

The Magazine for the Everyday Herbalist



# THE ESSENTIAL HERBAL



Herbal Gifts

Christmas Trees

Frankincense & Myrrh

Herbal Resolutions

\$5.95/ Single Issue  
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Print available in US only

**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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## MUSHROOM GINGER SOUP

Marcy Lautanen Raleigh

Ginger is a great anti-inflammatory and a good decongestant, and mushrooms can boost your immune response. Now doesn't that make this a perfect soup to enjoy in the winter.

2 1/2 C shiitake, white button, maitake, cremini, or oyster mushrooms cut in 1/4 inch slices  
1/2 to 1 inch cube fresh ginger (add a bit more if you really love ginger)  
4 C cold water  
2 T white or red miso paste

2 t rice vinegar (I used a rice vinegar infused with thyme)  
2 T finely chopped scallion or leek

Put mushrooms, ginger, and water in a pot with a lid and bring to a boil, then immediately turn down heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

Remove from heat and take out ginger. Put 1/4 cup of broth in a bowl and stir in miso paste and vinegar. Top with leeks or scallions.

Stir this mixture back into the pot. Serve topped with scallions. Makes 2 servings.

# FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

The two fragrant resins are often referred to, but rarely do we see them in use. Many people have never seen them or smelled their exotic perfume. Others who attend churches rich in ritual are much more accustomed to censors pouring forth the smoke of frankincense.

During the holidays, these are two of the famed gifts of the Magi, given along with gold to the baby Jesus, and are found sometimes in small quantities packaged for gift giving.

They are both resins, or saps from plants. Frankincense comes from the plant *Boswellia carteri*, and is grown mainly in Ethiopia. The scent is sunny and piney. It comes in different sizes, tear, pearl, and powder and is a warm variety of yellows. It is also available in essential oil, a form that is easiest to use in winter. In aromatherapy, frankincense is used to calm and release tension. It is also said to assist in meditation. When blending fragrances, frankincense oil is very valuable, because it quickly grounds blends that are too heady or lightens blends that are too base.

Myrrh is from a plant native to northern Africa. It is *Commiphora myrrha*. It comes in shades of red, amber, and brown and can be found in chunks, granules, or powder. The fragrance of myrrh is dark and mysterious. It is perfectly balanced by the brighter frankincense. Myrrh is rarely used in aromatherapy blends, but is found in mouthwashes and



toothpastes (often along with goldenseal) to heal gums and keep them healthy. It does NOT taste good. It was also used in mummification.

In the summer with windows open, these may be smoldered on charcoal blocks to release their fragrant full bodied scents. In the winter, that's really overwhelming. Instead, try adding some to a simmering pot. It takes a little while, but the hot water releases the scent. They can go into the fireplace in small quantities, or set in a dish on a heat source. They will however ruin the dish, so keep that in mind. The small pea-sized pieces may also be strung using a heated needle and worn about the neck. Body heat will slowly release the fragrance and surround you with mystery.



## HOLIDAY GIFT BASKET

Kelli Scott, Sugar Grove, Ohio

I love nothing more than to put together a basket of homemade goodies for family and friends. When most people think of a basket of goodies they think of cookies and breads, I think of essential oil blends and such. The items in my baskets are full of comforting smells just like the cookie baskets, but instead of adding inches to your hips they will bring calorie free comfort to your soul.

Some of the things I like to make for the gift baskets are:

### Holiday Spice Room Spray

3 drops Clove  
2 drops Cinnamon  
3 drops Ginger  
3 drops Nutmeg  
3 drops Orange  
3 drops Frankincense  
2 ounces distilled water  
5 drops emulsifier

### Chest Cold Rub

6 drops eucalyptus  
6 drops rosemary  
4 drops peppermint  
3 drops pine  
3 drops thyme  
5 drops camphor  
1.5 ounces carrier oil

### Sanitizer Spray "thieves blend"

10 drops cloves  
10 drops lemon  
5 drops cinnamon  
10 drops eucalyptus  
10 drops rosemary  
2 ounces distilled water  
15 drops emulsifier

### Muscle Aches & Pains

1.5 ounces oil  
10 drops rosemary  
6 drops juniper berry  
5 drops wintergreen  
10 drops clove  
5 drops black pepper  
5 drops cajuput

Along with these I will usually include a bar of homemade soap, and a spray bottle customized to the fragrance that the recipient loves. For example, my mom loves peppermint, so I may make up a spray bottle for her pillow full of peppermint. With having just that small item in there, they know that basket was made just for them with thoughts and love.

