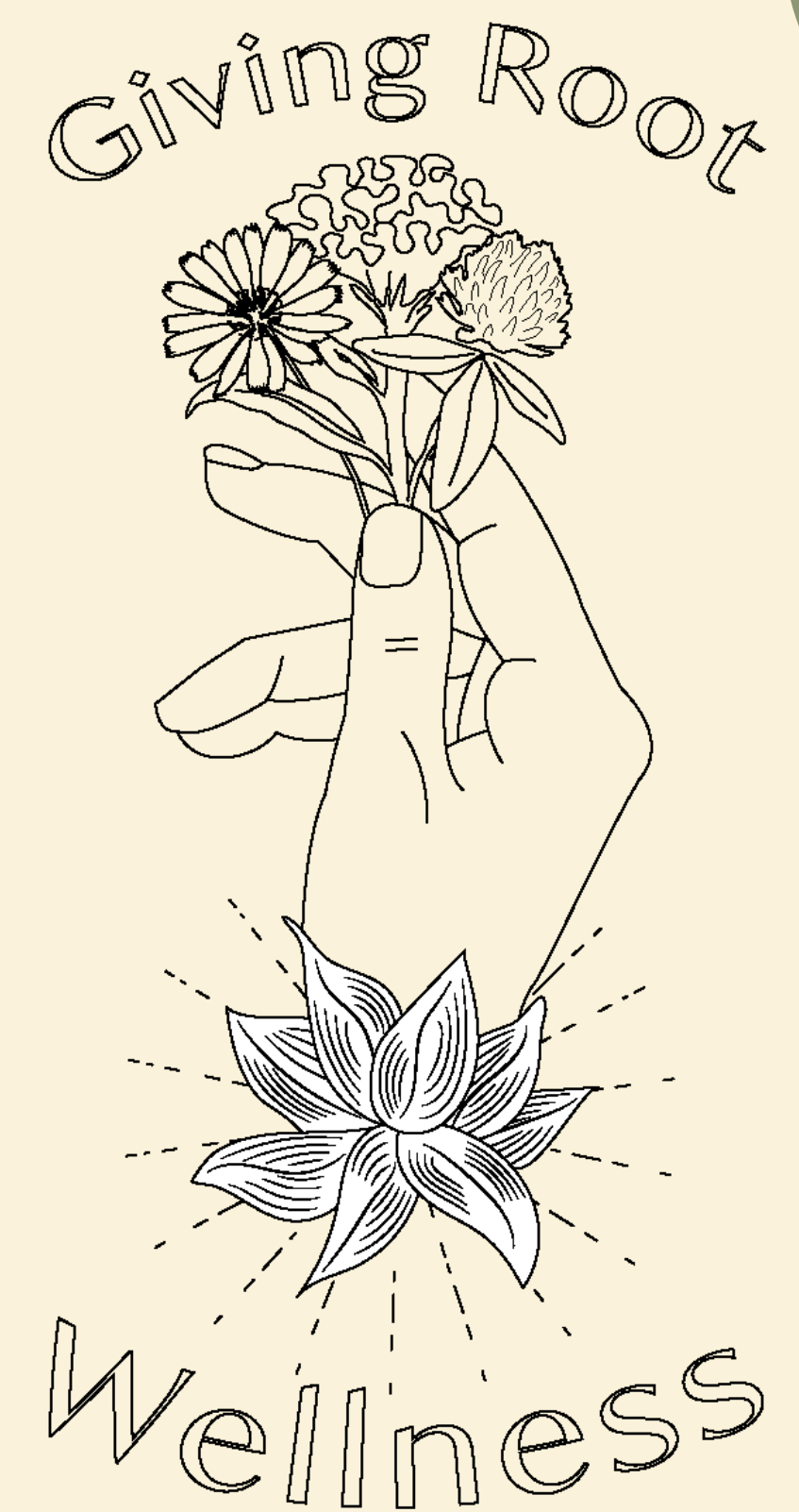


Topical Herbal Remedies

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For Common Gardener Ailments
by Shana Weddington



This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment.

