

\$7.95

A Field Guide to  
*MEDICINAL  
WILD PLANTS*  
of Canada



BEVERLEY GRAY



Wildharvesting—also known as wildcrafting, gathering, or foraging for plants—is the practice of respectfully harvesting and gathering plants that grow wild for food and medicinal purposes.

## Safety First

Plants have distinct effects on different people. It is vital that you consult your health care provider before considering any self-directed treatment of a medical condition, including the use of wild food and medicine plants. Be vigilant when consuming wild plants: if you notice any negative effects, discontinue use and consult your health care provider immediately.

Some beneficial plants closely resemble other plants that are toxic to humans. Before you consume any wild plant, consult with an expert to be certain that you have correctly identified it.

## Wild Harvesting Tips

- Gather in unpolluted areas
- Make noise to alert bears and other animals of your presence
- Harvest only where there is a large and healthy community of plants
- Do not over-harvest

## Harvest Times

When harvesting plants, it's important to gather at the correct point to ensure that you will have the best quality herbs.

**Herb** refers to the whole plant, including leaves, flowers, stems, seeds and, sometimes, roots. The whole herb can be

harvested while the plant is in flower. If the flower is not going to be used, then the herb can be gathered before the flowers emerge, but after the leaves have appeared.

**Flowers** are gathered in the pubescent stage when their colour, aroma and volatile oils are at their most potent or when they are wide open and at their peak.

**Roots** can be gathered in the spring before leaves start to develop and before the plant goes into flower, or in the autumn after flowering is finished and leaves have died back. Be sure to leave plenty of rootstock so that plants can continue to flourish.

**Fruits and seeds** are gathered when ripe.

## Preserving Plants

Drying plants helps preserve their vitality for future use in teas, tinctures, syrups, salves, creams and as spices. Dry out of direct sunlight, in a well-ventilated area, with low light and low heat. Methods include racks, baskets, paper bags, dehydrators and hanging in loose bundles. After drying, transfer to storage jars and label clearly. Store in a dark, cool, dry area—light, heat, moisture and exposure to air will deteriorate dried plants and decrease their shelf life.



## Arnica

*Arnica cordifolia, A. angustifolia*

Asteraceae family perennial, slender rhizome, erect stem stands 10–50 cm high. Leaves opposite, simple, entire or toothed. Yellow flowers with ray petals, circular cup of bracts at base.

**Habitat:** Moist mountainous areas, shade, among poplars, aspens and conifers.

**Harvest:** Pinch flower head off stem when in full flower; allow to wilt for a few hours so excess moisture evaporates; infuse in oil immediately because the flowers will turn to a white seed fluff as they begin to dry.

**Medicinal Uses:** Topically as salve, cream, oil or poultice to improve circulation to injured area, promotes healing of bruises,

sprains, strains, muscular inflammation, aches, pains, rheumatic joint pain and swelling due to fractures.

**Cautions:** Not for use on bleeding skin or for internal use unless in a homeopathic remedy.



### BASIC OIL-INFUSION RECIPE

Make sure your equipment is clean and dry. If using fresh herbs, wilt them for a day before infusing.

Combine 1 cup (250 mL) fresh or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125 mL) dried herbs in a blender with 2 cups (500 mL) olive oil or carrier oil of your choice. Pour into a jar, covered with a cheesecloth if using fresh herbs, or a lid if using dry herbs. Shake or stir daily.

After 2 to 4 weeks, strain the oil through a few layers of cheesecloth and add  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp (1 mL) vitamin-E oil as a preservative. Pour oil into a dark glass bottle. Label and store in a cool place out of direct sunlight.



## Bearberry

*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*

Ericaceae family perennial, wiry prostrate evergreen shrub, forms large mats that hug the earth. Flower clusters of tiny pinkish-white bells with 10 stamens. Fruit dull red, mealy inside, contains one hard-walled seed with pithy texture.

