

# CULTIVATING AND UTILIZING HERBS IN INTERIOR ALASKA

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Key considerations:

Climate: temperature, length of season, seed germination type

Leaves and flowers tend to be more productive and feasible than roots and seeds.

Substituting herbs for those that are difficult to cultivate here—ie grow Spilanthes instead of Echinacea

Look to the herbs that grow in the wild here, these species more likely to thrive in your garden!

How do you want to use the herbs?

Storage capabilities, limited number of herbs that overwinter here.

## COMMON HERBAL PREPARATIONS

Bolus: powdered herbs mixed with cocoa butter, shaped to  $\frac{3}{4}$  roll about 1" long and inserted into rectum for hemorrhoids or vagina for infections, tumors or irritations

Capsules or Pills: powdered herbs, typically used for strong herbs taken in small quantities.

Candies: rice syrup makes it sweet and smooth, used for children, sore throats.

Compress or Fomentations: use tea, oil or tincture, soak a thick cloth in hot tea, oil or tincture and apply as hot as is comfortable for externally treating swelling, pain, colds/flu, and stimulating circulation of blood or lymph over area applied. Cover wet cloth with towel a layer of plastic and hot water bottle or heating pad. Leave on 20 minutes to 2 hours.

Herbs: yarrow, marjoram

Enemas: teas used to irrigate the colon to eliminate fecal waste, nervous disorders, decreasing bodily pain, nourishing and toning to colon.

Herbs: catnip, oregano, marjoram, thyme, garlic, basil, red pepper, yarrow

Foot Bath: wrap person in blankets, keep both feet immersed in hot soak, this will relieve fever and chills and producing a sweat

Herbs: cayenne, garlic, yarrow

Gargle or Mouthwash: tea or a diluted tincture used to soothe and disinfect sore throats caused by colds, tonsillitis, laryngitis, nasal drip, or to treat bleeding or spongy, inflamed gums, loose teeth, infections or sores in mouth

Herbs: thyme, rosemary, spilanthes, poplar buds, sage

Liniment: warming and stimulating herbs extracted in vinegar or alcohol and rubbed into skin for inflammation, sprains, bruises, itchy skin, poison oak, insect bites, frostbite

Herbs: cayenne, marjoram

Poultice: herb or vegetable heated and moistened with water or another herbal extract and placed on an area of the body to relieve pain and heal wounds, inflammation, congestion, or abscesses.

Herbs: chickweed, cabbage, arnica

Plasters: herb or vegetable grated or mashed into a paste and applied directly to the affected area of the body to relieve inflammation, stings or heal wound and infection.

Herbs: pitch, plantain leaf, chickweed, yarrow

Salves: herbs extracted in oil then blended with beeswax so that the herbs stay on the skin longer, commonly used for itchiness, dry skin, cuts, sores, eczema

Herbs: calendula, poplar buds, lemon balm

Smoke Inhalation: can treat asthma, coughs, sore throats, insomnia, restlessness, bronchial congestion, short term use only as smoke is an irritant to lungs.

Herbs: coltsfoot for coughs, rosemary for calming

Steam Inhalation: use herbs high in volatile oils and DO NOT BOIL. Rosemary or yarrow for colds, coughs, mucus. Thyme or chamomile for wheezing, tightness in chest.

Syrup: herb extract preserved with glycerine and honey that is soothing for children and sore throats, commonly used for coughs, sore throats, loosen phlegm, facilitate expectoration

## VEGETABLES ARE MEDICINE TOO!

Nutritious, help eliminate toxins and clear waste, benefit the liver

Externally can be used as compresses, fomentations, plasters for their anti-inflammatory properties.

### GARLIC

Properties: Warming, Anti-bacterial for Colds/Flus, Diarrhea, Protective to heart, liver, pancreas

Garlic may enhance action of other cholesterol lowering agents

Fresh garlic at dose of 5 grams per kg body weight may prevent hepatotoxicity from acetaminophen

Preparation:

Internally: raw or cooked in food, tea, oil, tincture, syrup

Externally: oil, salve

Caution: raw garlic can burn, buffer with oil or salve. People taking insulin may need to monitor insulin level if taking garlic long term.

Contraindications: acute or chronic stomach inflammation, excess in early pregnancy, excess may decrease iodine uptake by thyroid, heavy use before surgery may increase clotting time and decrease platelet aggregation

### Garlic Syrup

Peel and mince 1/2 lb garlic and put in a wide mouth quart mason jar. Almost fill the jar with equal parts apple cider vinegar and pure water. Cover and let stand in a warm place 4 days. Shake the jar 3x/day. Add 1 cup vegetable glycerine and let stand another day. Strain with pressure through muslin or linen cloth. Add 1 cup honey. Stir til thoroughly mixed. Store in a cool place.

