scratched its surface). This is because not only do I wish to

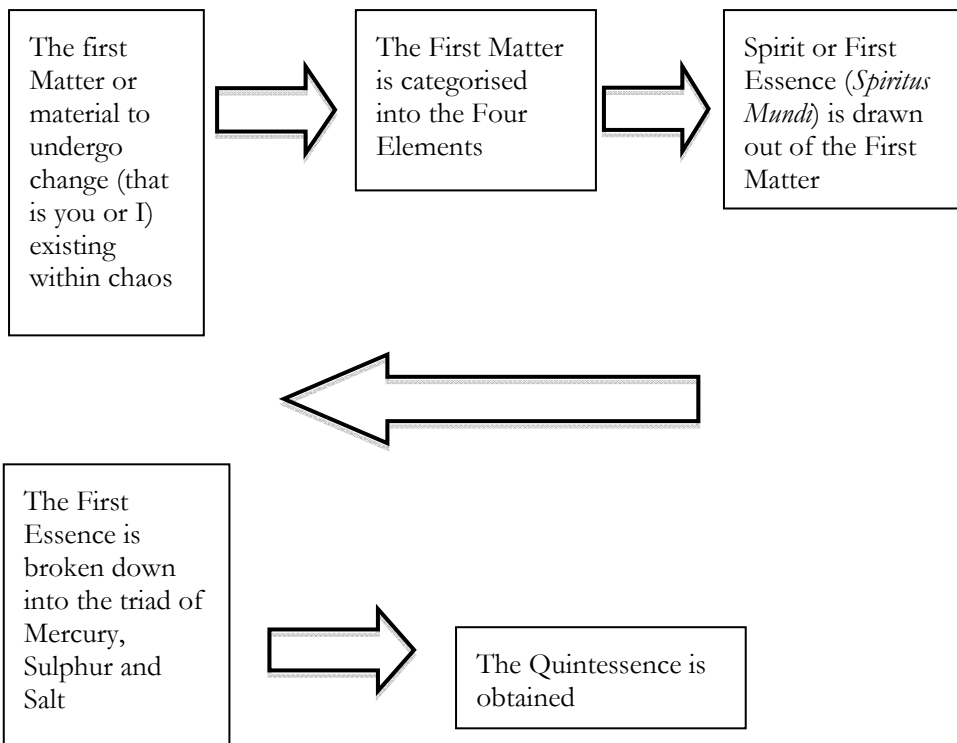
establish the lineage of herbal alchemy and give the reader an insight into the fact that alchemy has existed in all high civilizations, but I also want to show that at no point did it divorce its practical experiments from a central sense of spirituality. It seems to me that this is perhaps the most valuable lesson that alchemy has for us today. For many alchemists throughout history, the exploration of their art was just as much a discovery of what it meant to be human on all its levels, as it was an exploration of the physical manipulation of compounds. Today we have evolved a science that seeks to entirely divorce itself from spiritual concerns and a science that does not recognise spirit seems to me to deny a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human.

Be that as it may, before we look specifically at the role plants might play in alchemical processes let us take a quick look at spiritual alchemy.

### **Spiritual Alchemy Explained (in short)**

The goal of Alchemy is the Philosopher's Stone, a substance capable not only of turning base metal into gold but also of conferring immortality, health and most importantly enlightenment, which will allow its user to achieve Union with the Divine. It is also sometimes referred to as the Quintessence. The Quintessence in the words of Paracelsus is the essence of all celestial and terrestrial creatures"[10]. And according to Benedictus Figulus, writing in the *Golden Casket* [11], it is the Fifth Essence [12] and Spiritual Medicine, which is of Nature and the Heart of Heaven and not of a mortal and corrupt quality...[it] makes life possible [It is] the Fount of Medicine, the preservation of life, the restoration of health, and in this may be the cherished renewal of lost youth and serene health be found."

The Stone, or Quintessence, is achieved by a number of transmutative processes perhaps best shown in simplified form by the diagram on the next page:



In terms of purely spiritual alchemy the Philosopher's Stone or Quintessence is a transformed state achieved through the vessel of the human body. It is more than just a change of mind and spiritual enlightenment. In its highest sense it is Union with the Divine.

However, this is not to say that alchemy involving chemical processes cannot have the same effects. Indeed, it was (and is) believed that by creating certain alchemical compounds and ingesting them that similar, or even identical, effects can be achieved.

### The Point of Alchemical Herbalism

By utilising plant substances many alchemists believe a Stone can be obtained that will aid us in transforming ourselves into spiritual beings. If we think about Paracelsus' Spagyric medicine, as written of above, and were to break down a plant into Salt, Sulphur and Mercury we would get the following results:

Salt	The plant itself
Sulphur	Essential Oil
Mercury	Tincture (as in an alcoholic extract)

The alchemist carries out this separation and then recombines the above constituents in a series of processes. Although for Paracelsus the main aim was the production of medicine [13] for those inclined to herbal alchemy today the act of the alchemical preparation of plant material, under thought out astrological conditions and the imbibing of the end products, is designed to alter the internal physical, mental and spiritual state of the alchemist and provide a kind of initiation or beginning of a higher awareness of existence.

### **Practical Herbal Alchemy**

**Please Note:** this section of the chapter is for informational purposes only. Any herbal alchemical preparations should be used internally or externally with caution and if in doubt as to their effect you should consult a qualified medical professional.

Practical herbal Alchemy can be an involved practice that requires expensive specialist equipment, particularly if the creation of an herbal alchemical essence is sought after; where long hours will be spent watching trains of distillation apparatus and quite literally weeks spent heating liquids that require nearly constant supervision. Practical Alchemy really is for the committed and isn't entirely suitable for a work of this nature [14].

Having said that however, there is a work-around to produce a Stone that will enjoy some efficacy, which is relatively easy to carry out using ordinary household equipment and a purchased "cheat".

The first stage in the creation of a Stone is taking the plant (Salt) and producing a tincture (Mercury).

#### **Tincture (Mercurius)**

Equipment needed:

A bottle of brandy

A sterilized 75 cl bottle

A sterilized flat pan (a frying pan will do)

A sterilized heatproof glass dish

A sterilized spoon

Half a litre of distilled water

Sterilization by boiling is sufficient.

During your studies you will meet with a number of methods to produce this substance and I have attempted to give an easy [15] version intended to serve merely as a quick introduction.

First, take account of the astrological properties of the herb. You can find these by consulting the table in Appendix Two or by looking at Culpeper's *Herbal*. This is important, for to ensure an herb's potency it is usually best to pick it when its ruling planet is visible in the heavens. For added effect, some like to say a prayer over the plant so that they become fully attuned to it. This should not be underestimated; alchemy works on physical, mental and spiritual levels and the reasons for the inclusion of prayer should therefore be obvious in this regard. Picking or growing your own herbs is best, for that way you are more involved in the process than if you just went to a shop -they are superior to dried herbs for there is more life force within them. A word of caution though; if you are thinking of taking the herb from the wild make sure that you are able to identify it correctly, the last thing I want to encourage is accidental poisoning.

Once harvested the herb should be either extracted in brandy for twenty-eight days (a lunar cycle). After this period of soaking or maceration has finished, strain the tincture and store it in a bottle while the dregs are dried. This residue should then be heated in a pan until a pale ash results. The ash is then boiled in distilled water in a sterilised glass dish until sludge is created. This is then dried out in direct sunlight when crystals will appear. This drying out is known as the process of calcination. The crystals are placed back in the liquid (which you will recall was saved earlier) to create a spagyric tincture. This can either be taken internally by the alchemist, who takes a few drops of tincture internally over time by placing the liquid on the tongue, or saved for the creation of an alchemical Stone.

A tincture can be created for each of the seven magickal planets (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury and Moon) corresponding to the alchemical method that utilises seven stages of preparation [16].

### **The Essence (Sulphur)**

Creation of an alchemical essence is complicated, but if a high-grade essential oil is produced that has been carefully chosen as to its astrological properties some success will be achieved when using it to fashion a Stone.

### **Creating a Herbal Stone**

Equipment Needed:

As for a tincture

A heat proof porcelain crucible

An essential oil (either prepared by oneself or bought from a supplier) of the herb being used

According to alchemists the preparation of a Stone is intended to result in an initiation and give its creator a broader perspective on consciousness. It can be seen to show that a student has acquired mastery over the Vegetable Kingdom. This is an important initial stage for many spiritual alchemists wish to be raised up above the range of vegetable substances into mineral, above mineral into metallic, and above perfect metallic substances into a perpetually alive and divine Quintessence [17].

Because plants have planetary associations it is possible to make an herbal Stone that corresponds to each of the seven magickal planets and the spheres of influence that they represent. In terms of Golden Dawn style magickal philosophy based on the Kabbalah, this vegetable mastery is seen as a gateway to the astral-Yetzirahic realm [18] leading to the attainment of Briah. For best results then the following procedure should be carried out in rhythm with the celestial orbs and the tables in Appendix Two are designed to allow you to do this should you wish to.

To create a Stone follow the above procedure for the creation of a tincture until you have created a sludge and then dried it in the Sun. Add distilled water and then heat it until an ash residue is created, be careful to make sure that the ash doesn't blow away. Once the ash has been obtained grind it into a fine powder. Next, place it in a porcelain crucible, soak it in brandy and apply heat. Produce ash once more and repeat the process until a fine white powder has been obtained. This may take many attempts.

Next take the tincture already produced as well as the essential oil. Add a few drops of each to the salt until they are absorbed. This in effect brings together all three alchemical constituents of Mercury, Sulphur and Salt. Through the whole process the salient parts of a plant have been extracted and then recombined. This is seen as reincarnating the hidden power of the herb. Adding drops of essential oil and tincture can be done over an extended period in line with astrological considerations. Quite what these periods are depends on the individual but obvious choices centre around planetary hours and days of the week.

The process is complete when the salt will absorb no more liquid. You have now created a vegetable Stone.

Next, place the creation on in a warm dark place, over time the Stone will either harden or becomes jellied. If hard it can be placed in distilled water for a length of time, and the liquid (minus the stone) can then be drunk, if soft it can be cut up and each piece sucked daily like a sweet.

Through the act of preparation in line with astrological considerations, the separating and recombining of the Salt, Mercury and Sulphur and the taking of the end product, it is believed that the alchemist has engaged with the fundamental elements of life and has shown mastery over them. And, because of this, has achieved a degree of spiritual enlightenment and elevation in the initial phases of the Great Work. Later stages would involve similar mastery over the mineral and metallic kingdoms.

As with the preparation of a tincture, a Stone can be created for each of the seven magickal planets. This is significant for the planets correspond to various body parts, the Kabbalah and the chakras or energy centres of the body. When preparing the Stones the alchemist is in effect concentrating not only on the herb and planet but these diverse correspondences, continually keeping in mind the connections between them. Alchemy is therefore a holistic approach to the mysteries of existence and a complete understanding of the interconnectedness of life, the Universe and everything is what is being aimed at. And although the methods written of above may seem hopelessly naïve and ineffective in an age of scientific wonders, if this interconnected philosophy and approach is borne in mind, one can see that the alchemist's goal is remarkably similar to the scientist who seeks a unified field theory.

Regardless of these aims, alchemical herbalism in history has been important. Paracelsus's development of iatrochemistry directly led to the production of modern pharmacological medicine and spagyrics is often seen as predating homeopathy, of which more in a later chapter.

## Research Project

In this chapter I have done little more than touch on the subject of alchemical herbalism. For those who are interested in pursuing this work further there are some excellent and free resources out on the Internet. In particular I would recommend John Reid's course at <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/johnreid.html>, and Mark Stavish's *Practical Plant Alchemy* at <http://www.hermetic.com/stavish/alchemy/plant1.html>. Both works are full of practical alchemical experiments, Reid's will require the purchase of proper laboratory equipment if you are to carry out his suggestions (as well as requiring lots of free time) but it should at least be read as it provides the basics for an understanding of the subject. Stavish's work is indicated more for those who would like to have a go at being kitchen alchemists as everything he writes of can be carried out with household utensils.

