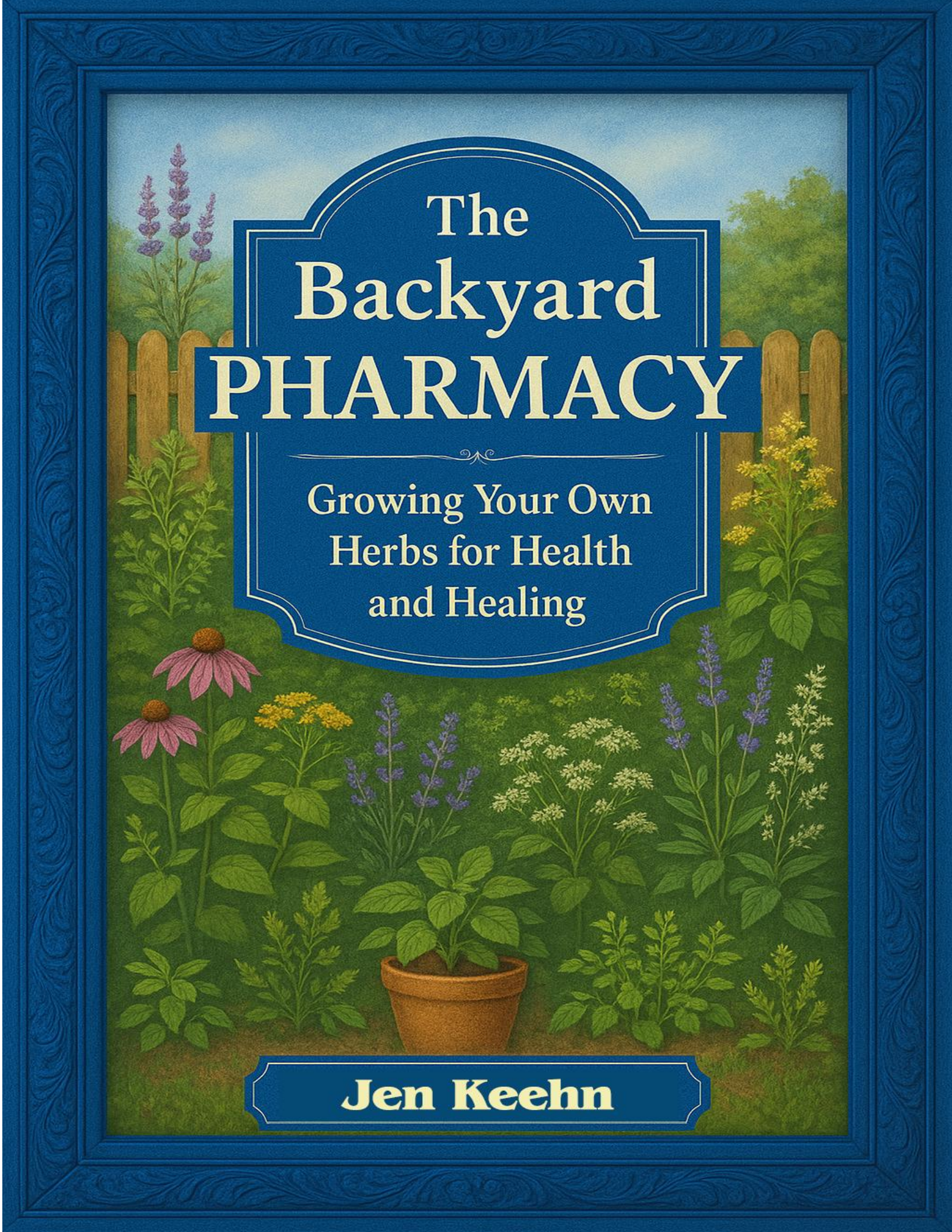


The background of the book cover is a detailed illustration of a garden. In the foreground, there are several potted and ground-growing plants, including purple salvia, yellow calendula, pink echinacea, and various green leafy herbs. A wooden picket fence is visible in the mid-ground, and a blue sky with light clouds is in the background. The entire scene is framed by a decorative blue border with a repeating floral pattern.

The Backyard PHARMACY

Growing Your Own
Herbs for Health
and Healing

Jen Keehn

The Backyard Pharmacy:

**Growing Your Own Herbs for Health and
Healing**

Jen Keehn

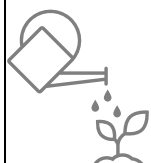
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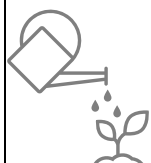


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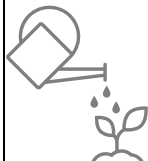
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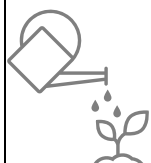
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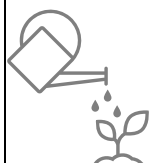
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Chapter 1: Getting Started on Your Herbal Garden



The proper foundation is essential when starting to grow your medicinal herb garden. This chapter will guide you through finding the ideal location for your herbs, choosing the best herbs for your needs, and understanding the basics of companion planting.

Choosing the Ideal Location

The first step in starting your herb garden is finding the perfect spot to plant your herbs. Different herbs and plants have different

sun and shade requirements. Choosing the correct location is crucial, as it directly impacts plant health and yield. Plants and herbs for your medicinal garden can be cultivated indoors and outdoors, depending on space, climate, and personal preference.

Sunlight and Shade Considerations

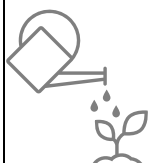
Medicinal herbs can be cultivated both indoors and outdoors. Consider outdoor areas with ample sunlight if you have the space, while also growing a few plants inside. Many medicinal herbs and plants will flourish in a sunny kitchen or living room window. That said, you can still successfully grow indoors if you don't have space outside.

Outdoor Gardening

If you have a garden, yard, or balcony, growing herbs outdoors lets them benefit from natural conditions. Outdoor gardening is also much simpler and less restrictive than gardening indoors. Raised beds and garden plots are ideal, but you can easily grow herbs and plants in containers on a patio, deck, or balcony. Just make sure they receive adequate sunlight and can properly drain.

Indoor Gardening

Indoor gardening is perfect for those with limited (or zero) outdoor space or individuals living in harsh climates. Growing indoors is also extremely accessible and lets you garden year-round. Plant herbs and plants in pots with drainage holes and place them on trays or plates to catch excess water. Consider using grow lights to supplement natural sunlight if necessary.



Deciding What to Grow

A well-chosen selection of medicinal herbs and plants can provide several natural remedies for various health conditions. When deciding what to grow, consider your unique needs and desires. Questions to ask yourself might include:

- What health issues do I want to address?
- How will I use these herbs?
- What are growing conditions like where I live?

Healing with plant medicine spans the history of mankind. The oldest record of the use of medicinal plants dates back 5,000 years to a Sumerian clay tab that contained 12 different preparations that referred to over 250 herbs and plants. In Chinese Medicine, medicinal plants can be traced back to 2500 BC in the Chinese book on roots and grasses “Pen T’Sao” written by Emperor Shen Nung, which contains 365 medicinal plants, many of which are still used today. The Ebers Papyrus written in 1500 BC contains 800 prescriptions using 700 various plant species.

Condition

Some herbs and plants are known for their anti-inflammatory effects and are ideal for supporting sore muscles and joints. Others contain calming effects, which can help with anxiety and overwhelm. Many medicinal plants have sedative-like properties, perfect for individuals with sleep issues like insomnia or difficulty falling or staying asleep. When you identify your unique needs, you can customize your herbal garden that offers the best support.

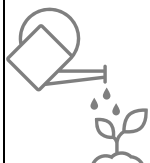
Product Type

When determining what plants and herbs to grow, consider how you’ll use them. Holistic herbal remedies include teas, tinctures, salves, and oil blends. Select plants and herbs best suited for the preparations you want to create. With careful pre-planning it’s possible to grow a handful of herbs and plants that can be seamlessly incorporated into different types of products.

Climate

It's also essential to consider the climate where you live. Some medicinal herbs have specific requirements for sunlight, meaning those that thrive in full sun may not be suited for areas that receive little sunlight. On the contrary, plants that prefer shade won’t do well in areas that receive significant sunlight.

Relative humidity also affects plants and herbs, influencing water balance, photosynthesis, and more. High humidity can slow the rate at which water evaporates from a plant’s leaves, making it difficult for plants to draw nutrients from the soil. It also slows down their capability to cool themselves. Giving plants too much water in highly humid climates can promote the growth of bacteria and mold, causing them to rot over time and die. Low humidity, on the other hand, can affect photosynthesis by reducing the amount of carbon dioxide plants can absorb. It can also lead to water loss, affecting nutrient uptake and reducing plant quality.



Herbs from tropical climates, such as lemongrass and basil, will do well in areas with high humidity but can be difficult to grow in dry climates. Lavender and sage, however, are medicinal herbs that thrive in dry, arid climates. Lavender is known to be challenging to grow in climates with high relative humidity and wet summers, but there are some types of lavender types more tolerant to humid areas, particularly French and French hybrid varieties.

Opting for medicinal plants and herbs best suited for your climate will significantly increase your chances of growing a successful garden. If you live in a hot, dry area, choose herbs native to your location or those from areas with a similar climate. Keep the same thing in mind if you live in a cooler climate.

Growing Zone

When selecting herbs and plants for your backyard pharmacy, determining your growing zone is an essential part of the process. The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard for gardeners to know which plants are most likely to thrive at a given location. It's based on the average annual extreme winter temperature. Divided into 13 zones, each containing two zones, the Hardiness Zone Map is an excellent tool to help you determine what plants and herbs to choose for your medicinal garden.

Choosing medicinal plants that naturally thrive where you live increases the chances of success in growing a healthy garden. For example, if you live in a dry area with extreme heat, plants and herbs that prefer cool, humid weather won't do as well as those that do. When you select herbs that match these conditions, you ensure they survive and stay healthy. By referring to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, you can easily identify the medicinal plants and herbs best suited to your local climate.

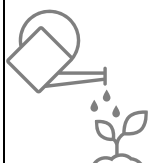
Companion Planting

Companion planting is a technique of planting certain plants together known to benefit one another. Companion planting is said to improve plant health, enhance growth, improve soil quality, and naturally repel garden pests.

Companion Planting Benefits

Natural Pest Control: Some herbs and plants naturally repel garden pests that may harm neighboring plants. Planting basil near tomatoes, for example, can help deter aphids, tiny insects that feed on plant sap, weakening the plant and spreading disease. Terpenes, the aromatic chemicals in plants and herbs responsible for their flavor and aroma, play a large role in the science of companion planting. Basil's strong scent masks the smell of tomatoes, making it more difficult for aphids to find them. Basil can also improve tomato flavor, creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

Companion planting also attracts beneficial insects. Some flowering herbs and plants attract pollinators like bees and butterflies, which are essential for the reproduction of many plants. Not only do these pollinators increase the yield of fruiting or flowering plants, but they also contribute to the



overall health of your garden. For example, bee-friendly borage planted with strawberries, a known companion plant, can significantly increase strawberry quality and yield.

Maximize Garden Space: Despite the size of your garden, companion planting helps you make the most of your space. Placing companion plants together strategically helps maximize productivity, ensuring each plant has room to grow. Consider planting taller herbs alongside shorter ones, which allows taller herbs to provide shade and protection for herbs that grow best in partial shade. Planting taller herbs like rosemary with shorter herbs like thyme creates a natural canopy that shields lower-growing herbs from excessive sun and wind.