Dose: 1 Tbsp 3x day before meals.

Indications: coughs, colds, sore throats, bronchial congestion, normalize high or low blood pressure.

ONION: Used for lung congestion

Preparation:

Internally eat raw or cooked

Externally apply onion plaster

### Homemade Cough Syrup

2 large onions

juice from half a lemon

1 TBSP raw honey

Slice onions and place in a pan. Drizzle lemon juice and honey over onions. Turn oven to lowest heat and place pan inside; cook 45 minute to 1 hour. Pour off juice and discard onions. Store "syrup" (juice) in a glass bottle and label. Makes about 1 cup cough syrup.

Indications: a deep cough that originates in the lungs (not an irritated throat). Coughs lasting for more than a week and accompanied by fever, chills, brightly colored discharge need medical attention.

### ONION PLASTER

Chop 3-4 onions. Place into the top of a steamer. Steam-cook the onions until soft. Allow to cool slightly. Ladle the pieces of cooked onion from the steamer and place in the middle of a piece of cheesecloth, approximately 10-inch-by-10-inch, or smaller, depending on the size of the individual you are treating. Fold the cheesecloth or strip of cheesecloth or muslin over and around the onions, pressing out excess liquid as you fold. Tie off or fasten the ends of the cheesecloth with a knot or safety pins to prevent onions from falling out. Place the onion plaster or poultice on the chest of the individual suffering from chest congestion. The plaster or compress should be warm, but not warm enough to burn the skin or cause discomfort.

### HOT PEPPERS

Cultivation: good drainage and hot growing conditions

Actions: Stimulating, Very heating

20 grams powdered chili may decrease mucosal damage of aspirin if taken ½ hour prior to aspirin.

Used as a tonic, to stimulate sweating, for normalizing blood pressure.

Cautions: can aggravate acute asthma

Contraindications: can increase gastric acid production, mucosal excess and potentially hemorrhage in people with stomach ulcers or acid reflux. Do not use while using antacids

BRASSICAS/CRUCIFERAE: Cabbage, Broccoli, Mustard, Asian Greens, Kale, Turnip, Rutabaga, Horseradish...

Properties: Generally high in Calcium, Anti-inflammatory, Cabbage compress specific for bursitis

Preparation:

Internally: raw, steamed, sauteed, soups, fermented

Externally raw or steamed as plasters or compress

Cautions: raw contains thiaminase-destroys thiamine (B1--loss of muscle control/convulsions), cooking destroys enzyme.

Contraindications: persons taking Warfarin (coumadin)

HORSERADISH, *Cochlearia amoracea*

Cultivation: full sun with well drained soil

Actions: Warming, Clears sinus congestion

Contraindications: Persons with acid reflux, excessive stomach acid, stomach ulcers, intestinal ulcers or kidney inflammation. Excess amounts in pregnancy. May decrease the effectiveness of thyroid medications. Do not take with antacids

## HERBS AND THEIR PROPERTIES

BASIL, *Ocimum spp*

Cultivation: Full sun, hot temps, rich soil, lots of water.

Properties: Beneficial to the digestion. Helps eliminate colds/flu. Relieves cramps, nausea, vomiting, constipation, nervous conditions

Preparation: raw, spice, tea

MINT FAMILY, LAMIACAE

Peppermint, Spearmint, Basil, Catnip, Rosemary, Thyme, Lavender, Marjoram, Savory, Sage, Skullcap, Anise Hyssop, Motherwort, Lemon Balm

Cultivation: cool, moist growing conditions

Common mint family properties: anti-oxidant constituents, beneficial to digestion and especially the stomach, soothing.

PEPPERMINT, *Mentha piperata*: stomach discomfort, gas, cramps, nausea, safe in pregnancy for morning sickness. Also used for palpitations, heaviness associated with hiatus hernia

Actions: anesthetizes nerves in intestinal tract

SPEARMINT: *Mentha spicata*. Not as strong as Peppermint. Still useful for most stomach and digestive issues.

Contraindications: emmenagogue Lamiaceae herbs in pregnancy (catnip, rosemary, sage, marjoram, motherwort)

DANDELION, *Taraxacum officinale*

Properties: High in assimilable calcium and other minerals. Leaf high in vitamin A. liver and gall bladder tonic and cleanser, Skin eruptions, Diuretic. used for Hepatitis and for breast inflammation

Preparation of Root: Saute root like carrot, or use as tea, tincture,

Preparation of leaf: Eat raw, cooked

Externally as poultice, plaster

### ROASTED DANDELION ROOTS

Cut roots in pieces with pruners. Use a cookie sheet to roast the roots. Spread them on the sheet and roast them as much as you can to save oven time. Roast them over 250 degree with the oven door a little open as they are

being roasted so that the moisture can get out of the oven. It takes two hours to roast them dry. The roots will shrink 1/4 from its original size. Stir them from time to time to ensure even roasting on all sides. Be careful, as they reach your desired color; take them out of the oven. Once they are dry, you can store them in glass jars.