Those less interested in the practical side of plant alchemy and more interested in history may wish to explore the life and work of Paracelsus in more detail. Paracelsus is a pivotal figure in Western medicine, alchemy and the occult and he is worth exploring in some detail.

Those with a fascination for alchemy in general could do no better than read Peter Marshall's *Philosopher's Stone* included in the reading list. This book provides a broad sweep of alchemical practices throughout history and presents a difficult subject in a clear, concise and fascinating way.

In Appendix One you will find *The Emerald Tablet* by Hermes Trismegistus. I included this within the chapter as it is one of the most important, accessible and shortest alchemical tracts that readily gives up its meaning. It has been central to European alchemical philosophy and underpins herbal alchemy. It is well worth reading and re-reading in this context as it will help make an abstruse subject matter intelligible.



# Appendix One

## The Emerald Tablet

Without lie, certain and most true:

What is below is like what is above, and what is above is like what is below, to  
accomplish the miracle of the One thing.

In truth, and without Lie, And just as all things have been from the one, so also  
they are born from this one thing by adaptation.

Its father is the sun, its mother the moon. The wind has borne it, its nurse is the  
earth. This one thing is the father of all things in the universe.

Its power is perfect, after it has been united with the earth.

Separate earth from fire, the subtle from the dense, with gentle heat and much  
devotion.

In great measure, it ascends from earth to heaven, descends again toward earth,  
and receives the force of the things above and below.

Thus you will possess the glory of the world, all obscurity shall flee away from  
thee.

This is the force of all force, it will overcome everything subtle, and penetrate  
everything solid.

In this manner, the world was created, but the map of this road is hidden.

For this reason I am called "Hiram Telat Machasot"- one in essence, but three in  
aspect. In this trinity is the wisdom of the whole world.

And so I have been called: Hermes thrice greatest, having the three parts of the  
philosophy of the world.

## Appendix Two

### Planets, Herbs and Days

Planet	Associated Herbs	Planetary Days
Saturn	Tamarind, barley and comfrey root, pine tree (not to be confused with ground pine), elm and cypress. Sloes, barley, quince and red beets.	Saturday
Jupiter	Currant, figs, olives, rose hips, almonds, chestnuts. Sage, burdock and other dock leaves, borage, bugloss and dandelion.	Thursday
Mars	Hawthorn, nettle, barberry and cacti, parsley, all-heal, capers, coriander, garlic, gentian, hops, horseradish, mustards, onion, peppers, radish and tarragon.	Tuesday
Sun	Camomile, celandine, century, eyebright, European angelica, lovage, orange, rosemary, rue, storax and saffron. Vine, bay tree, celery and rue.	Sunday
Venus	Mint, bramble, plums, apples, cherry, primrose, carnation, thyme, vervain, daisies, strawberry, wheat, white rose and violet.	Friday
Mercury	Marjoram, caraway, fennel, carrots, dill, fennel, pomegranate, self heal, lavender, lily of the valley, parsnips, hazelnut, horehound and mandrake. Cereals.	Wednesday
Moon	Cucumber, white rose, banana, gourds, mango, melons, pumpkin, sweet flag and water lilies. Seaweed, watercress, willow and wintergreen. Turnip, lettuce and willow.	Monday

## Appendix Three

### Planetary Hours of the Day

Hour	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
2	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter
3	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars
4	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun
5	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus
6	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury
7	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon
8	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
9	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter
10	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars
11	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun
12	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus

## Appendix Four

### Planetary Hours of the Night

Hours	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury
2	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon
3	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
4	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter
5	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars
6	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun
7	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus
8	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury
9	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon
10	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
11	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter
12	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun	Moon	Mars

## Footnotes

[1] See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemistry\\_\(etymology\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemistry_(etymology)).

[2] See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alchemy>.

[3] The earliest verifiable date is around 800CE although some sources may derive from two centuries earlier, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald\\_Tablet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emerald_Tablet).

[4] See Aaron John Ihde, *The Development of Modern Chemistry*, Dover, 1966, p.11, footnote at end of page.

[5] The Chinese appear to have developed alchemical ideas independently of the West and may have developed them first. One of their most significant ideas concerned itself with the attainment of immortality, which was to be achieved by rigorous ascetic and contemplative regimes designed to bring about an inner process that transformed the body. Like China and Egypt, India developed alchemy independently. They had beliefs similar to the Chinese, in that they used external and internal methods to purify the body and prolong life. An 11th century Persian alchemist named al-Biruni reported that they "have a science similar to alchemy which is quite peculiar to them, which is called Rasaviḍ<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>tam. It means the art which is restricted to certain operations, drugs, compounds, and medicines, most of which are taken from plants. Its principles restored the health of those who were ill beyond hope and gave back youth to fading old age." The texts of Ayurvedic Medicine and Science have aspects related to alchemy, such as having cures for all known diseases. Both had methods used to treat people by putting oils over them deriving from plants.

[6] See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger\\_Bacon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Bacon).

[7] In the early C14th, Pope John XXII issued an edict against Alchemy, which effectively removed all church personnel from the practice of the Art. Along with climate changes, Plague, war and famine prevalent in that time there would have been little time for those preoccupied with philosophical or scientific pursuits. Neither was hostility just confined to the Church, for example in Dante's Inferno, alchemists were seen as the falsifiers of metals and were to be riddled with disease in the tenth circle of Hell.

[8] Interest in Flamel has recently surged thanks to a reference to his name in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

[9] Available today as Mary Anne Atwood, *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery with a Dissertation on the More Celebrated of the Alchemical Philosophers, Being an Attempt Towards the Recovery of the Ancient Experiment of Nature*, Kessinger Publishing, 1942.

[10] Quoted in Archibald Cockren, *Alchemy Rediscovered and Restored*, available for free at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/alc/arr/arr00.htm> the relevant page is here: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/alc/arr/arr15.htm>

[11] Ibid.

[12] By fifth essence Figulus means fifth element, the aether from which derive the Four Elements Fire, Water, Air and Earth that make up physical reality.

[13] See [http://www.herbdatanz.com/spagyric\\_or\\_plant\\_alchemy\\_-\\_1.htm](http://www.herbdatanz.com/spagyric_or_plant_alchemy_-_1.htm)

[14] For those interested in pursuing herbal alchemy there are a number of respected sources out on the Internet that provide detailed information about spagyric preparations. Perhaps the most useful of these is John Reid's course at <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/johnreid.html>, although also worth consulting is Mark Stavish's *Practical Plant Alchemy* <http://www.hermetic.com/stavish/alchemy/plant1.html>

[15] For example, much more complex methods will be found here:

<http://pwp.netcabo.pt/r.petrinus/Vegtincture-e.htm> and here:

<http://www.alchemywebsite.com/reid2-3.html>

[16] Other alchemical methods use twelve stages based on the zodiac.

[17] Paracelsus, quoted here: [http://www.alchemylab.com/alchemical\\_theory.htm](http://www.alchemylab.com/alchemical_theory.htm) Although Paracelsus is talking of the alchemical process in general, the notion of the alchemist having to raise themselves through these classifications of life and mastering them still stands.

[18] There are a number of Kabbalistic realms that an aspirant has to ascend through these being Assiah, Yetzirah, Briah and Atziluth. The marrying of the Kabbalah and alchemy was largely carried out by the Golden Dawn and was not an explicit preoccupation of earlier alchemists.

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# Chapter Eight: Homoeopathy

# Homoeopathy

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn about homoeopathy, what it is, how it's claimed it works and some common criticisms of its ideas.

Continuing on, there is a research project.

And finally there is an appendix.

## Introduction

No herbal can really be considered complete without a chapter on homoeopathy, which makes extensive use of plant matter in its remedies (as well as other substances), although it should be stated that its methods and practices bear no direct relation to herbal medicine in general.

Here, though, we run into a problem for, unlike most types of modern herbalism, homoeopathy deeply divides those who use herb by-products to promote health. On the one hand we have those who state that homoeopathy is nothing more than mere quackery, or, at best, that any of its positive results can be put down to the placebo effect and, on the other, we have staunch supporters who claim to have witnessed near miraculous turn-arounds in a patient's health when conventional medical science has failed. It can be very confusing to meet with both views and the best that I can do for any student of this art is to lay out the arguments for and against, and give them the tools to decide for themselves where their allegiance lays.

First let us explore what homoeopathy is and a little of its development.

## What is Homoeopathy?

The word homoeopathy derives from the Greek words *bómoios* meaning "similar" and *páthos* which means "suffering" or "disease". It was developed by Samuel Hahnemann (1755-1843) [1], a one time village doctor in the copper mining district of Mansfeld in Saxony. During Hahnemann's early life medical practice was primitive by today's standards. Purging, bloodletting and strange "medicinal" concoctions were the order of the day that often killed rather than cured.

The young Samuel was appalled by the standards of medical treatment of the time as the following quotations show:

*My sense of duty would not easily allow me to treat the unknown pathological state of my suffering brethren with these unknown medicines. The thought of becoming in this way a murderer or malefactor towards the life of my fellow human beings was most terrible to me, so terrible and disturbing that I wholly gave up my practice in the first years of my married life and occupied myself solely with chemistry and writing. [2]*



*For several centuries, a whole range of causes, which I could not begin to enumerate, have led to the downgrading of that divine science, clinical medicine, to the level of a wretched, money-grubbing exercise in the whitewashing of symptoms and a demeaning traffic in prescriptions, in fact, God forgive us, to a more mechanical trade in which Hippocrates is lost to sight amidst a rabble of charlatans. [3]*

The medicine of his age did not impress Samuel then, and by 1784 he had given up his practice in favour of writing and translating. It was while working on William Cullen's *A Treatise on Materia Medica* [4] that he came across an interesting fact that was to change his life.

In this book it was claimed that a liquid made from the finely ground bark of cinchona, a Peruvian tree, would make an effective cure for malaria [5]. The curative properties of this bark were already well known in Europe and had been used to treat both Louis XIV of France and Charles II of England [6]. Hahnemann took issue with the claim that its potency was caused by the fact that it was an astringent -after all, other astringents had no effect on malaria [7]- and decided to test this claim for himself. Over a period of days he took high doses of cinchona and found that the bark produced symptoms that he claimed were reminiscent of malaria:

*I took for several days, as an experiment, four drachms of good china (cinchona) daily. My feet and finger tips, etc., at first became cold; I became languid and drowsy; my pulse became hard and quick; an intolerable anxiety and trembling (but without a rigor); trembling in all the limbs; then pulsation in the head, redness in the cheeks, thirst; briefly, all those symptoms which to me are typical of intermittent fever, such as the stupefaction of the senses, a kind of rigidity of all joints, but above all the numb, disagreeable sensation which seems to have its seat in the periosteum over all the bones of the body - all made their appearance. This paroxysm lasted for two or three hours every time, and recurred when I repeated the dose and not otherwise. I discontinued the medicine and I was once more in good health.□ [8]*

Later he would create similar experiments with digitalis (foxglove) and belladonna [9]. As a direct result of these he was able to begin to formulate the idea "*that which can produce a set of symptoms in a healthy individual, can treat a sick individual who is manifesting a similar set of symptoms*" [10] and write that:

*Every effective drug provokes in the human body a sort of disease of its own, and the stronger the drug the more characteristic, and the more marked and more violent the disease. We should imitate nature, which sometimes cures a chronic affliction with another supervening disease, and prescribe for the illness we wish to cure, especially if chronic, a drug with power to provoke another, artificial disease, as similar as possible, and the former disease will be cured: fight like with like. [11]*

Hahnemann published his results in Hufeland's journal in 1796 under the title *Experiment on a New Principle to Find Out the Healing Power of Medicinal Substances* and importantly stated that "*similia similibus curentur*" or like could be cured by like.

In his *Organon der Heilkunst* or Medical Primer he stated that:

*In order to provide a gentle, rapid, certain and lasting cure, in every case of illness be sure to choose a medicine which causes a similar kind of suffering to the kind which it is intended to cure!* [12]

This idea, what is today termed the "law of similars", had been present in India for perhaps thousands of years, as well as being evident in the writings of Hippocrates and Paracelsus [13]. Those that credit Hahnemann with re-introducing the idea into Europe in the eighteenth century are simply wrong; even before Hahnemann's day weak strains of small pox were being used for immunization, a technique brought to England from Turkey by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in 1721 [14].