Improve Soil Health: Growing certain plants together can also significantly improve soil health. Certain herbs and plants have properties that enhance soil fertility and structure, while others can help prevent soil erosion. Plants with extensive root systems can help hold the soil together and protect neighboring plants by stabilizing the soil, which is important in areas with heavy rainfall or prone to flooding.

Herbs can also improve soil structure, as when plants grow and their roots penetrate the soil, channels are created that enhance soil aeration and water infiltration. This leads to better root development and improves the soil's ability to retain moisture. A more balanced and fertile soil ecosystem can be achieved by establishing a diverse root system over time.

Some companion plants also release beneficial compounds into the soil that promote the growth of beneficial microorganisms and control harmful ones. For example, some herbs produce natural chemicals that inhibit the growth of soil-borne pathogens, which helps reduce the risk of disease in neighboring plants.

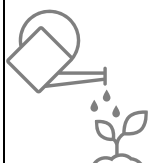
Practical Companion Planting Tricks

For successful companion planting in your medicinal herb garden, consider implementing the following tips:

Research Different Companion Plants: Before starting your garden, research various companion plants for some of the herbs you're interested in growing. Understanding the relationship between various companion plants will help you make informed choices about where to place different plants.

Plan Your Garden Layout: When working with companion plants, plan a garden layout that maximizes space and considers plant height and growth patterns. Plant compatible plants with one another to create a supportive environment that optimizes sun exposure and shade.

Plant Fast and Slow-Growing Herbs Together: Place fast-growing herbs with slower-growing ones to create more efficient use of space. As fast-growing herbs are harvested, slower-growing herbs have more room to mature.



Chapter 2: Essential Techniques for Growing Your Herbal Garden

The Basics of Growing a Garden

To successfully grow a garden, it's imperative to understand a few gardening basics. While gardening is simple, essential cultivation techniques must be implemented to grow healthy herbs and plants. In this chapter, you'll learn everything necessary to help your garden thrive, including choosing seeds and starter plants, the importance of high-quality soil, watering tips, natural pest control options, and more.

Choosing High-Quality Seeds and Starts

The foundation of any garden is built by planting a seed. Using high-quality seeds and starter plants will pay off in the long run, as strong, healthy plants are more resilient to pests and disease and produce better yields.

When planning your herbal garden, look for high-quality seeds. They have a higher germination rate and produce stronger, healthier plants. Insist on seeds from reputable sources to ensure you purchase the highest-quality seeds.

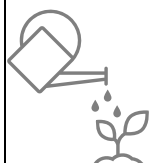


When selecting starter plants and herbs, choose those that appear healthy and strong. This increases the chances of growing a successful garden from the beginning. Avoid starts with yellowing leaves or that look wilted.

Planting at the Right Time

Planting herbs at the right time is essential. Different plants and herbs require specific planting times based on their growth cycle and climate. Knowing the correct time to plant the herbs you've chosen for your medicinal garden ensures they get the best possible start and are grown in optimal conditions.

- **Spring:** Many herbs, including most annuals and perennials, prefer to be planted in springtime when days become longer and soil starts to warm up, which supports rapid and healthy growth.
- **Summer:** Herbs and plants that thrive in heat can be planted in the hotter summer months. While they may require watering more frequently, they thrive in summer's peak growing conditions.
- **Fall:** Cooler fall temperatures are ideal for some herbs and plants. Planting these varieties in late summer or early fall is recommended so they have time to mature before the first frost.
- **Winter:** In mild climates, some herbs can be planted in winter. They can tolerate cooler temperatures and display vigorous growth in spring when the weather warms up.



The Importance of Soil Quality

The success of any garden depends on soil quality. High-quality soil produces high-quality herbs and plants, offering the nutrients, moisture, and structure plants need to thrive. Investing in high-quality soil is one of the best things you can do when growing your medicinal herb garden. It's the foundation that supports the life cycle of your plants, ensuring they're healthy and productive. Several elements contribute to soil quality, including texture, minerals, nutrients, pH levels, and the capacity to hold water.



Soil Texture

Soil texture is important because it contributes to soil fertility, how much water the soil holds, and how much water runs through it. Soil texture is generally categorized into the following types of textures:

- **Sand:** Sandy soil is light and dry. It's low in nutrients and drains rapidly. Because it warms quickly in the spring, it's beneficial for early planting but can result in loss of nutrients with increased watering or heavy rainfall.
- **Clay:** Clay soil is hard and compact. While high in nutrients, it can be difficult to successfully grow herbs and plants in clay soil because it becomes compacted, negatively affecting drainage, airflow, and root movement.
- **Silt:** Silt soil is light and airy with a soft, silky consistency. It's adept at retaining moisture and typically easy to grow in.
- **Loam:** Loam soil is a sand, clay, and silt mixture. It drains well, is high in nutrients, and is easy to grow with a texture excellent for airflow that allows roots to spread out and plants to thrive. A ratio of approximately 40% sand, 40% silt, and 20% clay is considered the best soil type for gardening.

Nutrients and Minerals

High-quality soil contains a balanced mix of nutrients and minerals that support plant growth. Nutrient-rich soil containing the following is imperative for disease resistance and healthy plant growth:

- Primary macronutrients (nitrogen [N], phosphorus [P], potassium [K])
- Secondary macronutrients (calcium [Ca], sulfur [S], magnesium [Mg])
- Micronutrients (boron [B], manganese [Mn], iron [Fe], zinc [Zn], copper [Cu], silicon [Si])

Moisture Retention

Good gardening soil contains the right balance of moisture retention and drainage. The capacity of soil to hold water must hold enough water to ensure plants stay hydrated but must have the capacity to drain any excess water that can oversaturate roots and lead to root rot.



pH Level

Soil pH influences several chemical and biochemical reactions within the soil. If soil pH is too high or too low, it can negatively affect the uptake of nutrients, decrease plant growth, and even cause plant death. A pH of 6.0-7.2 is ideal for most gardens. The easiest and most reliable way to test soil pH is with soil strips which can easily be purchased online and in most gardening centers.

Purchasing High-Quality Soil vs Making Your Own

You can either purchase high-quality soil or make your own. While purchasing soil is more straightforward, making your own soil is an easy and cost-effective option. Despite which route you take, ensure the soil you decide on is of the highest quality as it's imperative for the success of your garden.

Purchasing Soil

Purchasing high-quality soil from a garden center is effortless and ensures you buy a well-balanced mix that supports your herbs and plants. Ideally, you'll want to find soil labeled specifically for herbs or vegetables, as they're formulated with the right texture and nutrients plants need.

Making Your Own Soil

Making your own soil is easy and allows you to fine-tune your mix for your needs. It's a straightforward process that involves starting with a base of premium garden soil and adding compost, peat moss, and perlite to improve nutrient content, moisture retention, and water drainage. More cost-effective in the long run compared to purchasing soil, homemade soil mixes can also be customized to support different herbs and plants.

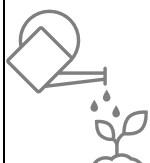
Watering and Feeding

Water and food are essential when growing a healthy garden. Different plants and herbs have different needs when watering and giving plants nutrients, but some general guidelines can help get you started. This helps ensure your plants receive exactly what they need when they need it.

Best Watering Practices

Herbs and plants need the proper amount of water at the right time for healthy growth. Keep the following things in mind when watering, all of which will help contribute to successful and healthy plant growth:

- **Ensure Consistent Moisture:** Most herbs and plants prefer consistent moisture. A good rule of thumb is to water when the top inch of soil feels dry when you stick a finger in it. Don't let the soil completely dry out because it can stress plants and impede their growth.
- **Water Deeply:** Deeply watering your plants and herbs to the root zone encourages deep root growth. Shallow watering, on the other hand, may cause weak roots that are susceptible to drying out and other stresses.
- **Don't Overwater:** Overwatering plants and herbs can be as damaging as underwatering. Avoid watering plants too much, as excess water can lead to root rot and other diseases.



The time of day you water contributes to overall plant health and growth. Watering in the morning is typically ideal because it allows plants to absorb moisture before it gets too hot. Watering midday when it's hot can lead to plants not receiving enough moisture, and watering in the evening can create a damp environment that causes fungal growth.

Natural Pest Control

Introducing beneficial insects to your herb garden will help naturally control garden pests and reduce the need for chemical pesticides, offering a more sustainable gardening approach. They're especially beneficial for cultivating high-quality crops, providing both pollination and biological control. You can attract predatory insects by planting pollinating flowers and herbs that attract them. Companion planting can also help control garden pests naturally and can be especially beneficial when used with predatory insects.

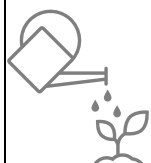
- **Ladybugs-** Ladybugs are one of the most beneficial insects you can introduce to your garden. Typically available to purchase at most garden centers, ladybugs prey on aphids, one of the most common garden pests. By introducing ladybugs to your garden, you'll help keep aphid populations under control.
- **Lacewings-** Lacewing larvae feed on various garden pests, including aphids, caterpillars, and mites. You can attract lacewings with plants and flowers such as dill, sunflower, cosmos, chamomile, and marigold.
- **Parasitic Wasps-** These tiny wasps lay their eggs inside or on pest insects, and when the eggs hatch, the larvae feed on the pests. They're particularly effective in reducing the number of caterpillars and other soft-bodied garden pests.
- **Ground Beetles-** Ground beetles are a wide range of predatory beetles that feed on numerous garden pests. Both adults and larvae are beneficial for eating several different insects, including caterpillars, slugs, silverfish, nematodes, thrips, and weevils.
- **Hoverfly Larvae-** Hoverflies are important pollinators, and their larvae are ravenous predators that feed on caterpillars, aphids, thrips, and beetles.



Homemade Garden Pest Solutions

Homemade pest control solutions are a natural, easy-to-make, and effective way to control garden pests without using potentially harmful chemicals. Following are some simple, homemade solutions for common garden pests.

- **Soap Spray** - A simple mixture of water and dish soap is an excellent repellent to help control soft-bodied insects like aphids and mites. Mix one tablespoon of mild dish soap and one quart of water in a spray bottle and spray directly onto the affected plants.
- **Garlic Spray-** Garlic contains natural insect-repelling properties that can deter pests such as aphids, spider mites, Japanese beetles, and more. Blend a few garlic cloves with water in a blender,



strain the mixture with a cheesecloth, pour the liquid into a spray bottle, and spray it on your plants to deter pests.

- **Neem Oil-** Neem oil is a natural insecticide that disrupts the life cycle of pests. Mix neem oil with water according to the instructions on the label and spray it directly on your plants to control a variety of pests, including aphids, spider mites, whiteflies, caterpillars, mealybugs, fungus gnats, and thrips.
- **Diatomaceous Earth-** Diatomaceous earth is a powdery substance made from fossilized algae. It's an effective repellent for crawling insects like ants and slugs that should be sprinkled around the base of your plants to create a barrier that pests can't cross.
- **Pepper Spray-** Creating a hot pepper spray by blending hot peppers with water, straining the mixture, and then adding it to a spray bottle to spray on plants will deter a variety of garden pests such as aphids, spider mites, whiteflies, ants, caterpillars, slugs, snails, and larger pests like deer and rabbits.