#### Warm Winter Spice Tea:

- One cup roasted Dandelion root
- Half cup dry orange peel.
- Half cup of Cinnamon bark
- Dry Ginger root – three-fourth cup
- Add one tablespoon of the mixture of above per cup of water.
- Simmer it for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Add some honey to sweeten if desired

#### SAUTEED DANDELIONS

Dandelion leaves  
2 cloves of garlic  
Salt and pepper to taste  
5 tbsp. bread crumbs  
Parmesan cheese to taste

Clean and wash dandelions. Cook in boiling water. Cover; cook about 5-7 minutes. Drain and squeeze out water until almost dry. Saute dandelions with garlic and olive oil for about 5 minutes. Add salt, pepper, bread crumbs, and cheese. Saute for about 10 minutes, stirring constantly so that they don't burn.

#### Pickled Dandelion Flower Buds

Dandelion flower buds – tightly closed...not ones that have simply closed up for the night, but ones that have not yet opened.

Garlic , Onion, Ginger– chopped  
(amounts depending on the size of jar):  
Tamari or Soy Sauce  
Apple Cider Vinegar

Put about a half inch of garlic, onions and ginger on the bottom of the jar. Fill with dandelion buds about a third of the way up. Add another half inch of garlic, onions and ginger. Add another third of dandelion buds. More garlic, onions, ginger, then fill jar with dandelion buds.

Pour 1 part tamari or soy sauce to 3 parts apple cider vinegar into the jar. Cover with a plastic lid or put a bit of waxed paper between dandelions and metal lid so the vinegar will not rust your lid shut!

Let it sit for 3 weeks on your counter. No need to ever refrigerate your pickled buds. Use as a condiment like any pickle, mix into tuna, egg, green or potato salad, and enjoy straight from the jar!

#### SAINT JOHNSWORT, *Hypericum perforatum*

Actions: Uplifting. Antibacterial and stimulates granulation of capillary regeneration. Supports nerve revitalization. Strengthens urinary system. Used for muscle and nerve pain, myalgia and neuralgia

Indications for internal use: depression, numbing frustration, stuck in rut, adrift.

Used topically for abrasions, ulcerations, burns

Contraindications: Photosensitivity. Use of pharmaceutical drugs. Internally use during pregnancy. Stop if skin eruptions or hives erupt. Of little or no value to bipolar, severe depression, psychosis and suicide pathologies. Surgery due to interaction with anesthetic drugs.

ARNICA, Arnica spp

Cultivation: affinity for moist, acidic soils, alpine habitats

Actions: Stimulates and dilates blood vessels increasing blood flow, aids in removing congestion that results from injury (slower acting than mentholytic herbs). Arnica is most useful for injuries aggravated by movement and improved by rest.

Preparations: Internally: tincture used sparingly in 1-3 drops doses after trauma.

Externally as oil, salve, liniment. Externally for bruises, hyperextensions, arthritis, bursitis, myalgia. Used for osteoarthritis to lessen congestion of the joints

Contraindications: Discontinue use if rash develops, if joints overheat or skin reddens. Do not use topically at the same time as using aromatic balms, DMSO, or if skin abraded. Use internally only in exceedingly small doses. Do not use internally during pregnancy, chronic intestinal inflammation, heart disease, liver disease, or kidney disease

CHICKWEED, Stellaria spp

Properties: High in vitamins A and C, nourishing tonic. Decreases fevers and inflammation. Clears the lungs in bronchial disorders. Internally for upper gastro-intestinal tract inflammation.

Fresh juice for painful urination.

Topically to soothe skin irritations, cuts, sores, abrasions, psoriasis.

Preparation: Eaten FRESH: salad, juice, pesto

Fresh herb used externally for oils, poultices, salves

#### CHICKWEED OIL

Macerate finely chopped fresh chickweed in oil. Keep in warm place for 3 days. Strain. Repeat with another batch of fresh chickweed. Let oil sit 48 hours, pour off clear oil and compost goop at bottom.

BURDOCK, Arctium lappa

Uses: liver tonic, cleansing, skin eruptions, urinary tract inflammation. arthritis.

