



THE ESSENTIAL HERBAL

2020
SPRING



The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist

Spring Healers

by essentialherbal.com

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C K F J T Z E I M B V V D S B
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plantain
jewelweed
chickweed
comfrey
salve
tincture
herb festival
breathing
fresh
nettles

dandelion
violets
cleavers
cottonwood
sassafras
pine
spearmint
chives
thyme
sage

We've put together this miniature sample of the magazine to share so that you can get an idea of what we do here at The Essential Herbal. The regular magazine is 32 full sized pages. Into each issue, we pack practical information, recipes, instructions, and ideas. Many thanks to our contributors for making this possible. They come up with some unique ideas that are fun and do-able. Hopefully you will find something useful to you and worth saving on these pages.

We began publication in 2002, and in 2012 we started offering print or pdf delivery options. Print is only available in the US, but pdf's go everywhere.

Since we began, we have found that although we never know exactly what material we will have for each generally seasonal issue right up until the deadline, it always falls together spectacularly with just the perfect blend of medicinal, culinary, fragrant, crafting, and growing information. There are projects and guidance to begin learning something new, keeping our readers busy right up until they start looking for the next magazine. We put out 6 issues a year, and each one is delightful.

So please enjoy this small sample. Hang onto it, and if you find that you'd like to become a part of it - as a subscriber, writer, or advertiser (or even all three!), visit our website or email us for more information.

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The Essential Herbal Magazine

The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist

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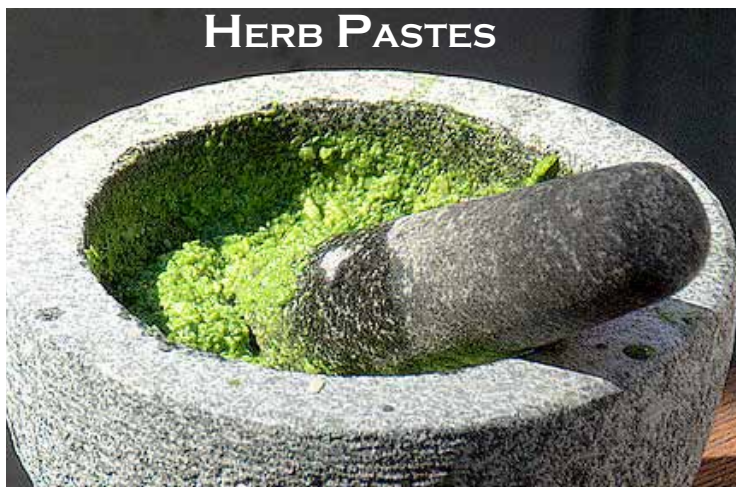
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HERB PASTES



When you think of pesto, it is usually the flavor that comes to mind. Maybe after that, you think about how easy it is to whip up a last minute meal without heating up the kitchen in the summer. We mostly think about Basil, but many other herbs can be used. Rarely do most of us think about the immense health benefits derived from these herb pastes, but we really should. It can go on pasta, you can slather it on a sandwich, add a dollop to soups, or use it as dip. Pesto is an easy food to eat in a lot of different ways.

Earlier this year, I was trying to think of pleasant ways to eat more raw garlic during cold and flu season. This is really a subject that has confounded me for many years since garlic was not a typical ingredient in the PA German fare of my childhood. It is an ingredient that I at first struggled to acquire a taste for and eventually came to enjoy. Still, eating raw garlic is one of the simplest ways to kick a virus, and when I realized that pesto was not cooked, it was a revelation for me.

Here are some of the reasons that pesto is more than just a sauce:



Garlic - Incredible healing powers that help to prevent influenza, colds, yeasts and fungus and contains antiseptic, antibiotic, antiviral, bactericidal, and anti-inflammatory properties. After watching my daughter go through over a week of the nasty, wheezing, upper respiratory virus this winter (after re-

fusing all offers of my herbal concoctions), naturally, I started coming down with it. Over the course of a day and a half, I ate about 2 full bulbs of garlic and was quickly on the mend. You could smell me coming, but at least I wasn't sick.



Basil - All of the culinary basil (and of course holy basil as well) work hard against inflammation. Basil is rich in anti-oxidants that combat aging and support the immune system and can combat stress, help with upper respiratory illnesses, battle headaches, or calm the stomach and improve digestion.



