

HEDGEROW HERBALS

The regular newsletter from your local herbalist - Julie Dore
Articles, news, recipes and tips for a healthy you

Summer/Autumn 2007

FREE

Welcome to the summer and early autumn edition which includes information on sunburn, healthy eating in the summer, men's health and a few herbal recipes and news

Safety in the Sun



Summer sun – it makes us all feel better inside but, of course, too much on unprotected skin not only causes ageing and increases our risk of developing skin cancer but more

immediately can mean painful burns.

If you do burn, first resolve not to let it happen again and, second, use summer herbs to help relieve the pain and assist in a speedy recovery. Marigolds (not French marigolds popular in garden centres but *Calendula officinalis*, also known as Pot Marigolds) have a mythology linked to the sun going back to the ancient Greeks. This beautiful flower aids healing of the skin and, as it is an anti-inflammatory, reduces the pain. Bathe the affected areas in a **cold** infusion of the flowers for healing relief and to stimulate the growth of new skin cells.



Marigold *Calendula officinalis*

You can make infused oil from St John's Wort flowers, another plant blooming now (see my website for recipe www.hedgerow-herbals.co.uk). This oil helps reduce inflammation and pain (also good for nerve pain including shingles and neuralgia) and assists in healing. You can add a few drops of Lavender essential oil to any carrier oil (including the St John's Wort) as it is a great healer of burns. For speedy relief use fresh Aloe Vera juice. Simply break off a leaf and squeeze out the sap onto the skin and allow to dry (grow Aloe Vera in your kitchen for oven burns too).

Salad Days

As the weather gets hotter, we naturally feel less hungry and prefer lighter, cooler, easily digestible foods and eating al fresco - everything tastes better eaten in the open air!. However, ice cream or cold drinks are not a good way to keep cool. If you are very hot they rapidly chill your digestive system causing stomach cramps and even diarrhoea. The body is fooled into believing core temperature has dropped reducing sweating which was helping to keep your body temperature steady. It is very important to replenish fluids but juices and water should be drunk at room or refrigerator temperature not iced. Luke warm tea is another option. One of the nicest at this time of the year is fresh lemon balm tea. Pick 8-10cm stem per person and pour over boiling water. Most importantly, cover to keep the essential oils

in the brew. The tea is ready to drink hot after 5 minutes or you can leave it to cool and you get a lovely tasting tea that's refreshing, calming and uplifting all at the same time.

For a robust, flavoursome salad to go with your BBQs try:-

Wild Leaf and Lettuce super salad – lettuce is not high in nutrients although the darker leaves do contain beta-carotene and folate. Therefore make some additions to create a nutrient rich super salad and skip the over priced, over-chlorinated mixed leaves you find in the supermarkets. However, ensure you can positively identify any plant you use and that it has not been treated with any chemicals. Always wash well before use.

For 4 people

Fresh dark lettuce leaves i.e. Cos or Romano, torn not cut

Handful of watercress (rich in Vitamin A, C & E plus calcium and iodine)

Handful of young leaf spinach (stimulates immune, helps regulate blood fats)

Then be adventurous and add a mix of wild leaves from the lawn for example:

young leaves of dandelion

self heal

ground ivy (very high in vitamin C and was once used to treat scurvy)

plantain

shepherd's purse

chickweed

These leaves will add vitamins A, B, C, D & K plus minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium, silica, zinc & potassium to your salad and lots of flavour. For colour add edible flowers of chives, viola, borage, nasturtiums or even a few daisies!



Self Heal *Prunella vulgaris*



Ground Ivy *Glechoma hed.*

Men's Health

In previous editions I have covered several health issues relating to woman, menopause, fertility and childbirth so its time to redress the balance a bit and look at men's health.

To be honest I don't see many men in my clinics, and those that attend have often had the appointment made by their female partner. Perhaps it's not surprising given the typical male's reluctance to seek medical advice, be it doctors or dentists, except in an emergency.

However a medical herbalist can help improve a man's health in lots of ways e.g. if you're feeling stressed or depressed, having trouble sleeping, always getting colds, suffering from acne or are recovering from an injury. Liver healing plants, like Milk Thistle, may be beneficial if you drink alcohol regularly and hangovers too respond well to plant medicines. Herbs can also be very effective in treating things like sweaty or smelly feet as well as more unpleasant conditions like athletes foot.

There are some illnesses specific to men primarily related to the reproductive system which also responds well to herbal treatments.

✿ **Fertility, including improving sperm quality and motility** – combined with a diet high in fruit and vegetables (5+ portions a day) herbs like astragalus, dong quai, black cohosh, horny goatweed, epimedium and ginseng can improve the motility and viability of sperm. Zinc is important for fertility and libido (that's why oysters, the highest natural source, are considered an aphrodisiac). Pumpkin seeds and nuts contain zinc too so nibble on these as a healthy snack. The amino acid L-carnitine taken for 4 months (it takes that long for sperm to be made) has been shown to normalise sperm. Individuals should stop smoking and reduce alcohol and coffee as all three substances reduce sperm count and increase sperm abnormalities. And of

course wear loose underwear and trousers and avoid hot baths.