Hahnemann also believed in Vitalism, the idea that within us all there is a spiritual force that reacts and adapts to external causes, where a negative state of mind can cause miasms or disease entities to enter the body; homeopaths refer to the "law of susceptibility" where an individual is more or less likely to be open to specific diseases.

Armed with the laws of similars and susceptibility Hahnemann started to test a variety of substances for the effect they produced on a healthy individual and attempted to ascertain the illnesses that they might cure. Initial results were not promising, for he quickly found that many of the substances he experimented with created toxic effects. Not one to give up easily, he hit upon the idea of diluting the compounds he was using, and came to the conclusion that these substances were still effective in producing symptoms when created in line with his methods of dilution and succussion.

These techniques are key to understanding homeopathy, so let us examine them a little further.

## **Dilution and Succussion**

Hahnemann created a potency scale known as the centesimal or "C Scale" [15], whereby each new level on the scale indicates a substance had been diluted by a factor of 100. Therefore a 2C dilution requires a substance to be diluted to one part in one hundred, this is then succussed (more of which in a minute) and then some of that solution is diluted by a further factor of one hundred. The amount of substance contained in a preparation of this nature is therefore extremely small, as it works out to one part in 10,000 (100 times 100).

A substance that is more diluted is deemed to have a higher potency and quite literally thought of as being more profoundly acting. The dilution figures can be mind-boggling, for example *Pulsatilla* 6C means the sixth centesimal potency of *Pulsatilla*, which has received six succussions and has a concentration of one part in a thousand billion [16]. Depending on the substance used, homeopaths can dilute its use by as much as 200C, i.e. 1:10 (to the power of 400), as in the popular

homeopathic remedy for treating flu, *Oscillocochinum*, which is a dilution of duck's liver.

After each stage of dilution a solution undergoes a process of succussion, which is designed to "potentise" the liquid. Succussion is where the prepared liquid is agitated by tapping it against a hard yet flexible object such as the heel of a hand or a leather pad. Hahnemann himself used a specifically made wooden striking board covered in leather and stuffed with horsehair. Over time he seems to have believed that it was possible to dynamise a solution too much and counselled that homeopaths should not transport remedies in their coats as the solution might be potentised to the point that it could cause death; later he would state that just smelling a solution was enough to effect a cure [17]. Although modern homeopaths do not go so far in their claims, they nonetheless generally believe that Hahnemann's method of agitation ensures that the vital energy of the diluted material is released and activated by succussion.

## Development of Homeopathy

By 1830 the first homeopathic school had been opened and was soon followed by dozens more in Europe and the USA. Its initial successes may have been because of homeopathy's perceived ability to cure patients when compared to conventional medicine's success rates. Critics of homeopathic practice point out that this might well have been because homeopathy killed less of its patients than conventional medicine rather than homeopathic practitioners actively curing their patients.

This is not to say that homeopathy was not criticised, where leading British and American physicians were quick to ridicule the infinitesimally small doses of therapeutic ingredient in homeopathic preparations [18] (of which, more later).

## Homeopathic Method Today

When visiting a homeopath it is normal to expect that there will be a fairly lengthy process of consultation that typically lasts between 45 minutes and an hour. This allows the homeopath to obtain a complete list of symptoms. The questions range over a patient's history, their physical, mental and emotional state, foods, likes and dislikes, work and leisure patterns and so on. The effects of spending time with a patient should not be underestimated as they frequently have an important calming effect that allows a patient to really take the weight off their shoulders and feel like an individual that is worth listening to. In this sense the consultation process is akin to some forms of psychotherapy. The information garnered provides the homeopath with a comprehensive representation of each individual's overall health. This information is then compared with lists in the drug provings found in the homeopathic *materia medica*. Based on this a "classical" homeopath then generally proceeds to prescribe a single correct remedy for an ailment that most closely matches the "symptom totality" of the patient. On the other hand a

"clinical" homeopath will provide a combination of remedies designed to address the various symptoms of an illness.

## Criticism of Homeopathy

So far I have presented an uncritical look at homeopathy. This is because I wanted to allow you to explore the topic without distractions. Having looked at the subject in a fair amount of detail I now want to go on and explore some common criticisms. I make these without judgement and invite you to investigate the issues raised.

The main criticism of homeopathy is that its very foundation is based on outdated and defunct notions. Broadly speaking, Hahnemann was operating within the current medical vogue where his thoughts were framed by eighteenth century ideas of Vitalism. He believed that diseases had spiritual as well as physical causes; an idea superseded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the development of microbiology and the germ theory of disease. Of course, a number of healing philosophies today pay attention to spiritual well-being when effecting a cure, including some areas of mainstream medicine. What was lacking in Hahnemann's day was the understanding of the part microbiology played in illnesses.

This was entirely forgivable in the 1700s, but modern homeopathy's scant regard for modern scientific processes is less easily allowable. So, on what grounds do homeopaths explain that their preparations work?

As we have already seen, homeopaths believe in the laws of similars and that like can cure like, as long as the substance that creates an effect is adequately diluted. So, for example, a dilution of nettle can cure physical stinging sensations. But to fully appreciate what homeopaths mean by dilution we need to look a little more closely at the dilution ratios than we have up to now.

It will be recalled from the notes above that the substances are massively diluted, commonly to one part in a thousand billion for a 6C dilution and one in 1.7 trillion trillion trillion (10 to the power of 36) for a 30C. In fact so great are the dilutions that they can be compared without exaggeration to a teaspoon of salt in as much water as the Atlantic Ocean. Another popular way of illustrating a 30C dilution is to talk of 1ml of a solution diluted into a cube of water measuring 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 metres per side (where it is claimed that this amount is equivalent to 106 light years).

This presents a great problem for homeopaths, for so little of the curative ingredient is contained in the dilution that the chances of a phial of liquid containing even one molecule of the substance is extremely unlikely. This has led some critics to claim that homeopathic remedies are nothing more than alcohol or water that the substance is said to be dissolved in, and that there is no trace of the therapeutic ingredient supposedly responsible for a cure.

Homeopaths in general do not seek to argue with the fact that the dilutions are massive to the point that no substance is physically present in a dilution. What

they claim, however, is that the substance leaves an impression in the liquid even though it may not be present, and that it is this "impression" that is responsible for effecting a cure. To back this up homeopaths cite a number of scientific studies that they claim support their assertions [19]. However, there is a greater body of scientific evidence in direct opposition to the cited studies [20]. These suggest that any positive gains from homeopathic remedies are solely because of the placebo effect. Worse than this, some critics also regard homeopathy as dangerous, arguing that as people put their faith in a pseudoscience they ignore modern cures that would rid them of their disease.

## **In Conclusion**

I will leave it up to students keen enough to go away and research the footnotes to this chapter to decide whether or not they concur with the sceptics or those who believe in homeopathy's efficacy. Whether or not you feel that homeopathy is a genuine form of medicine, it is nonetheless an important way in which herbs have been utilised for their curative properties over the last couple of centuries and is perhaps more popular and widespread than it was a century ago. In the next chapter in this herbal we will be looking at Bach Flower Remedies, a topic akin to Hahnemann's invention in that it too is partly based on the principles of Vitalism and indeed was created by a homeopath, Edward Bach.

## Research Project

If after having looked into the subject of homeopathy in this chapter you are convinced of its benefits then you may wish to expand on the appendix at the end which lists only the most common of ailments and their homeopathic cures. You may also wish to explore the treatment method and how homeopaths go about proscribing their medicines.

If, frankly, the subject leaves you incredulous then you may wish to look at the context in which Hahnemann was operating and at the man himself. Even sceptics of his work often feel that Hahnemann contributed to modern civilised medicinal practices. For example, he was one of the first to suggest that the mentally ill should be treated gently and also recognised the importance that cleanliness had in ensuring that the sick recovered. These were important ideas, that today we regard as being so blindingly obvious that we can hardly imagine a world where such notions were revolutionary and highly controversial.

Hahnemann is also personally quite fascinating and eccentric tales abound of him and his family that will delight those that can be bothered to find out more about this relatively obscure eighteenth century doctor.

## Appendix

### Homeopathic Remedies

The table below confines itself to herbal preparations.

Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Acne	Burning sensation, dry, red and hot.	<i>Belladonna</i>	Deadly Night Shade	6C up to 30C
	Constipation present, irritable and cold. Caffeine and alcohol exacerbate symptoms.	<i>Nux vomica</i>	Strychnine tree	6C up to 30C
	Spots made worse by rich, fatty foods.	<i>Pulsatilla</i>	Pasque-flower, meadow anemone	6C up to 30C
	Itchy and painful.	<i>Rhus tox</i>	Poison Ivy	6C up to 30C
Anxiety	Panic attacks.	<i>Aconite</i>	Aconite	6C up to 30C
	Anxiety after bereavement or break-down of relationship.	<i>gnatiai</i>	Saint Ignatius's Bean	6C up to 30C

Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Appetite	Refusal of food. Sleep deprivation caused by hunger	<i>Ignatia</i>		6C up to 30C
	Big appetite that is relatively easily satisfied.	<i>Lycopodium</i>	Ground Pine (also known as club moss)	6C up to 30C
Bereavement	Severe shock caused by a sudden death.	<i>Aconite</i>		6C up to 30C
	Unable to get over the loss of a loved one. Drawn out bereavement	<i>Ignatia</i>		6C up to 30C
Bites and Stings	Bruising, swelling	<i>Arnica</i>	Arnica (a member of the sunflower family)	6C up to 30C
	Bites from Horse Flies	<i>Hypericum</i>	St John's Wort	6C up to 30C
	Pain caused by puncture wound	<i>Ledum</i>	Labrador Tea	6C up to 30C
Bruising	Bruising in general	<i>Arnica</i>		6C up to 30C
	Bruising caused by varicose veins	<i>Hamamelis</i>	Witch hazel	6C up to 30C
	Bruised bones	<i>Ruta grav</i>	Rue	6C up to 30C



Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Burns	Scalds and burns that sting	<i>Urtica urens</i>	Annual Nettle	6C
Colic	When relieved by gentle pressure	<i>Colocynthis</i>	Bitter Apple	6C
	Worse when moving	<i>Bryonia</i>	Root of Bryonia	6C up to 30C
	When irritable	<i>Chamomilla</i>	Chamomile	30C
Constipation	Large stools	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C up to 30C
Coughs	Tickling cough brought on by cold wind	<i>Aconite</i>		6C up to 30C
	Dry barking cough	<i>Belladonna</i>		6C up to 30C
	Dry cough with aches	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C up to 30C
	Cough with phlegm	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C up to 30C
	Dry cough with retching	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C up to 30C
Cystitis		<i>Belladonna</i>		6C up to 30C
Depression	Irritable with it	<i>Nux Vomica</i>		6C up to 30C
	Crying and needing attention	<i>Belladonna</i>		6C up to 30C
	After a death	<i>Ignatia</i>		6C up to 30C
	Lack of self confidence	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C up to 30C

Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Diarrhoea	Sudden attack	<i>Aconite</i>		6C up to 30C
	Onset at night, caused by rich foods	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C up to 30C
	Sharp spasmodic pains	<i>Colocynthis</i>		6C
Flatulence	Accompanied by stomach pains	<i>Colocynthis</i>		6C
	Bloated after a meal	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C up to 30C
	Overeating	<i>Nux Vomica</i>		6C up to 30C
Hay fever	Streaming eyes and nose	<i>Allium cepa</i>	Onion	6C
	Burning eyes and itchy nose	<i>Euphrasia</i>	Eyebright	6C up to 30C
	Irritated throat and nose	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C up to 30C
Headache	Front of head and down into shoulders	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C to 30C
	Accompanied by watery eyes	<i>Euphrasia</i>		6C to 30C
	Right side	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C to 30C
	With feelings of coldness and irritability	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C to 30C
	Accompanying weepiness, associated with a period	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C to 30C
	Left Side	<i>Thuja</i>		6C to 30C

Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Indigestion	After eating	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C to 30C
	Windy	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C to 30C
	Swollen stomach	<i>Nux Vomica</i>		6C to 30C
	After eating rich foods	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C to 30C
Menopause	Vaginal dryness	<i>Belladonna</i>		6C to 30C
	Black stools	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C to 30C
	Moody with hot flushes	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C to 30C
Menstruation	Late period	<i>Aconite</i>		6C to 30C
	Pain and bright red blood	<i>Belladonna</i>		
	Period ceased due to death of a loved one	<i>Ignatia</i>		6C to 30C
	Pain in lower abdomen with headache	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C to 30C
	Infrequent with lower back pain	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C to 30C
Nausea	Brought on by travel	<i>Cocculus</i>	Red berried moon seed	6C to 30C
	Too much rich food	<i>Nux Vomica</i>		6C to 30C
	Accompanied by vomiting	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C to 30C

Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Pre Menstrual Tension (PMT)	Depression and ill temper	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C to 30C
	Irritable and cold	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C to 30C
	Feeling sensitive	<i>Pulsatilla</i>		6C to 30C
Sleep Deprivation	As a result of shock	<i>Aconite</i>		6C to 30C
	In teething children	<i>Chamomilla</i>		6C to 30C
	Due to bereavement	<i>Ignatia</i>		6C to 30C
	Brain keeps turning over events	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C to 30C
	Due to mental exhaustion	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C to 30C
Sore Throat	Develops after exposure to cold wind	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C to 30C
	Hot red face. Difficulty swallowing	<i>Belladonna</i>		6C to 30C
	Dry throat and thirsty	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C to 30C
	From talking too much	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C to 30C
Sprains	With bruising	<i>Arnica</i>		6C to 30C
	Painful	<i>Bryonia</i>		6C to 30C

Condition	Particular Symptoms Present and other Considerations	Recommended Preparation	Source or common name	Potency
Tired Eyes	Distance gazing	<i>Arnica</i>		6C to 30C
	Burning after study	<i>Ruta grav</i>		6C to 30C
Toothache	Worsened by cold drinks and foods	<i>Aconite</i>		6C to 30C
	To prevent bruising and pain at the dentist (taken before the visit)	<i>Arnica</i>		6C to 30C
	Teething difficulty in infants	<i>Chamomilla</i>		6C to 30C
Stress	Panic attacks	<i>Aconite</i>		6C to 30C
	Lack of confidence	<i>Lycopodium</i>		6C to 30C
	Can't stop worrying	<i>Nux vomica</i>		6C to 30C

## Footnotes

- [1] A delightful account of Hahnemann's eventful and eccentric life has been written by Anthony Campbell in *Homeopathy in Perspective: Myth and Reality* and can be found here:  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070829102314/www.acampbell.ukfsn.org/homeopathy/homeopathy-html/index.html>.
- [2] Quoted here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_Hahnemann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Hahnemann).
- [3] Quoted here: <http://altmed.creighton.edu/Homeopathy/quotes.htm>  
Creighton University, Department of Pharmacology.
- [4] Cullen (1710-90) was a Scottish doctor and chemist, who became Professor of the Practice of Medicine at Glasgow University as well as Professor of Physic and later Professor of Chemistry and Medicine at Edinburgh University. His *Treatise on Materia Medica* was issued in an authorised edition in 1789, although it had been available in an un-authorised form from 1771.
- [5] Hahnemann had, in effect, stumbled upon what would later be known as Quinine, which was isolated and named in 1817 by French researchers Pierre Joseph Pelletier and Joseph Bienaimé Caventou. The name was derived from the Inca word for the cinchona tree bark, *Quina* or *Quina-Quina*, which means "bark of bark" or "holy bark".
- [6] Both were treated by Robert Talbor, an apothecary's assistant who developed a cure for malaria consisting of the ground bark of Cinchona in white wine. See: <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/picrender.fcgi?artid=1296269&blobtype=pdf>
- [7] See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel\\_Hahnemann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Hahnemann).
- [8] Quoted here:  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070827064627/www.acampbell.ukfsn.org/homeopathy/homeopathy-html/chapter02.html>. Critics claim that the symptoms he described were not reminiscent of malaria.
- [9] His experiments were not confined to vegetable matter and he was even to use quicksilver (mercury).
- [10] This quote is to be found widely in homeopathic literature. I have not been able to ascertain its source.
- [11] Quoted here: <http://altmed.creighton.edu/Homeopathy/quotes.htm>.
- [12] Quoted here: <http://www.iavh.org/homeopathy/history/>.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smallpox>.
- [15] Another common scale is the X Scale proceeding on a 1:10 scale.
- [16] See <http://skepdic.com/homeo.html>.

[17] See Anthony Campbell, *Homeopathy in Perspective: Myth and Reality*, Chapter Three available for free here:  
<http://web.archive.org/web/20070829102314/www.acampbell.ukfsn.org/homeopathy/homeopathy-html/index.html>.

[18] Queen Victoria's physician, Sir John Forbes, said the doses were "an outrage to human reason". Professor Sir James Young Simpson said that homeopathic preparations would not "in the least degree affect a man or harm a fly", and American physician and author Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. wrote a work entitled *Homeopathy, and its Kindred Delusions* in 1842.

[19] See: Taylor MA, Reilly D, Llewellyn-Jones RH, McSharry C, Aitchison TC (2000). "Randomised controlled trial of homoeopathy versus placebo in perennial allergic rhinitis with overview of four trial series". *BMJ* 321 (7259): 4716. and Reilly DT, Taylor MA, McSharry C, Aitchison T (October 1986). "Is homoeopathy a placebo response? Controlled trial of homoeopathic potency, with pollen in hayfever as model". *Lancet* 2 (8512): 8816.

[20] See the articles here:  
[http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.632/healthissue\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/healthissues/newsID.632/healthissue_detail.asp) and here:  
<http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/homeo.html>.





# Chapter Nine:

## Bach Flower Remedies

# Bach Flower Remedies

## Welcome

In this chapter you will be learning about Bach Flower Remedies.

You will be looking at who Bach was, what his remedies set out to achieve and how they can be used. You will also be looking at the sceptic's viewpoint about these preparations.

## Introduction

One of the most famous medicinal preparations that utilises herbal material are the Bach Flower Remedies. Akin to homeopathic cures (although with a number of important differences) the remedies have been present in high street and specialist health shops since the 1930s and today are more popular than ever.

## Edward Bach

*Disease will never be cured or eradicated by present materialistic methods, for the simple reason that disease in its origin is not material . . . Disease is in essence the result of conflict between the Soul and Mind and will never be eradicated except by spiritual and mental effort [1].*

Edward Bach was born on September 24, 1886. He spent his early years in Birmingham, and as a teenager worked in his father's brass foundry. Unwilling to stay in the family profession he pondered entering the Church before deciding on becoming a doctor.

Bach studied medicine at the University College Hospital, London. Here he began to develop the notion that patients' illnesses were exacerbated or brought on by their mental states. For example, he observed that a woman who was apparently suffering from acute asthma had been extremely worried about the safety of her son whom she had not heard from since he had left for Northern England in search of work. When eventually he did contact her, the symptoms she had been suffering disappeared almost immediately. Similarly, a man with stomach ulcers, who had lost his job and was unable to support his wife and children, quickly recovered when he found work again.

Bach went on to study at Cambridge where he acquired a Diploma of Public Health and during World War I was in London again in charge of 400 beds at the University College Hospital. Around this time it was predicted that Bach had just three months left to live as he had a malignant tumour in his spleen. Fortunately, this was successfully removed and Bach went on to employment in the national Temperance Hospital and then later became a successful Harley Street practitioner.

Bach felt that vaccines current at the time could be improved upon. In 1919 he took on a new post at the London Homeopathic Hospital where he personally

developed seven bacterial “nosodes”, still referred to as the Bach Nosodes [2]. Nosode derives from the Greek word *nosos* meaning “disease”, it is a homeopathic preparation created from bacterial cultures that derive from respiratory discharges or diseased tissues that have been collected from either a sick person or animal. This material is then prepared according to the homeopathic processes of dilution and succussion outlined in the previous chapter. Bach’s nosodes were: *Proteus*, *Dysentery*, *Morgan*, *Faecalis alkaligenes*, *Coli mutabile*, *Gärtner* and *Bacillus No. 7* [3]. The *Proteus* and *Faecalis alkaligenes* preparations were seen as being suitable for those afflicted with irritability, anger, impatience and nervous exhaustion. The *Morgan* nosode aids those with depression, anxiety and nervousness. *Coli mutabile* is indicated for those who suffer from changeability and vacillation, and *Bacillus No. 7* is beneficial to those who lack of alertness and are sleepy.

Bach’s nosodes went on to become part of the modern homeopathic pharmacopoeia. However, he became increasingly interested in pursuing understanding the part that a patients’ state of mind played in their illnesses and to this end he strove to find remedies that would effectively produce mental well-being. In this he was especially influenced by Vitalism. It will be remembered from last chapter that this is the belief that human (and animal) functions are influenced by a vital principle that lies above and beyond physical chemical processes.

Although continuing to practice at Harley Street, Bach spent the leisure hours of 1928 researching various forms of flora. Utilising the knowledge of testing the curative properties of substances gained at the London Homeopathic Hospital and his innate sensitivity to the mental state of others Bach developed the first three of his flower remedies; these being *Clematis*, *Mimulus* and *Impatiens*. He noted that if he prescribed treatments based on a patient’s mental state he could bring them to greater health than they were in before.

So impressed was Bach by these results that in 1930, at the age of 43, he decided to turn his back on Harley Street and London in favour of the English and Welsh countryside. Here he would be able to pursue the goal of finding a set of medicinal preparations that would treat what Bach regarded as the primary states of disharmony in the psyche that manifested themselves as illness and disease.

Away from the city Bach engaged in the natural rhythms of the seasons. During the spring and summer he would go out in search of plants that would form the basis of his remedies, whilst the winter was taken up with treating those who came to see him. Oftentimes he wouldn’t charge for his services. The patients he treated convinced him more and more that if only the emotional and spiritual conflicts could be harmonised then the natural healing potential of the body could be unblocked and the conditions of the afflicted could be healed.

By February 1933 he was in a position to publish *Twelve Great Remedies*, which detailed the initial preparations he had discovered. During this period he began to show his work to others in the medical profession but was met with scepticism as well as condemnation from the General Medical Council when he began to advertise his cures in newspapers. Nonetheless, Bach continued with his work undeterred; by 1934 he had developed an additional seven remedies which he

wrote of in the second edition of his first work, now entitled *The Twelve Healers and Seven Helpers*. Later that year he was to move to Mount Vernon in Oxfordshire. By 1936 he had created another 19 remedies, which were included in the third edition of *The Twelve Healers*.

During his final years Bach trained a number of assistants who have ensured that his legacy thrives today [4].

At age fifty, and shortly after having given his only public lecture on his work, he died unexpectedly and suddenly in his sleep on November 27th, 1936.

## The Bach Centre

*Our work is steadfastly to adhere to the simplicity and purity of this method of healing.* Letter from Edward Bach to Victor Bullen [5] and the philosophy of the Bach Centre.

Today Bach's work is continued from the Dr Edward Bach Centre, Mount Vernon, situated in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell. Here, Bach's devotees follow his guidelines and instructions to produce the "mother tinctures" for the flower remedies. Open to visitors, the centre also provides educational talks and activities, publications and provides referrals to practitioners [6].

## The Remedies

Bach's remedies are based on the belief that all diseases were the result of a conflict between the soul and the mind. If these factors could be brought into a harmonious co-existence, then afflictions would disappear from the body [7]. Bach believed that the essences of different flowers could react on humans and help produce a level of spiritual well-being that had healing effects [8]. It is widely reported in unreferenced publications and on the Internet that he decided the effect a flower would have based on powers of "intuition or psychic discovery" [9], although in actual fact the exact method is unclear [10]. Based on his ideas of a particular plant's properties he would then prepare an "essence" from a mixture of water and plant matter, which resulted in a "mother tincture".

Bach wrote of this process in terms of it being a final stage that had involved the Four Elements:

*the earth to nurture the plant: the air from which it feeds: the sun or fire to enable it to impart its power: and water to collect and to be enriched with its beneficent magnetic healing* [11].