**Habitat:** Sunny, sandy soil, dry slopes, rocky areas, gravel, riverbanks, peat, coniferous forests, tundra.

**Harvest:** Leaves in spring through autumn.

**Medicinal Uses:** Leaves tinctured or tea as antiseptic for urinary tract infections, including cystitis, urethritis, prostatitis, diarrhea and as a mouthwash for infections.

**Food Uses:** Berry bland but edible; high in vitamin C and carbohydrates.

**Cautions:** Avoid large doses in pregnancy. Not to be taken for longer than two weeks.



## Bedstraw

*Galium* species

Rubiaceae family annual with green whorled leaves on squarish stems. Fragrant flowers in branched cyme clusters; petals are pure white to yellow and hairy. Nutlets come in pairs, 2 mm in length.

**Habitat:** Along riverbanks, dry, open or gravelly places.

**Harvest:** Flowering plant, seeds, leaves as they appear.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea or tincture, lymphatic tonic, diuretic, blood cleanser, urinary inflammations including cystitis.

Leaves and flowers can be used as compress to stop bleeding, soothe sore muscles and for eczema.

**Food Uses:** Young plants fried in oil, eaten alone or added to salads. Seeds dried, roasted and ground for a coffee substitute. Whole chopped plant can be used like rennet to curdle milk for cheese making.

**Cautions:** Continual use can irritate the mouth. Avoid with poor circulation and diabetes.



#### HOW TO PREPARE A WILD PLANT TEA

A fresh or dried-leaf infusion is the best method to prepare herbal tea. Break up the leaves, flowers and stems into small pieces (this releases the aromatic oils) and add a pinch per cup. Pour the boiling water over the leaves, cover so as not to release the volatile oils, and infuse for five to ten minutes. You can sweeten it up with a wee dollop of honey and enjoy!



## Wild Chamomile

*Matricaria discoidea*

Asteraceae family annual with many-branched leafy stems, 10–30 cm or higher. Leaves highly dissected, fern-like. Flowering heads are yellowish green, numerous, conical, in a cup of bracts; ray flowers absent.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils.

**Harvest:** Leaves and flowers in summer.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea for gas, diarrhea, heartburn, sleep, menstrual cramping and colds. Topically for wounds and achy, sore muscles.

**Food Uses:** Flowers can be made into a tea infusion, eaten raw or added to salads, smoothies, cakes and muffins. Contains vitamins A, C and minerals such as calcium, magnesium and potassium.



## Chickweed

*Stellaria media*

Caryophyllaceae family annual. Trailing ground cover reaches lengths of 10–60 cm. Lower leaves broad, long sparsely hairy petioles; upper leaves smaller and lack petioles. Tiny, dainty five-petal white flowers are sparsely scattered along the plant and are deeply cleft; petals shorter than green hairy sepals. Tiny seeds are reddish brown.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils.

**Harvest:** Whole plant.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea or eaten, regulates intestinal flora, absorbing toxins from bowel to balance colon bacteria and yeasts, good for constipation, lowering cholesterol and to aid weight-loss. Topically

to reduce inflammation of irritated itchy skin from insect bites; draws out infection from wounds or boils.

**Food Uses:** Salad green high in vitamins, minerals and usable protein. Add to soups, stews, salsa, dips, dressings, pastas and sandwiches. Use in place of parsley, add to pesto.

**Cautions:** Excess consumption can lead to diarrhea. During pregnancy only use topically and in small amounts as food.



## Red Clover

*Trifolium pratense*

Fabaceae (pea) family perennial with stems up to 80 cm high, erect or spreading. Three leaflets, oval-elliptic, 2–5 cm long; lower leaves, long petioled; upper leaves, short petioled or stalkless. Fragrant clusters of globe-shaped flowers, 1.2–2 mm long and red or pink.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils, wild all over the world.

**Harvest:** Flowers and leaves: when the flowers have just bloomed.

**Medicinal Uses:** The “queen of blood purifiers.” As tea or tincture for inflammatory skin conditions like acne, rashes, psoriasis, eczema; for coughs, asthma, bronchitis, sore throats, whooping cough, colds and fevers. Increase lymph flow, detoxifying, reducing inflammation for sore joints, arthritis, rheumatism and gout. Topically as poultice for mastitis and as mild infusion to promote healthy breast milk.