More than anything, I hope those that receive your baskets enjoy them.



More and more people are turning to handmade gifts this holiday season. Whether it is from the current economic climate, a greener conscience, or a brilliant burst of creativity, the trend is certainly catching on. Handmade gifts are a great way to show appreciation for the ones you love.

This season, celebrate by helping those you love decrease their stress and increase their health and wellness. Two simple, but powerful ways to do this are by soaking in a bath and/or drinking a cup of herbal tea. Herbal baths and teas have strong medicinal value. Benefits can range from gently soothing a sore muscle, to invigorating yourself on a dreary winter's day.

Follow these herbal recipes below to make quick and easy, yet thoughtful gifts. Think of them as templates, and feel free to let your creative juices dictate the final product.



**Muscle Ease Bath Salt**

1/2 C Sea Salt            1/2 C Baking Soda  
 1/2 C Epsom Salt        20 drops Tea Tree Essential Oil  
 15 drops Lavender Essential Oil  
 5 drops Rosemary Essential Oil  
 Mix all ingredients well. Add to bath by tablespoons to desired strength.

**Dreamy Bath Salt Blend**

1/2 C Sea Salt            1/2 C Baking Soda  
 1/2 C Epsom Salt        5 drops each of Rose, Chamomile,  
 Lavender, and Jasmine Essential Oil  
 Mix all ingredients well. Add to bath by tablespoons to desired strength.

**FairyTale Tea**

1/2 C Raspberry Leaf    1/2 C Lemon Balm

1/2 C Chamomile        1/4 C Peppermint  
 1/4 C Spearmint        1/4 C Rose hips  
 1/4 C Lavender  
 Blend all ingredients together for a delicious and fragrant tea blend            \*Yields 20 oz.

**Minty Magic Tea**

2 C Peppermint            1 C Spearmint  
 1/4 C Lemon Balm  
 Blend ingredients together for an uplifting and refreshing tea blend            \*Yields 20 oz.



You can store Bath Salts and Teas in simple Ball Mason Jars, or any interesting jar you find. Hot glue pretty paper onto the jar for a label, tie a ribbon around the top, and you have a beautiful homemade gift for family and friends. While you're at it, go ahead and make one for yourself too.

Let your gifts come from the heart this holiday season. You and your family will truly feel the benefits in body, mind, and spirit.



## SUGARPLUMS

Karen Hegre

Start to finish; 30 minutes & makes 30 sugarplums.

### Ingredients;

1/2 C granulated sugar	1 C pitted dates
1/4 t ground cardamom	1/2 C dried apricots
1/2 t cinnamon	1/2 C dried figs
1/2 C pecans	1/4 C golden raisins
1/4 C pistachios	1/4 C dried cherries
2 T orange liqueur or rum or your substitution.	

In a wide, shallow bowl, combine the sugar, cardamom and cinnamon. Mix well, then set aside.

In a food processor, pulse the pecans until roughly chopped. Add the pistachios & pulse again until both nuts are finely chopped.

Transfer the nuts to a bowl & set aside.

In the food processor, combine the dates, apricots & figs. Pulse briefly until roughly chopped. Add the raisins & cherries, then continue pulsing until the fruit is evenly chopped and begins to clump.

Return the nuts to the processor & add the rum, liqueur, or substitute. Pulse until just mixed. If the mixture does not stick

together, add additional rum or liqueur, or substitute.

A teaspoon at a time, roll the mixture into balls, then roll each

ball in sugar until well-coated.

Sugarplums can be refrigerated in a sealed container for up to 1 month. Layer the sugarplums, place a sheet of waxed paper between each layer.