Although often compared to Homeopathic cures there are important differences to note. Perhaps chief of these is that Bach's remedies are not derived from toxic substances, which, it will be noted from last chapter, is the case with many of the homeopathic preparations that made use of Strychnine and Deadly Nightshade amongst other poisonous herbal matter. More than this, their preparation does not rely on successive dilutions or the "Law of Similars". Unlike Hahnemann,

Bach does not write of plant preparations creating states similar to illnesses and disease. Rather he emphasises that “negative energy” can be neutralised by “positive energy”.

So, of what exactly did the preparations consist? Bach felt that a flower’s “spiritual essence” could be transferred to water, a conclusion he arrived at on observing fresh dew on a flower and an effect that he was sure could be strengthened by bright sunlight [12]. Of course, it was hardly practicable to collect dew in any appreciable measure and because of this Bach would resort to soaking the flowers in pure, clean water and leaving them in a sunny location. Alternatively, the plant would be boiled in pure water [13]. With both methods the plant matter is removed and the water-based solution thus obtained is then mixed with brandy in equal measure. As the remedies are extremely diluted - although not as dilute as homeopathic remedies- there is no trace of the scent of the plant and it is incorrect to refer to Bach Flower Remedies as a form of aromatherapy [14].

Those who advocate Bach Remedies often talk of the “energetic signature” of the flower and also describe it in terms of a flower soul [15]. This bears some comparison with homeopathic medicine where it is believed that the energy of the preparation is transmitted to the patient and affects their soul in a beneficial manner.

Depending on the nature of the patient’s affliction and what is seen to be the underlying cause, Bach flower preparations may be used by themselves or in combination with other treatments. In general they are administered orally. Because they are completely safe patients can self-prescribe, or they may choose to take the advice of a naturopath or doctor. Of particular interest to those interested in Magick is the fact that many promote the idea that prescription can be done on the strength of dowsing. Typically this is achieved through the utilisation of a pendulum where a patient holds the preparation and the dowser looks for significant swings in the pendulum to indicate suitability as a treatment.

When availing oneself of a professional’s services it is usual to expect that part of the process will involve a fairly lengthy consultation where detailed questions are asked over a wide range of topics about the patient’s life style, general health, diet and emotional well-being. It is often the case that other courses of action may be recommended as well as a Bach flower solution.

Perhaps the foremost and best known treatment is the Rescue Remedy, this is mixture of *Cherry Plum*, *Clematis*, *Impatiens*, *Rock Rose* and *Star of Bethlehem* which is prescribed for anxiety, panic attacks and stress. As a cream (with added crab apple), it is the only Bach preparation that will work on the physical body and can be used to relieve cuts, minor burns, stings and rashes. A list of Bach’s thirty-eight remedies can be found later in the chapter.

Not only have Bach flower remedies been used on humans. They are also popular in the treatment of a variety of domestic animals, as a casual search on the Internet will reveal [16]. Those who advocate this type of treatment claim that it

has a noticeable effect on their animal's behaviour and speak in terms of it having a calmative effect [17].

Much of modern medicine and sceptics tend to avoid the issue that psychology plays in susceptibility to illness and, in my view at least, often downplays the part that disharmony has in creating the conditions necessary for certain afflictions to arise. How a patient feels, although not easily quantifiable and measurable, is important to health and recovery.

This is not to say, though, that everyone agrees that Bach's flower remedies induce the kind of effect that it is advertised they may.

## **Flower Remedies: The Sceptic's Viewpoint**

The following discussion is presented so that readers are presented with a balanced viewpoint and can make their own decisions about which treatments may be effective. I always strive to empower students to form their own opinions:

The Bach Centre states:

*There haven't been any full clinical trials on the actions of the remedies. There was a study done in California as part of a doctoral thesis, but the methodology followed was questionable both in scientific terms and in terms of the assumptions made about the remedies, so we would not produce this study as 'evidence' even though it claimed to show that the remedies work. And there have been other, small-scale studies in different parts of the world, but again nothing that would convince a determined sceptic.... We don't see it as our role to 'prove' that the remedies work - instead we simply demonstrate how to use them and let people prove the effect on themselves [18].*

Whether the above is a reasonable stance to take depends on your point of view, it would be fair to say, however, that it is out of keeping with modern pharmacological medicinal practice and also out of step with those that use herbs in medicinal preparations as described earlier in this book.

Bach flower remedies have been heavily criticised in scientific literature [19]. That they are found to work at all is often explained as being a combination of the placebo effect and the fact that the lengthy consultation process provides a form of psychotherapy, which patients find benefits them [20]. In this the remedies share similarities with the homeopathic method of treatment. Issue is often taken with the way that material from the Bach Centre (and other supportive bodies) uses case reports backed by reviews from those who have claimed they have benefited from the products. For, as one person reports that a particular remedy is effective, another patient or Bach practitioner will then support this view with reference to their own experiences. Although, on the face of it, such a method of recording a medicine's effectiveness seems to be reasonable, it is open to a phenomenon known as "confirmation bias". This is where individuals search for information and then interpret it in line with their own beliefs, whilst at the same time ignoring information that does not fit with their preconceptions [21].

Having briefly looked at some of the common criticisms of the remedies let us now turn to how they may be used by those who believe they will work.

## Self Diagnosis and Treatment

**Please Note:** If you suspect you have an illness or a disease, your first port of call should be a qualified medical professional. Bach Flower Remedies should be considered a complimentary and alternative treatment.

Bach Flower Remedies are completely safe to use on all adults and because of this self-diagnosis is entirely possible. The Bach Centre advocates merely thinking about an affliction and then deciding which of the Remedies to use. Below I present some in-depth methods that I believe to be useful:

### Know Thyself

If we were to put Bach Flower Remedies into the context of magick then we would have to say that the patient must undergo a process of introspection.

The trick to the successful use of the remedies is the ability to discern the underlying cause of an affliction. It may be that you are someone who has a clear understanding of the processes of your mind and that you are readily able to ascertain the mental block behind a physical affliction. However, for many, perhaps the majority, this is often much easier said than done -it can often be extremely hard to know one self fully. Humans can be complicated individuals and for various reasons emotional and mental blockages can be problematic to uncover. How many of us truly know ourselves?

Fortunately there are a couple of avenues that can be explored that may give an indication of what the underlying cause of an illness might be.

### Meditation

Meditating on the area of the body that is afflicted or on the illness itself can often yield some interesting results. Those of you who have read other works published by Magicka School will have had a thorough grounding in a wide variety of techniques that will be of use and if you have followed the instructions diligently will no doubt by now be experienced in exploring your mind and your body on a variety of levels and can afford to skip this section. What, though, can be advised to the beginner?

Over the course of two weeks to a month the following meditation programme is suggested:

1. Try to set aside a ten to twenty minute space every day at the same time or at least the same part of the day. If you are really too busy then the minimum amount of time that will work is ten to twenty minutes twice a week. Don't cut down the amount of time of each session, however, as it is hard to be effective in less than the recommended time. It is suggested for the first week that you practice the meditation below.

Don't be discouraged if your first efforts feel clumsy and forced; practice makes perfect and before long you will have begun to master both.

2. Try to find a space where you won't be disturbed and somewhere that is warm and comfortable. For some of you this may mean negotiating with your family. Remember that you are entitled to some time for yourself.

3. Leave the phone off the hook.

4. Meditating either lying or sitting down is fine. Don't try to meditate lying down late at night, as you may find yourself nodding off.

5. Wear comfortable clothing if possible. At least loosen belts and ties or undo the top button of your jeans.

6. Soft light is best for meditation, so turn the main light off and use a lamp or preferably a candle.

7. Some people find relaxing music helps induce a meditative state, whilst others find it too much of a distraction. Experimentation will help you create the right ambience.

8. Breathing patterns are an easy way of calming and relaxing oneself. Don't be tempted to skip the breathing part of a meditation. Once in the process of visualisation don't stress if you are not following the pattern any more. Just concentrate on the mind's view.

9. It is strongly recommended you keep a journal in which to record your experiences and impressions that you receive. Some Witches have one book that they use for a personal record of meditations, dreams and so on, sometimes referred to as a Book of Mirrors, and another, known as a Book of Shadows, that they record rituals and ceremonies, invocations and prayers in. Some Witches simply merge the two and incorporate both meditation and ritual work in one volume. What format these books will be in very much depends on the individual Witch, and everything from a plain A4 notepad to a beautifully illuminated, leather bound work of art is fine. The important thing is to keep a record.

10. Read through the meditation below a couple of times before you begin, so that you know what you will be meditating on.

## **Wandering Mind**

The idea of this meditation is to allow spontaneous and unfettered images to come into the mind at random. This represents something of a departure from other meditations that you may have been used to, where the whole point of the exercise has been to concentrate on one thing without letting the mind wander. Here, though, we are concerned to allow images to bubble up in the mind that have relevance to the underlying cause of an affliction.

Use a breathing pattern that is easy to follow (breathe in for a count of seven, hold for a count of seven, breath out for a count of seven). Do this for a couple of



minutes. Visualise a chord of silver light extending down your spine into the ground.

Next think about the condition from which you are suffering. Don't try to stay especially focussed on it and merely allow what images and feelings come into consciousness to arise. Just watch these and make a mental note of them, as you will need to write them down when you are finished.

There is no time limit to this meditation. When you are feeling that you have had enough, become conscious of your breathing again and follow an easy pattern (breathe in for a count of seven, hold for seven, breathe out for seven). Do this for a couple of minutes. Near the end of this time withdraw the silver cord from the ground and retract it back into your spine.

Immediately after you have finished, record what you have seen in a notebook and over the next couple of days ponder the meaning of the images and sensations you felt. These might range over a number of things; everything from the dreamy and seemingly meaningless, to an argument with a partner, your time at work, a holiday, favourite food and so on.

Whatever came to your conscious mind will be a message to you about what factors are influencing your illness. As I said, some of these will be more obvious than others. An issue at work may be sapping you of energy and your health, a destructive relationship might be torturing you, maybe you have just too much on your plate. If the images were easily decipherable than all well and good. What do you do though if the images that appeared seem totally obscure? The first thing to realise here is that although their meaning may be veiled the images that have come to mind will not be without significance.

Often one of the most effective ways of realising what they mean can be to discuss them with someone you trust. Merely by vocalising something do we begin to comprehend it.

Alternatively, writing something down can have the same effect. At any rate you will be able to return to the images and question what they might mean.

## **Pendulum**

Not everyone prefers to use meditation as a tool to better understand him or herself. Another common method is using a pendulum to divine underlying causes.

Before starting it is important to establish parameters within which the divination will take place. This will depend on the exact mode of operation required. For example, it may be that you decide that a series of questions to which yes/no responses will be given will be the way to proceed; or it may be decided that a pendulum will be used over a chart and will point to relevant information. If using the first approach then the diviner will need to decide which way the pendulum swings will be a "yes" response and which way will be "no". For the second approach a chart will need to be created which displays a variety of choices, these

might be a series of statements of possible underlying causes arranged around a circle. The pendulum will be hung over the centre of the circle and the direction in which it tends to lean will be seen to have significance.

When holding a pendulum steadily by its chord minute movements in the arm, wrist and hand cause it to swing. These movements are caused by the subconscious mind (and not as commonly supposed by some undefined and mysterious occult force).

It will be understood then that both meditation and divination make use of subconscious messages to arrive at what may be influencing the course of an affliction.

The table on the next page shows the 38 Bach Flower Remedies and the type of person or conflict that they are designed to treat.