Walnuts (who can afford pine nuts anymore?) - Walnuts contain both monounsaturated fatty acids and Omega 3 essential fatty acids to promote healthier arteries and cholesterol levels, helping to possibly prevent strokes and heart disease. They contain very high levels of antioxidants and are packed with the B Complex vitamins, tons of beneficial minerals, and vitamin E.

Olive Oil - Bolsters immune system and helps to fight viruses. Consuming olive oil improves bone mineralization and calcification. It helps calcium absorption. There are many long term benefits to olive oil.

Many other herbs can be blended into pastes. They don't have

to be single, they can be blends like Basil and Chickweed, Sage and Nettles, etc., but do consider some of these benefits:



Thyme - Thyme is a rich source of nutrition, even in small quantities. It is a treasure trove of vitamins C, B6, K, and A, riboflavin, iron, copper, manganese, calcium, folate, phosphorus, potassium, and zinc. One compound, Thymol is one of a naturally-occurring class of compounds known as biocides that can destroy harmful organisms like bacteria, microbes, and viruses. Combined with other biocides, such as carvacolo (also in thyme), it has strong antimicrobial power and displays significant anti-oxidant protection of cellular membranes.



Sage - Sage is an amazing source of several B-complex vitamins, including folic acid, thiamin, pyridoxine and riboflavin. Lots of the vitamins C and A, plus minerals like potassium, zinc, calcium, iron, manganese, copper, and magnesium. Highly anti-inflammatory, sage is a powerful herb for people with conditions caused by or worsened by inflammation such as rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, and atherosclerosis.



Chickweed - Packed with vitamins and minerals like iron, calcium, magnesium, manganese, silicon, zinc, phosphorus,

potassium, protein sodium, copper, carotenes, and vitamins B and C, chickweed also has saponins that help with joint inflammation.



Nettles - Contain tannic acid, lecithin, chlorophyll, iron, silica, potassium, phosphorus, sulfur, sodium, and vitamins A and C. Some of the talents Nettles bring to the table include being diuretic, astringent, pectoral, anodyne, tonic, styp-tic, nutritive, anti-rheumatic, anti-allergenic, decongestant, expectorant, anti-spasmodic, and anti-histamine, herpetic, galactagogue, and an anti-histamine. Grinding the herb to paste takes the sting away without destroying the valuable components.



Violet Leaves - There are lots of vital minerals, especially calcium and magnesium available in the leaves. The leaves and flowers contain Rutin, a bioflavonoid that is helpful in the treatment of venous insufficiency and lowered blood flow to various parts of the body. Specifically, hemorrhoids and varicose veins may respond to consuming violet leaves. The leaves especially contain saponins and mucilage, having a positive effect on regularity of elimination, lung health, and can soothe the entire gastro-intestinal and urinary tracts.

Simple Basil Pesto Recipe

Put the following directly into the food processor:

1 C basil leaves

5 - 6 cloves of Garlic

1 C grated Parmesan cheese

1/2 C Walnuts

1/4 C olive oil

Process until smooth.

HERBS FOR BEES AND BEEKEEPERS

Suzan Tobias Scholl, Herbalist, C.N.M.A.
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From the May/June '12 issue of The Essential Herbal Magazine

Whether you are a Beekeeper, a gardener, or just a happy observer of nature, you can promote a healthy environment for our happy pollinators and provide an area that is attractive to these special friends.

Did you know that there are different kinds of pollinating bees? If you are not a beekeeper, you may not realize that there are pollinating bees that do not live in hives. We often speak of “busy” Honey Bees and Bumble Bees- but did you know that there are several other pollinator Bees? Solitary, non-swarming bees like the Red Mason bee, The Blue Orchard Bee, and the Bumble Bee live in holes in wood. The Red Mason bee can be seen in the garden from March to July and is responsible for pollinating top fruit and soft fruit. The Blue Orchard Bee is active from May to September and is an effective pollinator of summer flowers, herbs and vegetables. Both the Mason and the Orchard Bee are non-stinging and gentle. Bumble Bees pollinate shrubs, trees, garden flowers, and vegetables.