Topical Preparations

There is a long, rich history of herbs being used topically in every culture and every traditional system of medicine. The skin is our largest organ and first line of defense to the outer world. By applying herbal remedies topically we are utilizing a plant's vulnerary ability-to soothe and heal skin conditions.

Methods

Herbal Baths

- 1 A strong tea added to bathwater. Works through the combination of warm water, salt, and herbs being absorbed by the skin.

Compresses/Fomentations

- 2 A strong tea soaked cloth applied to the affected area. Works by drawing blood to the site and opening the pores.

Infused Oils

- 3 Herbs infused into olive, coconut, or other high-grade vegetable oils. Can be used alone or put into salves or creams.

Poultices

- 4 Raw plant material that is used in whole or mashed up form and applied directly to an area. Works through concentration of herbs.

Herbal Bath

Ratio: 3-4 ounces of herb per tub

Method One: Combine your herbs and simmer them until well steeped--about 15 minutes. Strain through a cheesecloth or fine mesh strainer before adding your infused tea liquid directly to your bathwater.

Method Two: Add all of your ingredients to an unbleached muslin bag and hang it on your tub nozzle. Turn your water on hot and let it run over your bag of herbs until your tub is half full. Adjust your temperature to fill the tube the rest of the way and toss your bag into the water as you soak.

Method Three: Put all of your herbs in a coffee filter and prepare as if making a pot of coffee. Pour the liquid directly into your bath. You can tie up the coffee filter and toss it in the tub as well or compost to discard. Note: This method is fine if rushed but not as potent as the other methods.

Timing

Soak in the bath for 20-30 minutes to enjoy the full benefits of the herbs.

Alternatives

Hand and foot baths are also great ways to access the healing power of herbs.



When to use an herb bath

Muscle Pain



Dry Skin



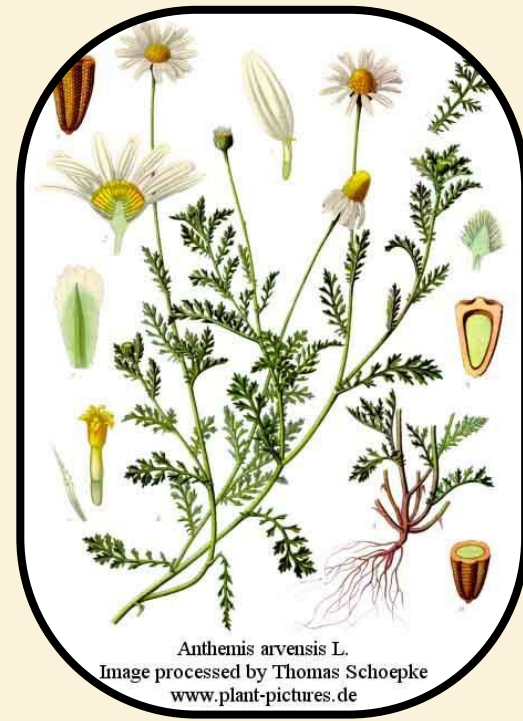
Poison Ivy



Inflammation



Plants for Herb Baths



Chamomile

- Inflammation
- Redness
- Minor Wounds
- Muscle Cramps
- Muscle Tension



Yarrow

- Pain
- Infection
- Poison Ivy
- Stings/Bites
- Styptic



Lavender

- Pain
- Itching
- Infection
- Burns
- Bruises



Oats

- Poison Ivy
- Itching
- Dry Skin
- Sunburn
- Contact Dermatitis



Willow

- Aching muscles
- Painful Joints
- Inflammation
- Relaxation
- Flexibility

There are many more herbs that can be used in herbal baths. Using herbs in conjunction with salts like Epsom salts, Dead Sea salts, or pink Himalayan salts can further the soothing benefits of an herbal soak.

