

The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist



THE ESSENTIAL HERBAL



Dill

Moon Phase Gardening...

Daisies

Garden Tincturing

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SAMPLE MINI-MAGAZINE

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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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ZODIAC POT POURRI FOR SIGN OF CANCER

Susanna Reppert Brill, www.TheRosemaryHouse.com

1 qt Rose Petals	1/4 C St John's Wort
1 C spearmint leaves	1/4 C privet
1/2 C parsley	5 T orris root, cut
1/2 C dill weed	

A few drops of essential oil, rose oil or your favorite scent.

When all your materials are completely dry, mix and store in an airtight container for four to six weeks until the fragrances mellow and blend. After the mixture has developed a pleasing scent, put it in pretty glass jars to open when you wish lovely fragrance nearby. Keep closed between uses. You may add any birthday flowers (dried) you receive during the years.



A DILLY OF AN HERB

Michelle Brown

Dill, *Anethum graveolens*, is one of our favorite herbs. Easy to grow, easy to use, and easy to teach about, it is one of the first herbs we learned to love. We think you will find enjoyment in this special herb as well.

Dill is easily grown by seed. In fact, that is the best way to start a plant or in the case of Dill, several plants. Scattering a few Dill seeds when the ground is warm in the spring guarantees a successful start. Keep the ground moist but not soaking and with some warm sun the seeds should germinate in a matter of a few days. Dill is an annual which means it will grow, put out leaves, blossom and set seed all within the same year. However, Dill also drops its seeds readily ensuring more Dill plants. To make sure that there is a good continuous crop of Dill, scatter a few seeds every three weeks or so and harvest the Dill leaves also called Dill weed to use in some good old standby dishes like potato salad, egg salad or sprinkled on baked potatoes with sour cream. Dill is also tasty when paired with green beans, carrots and cabbage. Snipping the Dill foliage preserves the flavor rather than tearing it from the stalk. Dill weed dries well and stays green if kept out of direct light.

Now that we have teased you into growing Dill for culinary uses, let's entice you some more with some medicinal uses of

Dill. Dill is a great digestive aid. Its seeds are often used to make a tea for colicky children. Dill has been used to treat flatulence and stimulate the appetite. Drinking a tea made with Dill seed or the leaves if seed is unavailable is often suggested prior to eating a large meal. Nibbling a few seeds after a large meal helps aid digestion and settles the stomach as well. Back when our colonial ancestors spent a lot of time in front of long winded preachers, Dill seeds were nibbled on to keep the mind focused on the sermon along with keeping the stomach quiet. Often called "meeting seeds" Dill has been found in some of our earliest artifacts in the original thirteen Colonies.

Planting Dill near cabbage, onions and lettuce may deter insects that enjoy annoying those crops. Dill also lends itself to adding some interest to an herb garden. It can become quite tall and the seed heads are like small umbrellas which hang heavy over smaller plants. Butterflies and caterpillars enjoy the taste of Dill and use the plant as a spot to rest. We have often seen small birds light on the seed heads picking a few for a tiny treat.

We have to agree that Dill is a very useful herb lending itself to culinary dishes, medicinally and even to the wild life. Grow some for yourself and see what all the fuss is about.

GO A LITTLE CRAZY FOR OXEYE DAISY - WILDCRAFTING THE OBVIOUS FLOWER

Diane Kidman, MommySpot.com

Nothing is more exciting for the wildcrafting herb lover than finding a sought-after plant and finally being able to harvest it and experience all it has to offer. Now that the wild plants are vibrant and full of life, we may be tempted to seek out every hidden jewel we dreamed about during the dreary months of winter. But what about those plants that abound at every turn? One in particular is that social flower, the oxeye daisy, *Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*. Perhaps you weren't aware that this abundant summertime field plant actually packs one heck of a medicinal punch - one you might find yourself in need of whenever you're far afield. I'm talking about natural allergy relief. Once dried and made into a tea, nothing clears drippy, runny sinus problems more effectively.

Find a large stand of them away from the roadside and in an area where you have the go-ahead from any landowners or proper authorities. Cut enough stem on each one so you can easily tie them into bundles. After tying the bundles together, hang them upside down outdoors in the shade, or in a dark and dry location inside. When the flowers are completely dried, snap off the flower heads and store them in a clean, dry jar.

Next time you get a drippy, runny nose from a cold, sinusitis, or allergies, prepare a tea by adding about a teaspoonful of the flowers in a cup of almost-boiling water, steeping for 10 - 15 minutes. Strain out the flowers and drink.