## IT'S ALL GOOD

Sandy Michelsen, Kalispell, Montana

Winter in NW Montana is long and dreary, but one of my favorite happy and productive pastimes is making herbal salves while thinking about wildcrafting, growing and collecting herbs last summer... and dreaming of the return of warm weather and bright sunshine.

With that in mind, I would like to share one of the salve formulas I use.

But first, I need to tell you about my accidental discovery when I grabbed the wrong bottle on the counter while finishing up my latest (and what turned out to be one of my greatest) batches of salve.

My original formula is named "Great Gardeners' Salve" which I gave to friends during the summer/fall outdoor work seasons. The salve treats and comforts dried, cracked and rough skin. It seems that after using it, they evidently really liked it and were using it all the time. I was getting great reports on how it soothed and healed their hands, face & feet last winter, as well.

So, back to the story. Just before I poured the salve into the jars, instead of Tea Tree oil, I grabbed Rose oil (fragrance kind) and added a few drops. The whole kitchen smelled like roses and I thought "what have I done". So, not to waste it, I continued on and added the Tea Tree oil and poured the salve. Of course, it was different, but that salve has become a favorite with the girls. Now you can play in the dirt all day and later soothe your skin with something that smells heavenly. The name of my new concoction is - you guessed it - Rose Gardeners' Salve!



Don't worry, guys, I still make the original recipe that you prefer.

Here's the formula:

### Great Gardeners' Salve

2 oz Calendula infused Olive Oil

2 oz Plantain infused Olive Oil

2 oz St. Johnswort infused Olive Oil

2 T Chamomile infused Olive Oil

About 6 T of Beeswax (a little more or a little less to suit your preference)

Melt together and just before pouring:

Add:

6 drops (2 capsules) of Vitamin E as a preservative - optional

6 drops Tea Tree essential oil

Stir gently

Pour into clean jars.

### Rose Gardeners' Salve

To above - add 6-8 drops of Rose fragrance oil - body safe!



## OH CHRISTMAS TREE!

Marci Tsohonis ~ Monitor, WA

Every winter, right around Thanksgiving time, our heart's focus moves from "everything else" to the Christmas season. The hunt is on for the perfect Christmas tree. Some families mark the tradition of tree hunting with a romantic outing in the woods, complete with a tailgate picnic and hot chocolate. If that sounds familiar, perhaps you've noticed, too, that "perfect" tree generally ends up being one of the first ones you passed, 2 hours and 17 muddy ruts ago!

Some families buy their tree from a commercial vendor; others grow a tree on their own property, or sell acres of them to others. In my experience, the selection process is just not logical, no matter how you approach the choosing of that magical tree. In the mind's eye, the candidate is archetypal, compared with all the trees in all the living rooms and all the experiences of Christmas Past you've ever had. My husband has been remarkably patient, even that time he had to cut off the top third of the tree, and then prune a perfectly angled 2+ feet off the entire circumference, from top to bottom, to accommodate our furniture in our then very small living room.

In 1999, the year we officially became Empty Nesters, Tom and I decided we weren't going to be the cause of the sacrifice of any more living trees. We had developed some environmental awareness and were learning about sustainability.

Alas, shopping excursions to hunt for the perfect artificial tree were disappointing. We saw trees that lit up with blinky fiber optic lights, trees with built in rain or ornaments that flashed, flocked trees with fake Christmas tree scents, and weird, (not even remotely natural looking) trees with limbs of flexible steel that hurt when you brushed against them. However, we were committed. (In hindsight, we should have been!) Eventually we settled on a "tree" priced at the upper limits

of our spending range, reasoning it would be our forever Christmas tree.

A Christmas CD played in the background as Tom hauled all the ornament boxes up from the basement. I lit a Balsam Fir scented Yankee candle, and made two mugs of Hot Cocoa. It was lightly snowing outside, and a fire blazed brightly in the fireplace. The stage was set. Oh, what commendable earthlings we were! Traditional carols trilled through the house, interrupted by a few choice cusswords as Tom assembled the tree. Finally, our tree was in the stand, in front of the bay window where we always placed our tree. The fake branches looked a bit sparse. We adjusted the branches, fluffing up the bendy needles as suggested in the assembly book. We covered them in as many ornaments as the tree would hold, though it could not hold all the sentimentally inspired ornaments we had made or collected over the years.