Compresses

1. First make a strong tea with your desired herbs. I like to use about 3 Tablespoons per cup of water. I use a cotton muslin bag and a ceramic bowl for steeping, but you could do this in a sauce pan or tea pot too! Let your tea cool, or place in the refrigerator to cool quickly. It should still be warm but not hot enough to cause pain or discomfort when touched.
2. Soak a clean piece of fabric/cotton material in the tea and squeeze excess tea out of the cloth.
3. Place soaked cloth on your skin and wrap around the area in need. Cover with a dry towel and ace bandage if needed to hold in place. Allow the cloth to cool to body temperature.
4. Optional: Remove the cloth and replace with a cool compress from an ice bath. Cover with a dry towel and allow the cloth to warm to body temperature.
5. Repeat this sequence 2-5 more times as needed.

Hot Compress

Can be covered with a hot water bottle. Heat brings blood to the area, opening the pores and allowing the medicated compress to have a greater effect.

Cool Compress

More astringing than hot compresses. Better for decreasing inflammation. Alternating between hot and cool has added benefit.



When to use a compress

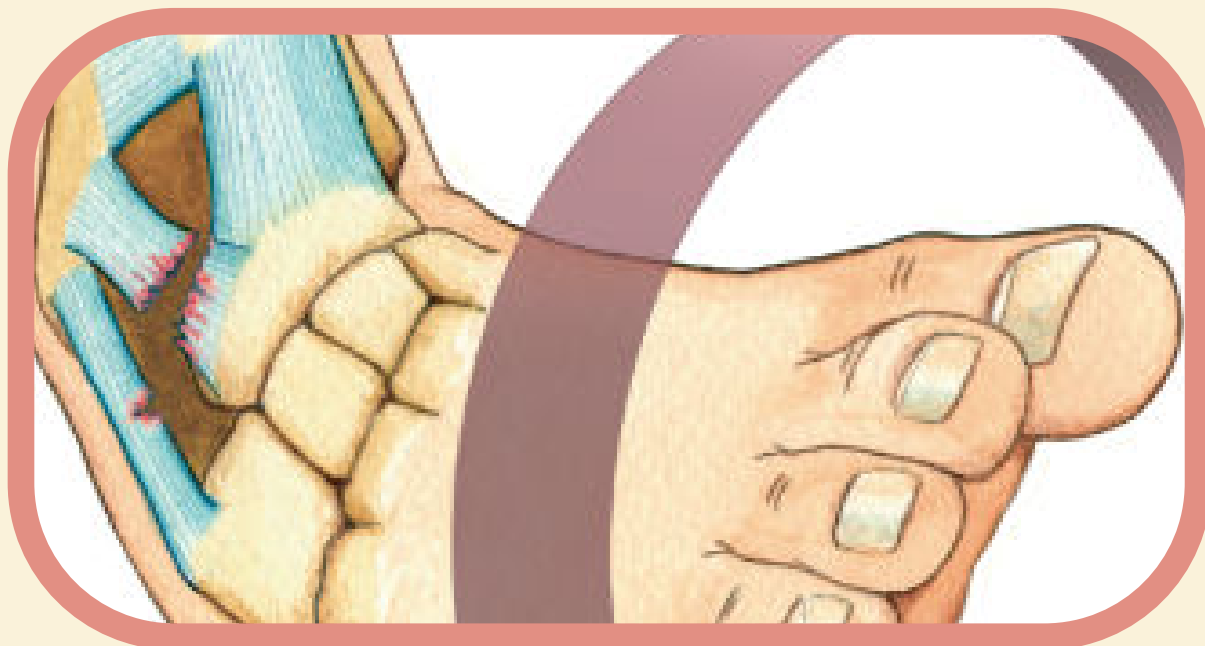
Stings/Bites



Skin Abscesses



Strains/Sprains



Joint Stiffness



Plants for Herbal Compress



Calendula

- Inflammation
- Ulcers
- Poison Ivy/Oak
- Eczema
- Wound Healing



Peppermint

- Hot Skin Conditions
- Bumps
- Sore Muscles
- Rash/Shingles



Comfrey

- Varicose Veins
- Tendonitis
- Sprains
- Strains
- Bruises



Sage

- Strains
- Insect Bites
- Skin Abrasions
- Headaches
- Cramps



Echinacea

- Venomous Bites
- Stings
- Skin Abscesses
- Minor Wounds
- Tick Bites

There are many more herbs that can be used in herbal compresses. Adding vinegar to your herbal preparation can add more astringency and is an excellent application for strains and sprains. Vinegar ratio is 1:4 of vinegar to infusion.