Chapter 3: Best Practices for Harvesting Herbs

Properly harvesting herbs is essential and should be done with the same care and attention taken during cultivation. Timing is crucial when harvesting medicinal herbs and plants. To attain the highest-quality herbs possible, the correct part of the plant needs to be harvested at the ideal stage of its life cycle, correctly dried, and properly stored in conditions that don't reduce their active ingredients and therapeutic efficacy.

Medicinal herbs and plants must be harvested at the correct time to ensure the best possible quality and highest concentration of beneficial therapeutic compounds. Harvest time depends on the plant itself and the part of the plant you'll use. The concentration of active ingredients in medicinal plants is heavily influenced by their growth stage and season.

The Best Time to Harvest Different Herbs and Plants

Harvest time is largely dependent on what part of the plant is harvested for use. Harvesting medicinal herb leaves, for example, is done at a different time than roots or flowers. Following are general guidelines that can help you identify when your herbs are ready to harvest based on what part you'll use.

Leaves

Leaves and aerial parts of plants (parts of the plants that are above ground) are typically harvested in spring or early summer, while they're young and thriving. Harvest leaves before plants flower, as the highest concentration of medicinal properties are present in the leaves during this period.

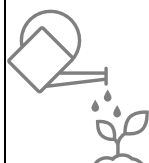
You'll want to harvest leaves in a manner that stimulates additional growth while taking enough of the plant to create various remedies. When harvesting leaves that branch from the main stem, remove approximately one-quarter to half just above the node. In medicinal herbs that don't branch out from the main stem, such as lemongrass, cut down to the ground, leaving approximately half of the plant alive.

Flowers

Flowers should be harvested when buds appear before they open, as this is when they contain the highest concentration of beneficial compounds but can also be harvested shortly after they bloom. Typically, flowers bloom in late spring through late summer and early fall depending on the zone. Remove buds or flowers by cutting or pinching them off at the base. Generally, the entire flower head should be left complete.

Roots

The best time to harvest roots is in the fall after the plant's leaves and flowers start to fade. Roots can also be harvested in spring before plants begin to flourish. You'll want to loosen the soil around the



base of the plant using a garden fork, as it makes it easier to remove the roots and causes less possible damage. Depending on the type of plant, roots can be carefully worked out of the soil by hand or with a digging tool such as a spade. After roots are removed from the ground, remove as much dirt as possible by hand or by gently knocking them against a rock or the ground. Next, rinse the roots with a garden hose or in a sink or bucket full of cold water to remove any remaining dirt. If dirt remains on the roots after this, gently scrub it off using a potato scrubber (or something similar) while the roots are submerged in cold water.

Plants and herbs should be harvested in the morning after the dew has evaporated and before the sun gets too hot. During this time, the plant's essential oils are at their peak and contain the highest medicinal value. The best time to harvest will be during different times of the year depending on the type of herb.

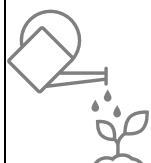
- **Spring:** Early spring is the best time for harvesting tender herbs like chives, cilantro, and parsley.
- **Summer:** Mid to late summer is the ideal time to harvest herbs such as basil, oregano, and lavender.
- **Fall:** The autumn months are perfect for harvesting roots like echinacea and ginseng. Hardy herbs like rosemary and thyme also benefit from a fall harvest.
- **Year-Round:** Some perineal herbs can often be harvested year-round, depending on your climate.

Avoiding Common Harvesting Mistakes

Making mistakes while harvesting is common, especially for the beginner gardener. Harvesting mistakes can reduce the quality of your medicinal herbs and plants, meaning extra care should be taken to avoid any potential errors.

Most herbs will benefit from being harvested early in the day when it's cooler before midday or afternoon heat, which will reduce the potency of the beneficial essential oils. Harvesting plants and herbs that are stressed or diseased should be avoided. Knowing the specific harvesting needs of each plant will ensure you avoid common mistakes and reap the most therapeutic benefits.

When harvesting, ensure that the garden tools you use are in good shape. Avoid using dull shears and other damaged tools as doing so can damage the plant and negatively impact future growth.



Essential Harvesting Tools

Having the right tools makes harvesting easier and more efficient. Essential tools include sharp scissors or pruning shears, a clean basket, and gloves. Sharp tools make clean cuts, preventing damage to the plant. A clean basket helps in collecting the herbs without contaminating them. Gloves protect your hands and the herbs.

Investing in the right tools will make harvesting easier and ensure efficiency. Essential tools to harvest medicinal herbs and plants include sharp scissors or pruning shears, a garden spade or fork, a clean basket or box, and surgical gloves.



- **Sharp Scissors or Shears:** Sharp scissors or shears ensure you make clean cuts when removing delicate leaves and flowers.
- **Garden Spade or Fork:** A quality spade or fork will help you dig into the ground without causing any damage to the plant's roots.
- **Basket or Box:** Collecting harvested leaves, flowers, and roots in a clean basket or box helps avoid contamination.
- **Surgical Gloves:** Surgical gloves will help protect the herbs, helping avoid contamination and the loss of beneficial essential oils while keeping your hands clean.

Best Practices to Preserve Potency

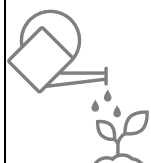
Preserving the potency of your herbs is essential, and certain practices should be followed to maintain the highest quality. Following are some of the best practices to ensure medicinal potency is preserved and you receive the most therapeutic benefit.

Ensure Proper Handling

Handling plants and herbs properly during harvest is critical. Always wear surgical gloves to maintain potency and avoid any possible contamination. Handle herbs gently to avoid the loss of essential oils and immediately place them in the basket or box. Avoid setting herbs in the dirt or on an unclean surface.

Process Herbs Immediately After Harvesting

Once herbs have been harvested, they should be processed quickly. If you plan to dry or dehydrate your herbs, spread them out in a single layer on a baking tray or something similar and place them in a cool, dark, dry spot away from direct sunlight. Before freezing herbs, wash them gently in cold water, pat them dry with a clean paper towel or cloth, then place them in an airtight container before drying or freezing.



Chapter 4: Drying, Freezing, and Storing Harvested Herbs

Preserving harvested medicinal herbs and plants is essential for therapeutic use throughout the year. In this chapter, you'll learn how to correctly preserve your harvest with essential drying and freezing techniques, as well as common long-term storage methods and tips for organizing an herbal medicine cabinet. All of this will ensure you reap the most benefit from your harvest and help keep herbs potent and fresh.

Drying Harvested Herbs

Drying herbs is a popular preservation method. It helps retain the beneficial properties of the herbs. There are two ways to dry herbs: air drying and dehydration. Both can be easily done and are equally effective. When medicinal herbs are dried properly, they can last for months, offering a constant supply of potent ingredients for various therapeutic applications.



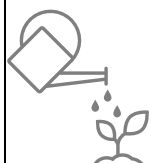
Air Drying Herbs

Air drying herbs is simple and effective but requires low humidity and good air circulation. Small bunches of herbs like mint and sage can be tied together, using rubber bands or thin twine to secure stems together. Hang them upside down in a dark, dry, well-ventilated space, tightening bundles as they dry to prevent them from falling. Avoid hanging bunches in humid areas or direct sunlight and ensure they're not exposed to dust. If you live in a particularly dusty area, you can cover bundles with a paper bag with holes punched in it. This will help keep dust off your herbs and ensure they have the airflow necessary to dry properly.

The best way to air-dry herbs with small leaves or flowers is by laying them on a screen. Drying racks can be purchased online and at most gardening centers, however, using a fine stainless-steel screen, mesh screen, or food-safe plastic screen will work well. You can also lay them on paper towels on the screens, but you may need to change them out to avoid excess moisture. Herbs should not overlap nor should leaves touch one another. Following these simple methods ensures herbs air-dry properly and retain their color, aroma, and potency for months.

Dehydrating Herbs

Dehydrating dries herbs more quickly than air-drying. Dehydration can be especially beneficial in areas with high humidity, as it reduces the possibility of herbs molding. To dehydrate herbs, use a



simple food dehydrator or air fryer with a dehydration setting option to a low temperature between 95-115°F (35-46°C).

Dry different herbs separately, as they may require different dehydration times anywhere from 1-18 hours. Rosemary, for example, takes around 6-8 hours to dry in a dehydrator. Dehydrating lemongrass leaves, on the other hand, only takes around two hours. Researching optimal dehydration times for various herbs will ensure they're dried properly and help retain their beneficial properties.

Freezing Harvested Herbs

Freezing freshly harvested herbs is an exceptional preservation method that helps maintain color, flavor, and medicinal properties. Freezing herbs is easy and can be done quickly. It's especially beneficial in climates with high humidity. Frozen herbs retain potency well, but dried herbs are typically more potent. Freeze-dried herbs, however, tend to maintain higher potency than air-dried or frozen herbs.

The Benefits of Freezing Herbs

Freezing herbs is an excellent preservation method for maintaining freshness because they're frozen directly after harvest when beneficial compounds are at peak potency. This helps preserve essential oils and medicinal compounds that might otherwise degrade if air-dried. Frozen herbs are particularly favorable for making therapeutic blends because of their high concentrations of potent medicinal compounds.

Preparing Herbs for Freezing

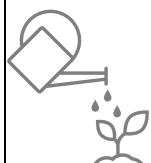
To prepare harvested herbs for freezing, begin by rinsing them carefully under cold water, removing any traces of dirt or pests. Lay them in a single layer on a paper towel, gently patting them dry with another paper towel. You can also use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture from some herbs but ensure to pat them completely dry with a paper towel before freezing. Fresh herbs must be dry before freezing them to ensure ice crystals don't form on them, which can reduce their therapeutic properties and damage their texture.



Layering Herbs: The most common and easiest method to freeze freshly rinsed and dried herbs is to layer them in a single layer in a freezer bag and lay them flat in the freezer, stacking bags on top of one another if needed.

Blanching Herbs: Blanching herbs before freezing can help preserve their color and medicinal properties. Following are step-by-step instructions:

Things You'll Need:



- Large pot
- Large mixing bowl
- A slotted spoon
- Ice
- Paper Towels

Instructions:

- Fill the large pot with fresh water and bring it to a rolling boil.
- Prepare an ice bath by placing ice cubes in the large bowl about halfway, then fill with cold water. This helps cool herbs quickly immediately after blanching.
- Submerge the herbs in the pot of boiling water for approximately 15-30 seconds.
- Using your slotted spoon, remove the herbs from the boiling water and transfer them to the prepared ice bath. This helps stop the cooking process immediately.
- Gently remove the herbs from the ice bath, lay them flat, and pat them dry with paper towels.
- Once all excess moisture is removed from the herbs, spread them on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and place them in the freezer. Once completely frozen, transfer them to airtight containers or freezer bags for storage.

Freezing Herbs in Oil

Freezing herbs in oil is a great method for preserving their beneficial properties. They're perfect for making therapeutic blends such as salves, balms, and other topical products. You can make frozen herb oil with single herbs or a combination of synergistic herbs you know you'll use in future recipes.

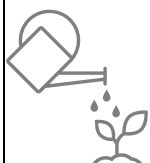
Things You'll Need:

- Ice cube trays
- Cutting board
- Small kitchen knife
- Oil of your choice (olive, coconut, sweet almond, etc.)
- Selected herbs (washed and dried)



Instructions:

- Finely chop the herbs with a small kitchen knife, which helps maximize surface area when submerged in the oil and ensures better infusion.
- Place chopped herbs evenly into the compartments of the ice cube tray, filling each about halfway.
- Slowly pour your oil over the herbs, filling each compartment in the tray until the herbs are covered completely.
- Put the filled ice cube trays in the freezer and let them freeze completely.
- Once frozen, pop the herb oil cubes out of the trays and place them in airtight containers or freezer bags. Label the containers with the type of herb and date so they can be easily identified.