**Food Uses:** Add cooked, dried or fresh clover flowers to grain dishes, salads, stir-fries, soups, sauces, breads and muffins or as a refreshing iced tea.

**Cautions:** Those with breast cancer or hormone-sensitive cancers, on birth-control pills, on blood-thinning medication or tamoxifen should avoid clover.

## WHAT IS A TINCTURE?

Herbs are infused in alcohol or vinegar in order to extract the plant's medicinal properties. Tinctures are usually applied under the tongue, for quick absorption, however some people find the taste too strong and prefer to add tinctures to juice, water or tea.



## Coltsfoot

*Petasites* species

Asteraceae family perennial. Flowers in spring before leaves emerge. Small clustered white flowers on a stalk; seeds have feathery bristles. Stems 10–50 cm high; leaves 2–18 cm high, arising from base, variable shapes, toothed margins, usually hairless, dark green on upper surface, dense white woolly hairs on lower surface. There are several subspecies of coltsfoot in North America and are differentiated by leaf shape. *P. frigidus* var. *sagittatus* has a heart- or arrow-shaped leaf.

**Habitat:** Moist habitats, from lakeshores to woods, to alpine slopes.

**Harvest:** Leaves: early summer.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea or syrup for coughs to expel excess phlegm. Externally as poultice or salve for skin inflammations.

**Cautions:** Contains alkaloids and can be harmful if taken in large quantities for long periods of time. Pregnant and nursing women and children under the age of six should avoid coltsfoot.



## Dandelion

*Taraxacum officinale*

Asteraceae family perennial with rosette of jagged, irregular-lobed green leaves produced from a long, thick, fleshy taproot. Stem is hollow with a white, latex-like substance. Bright yellow flowers with ray florets are surrounded by two rows of floral bracts. The outer row is often rolled back towards itself.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils, garden edges, meadows, roadsides.

**Harvest:** Roots: in spring before plant flowers; in autumn after first frost. Young leaves: early spring and throughout the summer. Flowers: in full blossom.

**Medicinal Uses:** Root in a tea for indigestion, spleen disorders, heartburn, constipation and stimulating the appetite. Used to treat rheumatism, gout, eczema and helps to lower cholesterol

and high blood pressure. Leaf is diuretic. Flowers make golden oil used topically for breast congestion.

**Food Uses:** High in the electrolytes sodium and potassium, young dandelion roots can be eaten as a nutritious vegetable. Nourishing vinegars can be made with the roots, leaves and flowers to use in salad dressings, sauces and marinades. The dried and powdered roots make a pleasant caffeine-free coffee substitute. Leaf is high in calcium and vitamin C and can be eaten fresh in salads, steamed like spinach, added to stir-fries, soups and stews and can also be used fresh or dried as a tea. Dandelion blossoms are rich in vitamin D, wonderful on their own, fried up in butter and garlic or dipped into a batter and baked or fried.

**Cautions:** Don't harvest roadside dandelions or lawn dandelions that have been sprayed with pesticides. Use caution if you have allergies to plants in the Asteraceae family.



## Devil's Club

*Oplopanax horridus*

Araliaceae (ginseng) family perennial. Coarse, scented shrub, 1–1.5 m high. Stems densely covered with spines and prickles. Leaves alternate, long-petioled; blades 10–30 cm wide, palmately five- to seven-lobed, leaf veins prickly beneath. Flowers in large terminal cluster, 10–20 cm long; petals greenish; terminal clusters of inedible red fruit 4–5 mm long, two-seeded.

**Habitat:** Understory of moist, shady and dense conifer forests, predominantly coastal regions.

**Harvest:** Shoots: early spring, just after they appear. Roots and inner bark of recumbent stem: spring or early summer. Slow growing; only gather what you need.