## Appendix

### Bach's 38 Flower Remedies [22]

Name	Bach's Description. Indicated For:
Agrimony	The jovial, cheerful, humorous people who love peace and are distressed by argument or quarrel, to avoid which they will agree to give up much. Though generally they have troubles and are tormented and restless and worried in mind or in body, they hide their cares behind their humour and jesting and are considered very good friends to know. They often take alcohol or drugs in excess, to stimulate themselves and help themselves bear their trials with cheerfulness.
Aspen	Vague unknown fears, for which there can be given no explanation, no reason. Yet the patient may be terrified of something terrible going to happen, he knows not what. These vague unexplainable fears may haunt by night or day. Sufferers often are afraid to tell their trouble to others.
Beech	For those who feel the need to see more good and beauty in all that surrounds them. And, although much appears to be wrong, to have the ability to see the good growing within. So as to be able to be more tolerant, lenient and understanding of the different way each individual and all things are working to their own final perfection.
Centaury	Kind, quiet, gentle people who are over-anxious to serve others. They overtax their strength in their endeavours. Their wish so grows upon them that they become more servants than willing helpers. Their good nature leads them to do more than their own share of work, and in so doing they may neglect their own particular mission in life.
Cerato	Those who have not sufficient confidence in themselves to make their own decisions. They constantly seek advice from others, and are often misguided.
Cherry Plum	Fear of the mind being over-strained, of reason giving way, of doing fearful and dreaded things, not wished and known wrong, yet there comes the thought and impulse to do them.

Name	Bach's Description. Indicated For:
Chestnut Bud	For those who do not take full advantage of observation and experience, and who take a longer time than others to learn the lessons of daily life. Whereas one experience would be enough for some, such people find it necessary to have more, sometimes several, before the lesson is learnt. Therefore, to their regret, they find themselves having to make the same error on different occasions when once would have been enough, or observation of others could have spared them even that one fault.
Chicory	Those are who very mindful of the needs of others; they tend to be over-full of care for children, relatives, friends, always finding something that should be put right. They are continually correcting what they consider wrong, and enjoy doing so. They desire that those for whom they care should be near them.
Clematis	Those who are dreamy, drowsy, not fully awake, no great interest in life. Quiet people, not really happy in their present circumstances, living more in the future than in the present; living in hopes of happier times, when their ideals may come true. In illness some make little or no effort to get well, and in certain may even look forward to death, in the hope of better times; or maybe, meeting again some beloved one whom they have lost.
Crab Apple	This is the remedy of cleansing. For those who feel as if they had something not quite clean about themselves. Often it is something of apparently little importance: in others there may be more serious disease which is almost disregarded compared to the one thing on which they concentrate. In both types they are anxious to be free from the one particular thing which is greatest in their minds and which seems so essential to them that it should be cured. They become despondent if treatment fails. Being a cleanser, this remedy purifies wounds if the patient has reason to believe that some poison has entered which must be drawn out.
Elm	Those who are doing good work, are following the calling of their life and who hope to do something of importance, and this often for the benefit of humanity. At times there may be periods of depression when they feel that the task they have undertaken is too difficult, and not within the power of a human being.
Gentian	Those who are easily discouraged. They may be progressing well in illness, or in the affairs of their daily life, but any small delay or hindrance to progress causes doubt and soon disheartens them.

Name	Bach's Description. Indicated For:
Gorse	Very great hopelessness, they have given up belief that more can be done for them. Under persuasion or to please others they may try different treatments, at the same time assuring those around that there is so little hope of relief.
Heather	Those who are always seeking the companionship of anyone who may be available, as they find it necessary to discuss their own affairs with others, no matter whom it may be. They are very unhappy if they have to be alone for any length of time.
Holly	For those who sometimes are attacked by thoughts of such kind as jealousy, envy, revenge, suspicion. For the different forms of vexation. Within themselves they may suffer much, often when there is no real cause for their unhappiness.
Honeysuckle	Those who live much in the past, perhaps a time of great happiness, or memories of a lost friend, or ambitions which have not come true. They do not expect further happiness such as they have had.
Hornbeam	For those who feel that they have not sufficient strength, mentally or physically, to carry the burden of life placed upon them; the affairs of every day seem too much for them to accomplish, though they generally succeeded in fulfilling their task. For those who believe that some part, of mind or body, needs to be strengthened before they can easily fulfil their work.
Impatiens	Those who are quick in thought and action and who wish all things to be done without hesitation or delay. When ill they are anxious for a hasty recovery. They find it very difficult to be patient with people who are slow, as they consider it wrong and a waste of time, and they will endeavour to make such people quicker in all ways. They often prefer to work and think alone, so that they can do everything at their own speed.
Larch	For those who do not consider themselves as good or capable as those around them, who expect failure, who feel that they will never be a success, and so do not venture or make a strong enough attempt to succeed.
Mimulus	Fear of worldly things, illness, pain, accidents, poverty, of dark, of being alone, of misfortune. The fears of everyday life. These people quietly and secretly bear their dread, they do not freely speak of it to others.

Name	Bach's Description. Indicated For:
Mustard	Those who are liable to times of gloom, or even despair, as though a cold dark cloud overshadowed them and hid the light and the joy of life. It may not be possible to give any reason or explanation for such attacks. Under these conditions it is almost impossible to appear happy or cheerful.
Oak	For those who are struggling and fighting strongly to get well, or in connection with the affairs of their daily life. They will go on trying one thing after another, though their case may seem hopeless. They will fight on. They are discontented with themselves if illness interferes with their duties or helping others. They are brave people, fighting against great difficulties, without loss of hope or effort.
Olive	Those who have suffered much mentally or physically and are so exhausted and weary that they feel they have no more strength to make any effort. Daily life is hard work for them, without pleasure.
Pine	For those who blame themselves. Even when successful they think that they could have done better, and are never content with their efforts or the results. They are hard-working and suffer much from the faults they attach to themselves. Sometimes if there is any mistake it is due to another, but they will claim responsibility even for that.
Red Chestnut	For those who find it difficult not to be anxious for other people. Often they have ceased to worry about themselves, but for those of whom they are fond they may suffer much, frequently anticipating that some unfortunate thing may happen to them.
Rock Rose	The rescue remedy. The remedy of emergency for cases where there even appears no hope. In accident or sudden illness, or when the patient is very frightened or terrified, or if the condition is serious enough to cause great fear to those around. If the patient is not conscious the lips may be moistened with the remedy. Other remedies in addition may also be required, as, for example, if there is unconsciousness, which is a deep, sleepy state, Clematis; if there is torture, Agrimony, and so on.
Rock Water	Those who are very strict in their way of living; they deny themselves many of the joys and pleasures of life because they consider it might interfere with their work. They are hard masters to themselves. They wish to be well and strong and active, and will do anything which they believe will keep them so. They hope to be examples, which will appeal to others who may then follow their ideas and be better as a result.

Name	Bach's Description. Indicated For:
Scleranthus	Those who suffer much from being unable to decide between two things, first one seeming right then the other. They are usually quiet people, and bear their difficulty alone, as they are not inclined to discuss it with others.
Star of Bethlehem	For those in great distress under conditions which for a time produce great unhappiness. The shock of serious news, the loss of some one dear, the fright following an accident, and such like. For those who for a time refuse to be consoled this remedy brings comfort.
Sweet Chestnut	For those moments which happen to some people when the anguish is so great as to seem to be unbearable. When the mind or body feels as if it had borne to the uttermost limit of its endurance, and that now it must give way. When it seems there is nothing but destruction and annihilation left to face.
Vervain	Those with fixed principles and ideas, which they are confident are right, and which they very rarely change. They have a great wish to convert all around them to their own views of life. They are strong of will and have much courage when they are convinced of those things that they wish to teach. In illness they struggle on long after many would have given up their duties.
Vine	Very capable people, certain of their own ability, confident of success. Being so assured, they think that it would be for the benefit of others if they could be persuaded to do things as they themselves do, or as they are certain is right. Even in illness they will direct their attendants. They may be of great value in emergency.
Walnut	For those who have definite ideals and ambitions in life and are fulfilling them, but on rare occasions are tempted to be led away from their own ideas, aims and work by the enthusiasm, convictions or strong opinions of others. The remedy gives constancy and protection from outside influences.
Water Violet	For those who in health or illness like to be alone. Very quiet people, who move about without noise, speak little, and then gently. Very independent, capable and self-reliant. Almost free of the opinions of others. They are aloof, leave people alone and go their own way. Often clever and talented. Their peace and calmness is a blessing to those around them.

Name	Bach's Description. Indicated For:
White Chestnut	For those who cannot prevent thoughts, ideas, arguments which they do not desire from entering their minds. Usually at such times when the interest of the moment is not strong enough to keep the mind full. Thoughts which worry and will remain, or if for a time thrown out, will return. They seem to circle round and round and cause mental torture. The presence of such unpleasant thoughts drives out peace and interferes with being able to think only of the work or pleasure of the day.
Wild Oat	Those who have ambitions to do something of prominence in life, who wish to have much experience, and to enjoy all that which is possible for them, to take life to the full. Their difficulty is to determine what occupation to follow; as although their ambitions are strong, they have no calling which appeals to them above all others. This may cause delay and dissatisfaction.
Wild Rose	Those who without apparently sufficient reason become resigned to all that happens, and just glide through life, take it as it is, without any effort to improve things and find some joy. They have surrendered to the struggle of life without complaint.
Willow	For those who have suffered adversity or misfortune and find these difficult to accept, without complaint or resentment, as they judge life much by the success which it brings. They feel that they have not deserved so great a trial that it was unjust, and they become embittered. They often take less interest and less activity in those things of life which they had previously enjoyed.



## Footnotes

- [1] Edward Bach, *Heal Thyself: An Explanation of the Real Cause and Cure of Disease*, Chapter 1, p.3, available for free here: <http://www.edwardbach.org/research/booksHome.asp?languagebox=1&section=Remedies>.
- [2] Also known as the Bowel Nosodes they were co- introduced by Bach, John Paterson (1890-1954) and Charles Edwin Wheeler (1868-1946).
- [3] On the various Nosodes see the interesting book by Patterson available for free here: <http://homeoint.org/books5/paterson/index.htm>.
- [4] In particular Nora Weeks and Victor Bullen.
- [5] October 1936, quoted here: <http://www.bachcentre.com/centre/simple.htm>.
- [6] See <http://www.bachcentre.com>.
- [7] Dr Edward Bach, *Heal Thyself*, P.3, available for free here: <http://www.edwardbach.org/research/booksHome.asp?languagebox=1&section=Remedies>.
- [8] See *Twelve Healers*, P.3, available for free here: <http://www.edwardbach.org/research/booksHome.asp?languagebox=1&section=Remedies>.
- [9] See for example: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Bach](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bach).
- [10] Julian Barnard, *Bach Flower Remedies, Form and Function* p.33-4.
- [11] Dr Edward Bach; “*Some Fundamental Considerations of Disease & Cure*”, page 17 of the article in *The Homoeopathic World*, 1930.
- [12] For descriptions on how Bach made these preparations see Dr Edward Bach, *Twelve Healers*, and P.10.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] The term is incorrectly used here in the unreferenced but influential article that has widely been copied on the Internet: <http://skepdic.com/bachflower.html>.
- [15] See for example: <http://www.psychologies.co.uk/Dictionary/Bach-flower-remedies>.
- [16] See for example: <http://www.bachflower.com/Pets.htm>.
- [17] Ibid.
- [18] <http://www.bachcentre.com/centre/faq.htm>.
- [19] See for example: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16292234?dopt=Abstract>.

[20] The following two studies concluded that Bach's remedies performed no better than placebo: H. Walach, C. Rilling, U. Engelke, *Efficacy of Bach-flower remedies in test anxiety: a double-blind, placebo-controlled, randomized trial with partial crossover*, Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 15 and S. Pintov, M. Hochman, A. Livne, E. Heyman, E. Lahat, *Bach flower remedies used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children — a prospective double blind controlled study*, European Journal of Paediatric Neurology, 9.

[21] On confirmation bias see J. Gregory, *The Psychology of Science and the Origins of the Scientific Mind*, p. 101, Yale University Press, 2006.

[22] Bach's writing is now out of copyright in the UK as Bach died over 70 years ago. This section is quoted verbatim from Bach's own writing.

# Chapter Ten: Creating an Herb Garden, Cooking and Storage

# Creating an Herb Garden, Cooking and Storage

## Welcome

In this chapter you will learn how to create an herb garden, how herbs can be used in cooking and how to store the plants that you have grown.

At the end there is a research project.

## Introduction

This is the tenth and final chapter in *A Magickal Herbal Compleat*.

You have explored a huge variety of ways that herbs can be utilised in terms of Magick and Health. Aspects that we have yet to cover, though, are the topics of creating an herb garden, using herbs in cooking and the storage of herbs. These will be explored now.