Preparing a Frozen Herb Paste: Blending herbs with a small amount of water to make a paste is an efficient way to preserve and portion them. Frozen herb paste cubes are convenient for preparing therapeutic blends such as tinctures, salves, and balms.

Things You'll Need:

- Blender or food processor
- Ice cube trays
- Selected herbs (washed and dried)

Instructions:

- Put the washed and dried herbs in a blender or food processor. Slowly add a small amount of water. You only need enough water to enable blending.
- Blend the herbs and water at the lowest speed until they come together in a smooth, consistent paste. If your paste is too thick, add a bit more water if necessary, being careful not to add too much and risk the paste becoming too runny. You might have to stop blending, scrape down the sides, then blend again until smooth.
- Carefully fill the ice cube trays with the prepared herb paste, ensuring each compartment is full.
- Place the ice cube trays in the freezer and allow them to freeze completely.
- Once frozen, pop the herb paste cubes out of the trays and put them in airtight containers or freezer bags labeled with the type of herb and date so they can be easily identified when you want to use them.

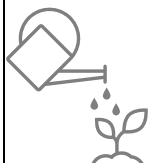
Storing Frozen Herbs

Proper storage of frozen herbs is crucial to maintain their quality and effectiveness. Use airtight containers or freezer bags to prevent freezer burn, which can degrade the herbs' texture and medicinal properties. Ensure the containers are tightly sealed to protect the herbs from absorbing odors from other foods in the freezer. Label the containers with the date and type of herb for optimal freshness. This makes it easier to keep track of their storage time. Although frozen herbs can be stored for up to a year, using them within six months will ensure they retain their maximum potency and therapeutic benefits. Regularly check for signs of freezer burn or off odors and discard any herbs that appear compromised.

Best Practices for Properly Storing Frozen Herbs Long-Term

Frozen herbs must be stored properly to ensure quality and effectiveness are maintained. Using airtight containers, freezer bags, or vacuum-sealing herbs will help prevent freezer burn, which can degrade the beneficial properties and texture of the herbs. Label each container with the herb and freeze date so it's easy to keep track of storage time.

When stored properly, frozen herbs will retain potency for up to a year or longer. Using them within six months is recommended to ensure they're as potent as possible, allowing for the most therapeutic benefit. Regularly check frozen herbs for signs of freezer burn and dispose of any damaged pieces.



Creating an Organized Herbal Medicine Cabinet

Creating an organized herbal medicine cabinet is a creative project that makes it easy to locate. Choose an area out of direct light, such as a pantry cupboard or drawer. Implement creative storage solutions such as a dresser with drawer organizers, an armoire, small shelves, and spice racks to keep containers tidy, organized, and easily accessible. Magnetic jars on the side of your fridge or inside a cabinet door are a space-saving option that makes your herbs easy to reach.

Label all your containers with the herb name and storage date, which will help you monitor which herb is which and the storage length, making it easier to determine their potency. Consider organizing herbs alphabetically or arranging them together by use. For example, you might want to keep herbs known to alleviate anxiety and help with sleep together, while grouping herbs beneficial for relieving pain together.

Store herbs in small batches to reduce exposure to air each time the container is opened, which will reduce the potency of the herbs over time. Silica gel packs can be added to storage containers to ensure herbs stay dry and avoid absorbing any potential moisture.



Chapter 5: Best Herbs and Plants for Beginners

Selecting medicinal herbs and plants that are easy to grow and care for is essential for those new to gardening. Easy-to-grow herbs make it more likely to have a successful harvest of healthy plants for an herbal pharmacy. It will also increase confidence in growing herbs, offering inspiration to continue homegrown cultivation of plants that naturally support wellbeing.

Easy-to-Grow Herbs and Plants



Aloe vera, *Aloe barbadensis miller*



Aloe vera has been used for thousands of years for medicinal purposes by cultures around the world, including Greece, India, Egypt, Mexico, China, and Japan. The Egyptians called Aloe vera “the plant of immortality,” ancient Greek scientists considered it the universal panacea, and Alexander the Great and Christopher Columbus used it to treat soldiers' wounds. To this day, Aloe vera is still widely regarded for its medicinal, health, skincare, and beauty benefits.

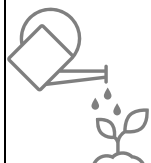
Aloe vera contains antibacterial, antifungal, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, anti-allergy, and immune-enhancing effects. It provides rapid skin cell regeneration in wounds, rashes, burns, and other skin problems, and is primarily used as a topical healing gel for skin issues of all kinds. It's known for successfully healing wounds in a manner that minimizes the likelihood of scarring. Aloe is also suggested to work harmoniously with comfrey to aid in healing from more serious problems such as fractures and sports-related injuries.

The plant is prized for its efficacy in supporting beautiful skin, with anti-aging benefits like significant wrinkle reduction and improved elasticity. Aloe vera's beauty benefits are linked to its ability to increase oxygen to skin tissues and stimulate collagen production.

Aloe juice can be taken internally, helping to treat ulcers, gastrointestinal issues, and irritable bowel syndrome. Research also supports Aloe vera's significant promise for treating HIV/AIDS when administered in the early stages, which is attributed to its positive effect on the immune system.

Cautions: Aloe should not be taken internally during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. The gel may cause an allergic reaction, and when used for the first time a small amount should be applied to the skin to ensure a positive response. Internal use may cause abdominal cramping, diarrhea, and increased constipation.

Parts Used: The gelatinous interior of the leaf (topically), juice (internally).



Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun 6-8 hours per day, provide shade for protection during hot weather

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Aloe vera is a succulent, meaning it prefers well-draining, dry soil. A cactus mix is recommended, and commercial potting soils should be avoided. You can make soil for Aloe with a combination of sand, peat moss, and perlite divided into equal parts.

Aloe prefers small, porous pots (like terracotta or clay) with drainage holes. Avoid planting the succulent in large pots, as it may cause water retention and lead to weak roots.

How much water Aloe requires depends on the time of year and the weather. The succulent doesn't need much water, requiring water about once a week in warmer summer months and approximately once every two weeks in cooler winter months. Aloe should only be watered every two weeks in the summer if you live in a hot, humid climate.

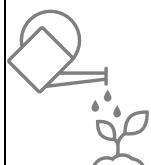
Harvesting:

- Select a thick, mature leaf and cut it off from the base of the plant using a sharp knife.
- Use the knife to slice the leaf lengthwise so it opens up to expose the gelatinous inner pulp of the leaf.
- Scrape the gel off the leaf into a bowl, discarding the yellow sap that releases from the side of the leaf.
- Store harvested Aloe vera in an airtight container for up to seven days in the refrigerator. The gel can also be frozen in an airtight container or freezer bag for up to one year.

Properties:

- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-aging
- Anti-viral
- Antitumor
- Antiseptic
- Immune boosting
- Laxative

Uses: Topically as a fresh gel or added to lotions and salves, prepared juice.





Ashwagandha, *Withania somnifera*



Ashwagandha, also known as Indian ginseng or winter cherry, has been used for over 3,000 years in Ayurvedic medicine to promote overall health and longevity. It's revered for its adaptogenic properties, helping to restore the body, manage stress, and increase overall vitality. Ashwagandha is still widely recognized as one of the best herbs for balanced well-being. It's shown to enhance physical performance, promote muscle recovery, reduce stress, improve mood, enhance cognitive function,

restore the nervous system, increase immunity, and more. Ashwagandha also supports the endocrine system, helping balance hormones and support reproductive health. It's a common herb used to increase libido and fertility in both men and women.

Cautions: Individuals with thyroid disorders should use caution when taking ashwagandha, as it could influence hormone levels in the thyroid. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should consult a healthcare professional before use. Prolonged use of higher doses may cause stomach discomfort, diarrhea, or nausea.

Parts Used: Roots.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun to partial shade

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Ashwagandha prefers well-draining soil, meaning a mixture of garden soil and compost that contains loam and sand would work well.

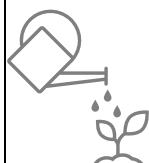
Ashwagandha can be grown in large pots with good drainage. Ensure the pot is at least 12 inches deep to allow the roots to spread.

It can be sown outdoors in warmer to moderate climates following the first frost, planting seeds about 3/8" below the soil. Seeds can be started indoors in colder climates and then transplanted after temperatures consistently reach 60 °F (16 °F).

Ashwagandha needs low to moderate watering. It should be watered regularly, allowing the soil to dry out completely between waterings. Overwatering can lead to root rot.

Harvesting:

- Harvest ashwagandha roots after the plant's first growing season, typically 6-7 months after planting.
- Carefully dig up the plant and wash the roots to remove soil.
- Cut the roots into small pieces and let them dry in a cool, dark place.



Properties:

- Adaptogenic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antioxidant
- Neuroprotection
- Increases immunity
- Balances hormones

Uses:

Ashwagandha can be used as a tea, tincture, or supplement. Powdered forms can be added to smoothies and tea and placed into capsules for easy, precise dosing. While less common, it can also be used in creams and oils to reduce inflammation and promote healing.

 Calendula, Calendula officinalis



Commonly known as marigold, calendula has been medicinally for centuries. Cultures across Europe, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean used the calendula flower for its healing potential, while medieval herbalists prized its potent properties for wound healing and skin care.

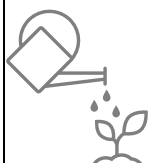
Calendula is known for its anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties, promoting rapid healing of skin wounds, burns, and rashes. It's particularly

effective as a natural first-aid option for minor cuts and abrasions. The anti-inflammatory qualities in calendula help reduce swelling and calm irritated skin. It's often used in salves, creams, and tinctures to help relieve various skin conditions, such as eczema and psoriasis.

Calendula can also be used internally, such as in a tea or tincture, to support digestive health by soothing inflammation in the digestive system, meaning it may support conditions like gastritis and peptic ulcers.

Cautions: Calendula is generally safe for topical use, but some individuals may experience allergic reactions, especially if sensitive to plants in the Asteraceae family. A small patch test is recommended to determine if a response occurs before widespread use. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should consult with a healthcare provider before use.

Parts Used: Petals (topically and internally).



Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun to partial shade, with protection from intense midday heat

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Calendula prefers well-draining soil, rich in organic matter. A balanced potting mix with added compost is ideal for cultivation.

Use pots with good drainage to prevent waterlogging. Terracotta or clay pots are preferred for their breathability, promoting healthy root growth.

Calendula can be planted outdoors in warmer climates in early spring, sowing seeds approximately ¼" - ½" deep. In cooler climates, calendula seeds can be started indoors and transplanted outside when temperatures consistently reach 60 °F (16 °F).

Calendula requires moderate watering. Keep the soil consistently moist without letting it become water-logged. Water should be reduced in cooler months, allowing the soil to dry out between waterings.

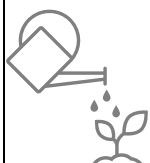
Harvesting:

- Select fully bloomed flowers and snip them off at the base with sharp scissors.
- Spread the harvested flowers on a screen or drying rack in a well-ventilated area away from direct sunlight.
- Once dried, store the petals in an airtight container in a cool, dark place.