hiding out during a rain shower

In spring, you can provide solitary wooden beehives perforated with holes for the Red Mason and Blue Orchard Bees, and Bumble Bee “nest-houses” for your pollinators. By attracting all bees to your garden, you will ensure effective pollination and happy flowers. By planting Herbs that are especially beneficial to bees with flowers that are blue, purple and yellow, you will be certain to attract the attention of a variety of pollinators. Aromatic herbs such as Lavender, Rosemary, Sage, Thyme, “Bee Balm” (Bergamot or Minarda), Hyssop, Basil, Anise Hyssop, and Marjoram; Wild Herbs such as Kudzu, Motherwort, Catnip and Purple Loosestrife; Bitter Herbs such as Southernwood, Wormwood and Rue: Nectar-rich Herbs

such as Clover, Alfalfa, Mint, Borage; and the Rose Family are all Herbs that will attract these hard-workers to your garden. By noting the bloom-time of your Herbs, you can plant a variety that invites pollinators throughout the growing season. Many Herbs “bolt” –they flower, and then decline. If you like to harvest your Herbs for cooking, potpourri, or medicine-making, you may want to plant extra plants to share with your pollinators. (To keep plants viable for harvest, you have to snip off blossoms as they appear. That way, the plant continues to mature and you can engender several harvests throughout the growing season.)



calendula

You might also plan a dedicated “Bee Garden.” By planting all the Bee-attracting Herbs in one place you get to observe their behavior more closely. Look for a spot with some shade. Add a swing or bench so you can sit, read a book, and enjoy their behaviors and hard endeavors. Perennial Herbs such as Bee Balm, Catnip, Mint, Rosemary, Sage, Thyme and some Lavenders will be the “backbone” of your Bee Garden, while annuals like Borage, Chamomile, Cilantro, Fennel, Dill, and Parsley will add interest, too. Providing building supplies such as a heap of well-sifted soil, moistened with water nearby will keep your bees content.

By growing large plots of nectar-rich herbs, Beekeepers can promote good health for the hives and improve the quality and quantity of their honey. Noted animal herbalist, Juliette de Bairacli-Levy felt that Bees are “instinctive and highly skilled herbalists.” Cultivars such as Clover, Alfalfa, Buckwheat, and Sweet Clover; and Wild Herbs such as Goldenrod and Aster, Chicory, and Kudzu are important sources of nectar. Frequently these are not abundant or are rendered poisonous to bees by herbicides and/or pesticide.

If you have space to plant singular herbs for honey you will have success placing your hives within close proximity to the following:

~Alfalfa is an excellent nectar-rich herb. Its honey is white to amber.



~Anise-hyssop makes bees drunk with pleasure. They stumble over its perennial blooms all summer.

~Bergamot (Bee Balm) attracts with its red, pink, and purple “raggedy Anne” heads of color.

~Buckwheat is another excellent nectar-rich herb which produces dark, thick, strong-flavored honey. Bees cannot get enough!

~Catnip, rich in nectar, blooms well on wastelands, over a long period.

~Red Clover is another nectar-rich perennial herb which produces with to amber honey.

~Hyssop causes bees to happily stumble over it s blooms June to September.

~Joe-Pye Weed is a perennial nectar- producer in early autumn. Its tall pink blossoms produce strong-flavored light amber honey.

~Kudzu produces a lovely magenta colored honey with a fruity taste.

~Marjoram, a perennial, blooms mid-summer. Honey from Marjoram is high in flavor, aroma, and quality.

~Sweet Clover, an annual, produces a white honey that is mild and spicy.

~Motherwort, a perennial, blooms most of the summer. Very easy to naturalize in waste areas, its honey is amber with a strong mint overlay.

~Mountain-Mint is an abundant source of nectar. A perennial, it produces minty flavored honey.

mountain mint

~Thyme honey is amber to dark with a delicate herbal flavor. There is nothing quite as enjoyable as watching a “carpet of bees on a carpet of thyme.”

~Blue Vervain grows in wet lowlands. This perennial produces good nectar in July and August with honey that is dark in color and pleasantly flavored.

field of blue vervain

For Beekeepers, faced with Colony Collapse Disorder [CCD] no pesticide or herbicide is good for bee populations; they are innately designed to “kill something living.” [*Note* There is a (new) pesticide which is a neurotoxin used in seed dressing to protect the seed and resulting plant against attack. Observers noted that CCD started after these neonicotinoid pesticides were introduced. Residues of this pesticide are found in the pollen and soil causing disorientation, paralysis and death to bees. Although it does not happen immediately, bees exposed to this pesticide died from CCD within about six months. You can watch this observation in the film, “Vanishing of the Bees.”]

American Foul Brood [AFB] is another bee colony disease that beekeepers are striving to eradicate. Studies have been ongoing that two fatty acids (palmitic and oleic) found in some pollens are able to kill AFB. Two fatty acids (linoleic and linolenic) have been found to be effective against AFB in laboratory tests. It has been asserted that antibiotic pollen in one bee cell, soaking through one wall of a neighboring cell has the potential to essentially kill bacteria in seven cells, as all cells are six-sided. Experiments with fields of Borage, which contains four of the fatty acids mentioned above, are ongoing.