**Medicinal Uses:** Dried devil's club root and the inner bark of the stem as a tea or tincture to strengthen body and to help it adapt to stresses and illnesses. For colds, flu and bronchitis use to dispel excess mucus and promote perspiration, which eliminates excess toxins through the skin. Use for stomach ulcers, a mild laxative and to soothe a nervous stomach. Treats general joint pain.

**Food Uses:** The early young shoots can be eaten raw or peeled and then cooked, but only within a few days after they have sprouted from the soil. Spring roots can be chewed after peeling off the outer layer of bark; they have a nutty flavour.

**Cautions:** When harvesting, be aware that the prickly spines can break your skin and quickly cause an infection. The inner bark is emetic and in large doses can cause vomiting.



## Fireweed

*Chamerion angustifolium*

Onagraceae (evening primrose) family, perennial. Erect fibrous stems up to 1.5 m high, arising from far-reaching horizontal roots. Leaves alternate, lance-shaped, 5–20 cm long, hairless, paler and veiny beneath. Flowering stalk tall, petals magenta rose-pink, 10–12 mm long. Long pink seed capsules 4–10 cm, developing at the base of the flowering stalk while upper flowers are still opening.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils, recently burned areas, open woods, hillsides and stream banks.

**Harvest:** Spring: leaves and roots. Summer: leaves and flowers. Autumn: roots.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea is a mild laxative used to dispel intestinal worms and for digestive upsets. Root, leaf and flower tea or tincture can reduce benign prostatic hyperplasia that can interfere with urination. Use topically for burns, dry, irritated skin, such as eczema or psoriasis.

**Food Uses:** Called “wild asparagus” the young shoots can be prepared and eaten like asparagus, are high in vitamins A and C, and are a healthy addition to spring salads. Leaves can be added to a stir-fry throughout the summer. Jelly can be made with the flowers.



## Goldenrod

*Solidago* species

Asteraceae family perennial. Lance-shaped oblong leaves, mustard-yellow ray flowers in clusters on the branch. Stems usually more than 35 cm high, from well-developed rhizomes; involucres usually less than 4 mm high.

**Habitat:** River meadows and open woods to moist alpine slopes.

**Harvest:** Flowers and leaves throughout summer. Roots: early spring or autumn.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea or tincture for excess mucus in the bronchial tubes. Is a diuretic and anti-inflammatory to help

treat cystitis and urethritis. Kidney tonic, antioxidant, antihistamine and anti-inflammatory. Topically leaves used as poultice for burns, insect bites and stings and to stop bleeding.

**Food Uses:** Young leaves cooked like spinach and added to soups, stews and stir-fries. Flowers in salads, added to muffins, cake batters, egg dishes and as a soup garnish. The young flowers or seeds can be gathered in the autumn, dried, and used as a thickener for gravies, soups, etc., throughout the winter.

**Cautions:** Use caution if you have allergies to plants in the Asteraceae family.



## Horsetail

*Equisetum arvense*

Equisetaceae family perennial. Green, jointed stems grow to 50 cm. Three to four angled branches are solid, in whorls at the nodes, spreading upwards. Sheaths at nodes have four to fourteen short, narrow dark teeth. First internode on each branch longer than the adjoining stem sheath.

**Habitat:** Damp, open woods, low open ground, meadows, embankments, dry sandy soil.

**Harvest:** Early summer when branches are pointing up, downward-pointing branches have developed oxalate crystals and are not suitable for consumption.

**Medicinal Uses:** As a tea, rich in silica, helps form collagen—an important protein found in connective tissue, skin, bone, cartilage

and ligaments. For mending broken, fractured bones, sprains, rheumatism, treating and preventing osteoporosis. Promotes urination, for bladder and urinary-tract infections, and can help heal stomach ulcers and remove kidney stones.

**Food Uses:** The spring budding shoots of the antioxidant-rich horsetail can be used as a steamed vegetable or tea.

**Cautions:** Long-term use is not recommended. Do not use horsetail if you have edema, gout, heart problems or kidney inflammation.



## Juniper

*Juniperus communis*

Evergreen shrub in Cupressaceae (cypress) family. Needle leaves are awl-shaped, 5–20 mm long, crowded in whorls, three along the branch. The mature seed cones are berry-like in appearance, resinous, fragrant and dark blue with a powdery coating.

