

Deborah J. Martin

Preface

Every witch I know, without exception, is interested in the use of herbs, not only from a magical perspective but also for medicinal purposes. Like all my friends, I spent hours scouring books and the Internet for the information I needed, whether it's what a particular herb is good for, or which herb to use in a particular application. There are sources that have medicinal uses or magical uses but none I could find that combined the two. This compilation is the accumulation of research for my own purposes. I hope you will find it as useful as I do.

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Introduction

*Herbs work on the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual
levels of existence.*

~ Matthew Wood

Like many herbalists, I have a difficult time separating the physical effect of herbs from the spiritual, or magical, effect. I am joined in this by herbalists going back centuries. Some of the oldest books on medicine were written by Babylonians as early as 2000 BCE, using both herbs and incantations to cure illness. What little we know of life before the arrival of Christianity suggests that herbs were used in rituals on a regular basis, not just in Britain but all over the world. Tribal medicine men and shamans from diverse cultures in Siberia, North and South America, India and Africa have used plants and incantations to heal the sick for over 4,000 years. It has been forgotten by many that plants are living beings who can add their energies to ours, not only on the physical level but on the spiritual level as well.

Scientifically-speaking, Man has been using herbs probably since the first time someone observed an animal eating a plant, put a piece of that same plant in their mouth, discovered it didn't taste *too* bad and filled the belly at the same time. Over the centuries, observation and experimentation have given us knowledge of plants' uses in many different applications: some for food, medicine, and clothing; others for fuel; and yet others for magic.

Or, if you believe in animism (everything in Nature has a consciousness), plants have told us of their wonderful properties. It's not difficult to imagine some prehistoric hunter walking along, feeling rather poorly when he hears, "if you eat a few of my leaves, I can help you feel better". He followed the instructions of the voice and lo and behold, felt better! Just in case he got the same sickness, he took one of the plants back to his cave and planted it there so he'd have it nearby

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Preparations

Interestingly enough, many types of herbal preparations are useful in both a medicinal *and* magical context. As you're doing your research, you'll find out which types of preparations work best in a given situation. Be sure to record these in your diary.

In this section I'm going to always use dried herbs unless otherwise noted. Be aware that for the most part, dried herbs are twice as strong as fresh so if you're using fresh, double the amount in your recipe. Also be sure you slightly crush your herbs as mentioned before.

The easiest method to use herbs is in **food**. You have to eat, so why not? You can make a very healthful meal using fruits and vegetables and adding some herbs. Or, you can make your meal a truly magical one by reciting your spell as you're cooking.

The most widely used preparation is a **tea** or tisane. (Actually, Tea is an herb. Its Latin binomial is *Camellia sinensis*.) Medicinally it's called an infusion or decoction. Magically, it's usually called a brew, potion or philter. To make a tea of a leaf or flower (an infusion) put one teaspoon herb in one cup just-boiled water. The water should be still steaming but not bubbling. Cover the cup to prevent the steam from escaping and allow it to steep for about ten minutes. Strain before use or use a tea bag or ball. To make a tea of a root or bark (a decoction), put one teaspoon herb in one and a half cups *cold* water. Bring the water to a boil, reduce the heat and allow it to simmer until your liquid is reduced to one cup. Again, strain before use.

I'm sure you know you can drink the tea (but be sure the herb is safe to ingest, first). A tea is used to make a **fomentation**. Prepare a strong infusion or decoction (double the amount of herb you use) and then soak a cloth in it. Bind the cloth around the area of the body you want to affect and cover with another cloth. This is very useful not only medicinally but in magical health workings targeted to a specific part of the body. You can also use a tea in skin preparations; as a wash, whether for yourself, your house or your magical items; or swish it into

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Mentha x piperita

Peppermint

Family Lamiaceae

Low Therapeutic Margin

Medicinal Uses

Appetite Loss

Colds

Colic

Dyspepsia

Fever

Flatulence

Flu

Headache, Tension

Insomnia

Measles

Morning sickness

Nausea

Teething, babies

Toothache

Magical Intentions

Anger Management

Healing, To Promote

Love, To Attract

Psychic Powers, To Strengthen

Purification

Sleep

Parts Used

Aerial

Essential Oil

Element

Fire

Planet

Mercury

Do Not Use

Pregnancy

Lactation

Children

Frail

Male

Female

Herbs: Medicinal, Magical, Marvelous!

Cautions

Excessive doses of oil can cause vomiting & drowsiness. Orally, oil can cause heartburn, nausea & vomiting, and allergic reactions, including flushing & headaches.

Topically, oil can cause skin irritation & contact dermatitis. Always use in a 1% solution.

Contraindicated with occlusion of bile ducts, gallbladder inflammation & severe liver damage.

Other preliminary research suggests that peppermint may lower testosterone levels & decrease spermatogenesis in male animals. It is not known whether this occurs in humans, although anecdotal reports suggest reduced libido in men consuming 4 cups + per day of peppermint tea.

There are some drug interactions - be sure to check.