Oxeye tea has such a mild flavor that you may suspect you did something wrong the first time you try it. But about 20 minutes after drinking that first cupful, you'll definitely feel its astringency going to work, opening sinus passages and drying up drippiness just as effectively as any over-the-counter medication, and without any sleepy side effects.

Could it be your most valuable wildcrafting finds this harvesting season are the most obvious and plentiful? Kind of makes you wonder what else is in the next field or forest, just where it always was, waiting in beautiful abundance to be discovered anew!



“The old time gardeners say with the waxing of the moon, the earth exhales. When the sap in the plants rises, the force first goes into the growth above ground. Thus, you should do all activities with plants that bear fruit above the ground during a waxing moon. With the waning of the moon, the earth inhales. Then, the sap primarily goes down towards the roots. Thus, the waning moon is a good time for pruning, multiplying, fertilizing, watering, harvesting and controlling parasites and weeds.”

Through the ages, those in tune with the earth have lived their lives in natural cycles. The following items are the cycles of the moon and ageless observations and suggestions:

PHASES OF THE MOON

Culpepper knew. Pliny the Elder knew. Old time farmers knew and would say “plant potatoes by the dark of the moon.” Many of our noted herbalists associated plants with both the moon and astrological signs, and still do.

“Gardening by the Moon” deals with lunar influences. If the moon can affect our oceans, thereby causing the tides, is it not logical to assume other water can be affected as well? How is this done? Does it really affect us as well?

It has to do with the laws of gravity and the gravitational pull of the moon. Sir Isaac Newton gave credibility to the theory that although the sun is many times larger than the moon, the moon is much closer to the earth, which allows its gravitational pull to be stronger and affect us more. Remember your school textbooks had pictures of the globe with a bulge in the oceans, denoting the tides?

It was accepted, but continues to be researched and established that during the full and new moons, the pull of the moon is strongest and not only pulls on the oceans, but also pulls ground water closer to the surface, this in turn, helps seeds to germinate and grow.

Researcher Dr. Frank Brown of Northwestern University conducted research which found that even plants that did not “see” the moon, absorbed more water during the full moon.

In his book *How to Grow More Vegetables*, author/researcher, John Jeavons reveals research whereby he concludes that an “increasing amount of moonlight stimulates leaf growth,” and “as the moon light decreases, the above ground leaf growth slows down.”

Yet another author/researcher, Ute York in her book *Living by the Moon* states:

First Quarter ~ New Moon

Begins where sun and moon seem to be in the same place. The moon rises with the sun and hardly seems visible.

The lunar gravity pulls water up; together with increasing moonlight, creating balanced root and leaf growth.

It is a time for new beginnings - growth and germination.

Plant annual plants that produce their seeds outside the fruit or that yield above the ground, i.e. cabbage, lettuce, celery, parsley, spinach, asparagus, broccoli, cereals, and grains.

Second Quarter ~ Halfway between the New Moon and the Full Moon

The moon rises around noon, sets around midnight, and is seen in the western sky before midnight.

The gravitational pull is less, but the moonlight is increasing which creates strong leaf growth.

The two days before the full moon are especially good for planting.

Plant annuals producing yields that are harvested above the ground, viney plants and those that produce seed inside the fruit, i.e. beans, peas, pepper, pumpkins, melons, squash, and tomatoes

For increased lawn growth, it is a good time to mow.

First and second quarter plantings are considered almost interchangeable with plants doing nearly equally well.

Third Quarter ~ Full Moon

The sun and moon are on opposite sides of the earth. The moon rises in the east around sunset, rising a little later each evening.

The gravitational pull is high during this time creating additional moisture in the soil. After the full moon, moonlight decreases putting energy down into the roots.

Plant biennials, perennials, bulbs and roots, trees, shrubs, berries, rhubarb (includes beets, carrots, strawberries, grapes, potatoes, onions, peanuts, and other plants to over-winter for an early spring harvest).

Plants are gaining more liquid around the full moon.

Because of this time of active root growth, it is a good time for transplanting, and pruning to come again.

Fourth Quarter ~ Halfway between Full Moon and New Moon

The moon rises at midnight (appearing overhead as the sun rises) and sets around noon.