**Habitat:** Dry, sunny slopes.

**Harvest:** Blue, resinous fruits take three years to mature and are gathered when ripe. Needles can be gathered any time.

**Medicinal Uses:** Berries are warming and spicy. Antiseptic, useful as a tea for urinary-tract problems such as cystitis, urethritis, prostatitis and vaginitis. Diuretic, helps to clear the bladder, prostate, gallbladder and kidneys of excess wastes

like uric acid, which causes gout. Anti-inflammatory, used topically or as a tea helps with sore joints, arthritis, muscles, gout and sciatica nerve pain. Strengthening to the immune system and good for preventing colds and flus.

**Food Uses:** Helps to eliminate gas and expel intestinal flatulence, assisting in the digestion of gas-producing foods like beans and cabbage. Juniper berries as a spice for sauerkraut, salmon and wild game.

**Cautions:** Berries can be irritating to the kidneys and should be avoided by those who have kidney disease or problems. Not for use in pregnancy. Use in moderation.



## Labrador Tea

*Rhododendron groenlandicum*

Aromatic, erect shrub in Ericaceae (heath) family, 30–80 cm high. Leathery leaves 2–5 cm long, blunt-tipped, edges curling under. Upper surface of leaves dark green, lower surface covered with densely woolly white hairs when new, turning rust-coloured with age. Flowers 10–12 mm wide with white petals.

**Habitat:** Peaty soils, bogs, muskegs, moist conifer forests, meadows.

**Harvest:** Leaves: early spring throughout the summer, but can be harvested year-round. Flowers: as they bloom.

**Medicinal Uses:** Mild narcotic effect. Topically reduces pain, treats skin problems like burns, ulcers, itchy chapped skin, stings, scabies and dandruff. As a tea, blood cleanser, tonic herb intestinal regulator, mildly laxative yet soothes diarrhea. For coughs and irritations of the lungs.

**Food Uses:** Substitute for black tea. High in vitamin C. As a spice, crushed or ground leaves add an interesting flavour to meat dishes and salad dressings. The leaves can be used as a substitute for bay leaf.

**Cautions:** Use in moderation. Do not use in excess if pregnant or have high blood pressure.



## Lamb's Quarters

*Chenopodium album*

Chenopodiaceae family annual, with stems up to 60 cm, erect or ascending, simple to many branched. Leaves 1–12 cm long, shaped like goose feet. Flowers clustered along the stem, inconspicuous, small and green. Sepal and petal lobes with keeled midribs; seeds 1.1–1.6 mm long, round, shiny black. The early seeds are grey coloured, then turn pinkish-red.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils.

**Harvest:** Leaves: throughout the summer. Seeds: late autumn when they turn reddish.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea for stomach ache, gas, bouts of diarrhea, an external wash for skin ulcers or gargle for throat and mouth ulcers.

Poultice for insect bites and stings.

**Food Uses:** Leaves high in vitamins A and C—when eaten with the seeds, form a complete amino-acid complex. Fresh leaves can be used like spinach. Drying the leaves and seeds is also an option and they are delicious in sauces for pasta and as a parsley replacement in soups. Seeds can then be eaten raw, dried, or ground up, adding protein and amino acids to breads, soups, stews and morning smoothies.

**Cautions:** Don't harvest in polluted areas.



## Lungwort

*Mertensia paniculata*

Boraginaceae (borage) family perennial, with branching erect stems, 20–70 cm high. Dark green leaves with rough hairs, broad at the base tapering to a long point; upper leaves are sessile (lack petioles). Flowers in drooping clusters; petals fused into funnel-shaped tubes, pink in bud, turning a rich blue in bloom. Seeds are wrinkled nutlets. Also called blue bells.

**Habitat:** Lowland plant of riverbanks, open woods and clearings, occasionally above timberline.

**Harvest:** Leaves and flowers: throughout spring and summer.

**Medicinal Uses:** As a tea for coughs, respiratory problems, relieving diarrhea and topically to soothe hemorrhoids. A poultice made with leaves is used to heal cuts and wounds.