Infused Oils

Dried Plant Oil

- Use a ratio of 1:5 plant material to oil
- Grind dried herbs into a coarse powder with a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle.
- Place the powder into a glass jar and cover with oil of choice.
- Shake gently every other day for two weeks then decant through a cheesecloth.
- Add vitamin E oil or store in fridge to preserve.

Warm Oil Infusion

- Harvest plants after the dew has evaporated and let wilt for a day or two to expire excess fluid.
- Place the herbs in a slow cooker or double boiler. Cover with oil.
- Heat the mixture gently (no higher than 110 F) for 48 hours.
- Press through cheesecloth and allow to sit in closed container for 2 days and strain again.
- Store in a cool, dry place for up to one year.

Oils

- Cold-pressed extra virgin olive oil
- Virgin coconut oil
- Sunflower oil
- Almond oil
- Rice bran oil
- Jojoba oil
- Safflower oil

Application

- Roller ball
- Dropper bottle
- Small shampoo style bottle
- Made into salve by mixing with beeswax
- Made into cream



When to use an infused oil

Burns



Arthritis



Strains/Sprains



Bruises

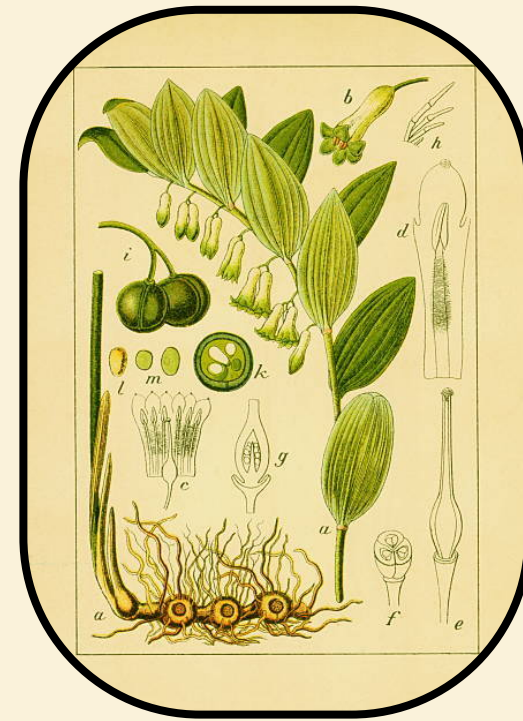


Plants for Infused Oils



Dandelion

- Muscle Pain
- Achy Joints
- Stress Relief
- Hiatal Hernia
- Scars



Solomon's Seal

- Joint Pain
- Tendon Pain
- Sciatica
- Cartilage Support



Chickweed

- Rashes
- Bug Bites
- Dry Skin
- Vitiligo
- Wounds



Goldenrod

- Strains/Sprains
- Aching Muscles
- Scrapes
- Chapped lips
- Calluses



St. John's Wort

- Sunburns
- Nerve Pain
- Bruises
- Abrasions
- Ulcerations

There are many more herbs that can be used to make an infused oil. Essential oils can be added for additional therapeutic benefits.

Poultices

- **Prepare by blending therapeutic plants (fresh or dried) into a green slurry or paste.**
- **Apply directly to the afflicted area and cover with a clean, dry cloth or bandaging material if a large area is being treated.**
- **Adding a binder such as clay makes the poultice easier to apply and helps it stay put. Clay has its own skin-healing benefits as well and is especially helpful for drying weepy skin conditions such as poison ivy.**
- **A primitive poultice can be used in a pinch while outdoors by chewing up a plant or rolling it in your hands and applying directly to a bite. This should only be done for yourself.**

Dry Herbs

Add boiled water to your dry herbs to re-hydrate and allow for it to become a thick paste.

Fresh Herbs

Using a blender or food processor along with water will make quick and easy work. Refrigerate for up to three days.