During this phase, there is decreased gravitational pull, less moonlight, and minimal life forces flowing, the dark side of the moon. It is considered a quiet time; a time to draw back, reflect, and re-organize. It is also the time to cultivate, weed, mulch, and get rid of pests. Pruning and transplanting also can be done carefully. Harvesting, or breaking the plant's energy force, is recommended during this time of the waning moon - when the moon's influence is at its weakest. It is also the best time to harvest those things intended for long storage, i.e. roots (potatoes, turnips, etc.), fruits, squashes, and herbs. Old timers say it is the time to move beehives and castrate animals.

If you want to decrease the growth of lawns, it is a good time to mow.

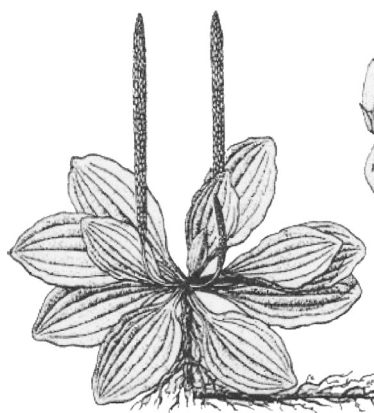
Sometimes for all our good intentions of planting, or mulching or transplanting, etc. on a particular day or weekend, when it comes time to actually accomplish the job, we just don't feel like it. Could this possibly be our bodies that are more in-tuned with Mother Earth, telling us what to do, and not to do?

There are several good research articles and books relating to this subject; some of those were used in preparation of this article include:

Lunar Organic Methods, Harry MacCormick
Llewellyn's Moon Sign Book 2003,
Gardening by the Moon, Caren Catterall

THE LOWLY PLANTAIN

Tina Sams, www.essentialherbal.com



Plantain (*Plantago major*), seen below, is common everywhere. The only requirement seems to be sunlight, and it will grow in any soil type. The name comes from the Latin *plan-tago*, meaning "sole of the foot" because the leaves are shaped somewhat like footprints. Another nickname is "white man's footprint" since it followed Euro-

pean settlers across America. There are nearly 200 species of *Plantago* to be found in the world. All are edible, and there are no poisonous species. As a wildcrafting enthusiast, this plant was one of the first to get that fire started for me. Once you "know" it, the plant appears everywhere you look. In that respect, it is like chickweed, and they are both so versatile and useful.

The first time we really used plantain, a toddler in a stroller had been stung in the palm of her hand, having made a fist around a bee landing there. We picked plantain and crushed it up while her mother removed the stinger. The mash was placed in her hand, and the screaming and tears stopped immediately. Later, it was equally effective the time my husband mowed over a nest of ground bees wearing only baggy shorts. Medicinally, the leaves or a decoction of the leaves can be used for all sorts of things - burns, eczema, boils, inflammation of the eyes, insect stings and bites, muscle sprains and strains, leg pains and aching feet, poison ivy or nettle rash, and hemorrhoids.

The young leaves can be added to salads, made into soup, added to stirfry, or generally used like spinach. The older leaves can become bitter.

The seeds are also valuable as a laxative. They are high in B vitamins, and can be taken in capsule form or made into a seed gel that can be kept refrigerated up to 2 weeks.

To make the plantain seed gel, gather a large quantity from the yard. You'll find them easily... they're the little stalks waving about 4-6 inches above the grass, just before you decide its time to mow :-). Put them in water to cover, and boil hard for 25 minutes. Run through the food processor until fine. Some berries or mint may be added for flavor. Use 1 Tbsp. of the gel to 1 cup warm water. This is a very healing drink for intestinal problems, as the gel is considered to soothe issues like irritable bowel, colitis, Crohn's, and aid in healing the damaged tissues.

Lavender can be such a friend. A gentle, loving, “wind beneath my wings” kind of friend that will remain useful and ready until you need it with the proper storage. Most people become familiar with the scent of lavender through the use of the essential oil in soaps, lotion, or candles, getting its name from the Latin lavare, meaning “to wash.” It clears the air, and because of that is sometimes added to ceremonial smudging blends where it becomes part of the incense. It is a clean, sometimes medicinal scent with floral notes. Some people love it right away. Others, like me, need to let it grow on them.

Early in my herbal learning days, I read an essay from a woman who always gave the gift of a pound of dried lavender for to celebrate a new home or a new marriage. She listed the myriad ways that the lavender could be used. For instance:

- *Scattered under the rugs to keep a room fresh.
- *Stuffed into small cloth bags and placed beneath seat cushions.
- *Placed in a bowl near the door to be rubbed gently, releasing their scent before welcoming guests.
- *Used in cooking and teas (sparingly).
- *Made into sleep pillows.
- *Added to baths, or made into strong tea to relieve skin rashes and irritations.
- *Placed in closets and drawers to freshen and effectively repel moths.
- *and on and on...