Planting Herbs like Anise-hyssop, Borage, Catnip, Hyssop, Marjoram, Motherwort, Mountain-Mint, and the Salvias attract bees by their color, nectar production, and hardiness. Herbs are utilized within the hives as well. Scented Geraniums and Rosemary can be rubbed on the inside to condition new hives before starting a colony. Wormwood rubbed on the hands can disguise the “human odor” and allow easier access to the hive (and masks the odor of the queen, if rubbed on areas where swarms have been removed.) Catnip, mint, or pennyroyal can be laid on top of the inner cover to deter ants from a weak colony. Beekeepers are growing seed trays of creeping thyme which are slid beneath the hive for a week before replacing it with a fresh tray. In the spring, a tea brewed from sage, thyme and chamomile and added to honey can be fed to each colony as a “spring cleanser.”

And remember: Comfrey, Calendula, and Plantain –rubbed on bee stings- soothes pain/itch and decreases swelling. Homeopathic Apis works great, too!



STARTING FROM SCRATCH WITH SEEDS

Kathy Musser, Cloverleaf Herb Farm



Even though there are plenty of potted herbs and flowers ready for purchase, starting plants from seed can be both economical and satisfying. The cost of a pack of seeds is generally less than the price of a single potted plant. Seed catalogs provide a huge variety of choices. New cultivars, interesting colors or forms, and hard to find varieties are in abundance in catalogs. If you're unsure of a plant's color or form or how it will grow in your garden environment, the economical nature of seeds allows you to try a new plant without a large investment. Lastly, there's the satisfaction of the process. Seed starting gives a hint of spring to come in dreary months. I love the process of starting seeds, transplanting the seedlings, planting out in the garden and harvesting and using these plants. It completes the cycle and provides satisfaction all along the way.

Materials aren't expensive and are easily found. In addition to seeds, you'll need lightweight soil-less mix. Try to get one labeled for seedlings, as it will be lightweight and drain well. Assemble your containers – plastic cell-packs, small pots or egg cartons. Make sure there are drainage holes in the bottom of containers or poke holes to provide drainage. Trays to hold your containers and a

plastic covering to hold in humidity are helpful. Plastic dome lids are made to fit right over flats or you can use clear plastic wrap stretched over the containers and attached with masking tape.

Place some mix in a bucket, etc. and apply water. Mix thoroughly so soil-less mix is uniformly moist. Fill your containers. Place seed in containers, press lightly into the mix. Label containers with variety name and date sown, using popsicle sticks or plastic stakes. Cover containers.

There is much helpful information on the back of the seed packet. The pack will tell you how many weeks (often 6-8) before setting out to start your seeds. Count back that number from the last frost date in your zone. For example, here in zone 6, our last frost date is usually mid-May. If the packet lists 6-8 weeks, start your seeds between mid-March and the beginning of April.

Annuals (those you plant every year) generally grow easily from seed. Since they only grow one year, they must reproduce easily and fairly quickly. Perennials (which survive multiple seasons) often take longer to germinate and do so more sporadically.

You may notice perennials often have a longer lead up time than annual seeds.

Seed packets often indicate a variety of needs, light or dark for germination. Seeds requiring light should be pressed into the soil, but not covered. Those requiring dark should be pressed into the mix and covered with more moistened mix. Larger seeds should be pressed into the mix and covered. If light vs. dark is not indicated, I follow a general rule: do not cover very small seeds and do cover larger ones.

Seeds have an outer coating that must break down before germination can occur. Seeds must be kept moist in order to germinate. For many varieties, bottom heat promotes germination. Heat mats are available from garden catalogs. You can also place seed trays on top of the refrigerator, which will provide sufficient, although not constant, bottom heat.

When seeds have germinated, remove plastic cover or wrap. Now the seedlings need sun for growth. Place seedlings in a sunny spot, preferably south-facing. Heat is not important now. In fact, seedlings grown in the lower range of normal household temperatures tend to be sturdier. If you're growing a large number of seedlings, it's worth investing in supplemental lighting. If you can set up a table with over-head fluorescent lighting, you don't need to worry about finding enough space on sunny windowsills. Regular fluorescent tubes are fine. They should be hung on chains so the lights can be raised as the seedlings grow.