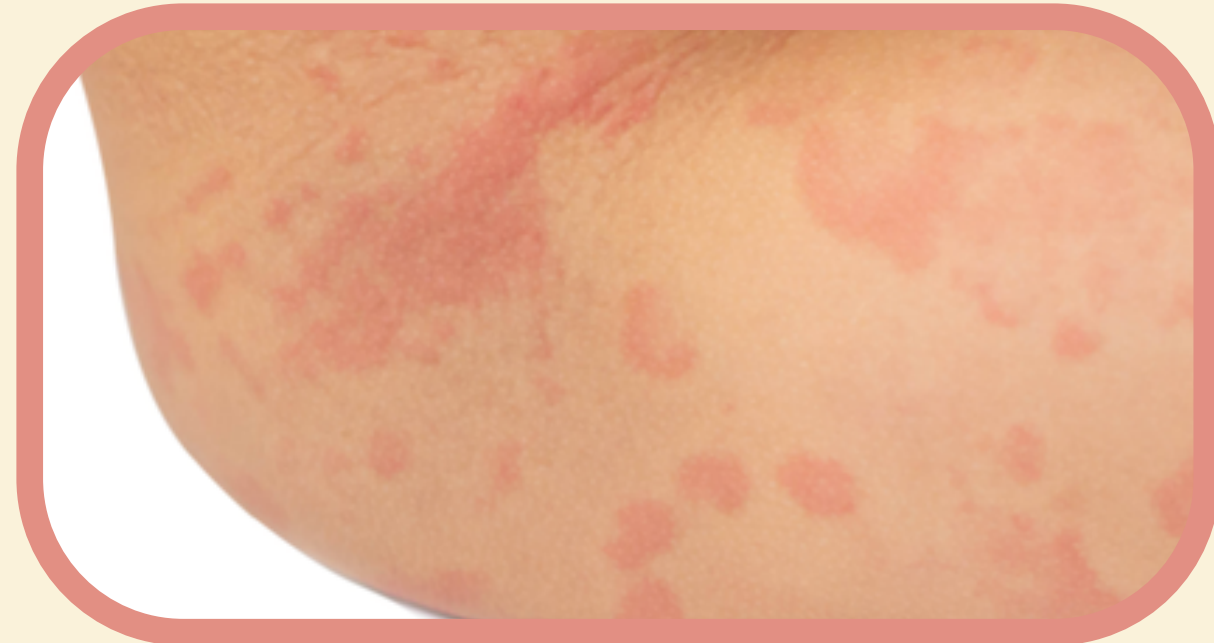


When to use a poultice

Skin Infections



Hives



Poison Ivy



Sunburn



Plants for Poultices



Burdock

- Bruises
- Boils
- Acne
- Arthritis
- Gout



Cleavers

- Sunburn
- Burns
- Blisters
- Nettle Stings
- Psoriasis



Mallow

- Swellings
- Insect bites and stings
- Boils and Abscesses



Mullein

- Splinters
- Boils
- Back Ache
- Mumps
- Broken Bones



Plantain

- Inflammation
- Cellulitis
- Splinters
- Minor Wounds
- Bug Bites

There are many more herbs that can be used for poultices. Using herbs in conjunction with clay or sometimes honey can further the soothing benefits of a poultice and allow for better adhesion.

Final Thoughts

- When wildharvesting plants ensure that you know how to properly identify a plant prior to harvesting. Seek a guide.
- Protect vulnerable plant populations
- Avoid over-harvesting of any wild stand--rule of thumb is no more than 5%
- Assess your environment and refrain from harvesting near a road, railroad tracks, anywhere pesticides are used, or other potentially toxic exposures.
- Use proper tools when wildharvesting to leave as little trace as possible.
- Not everyone is cut from the same cloth so keep in mind that when using plant medicine, constitutions play a role in how one will respond to herbal treatment. It's always best to work with a knowledgeable herbal practitioner for proper assessment.

Resources and References

Chestnut School of Herbal Medicine

1

www.chestnutherbs.com

Mountain Rose Herbs

2

www.mountainroseherbs.com

The Herbal Academy

3

www.theherbalacademy.com

The Eclectic School of Herbal Medicine

4

www.theeclecticschoolofherbalmedicine.com



THANK YOU