Preparation: saute, soups, tea, tincture

Contraindications: Excessive amounts during pregnancy

FIREWEED, Epilobium augustifolium

Over 50 species worldwide. Cultivation: moist to poorly drained soil

Properties: Shoots high in Vitamin A and C. Anti-inflammatory to gastro-intestinal tract. Increases colon tone. Used for chronic, pasty diarrhea (green or yellow) without fever or heat. Prevent and treat prostate inflammation

Preparations: Internally as salad, cooked green or tea. Internally as douche, enema.

Externally as wash for infants

Actions: Anti-viral, Sedative, Mood elevating, Antidepressant

Indications for use: Tired, burned out, nervous, extended emotional stress. Antispasmodic for menstrual cramps, stomach, gas discomfort, diarrhea, headaches. Mild antiviral for flus, head colds. Induces sweating and decreases aches and pain. Moderately effective against herpes virus, especially cold sores. Moderates high blood pressure and excess thyroid conditions.

Internally taken as: tea, tincture

Externally: essential oil on cold sores

Contraindications: Pregnancy, Persons with low thyroid (blocks conversion thyroxin to T3 by liver cells, Glaucoma, even at low dose can increase ocular pressure, Prostatic hyperplasia

### YARROW, ACHILLEA SIBIRICA

Aerial part used to: Promote sweating, release colds/flu. Stop bleeding. Regulate menses, varicose veins. Tonify uterus and regulate menses and alleviate menstrual pain. Antimicrobial against Shigella. Strong anti-inflammatory to skin and mucosa assisting recovery from gastroenteritis, diarrhea, dysentery. Low level chronic cystitis, irritated urethra and prostate

Preparations:

Internal use: tea, tincture, bolus

External use: paste, poultice, fomentation or compress.

Contraindications: do not use long term during pregnancy

### SPILANTHES, Spilanthes acmella

Cultivation: sun and rich soil

Properties: Immune enhancing tonic and Echinacea substitute. Toothache. Anti-malarial

### VIOLA spp,

Parts used: Leaves, Flowers

Properties: High in Vitamins A and C. Lymph and skin cleansing. Used for cancer, leukemia, aplastic anemia, mastitis, mumps.

Preparations:

Internal: raw, soup, tea, tincture, syrup, poultice,

External: oil, salve

### Violet Syrup

Ingredients:

1 ¼ oz dried Blue Violet leaf (Viola odorata)

1 ¼ quarts water

3 quarts honey

Place the Blue Violet Leaf in a stainless steel or glass pan and cover with 1 ¼ quarts of water. Let it sit overnight.

In the morning place the pan on the stove and simmer for 15 minutes, then strain. Measure strained liquid. Take that measurement and add 3 times the amount of honey to the liquid. Heat gently until the liquid and honey incorporate, then pour into sterilized jars and cap. Label and store in a cool place. Shelf life: approximately 1 year. Once a jar is opened for use, refrigerate it.

## OTHER RECIPES

### Nettle Pesto

4 cups fresh nettle tops - roughly chopped  
2/3 cup extra virgin olive oil  
1 cup nuts of your choice. (I used 1/2 almonds, 1/2 pecans in my last batch...yum!)  
2-6 cloves garlic according to taste  
1/4 cup romano or parmesan cheese (optional)

Put all ingredients in a food processor and process on high until creamy, making sure all the nettles are incorporated. That's it! What an incredible taste! Not only is it good on the traditional pasta, but the pesto makes a wonderful spread on toast or crackers. Also good as a dip. It freezes well.

### Immune Boosting Roots Herb Potage , 8-10 servings

1-2 fresh burdock roots, chopped  
2-3 fresh dandelion roots, chopped  
3 handfuls dry nettles, crushed  
2 1/2 qts. nonchlorinated water  
8-9 fresh or dried shiitake mushrooms, chopped  
1 medium onion, chopped  
5-6 grams kelp, crushed  
1 cup whole grain basmati or brown rice  
1/4 cup tamari  
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar  
2 Tbsp. miso  
6-8 cloves garlic, chopped

Cook burdock and dandelion roots with water. Cook 15-20 minutes over medium heat or until tender. You can pour off this water to make the soup less bitter, adding 2 1/2 cups fresh water. However, you will be pouring out the nutrients as well, so you might want to retain this nutrient-rich water and enjoy the bitter taste. Add remaining ingredients with the exception of miso and garlic. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 1 1/2 hours. Add miso and garlic right before serving. This soup has an exceptional taste that improves with age and is strengthening to the immune system and all our systems and cells. For variety, try adding beans, cabbage, beets and other root vegetables.

## RESOURCES

Plants That We Eat by Anore Jones

The Medicinal Herb Grower by Richo Cech

Making Plant Medicine by Richo Cech

Botany In A Day by Thomas J Elpel

Horizon Herbs seeds

Mountain Rose Herbs (supplies)

Cedar Mountain Herb School Recipes