Properties:

- Anti-inflammatory
- Antibacterial
- Antiviral
- Antifungal
- Immune boosting
- Skin healing

Uses: Use it topically as a fresh or dried flower in salves, creams, and oils. Use internally as a tea or tincture for digestive health and boosting immunity.





Chamomile, *Matricaria chamomilla*



Chamomile contains calming properties that support relaxation. The flower has been used for centuries to support a variety of ailments. The ancient Greek physicians prescribed Chamomile for fevers and women's problems, and the Egyptians dedicated the flower to their sun god, Ra, both for its sun-like appearance and healing qualities. Today, Chamomile remains a popular remedy for its soothing effects body and mind.

Chamomile is shown to contain anti-inflammatory and antispasmodic properties, and it's commonly used to treat digestive issues like indigestion, gas, and IBS. It's particularly soothing and known to increase relaxation, relieve anxiety, reduce stress, and help support sleep. Chamomile contains a mild, sedative-like effect, making it popular for soothing stress and relieving insomnia.

It also supports skin issues such as eczema, rashes, and minor wounds. Chamomile is commonly found in creams, lotions, and bath products.

Cautions: Chamomile is typically safe for most people when used in moderation, but those with an allergy to plants in the Asteraceae family, such as ragweed, daisies, marigolds, or chrysanthemums, may experience allergic reactions. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should speak with a healthcare professional before use.

Parts Used: Flowers (topically and internally)

Growing Location:

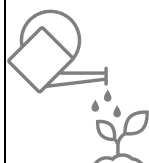
- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun to partial shade, with protection from strong winds

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Chamomile thrives in well-draining, sand or loam soil, enriched with compost. It prefers slightly acidic to neutral pH levels (5.6-7.5).

Use pots with good drainage to prevent waterlogging. Terracotta or clay pots are ideal for Chamomile because they allow roots to breathe, ensuring healthy development.

Chamomile seeds can be sown outdoors in warm after the first signs of frost have passed. Seeds should be placed close to the top of the soil, as they require light to germinate.

Chamomile thrives with moderate watering, where the soil is evenly moist, particularly during germination and early growth stages. It should still be watered regularly as it matures, but ensure soil dries out slightly between waterings.



Harvesting:

- Harvest the flowers when fully open and at their peak, using sharp scissors or pruning shears.
- Spread the flowers on a drying rack or screen in a well-ventilated area away from direct sunlight.
- Once dried, store the flowers in an airtight container in a cool, dark place.

Properties:

- Calming
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antispasmodic
- Antibacterial
- Mild sedative

Uses: Used commonly internally as a tea to aid digestion, promote relaxation, and support sleep. Also available in tinctures for internal use. Added to creams and lotions for topical use to support skin.

Echinacea, *Echinacea purpurea*



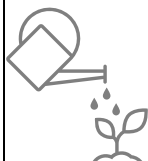
Echinacea, commonly known as purple coneflower, has been used for centuries in traditional medicine by Native American tribes and later by European settlers. Today, Echinacea is prized for its immune-boosting properties, where it's widely used as a natural remedy for sore throats, sinus infections, and bronchitis.

The antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-inflammatory effects of Echinacea have made it a popular option for strengthening the immune system, warding off colds and flu, supporting overall immune health, and reducing the severity and duration of respiratory infections.

It's also known to support wound healing and reduce inflammation in skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis. Echinacea is a natural beauty aid that helps promote healthy skin by reducing inflammation and supporting the skin's natural healing processes. It also helps to minimize acne and other skin blemishes.

Cautions: Immunocompromised individuals, especially those with an autoimmune disease, should not use Echinacea because it can stimulate the immune system and exacerbate symptoms. It should be avoided by anyone allergic to ragweed or other plants in the daisy family. Side effects can include stomach discomfort and rashes.

Parts Used: Roots, leaves, and flowers.



Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun to partial shade, well-draining soil

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Echinacea prefers well-draining, sandy soil. A mix of garden soil and sand is ideal. Avoid heavy, clay-based soils that retain water.

Echinacea can be grown in medium to large pots with good drainage. Terracotta or clay pots are suitable as they help prevent water retention.

Seeds should be sown directly on the soil surface and germinate in 10-20 days. Sprinkle a light layer of soil over the seeds to deter birds. Keep delicate, young plants protected from weather, pests, and pets until they're mature.

Echinacea needs moderate watering. Water the plant when the top inch of soil is dry. Overwatering can lead to root rot.

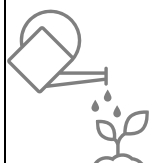
Harvesting:

- Harvest the roots in the fall after the plant has matured for at least two years.
- Cut the stems and leaves during the growing season when flowers are in full bloom.
- Dry the roots, leaves, and flowers in a cool, dark place to preserve their medicinal properties.

Properties:

- Immune boosting
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antibacterial
- Antioxidant
- Antiviral

Uses: Internally as a tea, tincture, or supplement. Topical use in creams and ointments will support skin health.



Ginger, *Zingiber officinale*



Ginger, widely used to support digestive health, has been used for thousands of years in several cultures for its varied therapeutic properties. Ancient Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurvedic healers prized ginger for its warming and digestive benefits. Today, ginger is still widely used for its ability to aid digestion, reduce nausea, and alleviate inflammation.

The root contains compounds with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimicrobial effects, all of which support its medicinal

effects. It's commonly used to treat digestive issues such as nausea, vomiting, and indigestion. Its efficacy in reducing inflammation and pain, however, also makes it beneficial for conditions like arthritis and muscle aches and pains

Other benefits of ginger include supporting the immune system and respiratory health, making it a popular natural remedy that helps to relieve symptoms of colds and flu, soothe sore throats, and reduce congestion. It's also known to improve circulation and support cardiovascular health.

Cautions: Pregnant and breastfeeding women should use caution when taking ginger, as it may cause mild side effects like heartburn and diarrhea. Individuals with gallstones or those on blood-thinning medications should consult a healthcare professional before using ginger.

Parts Used: Root.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Partial shade to full sun, warm climate

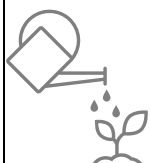
Ideal Cultivation Practices: Ginger prefers rich, well-draining soil. A mix of garden soil, compost, and sand is ideal for optimal growth.

Ginger can be grown in wide, shallow containers with good drainage. Ensure the pot is at least 12 inches deep, which allows the roots to spread.

Ginger needs consistent moisture but should be overwatered. Water ginger regularly, keeping the soil moist but not soggy. Reduce watering during dormant winter months.

Harvesting:

- Harvest roots 8-10 months after planting.
- Carefully dig up the plant, then cut off the amount needed.
- Replant the remaining root, which will continue growing and can be used in future harvests.



- Fresh ginger can be stored in the refrigerator for several weeks or frozen for longer storage.

Properties:

- Anti-inflammatory
- Antioxidant
- Antimicrobial
- Digestive aid
- Circulatory stimulant
- Immune boosting

Uses: Use in tea, a tincture, or a supplement when taken internally. Topically, ginger can be added to balms, salves, and lotions.

Holy Basil, *Ocimum sanctum*



Holy Basil, also known as Tulsi, is a popular herb used in Ayurvedic because of its numerous health benefits. It's considered a sacred plant in Hinduism and is commonly used to promote physical and spiritual well-being. Holy basil is an adaptogen, which helps the body manage stress and maintain balance.

The herb, known for its immune-boosting properties, contains compounds with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimicrobial effects. It's widely used to reduce stress, improve mood, and enhance cognitive function. Holy basil also supports respiratory health, relieving symptoms of asthma, bronchitis, and allergies. It also aids digestive health by reducing bloating, gas, and indigestion, and it supports cardiovascular health by regulating blood pressure and healthy cholesterol levels.

The herb, known for its immune-boosting properties, contains compounds with anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and

Cautions: Pregnant and breastfeeding women should use caution, as there is limited research on the herb's effects in this demographic. Individuals with blood clotting disorders or who take blood-thinning medications should consult a healthcare professional before using holy basil.

Parts Used: Leaves, stems, and seeds.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun to partial shade, warm climate



Ideal Cultivation Practices: Holy Basil prefers rich, well-draining soil. A mix of garden soil and compost is ideal.

Holy Basil can be grown in medium-sized pots with good drainage. Ensure the pot is at least 8-10 inches deep, which gives roots room to spread.

Water holy basil regularly, keeping the soil consistently moist. Do not let it become waterlogged. It should be watered more during hot, dry periods. Reduce watering in cooler months.

Harvesting:

- Harvest Holy Basil leaves and stems throughout the growing season.
- Pinch off the leaves as needed, promoting bushier growth.
- Dry the leaves in a cool, dark place to preserve their medicinal properties.

Properties:

- Adaptogenic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antioxidant
- Antimicrobial
- Stress relief
- Immune boosting

Uses: Internally as a tea, tincture, or supplement. Can be used fresh or dry in herbal remedies. Topically in creams and balms to support skin health.



Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*



Lavender is another herb that has been used for centuries, primarily for its soothing fragrance and healing properties. Ancient Egyptians used lavender in mummification, and the Romans used it for bathing, cooking, and scenting the air. Today, lavender is widely recognized for its calming, soothing effects.

It contains compounds with anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and analgesic properties. It's commonly used to reduce stress, relieve anxiety, and promote restful sleep. Lavender is also effective in soothing headaches, migraines, and muscle tension.

The flower also supports skin health, helping to heal burns, cuts, and insect bites. Its antiseptic properties make it beneficial for treating acne and other skin



infections. Lavender oil is commonly used in aromatherapy to enhance mood and alleviate symptoms of depression.

Cautions: Lavender should be used cautiously by individuals allergic to plants in the Lamiaceae family. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should consult a healthcare professional before using lavender. Excessive use may cause skin irritation or an allergic reaction.

Parts Used: Flowers, essential oil.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun, well-draining soil

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Lavender prefers well-draining, sandy or gravelly soil with a slightly alkaline pH. Avoid heavy, clay-based soils that retain moisture.

Lavender can be grown in medium to large pots with good drainage. Terracotta or clay pots are ideal as they help prevent water retention.

Lavender requires moderate watering. Water the plant deeply but infrequently, allowing the soil to dry out between waterings. Overwatering can lead to root rot. It's a drought-tolerant plant that does well in dry, hot climates.

Harvesting:

- Harvest lavender flowers when they are in full bloom.
- Cut the stems early in the morning after the dew has dried.
- Hang the stems in small bunches to dry in a cool, dark place.
- Store dried lavender in an airtight container away from direct sunlight.

Properties:

- Anti-inflammatory
- Antiseptic
- Analgesic
- Antidepressant
- Relaxant

Uses: Take it internally as a tea or supplement or can be used topically in creams and balms to soothe skin and reduce inflammation. It's used in aromatherapy, skincare products, and essential oils.



Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*



Lemon balm is a popular herb with numerous health benefits and has been used for over 2,000 years in traditional medicine. Native to Europe, it was prized by ancient Greeks and Romans for its efficacy in alleviating stress and anxiety.

The herb contains compounds with antiviral, antibacterial, and antioxidant properties. It's commonly used to reduce stress and anxiety, as well as to promote restful sleep. Lemon balm is also effective in soothing digestive issues

such as indigestion, bloating, and gas.