Christmas came. We both missed the wild scent of a real Balsam Fir every moment during those holidays. Christmas went. We learned that assembling a fake tree isn't nearly as difficult as getting it to fit back in the box after the holidays. Part of any growth process is being able to admit that you've made a mistake. We changed our minds again. We could not, would not, celebrate another Christmas without a real Christmas tree. To compensate for future sacrifices, we have learned to propagate Evergreens and plant new trees whenever we can. We now have several future Christmas trees growing on our own property.

Oh, I bet you are wondering what ever happened to that pathetic, artificial tree. To the best of our knowledge it is still up in the attic at our previous home, gathering dust. We moved seven years ago.

While morphing into a tree hugger, I was learning about herbs, soap making, infusions, lotions and potions. I researched medicinal uses and cottage crafts for retired Balsam Firs, as they are easily the most readily available for Christ-





mas trees in the Pacific Northwest. I have really enjoyed making the following remedies and crafts.

### **Balsam Fir Steam**

Inhale steaming vapors to relieve sinus or chest congestion. Snip a cup or two of needles off a branch. Add them to an equal part of water in an electrical inhaler, if you have one. If not, simmer the needles in a covered saucepan for about 10-15 minutes. Drape a towel over your head to contain the vapors and lean over the pan, breathing deeply for a few minutes until it quits steaming.



### **Cold and Flu Tea**

Add a fat teaspoon of fir needles to a mug or personal teapot. Cover and steep about 10 minutes. Sweeten with honey.

Drink 3 mugs full over the course of the day to ease congestion.

### **Cold and Flu Bath**

Fill a muslin drawstring bag with Fir needles and Rosehips. Float it in the tub while you are soaking, then use the bag as a washcloth once the contents have softened.

### **Balsam Fir Oil infusion**

Fill a small crock-pot æ full of fir needles. Add Soybean or Olive Oil to cover. Heat at about 100 degrees for most of a day. Strain and place in a quart jar with a lid. Store in a cool place.

### **Balsam Fir Salve**

To make a wonderful anti-viral, anti-bacterial salve, melt 1° oz. Bees Wax pastilles into 8 oz. of infused oil. Cool to 140 degrees. If desired, add a little Balsam Fir essential oil just before pouring into storage containers.

### **Aromatic Coasters or Hot Pads**

If you are handy with a sewing machine, make coasters lined with thin wool or cotton quilt batting. Before sewing the last seam closed, drop in 2-3 Tbsp. of Fir needles for the coaster and 1/2 cup for the hot pad. Sew closed. Shake the coaster to evenly distribute the needles. Topstitch the coaster or hot pad with a icorner to corner Xi to hold the Fir needles in place, and keep them from clumping.

Wishing you all a warm and cozy Christmas!



## **5 HERBS TO KEEP THE IMMUNE SYSTEM UP AND RUNNING**

Cold and flu season is here. It is nearly impossible to avoid being exposed to these viruses, but luckily there are several herbal helpers for fighting off the effects. Vitamins, sufficient rest, fluids, diet, and frequent hand washing all help, and these herbs finish the job...

**Astragalus** is a good herb to take on a daily basis. It is deep support for the immune system, and can make a huge difference in our ability to fight off infections. Tincture is most effective, but teas are available as well. Adding it to long simmering soups is a good way to enjoy it too.

**Echinacea** has become very well known as an immune enhancing herb. The most effective means of using it is large doses at the first sign of illness. Achy arms and shoulders? A full dropper of tincture every couple of hours for a day or two will help take care of that. Sore throat, run down feeling, swollen glands all signal that it is time to start the Echinacea. This herb is readily available in many forms.

**Elderberry** is another great herb to take at the first hint of

infection. Viruses are like tiny Velcro covered balls. The tiny hooks grab onto healthy cells and infect them, starting a chain reaction. Elderberry is thought to coat the cells, making them too slippery for the hooks to catch on to. This cuts off the reaction and abbreviates the infection. We can find elderberry syrup, tincture, tablets, teas, wines, and jelly. The syrup is highly effective, and the jelly is a close second – especially for children. Taken every four hours for three days, it often yields surprisingly fast results.