## Creating a Magickal Herb Garden

A number of things will dictate the kind of herb garden that it will be possible for you to create; local climate, the type of soil you have and the amount of space that's available. Although many herbs are extremely hardy, it can't be stressed enough that before you rush out to your local garden centre to buy your plants you need to carefully plan your garden. There is nothing more disappointing than bringing home many healthy and vibrant herbs only to find that within a number of weeks their leaves start to curl and brown at the edges, or that they wilt and die.

In this section we will look at the various factors you need to take into consideration and I will provide you with the materials you need to make a successful plan.

## Climate

Perhaps the easiest area to look at is that of the weather. Your own life is affected as much by it as the plants you will have in your garden, so you will already likely be something of an expert on it. You will want your herb garden to be successful all year round so the table below makes sure that you think in terms of the seasons. Because most of the people who read this book will be those with an interest in Wicca I have arranged things around the Sabbats.

Season	Rain fall, Average Temperature, Hours of Sunshine, Wind Factor
Imbolg	
Spring Equinox	
Beltane	
Summer Solstice	
Lughnasadh	
Autumn Equinox	
Samhain	
Winter Solstice	

## Soil

Next you will wish to examine the soil type available to you (of course, not everyone opts to plant in a garden and it is quite possible to have an herb garden arranged in pots).

There are 6 basic soil types that are determined by the relative amounts of mineral particles, rock and organic matter. The easiest way to work out your soil type is to rub some damp soil between your hands and use the table below to decide which one you have in your garden.

Soil Type	Qualities
Clay	Sticky and easily rolled into a ball.
Sandy	Impossible to roll into a ball as the soil will fall apart.
Chalky	Light, you will notice chunks of chalk in it.
Peaty	Sponge like texture and holds lots of water.
Loamy	High amounts of organic matter, brown, crumbles easily.
Silty	Can make into a roll but not a ball, silky to the touch.

Having determined your soil type you will next want to see if it is alkaline or acid.

This is worked out against something called the pH scale. This ranges from 0 to 14, where 0 indicates extreme acidity and 14 indicates extreme alkalinity. Most plants prefer a pH of 6.5 to 7 (the pH of pure water) because this is the level at which nutrients are most easily absorbed. However, some plants are ericaceous and need acidity to grow successfully and others prefer alkaline conditions.

Finding out the pH of your soil is best done with a kit that can be brought from most garden centres.

To raise pH (make the soil more alkaline) add Lime, to lower pH (make the soil more acidic) add Sulphur. This can be done in conjunction with step 4 below.

Whatever soil type you have, you will probably need to make its texture and structure to make it more amenable to root systems that are the carriers for all that a plant needs.

There are a number of steps to improving the soil, which, is best done from the autumn to spring equinox:

1. Dig over the soil and break up large clods. If the ground has never been dug before then it is best to use a spade, if not then a fork can be used.
2. Next add either bought compost, compost you have made yourself (from garden and vegetable waste) or manure that has been well rotted.
3. Dig over the soil and work the compost well in.
4. Lightly tread down the soil with your heel. You can then add organic fertilizer if you wish made from bone, blood or fishmeal (roughly a handful per square metre and then rake it over.

## **Types of Herb Gardens**

Not everyone has a house and a garden and for this reason I have decided to present and discuss a couple of possibilities.

### **Those with Space for a Magickal Herb Garden in the shape of a Pentacle**

Ideally this garden idea is pitched at those who have a space of around 9 metres squared, although if you are selective then it will work with 4 metres squared of spare ground. Anything less and the plants will be too cramped.

Mark out the ground in the shape of a pentacle. You will need six wooden stakes, a bag of white pebbles, a ball of string and a compass. Do the following:

1. Place a stake in the ground and attach 1.5 metres of string.
2. Create a circle with a diameter of 1.5 metres. Mark out every 20 cms or so with a pebble.
3. Your circle will have a circumference of around 470 cms.
4. Next you need to mark 5 points around the circumference with a stake. Stand on the centre of the circle, hold the compass and find North.
5. Mark the Northern point on the circumference with a stake.
6. Next measure out a length of string 94 cms long.

7. Lay the length of string from the North stake around the circumference. Put a stake in the ground.
8. From this second stake lay out the length of string around the circumference and put a stake in the ground.
9. Repeat step 8 until you have five stakes around the circle circumference.
10. To complete your pentacle it is now a case of joining the stakes with string.

Once you have created the pentacle with pebbles, stakes and string you will likely wish to mark it out more permanently. This can be done with wooden edging, stones or bricks.

You now have 6 areas within the pentagram that can be planted out with herbs (or 11 areas within the whole pentacle).

Such esoteric landscaping is more common than you might realise. There are in fact a whole range of occult themed gardens all around the world and many of these make great inspirational material. Perhaps the most famous of these are the richly symbolic Japanese Zen Gardens, but Buddhists have their own gardens too. In Europe there is the magnificent Tarot Garden created by artist Nikki Saint-Phalle as well as a large number of landscaped works reflective of Freemasonry [1]. If all these religions, philosophies and movements can have their ideas worked into horticulture then why shouldn't Wiccans do the same? Especially as Wicca is a nature based religion.

Quite what you plant will, of course, be dictated by where in the world you are and climate. From some of the previous chapters in this book you should be well versed in the subject of seasonal herbs, so when you plan your garden try to think in terms of creating one that will be of use right around the year and that will fit with the cycle of celebrations.

Not all have the space for such large scale projects though.

### **Balcony Garden**

Personally I spend up to half the year in London. London is of course one of the greatest cities in the world and as urban landscapes go one of the most surprisingly green cities in the world. Criss-crossed by an extensive canal system it is quite possible to walk for miles from park to park along herb-lined water ways meeting swans, herons, Canada geese, foxes and squirrels along the way. Charming as this might be, the premium charged for London property and for that matter the cost of housing in most of the cities of the Western World, especially at the time of writing, makes a house with a garden out of range of all but the relatively wealthy. The rest of us make do in flats and those that want to grow herbs will have to resort to utilising their balconies.

Just from looking out of my window I can see hundreds of apartments, nearly all have this pleasant outdoor feature and yet I can only see three or four that have any evidence of cultivation. Most are completely bare, one or two have tables and chairs and a number have become a storage place for bicycles. What an under used resource!

A balcony herb garden can be an endless source of pleasure and takes very little effort to set up. Lavender baskets hung from the railings make an eye catching display in the summer months and their fragrance brings bees into the heart of the city and gently perfumes the flat from the outside. A couple of well tended bay trees look smart either side of a small dining table and chairs, while a range of properly potted herbs for cooking or magickal use can be stood anywhere to suit.

Proper potting is important. Clay earthenware pots, though expensive, are best. The nasty plastic pots that the plants are often sold with are invariably too small and allow the soil to dry out easily. When planting herbs don't forget drainage, which can be effectively supplied through using shards of pottery or stones at the bottom of the pot. If you have bought herbs at a supermarket these are often sold with plastic plant restrictors, in the form of a cage around the roots, just lurking below the surface of the soil. These seem designed to strangle and kill a plant after a few weeks of growth; to get rid of them cut the plastic cage off whilst being careful not to damage the roots and re-pot the plant.

Plain clay pots are also fun to decorate with paints and Witches will no doubt find all manner of symbols to put on theirs.

If your balcony is small, a mirror at one end will increase the sense of space no end. Another nice touch can be to add ornamental stones, large shells or even interestingly shaped pieces of wood –all these things bring beauty to the herb garden space and will make it enjoyable environment to be in.

### **A Word of Warning**

If you live in a city pollution levels are often high. If you are intending to use your herbs for medicinal or culinary purposes you will need to check the levels of pollutants in the air. Overtime ingesting herbs that have been near traffic fumes or factories can be damaging for the health and sometimes seriously so.

Similarly, you will also need to circumspect when picking herbs from the wild. My wife and I will often pick bags full of stinging nettles along the canal to boil up back at home for a hair rinse, but would think twice about putting them in a quiche. That is not to say though that some areas in cities won't be fine...London also has extensive marsh lands, parts of which are protected nature reserves, well away from traffic and factories and herbs here are safer to use for internal preparations or food.

Remember, unless the herb is truly abundant, digging up a plant from the wild and transplanting it into your garden is generally frowned upon. Some of them are endangered, and many can be easily decimated. Care should even be taken when harvesting stems and leaves. Look around, how many plants are there, is cutting



the herb going to be a problem? It goes without saying that Witches have a strong respect for nature and act accordingly.

## Herbs in Cooking

As well as having been used for healing and magick, herbs have, of course, also been used for cooking since time immemorial and yet this is the one major subject that has hardly been touched on in this work. Part of the reason for this is that this kind of information is widely available in all manner of cook books and the Internet and there seems little point in presenting you with a range of recipes that are easily found and that may or may not be to your liking anyway.

Therefore I have instead decided to write a generalised section on what herbs go best with what types of food and present this in a quick reference table. If you are something of a kitchen Witch you may wish to grow all of the herbs in the list in your garden.

Don't forget (if you haven't already) to invest in a pestle and mortar, which is useful for grinding pods and seeds to a fine powder.

Herb	Culinary Uses
Bay	Personally I use bay leaves with many dishes. It works really well in Basmati rice, is wonderful in stews and can also be used on roasting potatoes.
Basil	<p>As anyone in Italy will be able to tell you, Basil is the herb <i>par excellence</i> for tomato dishes.</p> <p><b>Mediterranean sauce</b></p> <p>Use one tin of tomatoes or a jar of passata and add in a handful of finely chopped fresh basil and oregano, a tea spoon of olive oil and a pinch of salt and pepper. Can be used for pasta dishes and on pizzas.</p> <p><b>Salad Mix</b></p> <p>Basil has a heady aroma that immediately conjures up Mediterranean holidays and in those lands is often liberally added to salads whether there be tomatoes present or not.</p> <p>Mix in equal proportions: basil leaves, coriander leaves, rocket and spinach.</p> <p>Basil is also a main ingredient in pesto (the others being pine nuts, olive oil and garlic), which is delicious served on many types of pasta.</p>

<b>Herb</b>	<b>Culinary Uses</b>
Basil continued	<b>Pesto</b> Take several bunches of basil. Strip away the stalks (you won't be using those) and chop finely. Peel a whole garlic and finely chop. Blend with olive oil and a handful of ground pine nuts. Add a pinch of salt.
Borage	Borage has a cucumber taste and is ideal for salads; it can also be added to yoghurt, cream cheese and shellfish.
Cardamon	Cardamon pods are a staple of Eastern cooking and are great in curries (used either whole or ground) and can be used to flavour rice.
Caraway Seeds	Add to stir fries for extra flavour.
Coriander Seeds	When the seeds are crushed to a powder this spice is great with fish or poultry.
Chilli	Having once handled dried chilli peppers and then inadvertently rubbed my eyes I am able to say from experience just how excruciating chilli can be when applied to sensitive body parts. Use with care! Can be added to dishes to make them spicy hot!
Chives	Great with cream cheese, or with boiled potatoes.
Cloves	When ground and added to chicken you will create an unusual Oriental dish. Also used with fruit salads, mulled wine and baked ham.
Curry Leaves	Obviously used in curries and best added before spices are fried.
Dill	Roughly chop up the dill, mix with butter and place inside a gutted fish before grilling.
Ginger	Good for creating a warming taste. Peeled root ginger can be added to Chinese savoury food, stem ginger for sweet.
Lemon Grass	As the name implies this herb imparts a lemony flavour to food it's used with. Use with fish.
Mint	Wonderful in chilled sweetened water during the summer months and great when boiled alongside new potatoes served with lashings of butter.
Mustard Seeds	Grind and add to beef, chicken or pork.
Paprika	Warm red colour use with eggs and rice.

<b>Herb</b>	<b>Culinary Uses</b>
Parsley (flat leafed)	Wonderful when roughly chop and added inside a fish on the grill. Chop finely and cook with poached cod, served with drizzled olive oil and lemon.
Parsley (curly)	Finely chop and add to boiled potatoes served with lashings of butter.
Rosemary	Used in Italy when roasting potatoes, alongside bay and sage. Before cooking lamb marinade for several hours (overnight is ideal) in rosemary olive oil and garlic. Just delicious!
Sorrel	Sorrel has a lemony taste and can be used in salads.
Tarragon	Best for chicken and lamb. Crush and add to butter and then spread on chicken before roasting.