It also contains benefits that support skin health, where it's known to treat cold sores and other herpes-related outbreaks due to its antiviral properties that speed up the healing process. Additionally, lemon balm is used to improve cognitive function and alleviate symptoms of mild depression.

Cautions: Lemon Balm should be used with caution by anyone with a thyroid disorder, as it could interfere with thyroid hormone levels. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should speak with a healthcare professional before using lemon balm. Excessive use of the herb could cause nausea or dizziness.

Parts Used: Leaves.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun to partial shade, well-draining soil

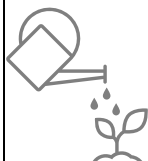
Ideal Cultivation Practices: Lemon Balm prefers well-draining, fertile soil. A mix of garden soil and compost is ideal.

Lemon Balm can be grown in medium-sized pots with good drainage. The pot should be at least 8-10 inches deep to allow the roots to spread.

Lemon Balm needs regular watering to keep the soil consistently moist. Avoid overwatering. It needs water more frequently during hot, dry periods while watering should be reduced in cooler months.

Harvesting:

- Harvest lemon balm leaves before the plant flowers for the best flavor.
- Cut the stems in the morning after the dew has dried.
- Dry the leaves in a cool, dark place to preserve their medicinal properties.



- Store dried lemon balm in an airtight container away from direct sunlight.

Properties:

- Antiviral
- Antibacterial
- Antioxidant
- Calming
- Digestive aid

Uses: Internally use lemon balm as a tea, tincture, or supplement. Topically, it can be added to creams and balms to treat cold sores and skin infections.

 Mint, *Mentha spp.*



Mint has been used for thousands of years for its medicinal properties. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans used the herb for its refreshing flavor and therapeutic benefits. Today, mint is used widely to soothe digestive issues, freshen breath, and flavor various dishes and beverages.

Mint contains antibacterial, antiviral, and anti-inflammatory properties and is known to be effective for alleviating

digestive issues like indigestion, bloating, and gas. It's also effective for headaches, nausea, and respiratory problems.

The herb is also known to support skin health, where it helps soothe irritation and inflammation. It's often used in topical applications to relieve itching and pain. Mint is used in aromatherapy to boost mood and increase mental clarity.

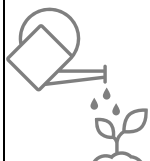
Cautions: Mint should be used with caution by individuals with gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) as it could make symptoms worse. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should consult a healthcare professional before using mint.

Parts Used: Leaves.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Partial shade to full sun, well-draining soil

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Mint prefers rich, well-draining soil. A mix of garden soil and compost is ideal for optimal growth.



Mint can be grown in medium-sized pots with good drainage. Ensure the pot is at least 8-10 inches deep to allow the roots to spread.

Mint needs regular watering to keep the soil consistently moist. Do not overwater and allow soil to become waterlogged. Water more frequently during hot, dry months and reduce watering in cooler months.

Harvesting:

- Harvest mint leaves throughout the growing season.
- Cut the stems early in the morning after the dew has dried.
- Use fresh or dry leaves in a cool, dark place to preserve their medicinal properties.
- Store dried mint in an airtight container away from direct sunlight.

Properties:

- Antibacterial
- Antiviral
- Anti-inflammatory
- Digestive aid
- Mood boosting

Uses: It can be used as a tea, tincture, or supplement, and topically in creams, lotions, salves, and balms to soothe skin irritation and inflammation.

Oregano, *Origanum vulgare*

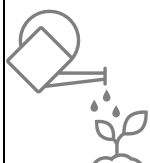


Oregano is widely used to support immunity and respiratory function. The herb has been used for thousands of years in traditional medicine, and both the Ancient Greeks and Romans utilized it for its antiseptic and medicinal properties.

It contains compounds with antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal properties. The herb is commonly used to treat respiratory issues such as coughs, colds, and bronchitis. Oregano is also

effective in supporting digestive health, where it helps relieve things like indigestion and bloating. It also contains immune-boosting properties that may fight off infection.

Oregano also supports skin health, demonstrating efficacy to treat infections and reduce inflammation. It's commonly used in topical applications to alleviate pain and promote healing.



Cautions: Oregano should be used cautiously by individuals allergic to plants in the Lamiaceae family. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should speak with a healthcare professional before use. Excessive use could cause stomach upset.

Parts Used: Leaves, essential oil.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun, well-draining soil

Ideal Cultivation Practices: Oregano prefers well-draining, sandy soil. Avoid heavy, clay-based soils that retain moisture.

Oregano does well when grown in medium to large pots with good drainage. Terracotta or clay pots are ideal as they help prevent water retention.

Oregano requires moderate watering. The plant should be watered deeply but infrequently, allowing the soil to dry out between waterings. Overwatering can lead to root rot.

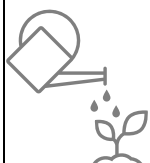
Harvesting:

- Harvest oregano leaves when the plant is in full bloom.
- Cut the stems early in the morning after the dew has dried.
- Dry the leaves in a cool, dark place to preserve their medicinal properties.

Properties:

- Antibacterial
- Antiviral
- Antifungal
- Antioxidant
- Immune boosting

Uses: Internally oregano is used as a tea, tincture, or supplement. It's also used in topical applications, such as creams, salves, and balms.





Rosemary, *Rosmarinus officinalis*



Rosemary contains several therapeutic properties and has been used for thousands of years for medicinal use. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans all used rosemary to aid memory and support overall health. Today, this common herb is widely recognized for its cognitive and digestive benefits.

It contains compounds with antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties. Rosemary is commonly used to improve memory,

concentration, and cognitive function. The herb also shows efficacy in supporting digestive health, where it relieves bloating and indigestion.

Rosemary also supports skin and hair health. It's shown to promote hair growth and reduce dandruff. Its antiseptic properties make it useful for treating acne and other skin infections. Rosemary is commonly used in aromatherapy to reduce stress and enhance mood.

Cautions: Rosemary should be used with caution by individuals with high blood pressure or epilepsy, as it may worsen symptoms. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should speak with their healthcare provider before use.

Parts Used: Leaves, essential oil.

Growing Location:

- Indoor: Bright, indirect light
- Outdoor: Full sun, well-draining soil

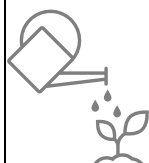
Ideal Cultivation Practices: Rosemary prefers well-draining, sandy soil. Avoid heavy, clay-based soils that retain moisture.

Rosemary grows well when cultivated in medium to large pots with good drainage. Terracotta or clay pots are best because they help prevent water retention.

Rosemary requires low to moderate watering. Water the plant deeply but infrequently. Allow the soil to dry out between waterings. Overwatering can lead to root rot.

Harvesting:

- Harvest rosemary leaves when the plant is in full bloom.
- Cut the stems early in the morning after the dew has dried.
- Dry the leaves in a cool, dark place to preserve their medicinal properties.



- Store dried rosemary in an airtight container away from direct sunlight.

Properties:

- Antioxidant
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antimicrobial
- Cognitive enhancer
- Digestive support

Uses: Internally as a tea, tincture, or supplement. Topically in creams and balms to promote hair growth and treat skin infections. It is used in aromatherapy to enhance mood and reduce stress.



Chapter 6: Herbal Synergy: Formulating Effective Herbal Blends



Certain herbs are found to contain synergistic properties that when combined are said to enhance their therapeutic benefits. Before creating effective herbal blends for various holistic health needs, it's important to understand more about this plant synergy. Equipped with this knowledge offers the opportunity to harness the most benefit from the herbs cultivated in your backyard pharmacy. Keep reading to learn more about the synergistic effects of various herbs to make the most effective healing blends in different remedies.

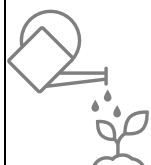
Herbal synergy is defined as: “two or more herbs interacting to produce a greater effect than the effect of individual herbs used alone.” It's based on the concept that certain herbs work harmoniously together to

amplify each other's benefits, ultimately creating a more potent and effective option than using a single herb alone. Understanding herbal synergy will allow you to create blends that target specific health issues more effectively.

Several studies support the idea of herbal synergy, many of which have shown that certain compounds in herbs interact at a molecular level to produce more significant therapeutic effects. The combination of turmeric and black pepper, for example, is well-known for enhancing the bioavailability of curcumin (the active compound in turmeric) by 2000%! Piperine, found in black pepper, inhibits the metabolic breakdown of curcumin in the liver, allowing higher concentrations to remain in the bloodstream. This is especially beneficial because curcumin contains poor absorption, rapid metabolism, and rapid elimination, meaning the concentration of curcumin available in the body becomes low quickly after consumption.

Some herbs also contain a symbiotic relationship, where their combined use enhances their individual effects, decreases potential side effects, and increases potency. Licorice root is often used as a harmonizer in traditional Chinese medicine, as it boosts the effects of the other herbs while mitigating potential side effects. This relationship between herbs ensures the blend is effective and gentle on the body.

When combined, some herbs work together to target different pathways in the body. The combination of ginkgo biloba and ginseng, for example, is often used to enhance cognitive function. This is because ginkgo improves blood circulation to the brain, while ginseng boosts energy and reduces mental fatigue. When combined, they offer increased potential to enhance mental performance.



Another facet of herbal synergy has to do with balancing active compounds. There are some potent herbs that when used alone might be too strong or lead to unwanted side effects. But by combining these herbs with other herbs, the overall blend balances out, reducing the risk of side effects while providing therapeutic relief. Calming chamomile, for example, can be balanced with the uplifting properties of mint to create a soothing blend that doesn't cause sleepiness.

Combining synergistic herbs can also improve the overall bioavailability of nutrients. Some herbs contain compounds that enhance the absorption of vitamins and minerals from other herbs present in the blend. Not only can this increase the efficacy of the remedy, but it also ensures that the body receives an adequate supply of the nutrients necessary to thrive.

Popular Herbal Blends

Several herbal combinations have been used for thousands of years, especially in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda. The combinations below feature herbs from Chapter 5, which will allow you to create synergistic blends that will effectively support various health needs and promote balanced well-being.

Echinacea and Ginger

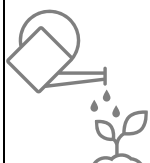
Echinacea and ginger are often used together to boost the immune system and combat infections. Echinacea enhances immune activity, and ginger provides anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties. This combination is especially effective during the cold and flu season, as it helps to reduce symptoms and boost overall immune health. Creating a soothing herbal tea with these medicinal herbs is a simple, yet powerful way to support well-being while under the weather.

Chamomile and Lavender

Chamomile and lavender create a calming blend commonly incorporated in different types of herbal remedies to promote relaxation, ease stress, and improve sleep quality. This classic combination is highly regarded as a natural way to reduce stress and anxiety, as chamomile's gentle and effective sedative-like properties support the ability of lavender to relax the nervous system. Creating a soothing tea that incorporates both is excellent for relaxing before bed and can help enhance overall sleep quality. They can also be combined in topical products, such as lotions and salves, for a soothing effect on both the body and mind.

Aloe Vera and Calendula

Aloe Vera and calendula are powerful herbs known to support skin healing and repair. Combining the soothing, anti-inflammatory effects of Aloe Vera can complement calendula's efficacy to promote wound healing and reduce skin irritation. Creating a topical blend of these skin-supporting herbs can be beneficial for treating burns, cuts, and other skin issues, offering natural relief and potentially promoting faster healing.