**Garlic**, the antibiotic we love to cook with. Raw is the best way to get the medicinal benefits, but roasted is some pleasant medicine. Try to incorporate garlic into the diet each day. It is well worth getting past the fear of bad breath, as this is truly an amazing way to keep illness at bay.

**Siberian Ginseng** is an amazing herb. Research in Siberia found that people who used it were healthier and more happy than an identical group who were not given the herb. It helps the body deal with all types of stress, which robs us of strength and vitality while depleting the immune system.

Try one or all of these herbs this winter. This just might be a year without illness.

## FIELD NOTES WINTER MINI '18

Life is so funny. As I look back over the life of the magazine, everything has changed ... and nothing has changed at all. It's been a long, hard slog that went by in the blink of an eye. There are times that I think that if I have to learn one more bit of technology it will be the end of me, and there are other times when it seems as if it has all been a breeze. We went from a small apartment with the computer in the living room with a bookshelf holding the entire business, to a farm house that spills over with skid loads of books, magazines, jars of herbs and oils, a shipping room, and an actual office. Yet nothing has really changed all that much.

In the beginning, it was primitively put together. My lack of word processing knowledge clearly showed, but the pages were filled with the lovely words of grass-roots herbalists sharing their knowledge. The goal was to help people learn to make and use simple herbal recipes and remedies, and to mostly address ways to remain healthier or comfort those with self-limiting illnesses. Today, that's still exactly what we aim to do.

Maryanne's skills in lay-out have made it so that we can put 2 or 3 times as much into each issue as I was able to do. Molly spends part of each day working on social media sites to spread the word, and Rob (although living in far-off cities that change almost yearly) makes sure that the website is up to date. With their help, our public appearance is so much more than it once was, and yet... and yet the magazine is the same.

The writers who contribute their articles are the heart of the magazine. Throughout all these years that has never changed. We have writers who have been writing consistently for years, and others who have something special for just one issue. All of them share our vision and purpose; to help the readers find their way and join in the absolute joy of being able to work with herbs. This has been an honor and a privilege, and I can't wait to see what the next 15 years hold. Thank you.

Peace,

*Tina*

Field Notes - Our 15th Year! (excerpt from 4 years ago)



## TOP TEN HERBAL RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Cory Trusty, [www.aquarianbath.com](http://www.aquarianbath.com)

Have you picked your New Year's Resolution Yet? Why not make it Herbie! Everything is better with herbs, you know. I'm still working on my resolutions. Here are a few ideas:

1. I resolve to harvest my home-grown herbs in their prime before they are lost to blight, varmint, frost, neighborhood dogs, free ranging chickens, or random acts of God.
2. I resolve to use that long coveted exotic herbal ingredient that I just had to have but have not yet figured out what to do with.
3. I resolve to clean and organize my herb cabinet prior to ordering redundant quantities of herbs, especially those coveted exotic herbs that I haven't figured out yet.
4. I promise that I won't put a special set of herbs and clays for making tooth powders and black salve in a "special new place" instead of tucked in the back of the cabinet.
5. Similarly, I resolve to avoid putting herbal sundries in "a very safe place." Furthermore, I when handling herbal items, will substitute the phrases "special new place" and "a very

- safe place" with the phrases "a stupid new place" and "a very stupid place."
6. I promise to plant those rare, organic, or heirloom herbal seeds (and even during their proper growing season.)
  7. I will keep my herb recipe notebook orderly and up to date in case of need for emergency evacuation due to fire, flood, tornado, or in case of similarly rare occasions, such as having a free moment to actually create something.
  8. I will stop to investigate that patch of herbs seen from the corner of my eye while driving, even if I have to make a U-turn, use a strange driveway, let the groceries sit in the car for a minute, or hike across a field.
  9. I will not miss out on the Elderberry, Goldenrod, Cleavers, (etc., fill in the blank) harvest season this year, even if I have to sneak out of the house or inconvenience the dad. Sorry Dad!
  10. Last but not least, I resolve to make and use some very special herbal creations just for me!
- Have a good year. Hope you meet some new herbs!