**Food Uses:** Leaves added raw to salads, shredded for use in cold- or warm-grain salads, soups, stews, or eaten as a steamed green.



## Mint

*Mentha arvensis*

Lamiaceae family perennial, stems singular or branching, to 50 cm high. Leaves 1–8 cm long, variously oval-shaped, tapered at both ends, covered with aromatic oil glands, margins toothed. Flowers small, tightly clustered in axils of middle and upper leaves; petals purplish to pinkish or white, fused into a partial tube 4–6 mm long.

**Habitat:** Grassy swales, meadows, moist ditches, riverbanks and lakeshores.

**Harvest:** Leaves: throughout the summer.

**Medicinal Uses:** Aids digestion, relieving menstrual cramps and nausea and helps to bring on delayed menstruation. Helps colds and flu by reducing excess mucus and lowering fevers. Cold tea can be used topically as a compress to reduce fevers, for itchy skin rashes and to reduce pain of arthritis. Tea in the morning clears a tired mind and can deflect oncoming headaches and alleviate nausea due to motion sickness.

**Food Uses:** High in vitamin A and C and minerals like calcium, iron and magnesium. Add to fruit salads, savoury dishes such as hummus and chutney. Jelly good with peas, wild game, fowl or ice cream.

**Cautions:** Those susceptible to miscarriage should avoid high doses.



Cathie Archbold photo

## Stinging Nettle

*Urtica dioica*

Urticaceae family perennial herb with tough, simple or branched stems, to 1 m or higher. Stinging hairs on the stems and leaves. Leaves coarsely toothed, up to 15 cm long. Small green flowers in elongated and drooping clusters from upper nodes. Seeds small, 1–1.5 mm long, tan to brown.

**Habitat:** Grows in thickets near stream banks and in disturbed, rich, damp soils.

**Harvest:** Leaves: spring and early summer. Roots: early spring or late autumn. Seeds: when mature.

**Medicinal Uses:** Chlorophyll-rich nettle leaf is a tonic herb that strengthens and supports the whole body, specifically the digestive, respiratory, urinary and glandular systems. Antihistamine properties make it good for symptoms of eczema and allergies such as sneezing and itchy, watery eyes. Used for arthritis, gout, kidney irritations and in a nourishing syrup or a tea infusion for anemia. Helps the efficiency of kidney and liver and is a mild laxative and diuretic. Ripe seed tincture clears excess creatinine from urine in seven to ten days.

**Food Uses:** Nutrient rich leaves used fresh as a juice, in soups and stir-fries, steamed or lightly fried with garlic-butter.

**Cautions:** After nettle enters its flowering and seed-setting stages, mature leaves develop gritty particles called cystoliths that can irritate the urinary tract when ingested.



## Wild Onion/Chives

*Allium schoenoprasum*

Liliaceae family perennial with flower clusters arising from a leafless stem; underground bulb elongated, egg-shaped with papery skin. Flowering stems are 15–45 cm high. Leaves shorter, hollow and smell and taste of onion. Flowers umbellate, petals dark pink to purple, with darker veins.

**Habitat:** Moist, turf places along rivers and lakeshores at lower altitudes, grows well in gardens.

**Harvest:** Stems and flowers: throughout spring and summer.

**Medicinal Uses:** Benefits digestive system and blood circulation by improving appetite and warming body. Mild antiseptic and expels worms and parasites.

**Food Uses:** Flowers and stems in salads, soups, with vegetables, omelets and in savoury muffins and breads. Can be chopped then

dried or frozen for winter use.



## Plantain

*Plantago major*

Plantaginaceae family perennial, green leaves elliptic to egg-shaped with prominent parallel veins; margins entire or undulating, 3–15 cm long. Flower spikes dense, up to 25 cm long, hairless; small greenish flowers.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils, riverbanks and garden edges.