There are some varieties that require very mild winters with no frost. They are the frillier and most have unusually scented, lacy (pinnate) foliage and a spreading, but upright habit. Lovely, but we like the less delicate plants here.

The herb is mightily effective against moths. I visited a friend who had come into possession of the entire fleece of a shorn sheep. With a newborn, she didn't have much time to work on it, and when she opened it to show me, a platoon of tiny moths flew into the air. We scattered a few ounces of dried lavender buds in with the wool, and the next day the moths had moved on to other, hopefully more hospitable pastures. There are some varieties that require very mild winters with no frost. They are the frillier and most have unusually scented, lacy (pinnate) foliage and a spreading, but upright habit. Lovely, but we like the less delicate plants here.

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Lavender Whipped Cream

- 1 C heavy cream
- 3 T fresh lavender blossoms
- 2 T fine sugar

Combine heavy cream and lavender. Cover and refrigerate overnight to allow the cream to absorb the lavender flavor. Strain, discarding the lavender. Beat cream with electric mixer till almost stiff. Add sugar gradually as you keep beating, until stiff. Serve over fresh fruit or pound cake. Sprinkle with more blossoms.

Lavender Wine Jelly

- 1/2 C lavender blossoms and leaves
- 2-1/2 C boiling water
- 4-1/2 C sugar
- 1/4 C white wine
- Few drops purple food coloring (optional)
- 1/2 bottle liquid pectin

-Prepare sterilized jars and lids.

-Pour boiling water over lavender and let steep for 15-20 mins. Strain and measure 2 cups of this herb tea into saucepan.

-Stir in sugar, wine and coloring (if using). Heat to a full rolling boil, stirring constantly. Pour in pectin and return to boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly.

-Remove from heat and skim off foam. Pour into hot sterilized jars and seal. Process 5 minutes in hot water bath.

Herb-Flavored Honey

This is such an easy project that you will want to make several kinds. To each cup of honey, use one of the following herbs in amounts suggested, or experiment with your choice of other herbs and spices.

- 2 T dried lavender blossoms
- 3 or 4 rose or lemon geranium leaves
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary or 2 tbsp. dried
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme or 2 tbsp. dried
- 4-5 cinnamon sticks

Heat the honey gently in a non-reactive saucepan. Put the herbs in a clean jar and pour the honey over them. Cover tightly and let sit for 1-2 weeks before using. Delicious on pancakes, waffles, toast, fruit, or to sweeten tea.

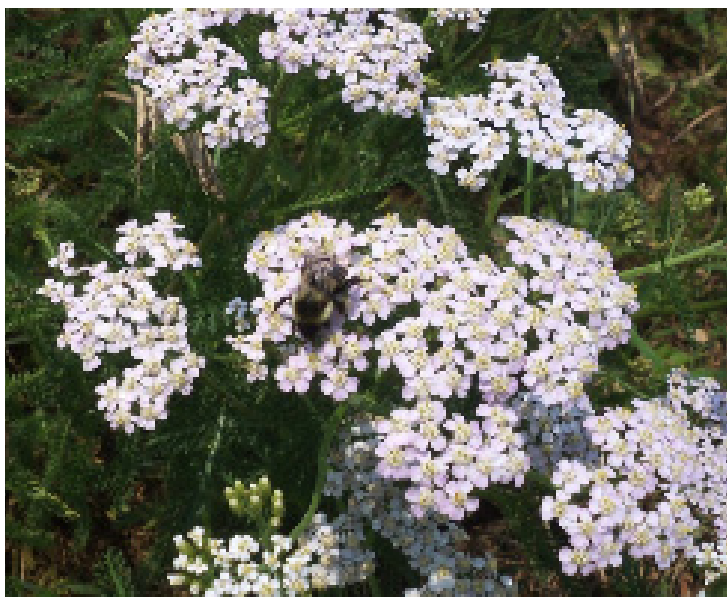
"GARDEN TINCTURE"

Roxann Phillips

In my garden, I grow an assortment of plants from which I harvest parts all season long for their medicinal virtues. (When I say that I pick the flowers, what I really mean is the flower along with stem and leaves attached.)