## **Harvesting and Storing Herbs**

By and large herbs are very hardy plants and because of this they will often withstand a fair amount of harvesting and many plants can be cut right back (within 10 centimetres of the ground) in the summer without doing them any long term damage.

Quite when they are harvested will depend on what you are intending to use them for. If being used for magickal work the exact time can often be important and more often than not will be dictated by the phase of the Moon, if used for cooking and healing then the best time will often be in the morning and just before a particular herb has begun to flower. Use a sharp knife or scissors, as you will need to be careful not to rip at the plant.

There are a variety of storage techniques available today. Let's start with the most ancient:

### **Drying**

With this technique it is important that leaves and stem have been harvested. The stems should be tied with rubber bands, string, or wire bag fasteners. Place a paper bag (paper and not plastic as the plant will "sweat") over the leafy part and then hang upside down in a dry, clean area – an airing cupboard, shed, covered porch, garage or attic are all ideal locations so long as the plant is not in direct sunlight. Once dry you are then ready to pick off the leaves, grind them into small pieces and place in a clean, sealed glass container -airtight is best as this will preserve the herb for a few years. These should then be stored in a cool, dry and dark place.

Alternatively, you can dry leaves of plants by leaving them in the same location on a grilled baking tray (the grills are important as they allow circulation of air).

Some people advocate the use of drying in an oven at a low heat. Whilst this method works (though you have to be careful not to cook them), it isn't really necessary unless you are in a huge hurry to get them dry or don't have the space to hang them up.

### **Herb Salts**

Another excellent method of storage is to create herb salts, which are useful for seasoning a variety of dishes. The following method works well for chives, thyme, rosemary, oregano and basil.

These are very simple to make. Sprinkle a desired amount of salt over a metal baking tray (an easy way to get the right amount is to fill up by two thirds the container you are going to use). Next chop up a handful of the herb that you wish to use and sprinkle that evenly on top of the salt. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes or so at 200 degrees centigrade. When dry place the salt and herb mixture into your container.

### **Freezing**

Not all herbs are suitable for drying, however. Fennel and chives are two examples where results will be disappointing. In this case you could instead resort to freezing. In fact there is an argument that freezing is a better option than drying, as it tends to preserve more vitamins and minerals. It is a particularly suitable method for Basil, which when dried tends to lose its aroma and zing. In fact, in Italy, perhaps the country that makes most use of Basil, freezing is commonplace and frozen Basil is sold in supermarkets all over.

Before freezing give the herbs a wash and let them dry off excess moisture in a colander. Place them in resealable plastic bags, and make sure you label it.

### **One Last Thing**

Herbs should never be stored in damp humid environments, as this will cause them to rot.

# Research Project

## Creating an Herbal

Creating an herbal is a lifetime's work and it's a good idea to find a good quality hardback blank book that will last for many years to record the information. You may even wish to find a book that has a binding that can be undone, which will allow the addition or re-ordering of leaves.

It can be a lovely idea to press specimens of different herbs to be included on the pages. A quick way to press plants is to put a cutting between two leaves of thick blotting paper and place a heavy book on top for a few days. By then the plant should be flattened and ready to glue into the herbal. Alternatively, those that are artistic can go about painting or drawing the herb.

All kinds of information can be recorded: where the herb was found, growing conditions, folkloric and magickal information, medicinal and culinary uses etc.

Over time this will be a wonderful resource both for you and your family.

## End Notes

Congratulations! You have now got to the end of *A Magickal Herbal Compleat*.

I sincerely hope that you have enjoyed the book and that you have found it of interest and value.

I am sure that you will now have found that herbs have the power to enhance your life on many levels. If you would like to write to me and let me know of your herbal experiences I can be contacted via the email [admin@magickaschool.com](mailto:admin@magickaschool.com).

In Love and Light,

Pino Longchild

## Footnotes

[1] The following links may be of interest:

<http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeV/Freemasonill.html>

<http://learn.bowdoin.edu/japanesegardens/>

<http://chippit.tripod.com/garden.html>

<http://www.nikidesaintphalle.com/>





# Reading List

## Reading List

For the reader's convenience the following list has been organised by chapter headings.

### Chapter One: Selective History of Herbs

Cindy Engel, *Wild Health: How Animals Keep Themselves Well and What We Can Learn From Them*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Tells you exactly what it says on the cover.

E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Dead*, more properly known as *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* can be found at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/egy/ebod/> or for a hard copy see *The Book of the Dead*, Dodo Press, 2005. Budge's work cannot be too highly recommended and will be of use when studying any of the courses or books published by Magicka School.

M. F. (Margaret F.) Roberts, Michael Wink, *Alkaloids: Biochemistry, Ecology, and Medicinal Applications*, Springer, 1998. An academic work that contains an excellent short history of herbs.

Nicolas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*, Wordsworth Reference, 2007. If there is one work on herbs that you will buy this chapter then this is it. Although many of Culpeper's remedies are still relevant today many are frankly dangerous as well, what makes this book so useful is its store of magickal and astrological herbal lore.

### Chapter Two: Pre-Scientific Theories About Herbs

For those wanting a detailed discussion of Greek and Roman herbal traditions see Dr Walter Sneader, *Drug Discovery*, John Wiley and Sons, 2006.

Nicholas Culpeper, *The Astrological Judgment of Diseases from the Discomfiture of the Sick*. Today published by Kessinger, 2004. An excellent facsimile edition, detailing Culpeper's views on astrology, medicine and illness. Well worth a look by those curious to know more in detail about seventeenth century astro-pharmacy.

Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*, Wordsworth Reference Series, 2007.

Scott Cunningham, *Cunningham's Encyclopaedia of Magickal Herbs, Expanded and Revised*, Llewellyn, 2003. Cunningham's work is designed for magickal rather than medicinal use, although he draws on Culpeper for many of his astrological attributions. This book is highly recommended as it is among the best and most user friendly of modern magickal herbal texts.

Nicola Peterson, *Herbs and Health*, Bloomsbury Books, 1989. Of interest to those wishing to know more about how herbs may be used to promote health.

### **Chapter Three: Herbs in Religious and Magickal Practice**

Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, January 1, 1966.

W.B. Crow, *The Occult Properties of Herbs and Plants*, Aquarian Press, 1980.

Scott Cunningham, *Encyclopedia of Magickal Herbs*, Llewellyn, 2003.

Steve Andrews, *Herbs of the Northern Shaman: A Guide to the Mind Altering Plants of the Northern Hemisphere*, Loompanics, 2006.

John Marco Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1970.

Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, Routledge, 2003.

### **Chapter Four: Using Herbs to Heal**

All of the books in this list are excellent sources for practical healing techniques using herbal remedies.

Tammi Hartung, *Growing 101 Herbs that Heal: Gardening Techniques, Recipes, and Remedies*, Storey Publishing, LLC, 2000.

James Green, *The Herbal Medicine Maker's Handbook: A Home Manual*, Crossing Press, 2000.

Rosemary Gladstar, *Family Herbal: A Guide to Living Life with Energy, Health, and Vitality*, Storey Publishing, LLC, 2001.

Nancy Phillips, Michael Phillips, Rosemary Gladstar, *The Herbalist's Way: The Art and Practice of Healing with Plant Medicines*, Chelsea Green; Revised edition, 2005.

David Hoffman, *Medical Herbalism: The Science Principles and Practices Of Herbal Medicine*, Healing Arts Press, 2003. Hoffman is something of a herbalists' herbalist and this book comes highly recommended by many experts within the herbal community.

### **Chapter Five: Herbs and Practical Magickal Work**

Aleister Crowley, *777 and other Qabalistic Writings*, Weiser Books, 1986

Nicholas Culpeper, *Complete Herbal*, Wordsworth Reference Series, 2007

Scott Cunningham, *Encyclopedia of Magickal Herbs*, Llewellyn, 2003

Scott Cunningham, *The Secret Craft of the Wise: Magickal Herbalism*, Llewellyn, 2006

Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A study in Magic and Religion*, Wordsworth Reference Series, 1993

## Chapter Six: Herbs and Aromatherapy

Scott Cunningham, *Magickal Herbalism: The Secret Craft of the Wise*, Llewellyn, 2006

Stephen Pollington, *Leechcraft: Early English Charms, Plantlore and Healing*, AngloSaxon Books 2000

*Culpeper's Complete Herbal: A Book of Natural Remedies for Ancient Ills*, Wordsworth reference Series, 2007

Robert Tisserand, *The Art of Aromatherapy*, CW Daniel, 2004

René-Maurice Gattefossé, *The Practice of Aromatherapy*, available from Beekham Books, 1990.

Joannah Metcalfe, *Herbs and Aromatherapy*, Bloomsbury Books, 1993.

## Chapter Seven: Herbal Alchemy

John Reid, *Course on Practical Alchemy* at <http://www.alchemywebsite.com/johnreid.html>.

Mark Stavish, *Practical Plant Alchemy* at <http://www.hermetic.com/stavish/alchemy/plant1.html>.

Peter Marshall, *The Philosopher's Stone: A Quest for the Secrets of Alchemy*, Pan Books, 2002

Frazer Albertus, *Alchemists Handbook: Manual for Practical Laboratory Alchemy*, Weiser Books, 1987. A number of useful chapters on herbs and alchemy as well as being a great guide to practical aspects of the Royal Art.

Satnton J. Linden, ed. *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton*, Cambridge University Press, 2003. An excellent source book of extracts from primary texts.

## Chapter Eight: Homeopathy

Anthony Campbell, *Homeopathy in Perspective: Myth and Reality*, available for free here:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070829102314/www.acampbell.ukfsn.org/homeopathy/homeopathy-html/index.html>.

Amy L. Lansky, *Impossible Cure: The Promise of Homeopathy*, R.L. Ranch Press, 2003. Written by a convert who attributed the cure of her son's autism to homeopathy.

Stephen Cummings, Dana Ullman, *Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines* A comprehensive guide, Tarcher, 2004.

Miranda Castro, *The Complete Homeopathy Handbook: Safe and Effective Ways to Treat Fevers, Coughs, Colds and Sore Throats, Childhood Ailments, Food Poisoning, Flu, and a Wide Range of Everyday Complaints*, St. Martin's Griffin, 1991.

Samuel Hahnemann, R. E. Dudgeon, Trans., *Organon Of Medicine*, Kessinger Publishing, 2007. Available for free here:  
<http://www.homeopathyhome.com/reference/organon/organon.html>.

Samuel Hahnemann, *The Chronic Diseases: Their Peculiar Nature And Their Homeopathic Cure*, Kessinger Publishing, 2007.

Rima Handley, *A Homeopathic Love Story: The Story of Samuel and Melanie Hahnemann*, North Atlantic Books, 1993. Great biographical account of these two historic figures, full of wonderful anecdotes.

*Hahnemann Revisited, A Textbook of Classical Homeopathy for the Professional*, Full of Life Publications, 2001.

## **Chapter Nine: Bach Flower Remedies**

A wide range of works by Edward Bach can be found here and available for free:  
<http://www.edwardbach.org/research/booksHome.asp?languagebox=1&section=Remedies>.

Included are: *Heal Thyself* 1931, the first of two versions of this book that Bach published; *Ye Suffer From Yourselves*, the text of a lecture given by Dr Bach in Southport in 1931; *New Remedies*, first published in *Homeopathic World*, 1930; *Free Thyself* ; *Considerations on Disease*, first published in *Homeopathic World*, 1930; *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies*, 1936; *Healing by Herbs*, the text of a public lecture given by Bach in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, on 24 Sept 1936.

On the same site will be found a whole range of related publications, many of which are available at no charge.

Edward Bach and E. J. Wheeler, *The Bach Flower Remedies*, McGraw-Hill Contemporary, 1998

Stefan Ball, *The Bach Remedies Workbook*, Vermilion, 2005.

Judy Howard, *The Bach Flower Remedies Step by Step: A Complete Guide to Selecting and Using the Remedies*, Vermilion, 2005.