**Harvest:** Leaves: summer. Seeds: autumn.

**Medicinal Uses:** Grows throughout the world with different regional uses. As a poultice, plantain draws out poison from snakebites, staunches bleeding wounds, stops mosquito bite itch. Useful as a salve for skin infections, leg ulcers, eczema, psoriasis, burns, abscesses, cracked skin, cuts, abrasions, bruises and hemorrhoids. Used in tea, tincture or cough syrup for bronchial congestion, laryngitis, lung irritations and coughs.

**Food Uses:** Full of enzymes, vitamins A, C and K, and minerals. Young leaves can be eaten raw, chopped into salads, steamed as a side vegetable, cooked in soups or sautéed in a bit of butter.

**Cautions:** Plantain seed and husk powders can lower blood-sugar levels, so diabetics should be aware before using.

## PREPARING POULTICES

Poultices are made with fresh or dried botanicals and are used to soothe and heal tissue, stimulate circulation, relax muscles and help draw out toxins and foreign material from skin.

To make a poultice, barely cover mixed fresh or dried herbs with boiling water in measuring cup or saucepan.

Let herbs steep 15 minutes. Scoop the herbs onto a double layer of cheesecloth and draw into a bundle. Test to make sure it is not too hot then place the poultice over the affected area and cover with a dry cloth to retain heat and absorb excess liquid.



## Raspberry

*Rubus idaeus*

Rosaceae (rose) family, erect woody shrub, to 1.5 m high, branches covered in prickles; canes biennial, freely branching. Leaves three or five leaflets, double-toothed, green above, white, woolly hairs below. Flowers in small clusters, axillary or terminal; sepals 4–10 mm long, finely pubescent and with gland-tipped hairs; petals about as long as the sepals, white. Fruit red.

**Habitat:** Woodland clearings.

**Harvest:** Leaves: spring/early summer before the berries start to form. Berries: when juicy, red and ripe.

**Medicinal Uses:** Fruit is a blood tonic; high in vitamins B, C, and minerals like magnesium, calcium, iron and phosphorus. Leaf tea, also high in vitamins and minerals, is used as a breastfeeding tonic, as women's tonic for stages of reproduction, tones and strengthens muscles of pelvic region, including uterus, regulating the menstrual cycle, preparing uterus for conception, eases menstrual cramping, excessive bleeding and diarrhea. As mouthwash for ulcers, cankers, bleeding gums and as a gargle for sore throats.

**Food Uses:** Raspberries are high in pectin and citric acid—great for making jam.

**Cautions:** Leaves go through a chemical change while drying. They should only be used fresh or dried, not wilted.



## Rose

*Rosa* species

Rosaceae family, low shrub with stems covered in thorns and prickles. Leaves of 3–7 leaflets, toothed, with small soft hairs. Fragrant flowers, usually solitary on the stem; petals 2–3 cm long, pink; many yellow stamens in the centre of the flowers. Sepals prominent, green with glandular hairs on the back. Fruits are fleshy red hips, elliptic or pear shaped with browned sepals still intact and erect.

**Habitat:** Riverbanks, woodland clearings, disturbed soils or burns.

**Harvest:** Leaves: early spring. Flowers: summer. Fruit: autumn, after the first frost.

**Medicinal Uses:** Leaf tea, blood-cleansing tonic for stress, infection, diarrhea and gastritis. Petals stop inflammation and moisturize the skin. Rosehips are high in vitamin C, minerals and bioflavonoids. Used as a heart tonic tea to strengthen capillaries,

for hemorrhoids, varicose veins, blood circulation helping with cold extremities. Rosehip syrup or tea for anemia, for menstrual cramping, bladder or kidney irritations.

**Food Uses:** Flowers and leaves can be added to salads, jams, jellies and to decorate cakes. Rose-petal jelly is light and delicate, yet complex and divine. The fruit for syrup, jam and jelly.

**Cautions:** Seed hairs of rosehips are irritating to the digestive tract.



## Wild Sage

*Artemisia frigida*

Asteraceae family perennial, aromatic, mat-forming with a stout, fibrous and much-branched crown. Leaves crowded, highly dissected, with fine linear divisions, silvery-grey; upper stem leaves smaller, less dissected. Flowering stems from prostrate or ascending branches, 10–40 cm or more high, whitish-grey hairs. Flower clusters not showy, bracts surrounding the flowers are the same colour as the leaves and stems.