When the Echinacea purpurea is blooming, I pick flowers and put them in a jar filled with 70% ethanol (usually diluted Everclear).



When the yarrow blooms, some of those are added. Of course, the Beebalm flowers are desired, and they add a pretty color, as well as antiviral properties.



Bee Balm
(Monarda)

Anise hyssop flowers go in when they arrive and lemon balm leaves are gathered as I pass them on the way to the elderberry "tree".



This plant would normally grow as a shrub, but I've pruned it to grow as a tree and it has a beautiful canopy that shades the horse's water trough now. When the berries are plump and juicy, I gather a handful and add them to the jar. Then I put the jar on the shelf to steep for a few months, and by the time winter and the accompanying sniffles arrive, I'm ready! We use it at the first sign of an illness, no matter what type, and the symptoms are gone in short order.

If we didn't respond soon enough and a full-blown illness erupts, I'll add some Usnea tincture to the flower tincture to ramp up the power.

FIELD NOTES SUMMER MINI '18

This morning the sky is gray and there is drizzle. The prediction is for nearly three days of the same. The last flat of plants will have to wait, and I've got to admit that my body is screaming for a break.

Since the temperature has warmed, I've spent part of almost every day tussling with weeds, wrestling with the shovel (or more to the point, rocks under the surface), and dragging the hose around with me. I've built things for the beans to climb and collared the veggies that the rabbits like most. Then there was that bamboo splinter that took three fun-filled days to remove. It is never-ending, and a fight that is not ever completely won.

Why? As I rolled around in the mud going after another underground mugwort runner, that question rattled around in my head. Why do I look forward with breathless anticipation to the chance to stain my hands beyond redemption, strain muscles that all but disappeared over the winter, and breathe in gnats that find my eyes, nose, and mouth irresistible? What is it about feeling the dirt in my hands? Why must I envision the flowers waving in the breeze, trying to picture the colors that will work together with the house, and still coincide with the foliage and blossoming time of neighboring plants? The cost of buying the herbs, veggies, and berries is a consideration unless my time is worth more than about a nickel an hour, so no, that can't be it.

So why do we toil in the garden? Have you ever tried to explain it to a non-gardener? Good luck with that. I think it is about creating, just like art and writing. To take a parcel of ground and turn it into a small patch of Eden is a very powerful experience. To snag a little bit of the magical workings of the seasons and claim it as our own seems to put some bit of order into lives that may sometimes feel so far beyond our control. Creating order outside my back door is about all I can hope for on some days. Gathering the resulting bounty for sustenance is nourishing on so many levels. Will the dill taste dillier than that in the grocer's case? Will my cucumbers be cukier? Will the basil be worth the time spent pinching it to keep it from bolting. Will my daily battle of wills with the resident groundhog be worthwhile? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!

Last night was brutal. By the time I dragged myself up from the dirt (using the shovel handle for leverage), threw the 2000 pound hose back under the deck, and heaved a few bushels of weeds on to their appropriate mound, there was just enough time to hobble out and lean against the sun-warmed car to watch the sun dip below the horizon.

Now how could I possibly explain to a non-gardener that this was a perfect evening?

As this issue came together, I noticed that there is a lot of the same heart-felt love of the plant world coming through in the articles. The thrill is back. The excitement and joy of walking out the door each morning has returned. All of our dreams from winter and early spring have started to bear fruit, and we are happy. We sweat, and hoe, and prepare our creations for our loved ones, and feel a step closer to the sweet, damp earth.

Here's to a great season, everyone. Let your garden-freak flag fly!

Peace,

Tina



(Field notes from The Essential Herbal, Jul/Aug '07)

FRESH FRUIT FACE MASK

Cindy Jones, www.sagescript.com

With summers bounty upon us you may have an excess of fresh fruit from the garden. Why not try a fresh fruit and herb facial to brighten your skin? Fruit makes a great exfoliant since it is high in alpha hydroxyl acids such as malic acid and tartaric acid. These mild acids help loosen the dead skin cells that sit on the surface. Once these cells are removed your skin will glow more and moisturizers will work better.

Berry Facial

1/2 C of fresh berries; strawberries or raspberries

1 T parsley

1 t honey

Mash the berries in a small bowl using a fork. Finely mince the parsley and add to the berries. Mix in the honey. If you have yogurt on hand, add a tablespoon of that too.

Apply generously to the face. Sit back and relax for 15 minutes while the mask does it's thing. Rinse off with water and a washcloth. Apply a moisturizer. Feel the difference?