Ashwagandha and Holy Basil

Ashwagandha and holy basil are known for their adaptogenic properties, meaning they can help the body manage stress and provide overall wellness benefits. Ashwagandha supports the adrenal glands and reduces cortisol levels, while holy basil improves mental clarity and balances energy levels. The combination of the two is a popular natural remedy for individuals with chronic stress and fatigue. It's important to note that it can take 1-3 weeks of consistently taking ashwagandha to experience its therapeutic effects.

Lemon Balm and Mint

Lemon Balm and Mint are both herbs known to support digestive health. The two work well in herbal combinations to support stomach discomfort and other digestive issues. Lemon balm has properties that help relieve bloating and gas, while mint helps relax gastrointestinal muscles. A tea made with this blend can be effective for promoting healthy digestion and relieving digestive discomfort.

Rosemary and Thyme

Rosemary and thyme display brain-boosting benefits that support cognitive function, including memory and concentration. Carnosic acid is the active ingredient in rosemary that protects the brain from free radicals, and thyme is rich in antioxidants that support cognitive function. A blend of these powerful herbs, such as in a tea or tincture, can offer effective support for mental clarity and focus, particularly when doing intense study or work.

Customizing Synergistic Herbal Blends

Customizing herbal blends involves synergistic combinations to support specific health needs and preferences. When considering these combinations, it's important to personalize remedies for particular purposes and determine the best dose for the most effective benefits. Define specific health goals, such as boosting immunity, enhancing relaxation, supporting sleep, or improving digestion. Then choose the herbs known to complement each other that reflect these goals.

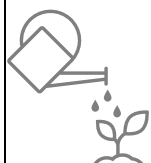
Consider the type of the herbal blend, whether it's a tea, tincture, or salve, as each might require different herbs or distinct preparation methods. Experiment with various combinations and ratios to discover what's most effective. Monitor how the body responds, adjusting the blend as needed.

Some herbs are more effective in higher doses, while others work best in smaller amounts. It's important to research herbs incorporated in herbal blends or consult an herbalist to determine the appropriate dosage.

Following are some examples of blends for various purposes:

Stress and Anxiety:

Herbs like ashwagandha, valerian root, and passionflower can be combined to create a blend that reduces stress, increases relaxation, and supports sleep. Ashwagandha helps the body adapt to stress, while valerian root and passionflower act as natural sedatives. When used together, these herbs create an herbal blend that can help soothe the nervous system and ease mental tension.



Sleep:

Combine chamomile, lavender, and lemon balm for another soothing herbal blend that can help support sleep. Chamomile is renowned for its calming effects and ability to induce sleep, lavender promotes relaxation, and lemon balm has a mild sedative quality. Used together, these herbs create a potent synergy that can reduce insomnia and induce deeper, more restorative sleep.

Digestive Health:

Peppermint, fennel, and ginger can be combined to help alleviate digestive discomfort and improve overall gut health. Peppermint helps soothe the digestive tract and relieves gas, fennel assists in reducing bloating and supports healthy digestion, and ginger helps stimulate digestive enzymes and reduce nausea. This synergistic combination works to support healthy digestion and alleviate GI discomfort.

Immune Support:

Echinacea, elderberry, and astragalus can be combined to create an immune-boosting blend. Echinacea supports a healthy immune system and helps fight off infections, elderberry is rich in antioxidants and vitamins that enhance immune function, and astragalus strengthens the body's defenses while supporting overall immune health. Together, these herbs provide the support to ensure the immune system is strong and resilient and can be especially beneficial during cold and flu seasons.

Inflammation Support:

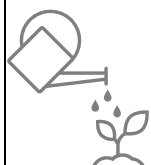
Turmeric, ginger, and holy basil can be combined to reduce inflammation and alleviate inflammatory pain. Turmeric contains curcumin, a powerful anti-inflammatory compound, ginger enhances turmeric's effects and contains its own anti-inflammatory benefits, while holy basil helps reduce stress-related inflammation and supports overall well-being. This blend targets inflammation at its source, providing holistic relief from conditions like arthritis and general muscle aches and pain.

Increased Energy:

Ginseng, green tea, and rosemary can be combined to increase mental and physical energy. Ginseng is known for its ability to increase stamina and reduce fatigue, green tea provides a gentle caffeine boost and is rich in antioxidants, and rosemary enhances mental clarity and focus. This blend can help maintain energy and alertness throughout the day without the jitters associated with coffee.

Determining the Perfect Dose

The effectiveness of an herbal blend also depends on using the correct dosage. Following are general guidelines to help determine the optimal dose in various herbal combinations:



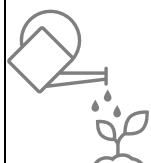
Start Small: Begin with a low dose, then gradually increase it until discovering the most effective amount. This will help minimize the potential risk of adverse reactions and allow the body time to adjust to the herbs. When using a blend for stress relief, for example, start with a small quantity and observe how the body responds. Increasing the dose in small increments helps to identify the precise amount that provides the desired effects without causing discomfort.

Consider Individual Factors: Age, weight, metabolism, and overall health can influence the appropriate dose. Always adjust accordingly to ensure safety and effectiveness. Younger individuals or those with lower body weight might require smaller doses, while older adults or those with higher body weight might need a higher dose. Chronic illnesses or the use of existing medications can impact how your body metabolizes herbs, highlighting the importance of researching any contraindications before administration to avoid potential side effects and achieve the best results.

Consult Different Resources: Refer to herbal guides or consult with a professional herbalist to ensure you're using safe and effective combinations and dosages. Herbal guides and credible studies will provide dosage recommendations based on both traditional use and extensive research. Healthcare professionals with knowledge of herbal medicine can offer personalized advice, which is especially important if you have underlying health conditions, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or take prescription medications.

Keep a Record: A detailed journal should be maintained of the effects of various herbs, noting the time, date, dose, and observed effects. This practice helps track the body's response over time and identify patterns that can help achieve the most benefit. If you notice that a particular blend works better taken at a certain time of day, you can then adjust your regimen accordingly. Keeping records also aids in pinpointing any adverse reactions or interactions with other substances. This information is invaluable for fine-tuning herbal blends to achieve consistent, effective results.

Determining the ideal dose requires patience, observation, and the need to adjust based on feedback from the body. Starting with small doses, considering individual factors such as age, weight, metabolism, and other medications, consulting reliable resources, and keeping detailed records are essential steps in this process. With careful attention to dosage, the benefits of herbal blends can be maximized to support health naturally and safely.



Chapter 7: Homemade Herbal Remedies

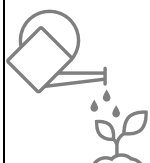
Creating homemade herbal remedies from homegrown herbs is a rewarding, empowering practice that offers the opportunity for holistic health support by harnessing the healing properties of the herbs grown in your garden.

This chapter offers the foundational information needed to create herbal remedies at home, including the essential items necessary and troubleshooting tips for circumventing common issues. It also includes 12 easy-to-make herbal remedies suitable for beginners and novice herbalists alike, including teas, tinctures, salves, and oil infusions.

Essential Items for Preparing Herbal Remedies

Having the essential supplies needed to create homemade herbal remedies will help ensure they're created successfully to provide the best possible benefits.

- **Fresh or Dried Herbs:** Use the herbs grown in your garden or a combination of homegrown herbs and others purchased from reputable suppliers.
- **Mortar and Pestle:** A mortar and pestle should be used to grind herbs to release their beneficial properties. A coffee grinder can also be used to grind herbs, which will provide a suitable consistency for using them in various remedies.
- **Clean Jars and Bottles:** Invest in clean, airtight jars and bottles, such as Mason jars, to store your finished remedies. For tinctures, use small brown bottles with a pipette dropper, which consists of a rubber bulb and a glass or plastic tube that screws into the bottle and allows you to measure and dispense the liquid in drops.
- **Dropper Bottles:** For tinctures, use small brown bottles with a pipette dropper, which consists of a rubber bulb and a glass or plastic tube that screws into the bottle and allows you to measure and dispense the liquid in drops.
- **Labels:** Clearly mark each container with the name of the remedy and the date it was made. This ensures remedies aren't mixed up and helps determine freshness and potency.
- **Carrier Oils:** Olive oil, coconut oil, and almond oil are excellent bases for infusions and salves.
- **Beeswax:** When making salves and balms, beeswax is often used as a thickening agent that gives them a desirable consistency.
- **Double Boiler:** A double boiler is used to gently heat herbs and oils together without burning them.
- **Cheesecloth:** A cheesecloth is necessary to strain herbs from oils and tinctures to achieve a smooth, clear final product.
- **Fine Mesh Strainer:** Use this to strain fine particles from your remedies.
- **Dropper Bottles:** For tinctures, use small brown bottles with a pipette dropper, which consists of a rubber bulb and a glass or plastic tube that screws into the bottle and allows you to measure and dispense the liquid in drops.
- **Measuring Cups and Spoons:** Measuring cups ensure accurate measurements, while spoons are needed to stir various mixtures together.



- **Heat-Proof Mixing Bowls:** Using heat-proof mixing bowls is recommended to ensure safety when mixing ingredients.
- **Cutting Board and Knife:** Can be implemented to chop fresh herbs for easier processing.
- **Small Funnel:** This makes it easier to pour liquids into containers without spilling.
- **Digital Scale:** Weigh herbs and other ingredients for precise formulations and dosing.

With these items, creating herbal remedies at home can be effortless. Each can make preparation much easier. Whether crafting a calming chamomile tea or revitalizing rosemary oil, having the right supplies will make the process smooth and successful.

5 Troubleshooting Tips for Common Issues

Creating homemade herbal remedies can be a fulfilling experience, but common issues can arise. Following are five troubleshooting tips to help you overcome common challenges and ensure herbal remedies are enjoyable and effective.

1. Ensuring Potency

If your herbal blends lack potency, check the freshness of your herbs. Freshly harvested herbs retain more of their beneficial properties. Store dried herbs in a cool, dark place in airtight containers to maintain their potency. Using the correct ratio of herbs to base ingredients is also crucial for effectiveness. It may be necessary to add more herbs to a recipe to experience the desired effects.

2. Adjusting Tincture Taste

Sometimes tinctures can taste unpleasant or too strong. If this occurs, dilute the tincture with more carrier alcohol or glycerin. Start with small amounts, tasting and adjusting as necessary until the flavor is more palatable.

3. Correcting Salve Consistency

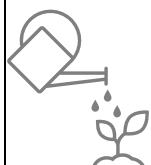
Salves can turn out too hard or too soft. If your salve is too hard, remelt it and add more carrier oil to soften it. If it's too soft, add more beeswax to thicken it. Test the consistency by letting a small amount cool before adjusting further. This ensures you achieve the desired texture.

4. Preventing Mold

Mold can develop if infusions and topicals aren't stored properly. Ensure your jars and bottles are completely dry before adding your herbal blends. Store infusions in a cool, dark place, and always use clean utensils when handling. Adding a few drops of vitamin E oil can also help preserve the freshness and prevent mold growth.

5. Maintaining Aroma and Flavor

Herbal remedies can lose their aroma and flavor over time. Make sure to store them in tightly sealed containers away from direct sunlight and heat, which will help maintain aroma and flavor over time.



Herbs should be fully dried before storage to avoid moisture buildup, which can lead to loss of aroma. Regularly check your supplies and replace any that have lost their scent or flavor.