**Habitat:** Steep, open slopes and sandy river terraces.

**Harvest:** Leaves and flowers: spring through autumn.

**Medicinal Uses:** Known as wormwood, tea is bitter, acts as a digestive tonic and is a potent agent to expel worms. Gargle tea to heal a sore throat and to wash wounds. Use topically to aid cuts, wounds and for other skin problems such as acne, boils and blisters.

**Food Uses:** Use as a spice to add a unique flavour for poultry and meat dishes.

**Cautions:** Use in moderation. High doses can cause stomach upset and cramping. Not recommended for young children, pregnant women or people with allergies to Asteraceae family.

## THE HIKER'S HERB

How many times have you been out hiking and your feet have gotten sore? A simple remedy is to line the bottom of your shoes with some wild sage leaves. The result: Relief for aching arches and hiking boots you don't mind having in the tent!



## Shepherd's Purse

*Capsella bursa-pastoris*

Brassicaceae (cabbage) family winter annual, stems 10–50 cm high. Basal rosette of leaves 3–20 cm long; stem leaves alternate, small, clasping the stem. Loose flower clusters, sepals greenish or whitish, about half the length of the petals; four petals, 2–4 mm long, white or pinkish. Dry fruits with heart-shaped cases, lobes split off to release seeds; 4–8 mm long.

**Habitat:** Disturbed soils.

**Harvest:** Leaves: before flowering. Seeds: in late summer until snow.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea or tincture, mild diuretic, high in vitamin K, an effective blood clotter. Decreases menstrual flooding.

**Food Uses:** Leaves are high in beta carotene, iron, calcium and potassium. Good added to salads and sandwiches or steamed. Seedpods add a peppery spice to dishes.



## Strawberry Blite

*Chenopodium capitatum*

Chenopodiaceae family annual, erect stems or ascending, simple or branched, up to 60 cm high. Leaves up to 10 cm long, arrowhead shaped, toothed, long-petioled toward base. Unusual-looking flower clusters bright red, juicy and round in shape.

**Habitat:** Clearings, disturbed soils.

**Harvest:** Leaves: summer. Red flower/seed heads: when blooming.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea, whole plant for healing mouth, throat ulcers; or cooled as compress for hemorrhoids.

**Food Uses:** Seedy red flowers are sweet and tasty raw in smoothies and salads.



## Yarrow

*Achillea millefolium*

Asteraceae family perennial, stems simple, forked above, 20–60 cm high. Green basal leaves, fern-like with long petioles, lower stem leaves with petioles, but middle and upper stem leaves stalkless, reduced upwards. Fragrant flowering heads numerous, in flat or round-topped clusters; petals white or cream coloured.

**Habitat:** Meadows, sandy slopes, dry areas; also common in gardens and disturbed soils.

**Plant Parts Used:** Flowers, leaves, roots, stalk.

**Harvest:** Flowers and leaves: in summer.

**Medicinal Uses:** Tea, immune stimulant for fever, cold and flu, excess phlegm, sore throat, inflamed gums or mouth infections. A

bitter, yarrow aids digestion, lowers blood pressure and increases circulation. Stops topical bleeding immediately. A pain reliever with antiseptic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory properties to keep wounds free of infection. Helps reduce heavy menstruation, relieve pelvic congestion, reduce cramps and cleanses the liver so hormones like progesterone and estrogen are processed efficiently in the body.

**Food Uses:** High in vitamins and minerals, tea or tincture can be added to smoothies. Fresh or dried plant can be made into nutritive vinegar for salad dressing. A tablespoon of vinegar infusion can also be added to a cup of hot water and sipped. The leaves can be crushed and added to spice blends.

**Cautions:** Not recommended during pregnancy or for those with allergies to the Asteraceae family.



*Cathie Archbold photo*

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