After germinating, seedlings need to be watered when they dry out. Overwatering at this point can lead to damping off, a fungal disease, which attacks at the base of the seedling, turning the stem gray and fuzzy and causing the plant to fall over. It can occur fairly quickly and there's no reviving the plant once it happens. I find that even as seedlings, it's better to let them dry out between waterings. This virtually eliminates damping off as a problem. Many sources recommend bottom watering.

This is fine to do, but the necessary close monitoring of your seedlings for water is the most important factor. It's easy to tell when soil-less mix is dry as the color lightens considerably.

Seedlings can be transplanted when they develop a second set of leaves. The first set are the same on almost all plants. The second set are actually the first set of "true leaves" and will vary according to the specific plant. Fill pots or peat pots with soil-less mix. Use a small spoon or seedling lifter (available in garden catalogs) to gently lift seedlings from container. Make a hole in the transplanting soil with your fingers and gently place seedling in soil. Don't handle the seedlings by the leaves.

Handle by the stem or better yet, by the root ball. Firm soil around seedling and water. Put seedlings back in sunny window or under lights. As the seedlings develop, you can begin the hardening off process leading up to planting in the garden or containers.

Put potted plants outside in a protected spot, out of direct sun and shielded from wind. Bring them back inside at night.

Each day, move them so they are more exposed to the elements. Watch watering carefully, as they will dry out more quickly as they're exposed to more sun and wind. Follow this procedure for 10-14 days. At the end of this time, they can be transplanted to their final location once the last frost date has passed.

Some seeds require special treatment to help break down the protective coating. Very hard seeds can be soaked in warm water for an hour before planting or nicked with sandpaper or a nail file. Some perennial seeds should be sown, then placed in the refrigerator to simulate a cold dormancy period.

Whether it's to stretch your plant buying budget, grow the perfect variety, or simply enjoy the process, get a jump start on spring by starting some plants from seed.



VIOLET SUGAR SCRUB

The yard performed one of her many yearly feats of magic the other day, and turned blue and purple, with many dots of bright yellow. For over 20 years that has been the signal for Molly and me to spend a couple of hours picking the violet blossoms and make syrup. The recipe and instructions are [HERE](#) and you'll find a link to violet jelly there too.

We didn't feel like making syrup this year, and decided to make some sugar like we'd seen on a site called Gather Victoria. There, they used the sugar to coat shortbread cookies, and it was stunning. We went another direction. We decided on a sugar scrub.

One of our favorite things is sitting a few feet apart and having long, meandering conversations while picking violets. It's a spring ritual. The time goes too quickly, but since we both love the way this came out, we'll just have to go back out there and pick a lot more.

We used our mini food processor, pretty much filling a cup with sugar and a cup

with unpacked violets. Once they were thoroughly blended, we smoothed the mixture out onto wax paper covered cookie sheets. Parchment would be good too, but we were out of that.

By the next morning, it was already dry.

We mixed about equal parts olive oil with the violet sugar. Because my sister was (probably rightly) concerned about the sugar losing its color, we added a squeeze of lemon juice.

Several days later, it is still gorgeous and if possible, even more vibrant. We used olive because it was handy and we were just messing around. I'd probably use something with less color and scent next time - maybe fractionated coconut oil.

It feels wonderfully nourishing to the skin. While the flowers are beautiful, I may want to try using the leaves next time, or some flowers and leaves that are noted for their skin-loving properties.

Definitely a keeper in the recipe file!

FRESHEN THE CARPET FOR SPRING - NATURALLY!

In the Mar/Apr '19 Essential Herbal issue
Excerpt from Green Cleaning with Essential Oils, Amber M.
LaBorde (botanicallyrooted.com)

We love this idea for freshening up winter-weary carpeting.

Natural Carpet Cleaner

1/2 C baking soda
8 drops of essential oil
Add the essential oil to the baking soda and mix thoroughly.
Sprinkle on carpet.
Wait 10 minutes, and then vacuum thoroughly.

Make fresh for each use.
Do not apply to wet patches on the carpet!



Of course I had to make some, right?



I had some ancient (25 year old) jasmine absolute laying around. This is a good application for old oils that you might

not want to use on skin or diffused.



No plastic containers are single use in this house. Parmesan topping jars are treasured! They're perfect for stuff like this.

I need to add some kind of botanical to the mix so that I can see that no parts of the carpet have been missed. This is something I try to do pretty often with just crumbled (old) herbs when vacuuming. It keeps everything smelling fresh, too. .



Happy Spring!