12 Recipes for Homemade Herbal Blends

Herbal Teas

Chamomile and Lemon Balm Tea

This calming tea is perfect for stress relief and promoting a sense of relaxation. Chamomile soothes the nerves, while lemon balm enhances mood and reduces anxiety.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon dried chamomile flowers
- 1 tablespoon dried lemon balm leaves
- 2 cups boiling water
- Honey (optional)

Instructions:

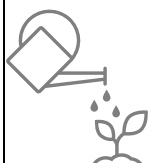
- Bring 2 cups of water to a boil.
- Place chamomile flowers and lemon balm leaves in a teapot or infuser.
- Pour boiling water over the herbs.
- Cover and steep for 10 minutes.
- Strain the tea into a cup.
- Add honey if desired for sweetness.

Recommended Dose:

Drink 1 cup of tea 1-3 times daily. Avoid drinking in excess to avoid drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, and vomiting.

Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should use with caution, consulting a healthcare professional before use. It may interact with blood thinners, sedatives, and thyroid medications. Could pose a risk to people with allergies to plants in the *Asteraceae* family.



Mint Ginger Tea

This refreshing tea is great for digestion and can help alleviate nausea. Mint provides a cooling sensation, while ginger warms and soothes the digestive system.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon fresh mint leaves
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- 2 cups boiling water
- Lemon slice (optional)

Instructions:

- Bring 2 cups of water to a boil.
- Place the desired amount of dried or fresh mint leaves and grated ginger in a teapot or infuser.
- Pour boiling water over the herbs.
- Cover and steep for 10 minutes.
- Strain the tea into a cup.



Recommended Dose:

Drink 1-3 times daily. Avoid excessive use to avoid potential digestive upset.

Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women and people with gallbladder issues should use with caution. It may interact with blood pressure, diabetes, and anticoagulant medications. Always consult a healthcare professional before use.

Holy Basil and Lavender Tea

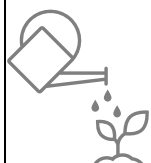
This aromatic tea promotes relaxation and helps balance the mind. Holy basil is known for its adaptogenic properties, while lavender promotes a soothing calm.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon dried holy basil leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried lavender flowers
- 2 cups boiling water
- Honey or sweetener (optional)

Instructions:

- Boil 2 cups of water.
- Place holy basil leaves and lavender flowers in a teapot or infuser.
- Pour boiling water over the herbs.
- Cover and steep for 10 minutes.
- Strain the tea into a cup.



- Add honey or sweetener if desired.

Recommended Dose:

Drink 1 cup of tea 1-3 times daily. Avoid excessive use to prevent potential drowsiness.

Cautions:

It should be used with caution by pregnant or breastfeeding women and individuals with thyroid issues. It can interact with blood thinners, sedatives, and diabetes medications. Always speak with a healthcare provider before use.

Herbal Tinctures

Echinacea and Ginger Tincture

This tincture boosts immunity and supports overall health. Echinacea stimulates the immune system, while ginger adds anti-inflammatory benefits.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried echinacea root
- 1/4 cup grated fresh ginger
- 1 cup vodka or glycerin
- Clean jar with lid

Instructions:

- Place echinacea root and grated ginger in a clean jar.
- Pour vodka or glycerin over the herbs, covering them completely.
- Seal the jar tightly with a lid.
- Shake the jar daily for 4-6 weeks.
- Strain the tincture through a cheesecloth into dropper bottles.
- Use 1-2 full droppers as needed to boost immunity.

Recommended Dose:

Use 1-2 full droppers 2-3 times daily. Monitor for any adverse reactions and adjust the dosage as needed.

Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women and individuals with autoimmune disorders should use with caution. It can interact with immunosuppressants, blood thinners, and diabetes medications. Always speak with a medical professional before use.



Ashwagandha and Holy Basil Tincture

This tincture promotes stress reduction and mental clarity. Ashwagandha is a powerful adaptogen, while holy basil enhances cognitive function.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried ashwagandha root
- 1/4 cup dried holy basil leaves
- 1 cup vodka or glycerin
- Clean jar with lid

Instructions:

- Place ashwagandha root and holy basil leaves in a clean jar.
- Pour vodka or glycerin over the herbs, ensuring they are fully submerged.
- Seal the jar with an air-tight lid and shake well.
- Store the jar in a cool, dark place for 4-6 weeks, shaking it daily.
- Strain the tincture through a cheesecloth into dropper bottles.
- Take 1-2 full droppers to reduce stress and improve mental clarity.



Recommended Dose:

Use 1-2 full droppers 2-3 times daily. Avoid excessive use to prevent excessive stimulation. Monitor for any adverse reactions and adjust the dosage as needed.

Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women and individuals with thyroid disorders should consult with a healthcare provider before use. It may interact with sedatives, thyroid medications, and immunosuppressants.

Oregano and Thyme Tincture

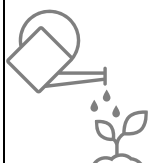
This tincture supports respiratory health and fights infections. Oregano and thyme both have strong antimicrobial properties.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried oregano leaves
- 1/4 cup dried thyme leaves
- 1 cup vodka or glycerin
- Clean jar with lid

Instructions:

- Place oregano and thyme leaves in a clean jar.



- Pour vodka or glycerin over the herbs, ensuring they're fully covered.
- Seal the jar with a lid and shake well.
- Store in a cool, dark place for 4-6 weeks, shaking daily.
- Strain the tincture through a cheesecloth into dropper bottles.
- Use 1-2 full droppers to support respiratory health and fight infections.

Recommended Dose:

Use 1-2 full droppers 2-3 times daily. Monitor for any adverse reactions and adjust the dosage as needed.

Cautions:

Oregano and thyme tincture may not be suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women, who should speak with their doctor before use. It may interact with anticoagulants and diabetes medications.

Herbal Salves and Balms

Calendula and Aloe Vera Salve

This salve soothes and heals minor skin irritations. Calendula promotes skin healing, while aloe vera provides moisturizing and anti-inflammatory benefits.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried calendula flowers
- 1/4 cup fresh aloe vera gel
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup beeswax
- Double boiler
- Clean jars for storage



Instructions:

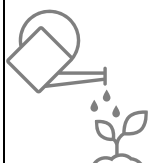
- Infuse the olive oil with calendula flowers by heating in a double boiler for 2 hours.
- Strain the oil through a cheesecloth.
- Return the infused oil to the double boiler and add aloe vera gel.
- Add beeswax and stir until melted.
- Pour the mixture into clean jars and let cool.
- Use this salve to soothe and heal minor skin irritations.

Recommended Dose:

Apply a thin layer to the targeted area 2-3 times daily. Avoid using it on large areas of broken skin or open wounds.

Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should consult a healthcare provider before use. Always test on a small skin area first to check for allergic reactions.



Lavender and Chamomile Balm

This balm promotes relaxation and restful sleep. Lavender and chamomile both have calming properties, making this balm ideal for bedtime use.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried lavender flowers
- 1/4 cup dried chamomile flowers
- 1 cup coconut oil
- 1/4 cup beeswax
- Double boiler
- Clean jars for storage

Instructions:

- Infuse the coconut oil with lavender and chamomile flowers in a double boiler for 2 hours.
- Strain the oil through a cheesecloth.
- Return the infused oil to the double boiler and add beeswax.
- Stir until the beeswax is melted.
- Pour the mixture into clean jars and let cool.
- Apply this balm before bedtime to promote relaxation and restful sleep.



Recommended Dose:

Apply a thin layer to pulse points or tense areas. Use as needed to promote relaxation and restful sleep.

Cautions:

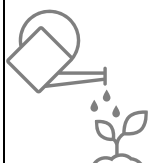
Pregnant or breastfeeding women should speak with a healthcare professional before use. Always test on a small skin area first to check for allergies.

Rosemary and Mint Salve

This salve refreshes and relieves sore muscles. Rosemary stimulates circulation, while mint provides a cooling, soothing effect.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried rosemary leaves
- 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup beeswax
- Double boiler



- Clean jars for storage

Instructions:

- Infuse the olive oil with rosemary and mint leaves in a double boiler for 2 hours.
- Strain the oil through a cheesecloth.
- Return the infused oil to the double boiler and add beeswax.
- Stir until the beeswax is melted.
- Pour the mixture into clean jars and let cool.
- Use this salve to refresh and relieve sore muscles.

Recommended Dose:

Apply a thin layer to sore muscles 2-3 times daily. Avoid using it on broken skin or open wounds.

Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should speak with a healthcare professional before use. Test on a small skin area first to check for any sensitivity or potential allergic reaction.

Herbal Oil Blends

Lemon Balm and Thyme Oil

This uplifting oil blend is perfect for revitalizing massages that invigorate both body and mind. Lemon balm uplifts the spirit, while thyme invigorates.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried lemon balm leaves
- 1/4 cup dried thyme leaves
- 1 cup olive oil
- Double boiler
- Clean bottle for storage

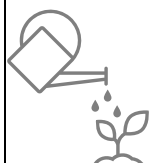


Instructions:

- Infuse the olive oil with lemon balm and thyme leaves in a double boiler for 2 hours.
- Strain the oil through a cheesecloth.
- Pour the infused oil into a clean bottle.
- Use this uplifting oil for massage to revitalize the body and mind.

Recommended Dose:

Apply a few drops of oil directly to the skin, using as much as needed to keep the skin lubricated during massage. Avoid using it on broken skin or open wounds.



Cautions:

Lemon balm and thyme oil may not be suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women. They should speak with a healthcare provider before use. Apply on a small skin area first to test for an allergic reaction.

Lavender and Calendula Oil

This nourishing oil blend promotes healing and reduces inflammation. Lavender soothes the skin, while calendula accelerates the healing process.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried lavender flowers
- 1/4 cup dried calendula flowers
- 1 cup almond oil
- Double boiler
- Clean bottle for storage



Instructions:

- Infuse the almond oil with lavender and calendula flowers in a double boiler for 2 hours.
- Strain the oil through a cheesecloth.
- Pour the infused oil into a clean bottle.
- Apply this nourishing oil to the skin to promote healing and reduce inflammation.

Recommended Dose:

Apply a few drops to the targeted area 1-2 times daily. Avoid using it on broken skin or open wounds.

Cautions:

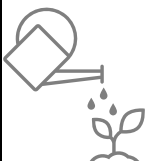
Pregnant or breastfeeding women should consult a healthcare provider before use. Always test on a small skin area first to check for allergies.

Rosemary and Oregano Oil

This stimulating oil blend is ideal for scalp massages to promote hair health and growth. Rosemary stimulates hair follicles, while oregano enhances circulation.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dried rosemary leaves
- 1/4 cup dried oregano leaves
- 1 cup olive oil
- Double boiler
- Clean bottle for storage



Instructions:

- Infuse the olive oil with rosemary and oregano leaves in a double boiler for 2 hours.
- Strain the oil through a cheesecloth.
- Pour the infused oil into a clean bottle.
- Use this stimulating oil for scalp massages to promote hair health and growth.

Recommended Dose:

Apply a few drops directly to the scalp, massaging it gently with your fingertips 1-2 times daily. Avoid using it on broken skin or open wounds.

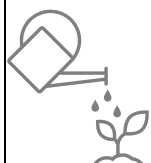
Cautions:

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should use caution and consult with a healthcare provider before use. Test on a small skin area before use to check for an allergic reaction.



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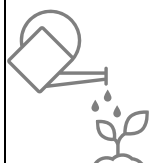
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