✿ **Loss of libido including erectile problems and impotence** – firstly it is important to ensure there is no underlying cause such as diabetes and high cholesterol as both can cause erection difficulties. Herbs can particularly help when causes are linked to stress, age or emotional reasons. Ashwaganda, muira puama, ginseng, ginkgo and damiana are all used to increase libido and improve erectile strength. Anti-stress herbs like valerian, oat straw, smilax, liquorice and lemon balm maybe used depending on the individual. Herbs that improve pelvic circulation like yarrow and ginger help improve the general health of the area.

✿ **Infections of the reproductive organs** including prostatitis, epididymitis, urethritis and balanitis. In these cases anti-infective herbs, e.g. Echinacea, thyme (it's excreted by the kidneys so very potent in urinary infections), goldenseal, and hydrangea are very important. To ease discomfort demulcent herbs such as horsetail and corn silk are added.

✿ **Benign prostate enlargement** - herbal combinations including Saw Palmetto, Nettle root and Thuja have been shown to be as effective as drugs in mild to moderate cases without the distressing side effects. Pumpkin seeds or oil in the diet is beneficial in this condition as they help restore normal urine flow. A number of herbs should not be used, including those recommended for impotence and fertility as some of them increase testosterone and therefore make the prostate enlargement worse. It is advisable to limit bicycle use, including exercise bikes, as these seats place pressure on the prostate causing discomfort and possible inflammation.

Diet can play a vital role in health and one of the latest "super foods" for men is pomegranate juice. It's good for heart

health and keeping the arteries clear of cholesterol, something men especially need to think about.

And finally... last year I talked about the health benefits of chocolate. Well I can't find anything on beer but if you chaps are cider drinkers (moderate of course!) then



you could be boosting your intake of a group of antioxidants called phenolics. Antioxidants protect the body from strokes, heart disease and cancer. A study done by Glasgow University has discovered that whilst

dessert apples are a good source, English cider apples are even better and what's more the cider making process preserves these high levels. Cider has 7 times more phenolics per glass than cloudy apple juice and 18 times more than the clear varieties. So although it doesn't count against your 5+ portions of fruit and veg. a day (no cheating) a glass of cider is another way to boost your antioxidant intake. *(Personally I'm still on the chocolate!)*

Echinacea - the latest news



I feel sorry for research scientists sometimes. They have to design the right experiment to get the results to prove what we (herbalists and patients) intuitively knew all along! In this case that Echinacea can boost your immune system to help, among other conditions, fight off the common cold. However before you rush off to buy just any old remedy in the shop

with a picture of this lovely plant on the box remember, as with a great many over-the-counter herbal remedies (and supplements too), quality matters and sadly many are poor. In the case of Echinacea, it is the root of the species *Echinacea augustifolia* that contains the highest amount of the immune boosting chemicals (called alkylamides). These are most readily used by the body when extracted from the plant using a high percentage alcohol. You know if you're taking a high quality preparation as it (actually those alkylamides again) will make your whole mouth and throat zing. (I find it numbs my sore throat for a while, a welcome side-effect!).

So, sorry if you've been drinking Echinacea and Raspberry tea to boost your immune system – it won't, but it is a great way to reduce your caffeine and boost your fluid intake.

DIARY DATES

KIDS STUFF

The opening of the Community Medicinal Herb Garden situated in the Orchard at Cambourne is on 31st July between 11am - 1pm with a children's' event that includes painting signs for the garden, seed planting and a real herbology class. The garden has been designed, dug and planted with grateful support from the Wildlife Trust. For more information contact the Wildlife Trust on 01954 713500.

THE REAL POTIONS AND HERBOLOGY CLASS



Learn about magical medical plants just like Harry Potter and his friends and make some healing potions to take home (*Note: no spiders' webs, newts or bats will be harmed!*)

10-12noon Thursday 9th August 2007 at St Ives Complementary Health Centre - £10 per child (suitable for 8 yrs and above). (*A booking form must be completed prior to the event –see contact details below*)

PLUS for all why not join me on a plant safari this autumn when I will be telling you about the medicinal uses and folklore of plants growing at these beautiful nature reserves?

● **Sunday 9th September** (2pm) at **Sandy RSPB HQ** Tickets include entry to reserve – phone 01767 680541 to reserve a place

● **Sunday 30th September** (2pm) **West Stow Country Park**, Bury St Edmunds Tickets £5 adults, £3 children phone 01284 728718 (as the park contains a reconstruction of an Anglo Saxon village, herbs used in this period will feature prominently)

OR COME TO a Herbal Workshops Learn about traditional and modern herbal remedies and how to make your own to treat common ailments. Will be held on Saturday afternoons at St Ives Complimentary Health in September and October. Dates to be confirmed depending on uptake – PLEASE register your interest on 01480 492088

IN FUTURE, THIS NEWSETTER WILL ONLY BE PUBLISHED 3 TIMES A YEAR AND NOT 4 TIMES SO PLEASE LOOK OUT FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF HEDGEROW-HERBAL NEWS WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM NOVEMBER.

Visit the Hedgerow Herbals website www.hedgerow-herbals.co.uk.

For advice, comments or topics you would like to see in future newsletters contact **Julie Dore** at

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