

Common Herbs and Their Medicinal Uses

We have a pretty extensive vegetable and herb garden on our homestead. We have fruit trees, a vegetable garden, a berry walk as well as our herb garden. Each herb can have multiple purposes, besides just “tasting good” in your meals.

We get all of the following planted and / or reseeded each year to make sure that we have them on hand. Here is information from many different website sources. (We put links to do more research at the end of each herb plant section too)

Our herb garden includes the following:

- Basil
- Cilantro
- Chamomile
- Lavender
- Lemon Balm
- Lemongrass
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Peppermint
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Western Yarrow

BASIL: natural anti-inflammatory with mild antiseptic functions. Also used for flatulence, lack of appetite, nausea and cuts and scrapes. We eat a lot of basil at our house. It grows well in our aquaponics system and in a pot on our back patio. Pesto is a sauce that we make often using basil.

Treatments Using Basil

1. **Healing:** Sharpen memory, use as a nerve tonic, and remove phlegm from your bronchial tubes. Repeat up to once an hour. Leaves can strengthen the stomach and induce profuse sweating. The seeds can be used to rid the body of excess mucus.
2. **Fevers:** Basil leaves are used for quenching fevers, especially those related to malaria and other infectious, eruptive fevers common to tropical areas. Boiling leaves with some cardamom in about two quarts of water, then mixed with sugar and milk, brings down temperature. An extract of basil leaves in fresh water should be given every 2 to 3 hours; between doses you can give sips of cold water. This method is especially effective for reducing fevers in children.
3. **Coughs:** Basil is an important ingredient in cough syrups and expectorants. It can also relieve mucus in asthma and bronchitis. Chewing on basil leaves can relieve colds and flu symptoms.
4. **Sore Throat:** Water boiled with basil leaves can be taken as a tonic or used as a gargle when you have a sore throat.
5. **Respiratory Disorders:** Boiling basil leaves with honey and ginger is useful for treating asthma, bronchitis, cough, cold, and influenza. Boiling the leaves, cloves, and sea salt in some water will give rapid relief of influenza. These combinations should be boiled in about two quarts of water until only half the water remains before they are taken.
6. **Kidney Stones:** Basil can be used to strengthen your kidneys. In cases of stones in your kidney, the juice of basil leaves mixed with honey and taken daily for 6 months will expel them through the urinary tract.

7. Heart Problems: Basil can be used to strengthen those weakened by heart disease. It can also reduce your cholesterol.
8. Children's Illnesses: Pediatric complaints like colds, coughs, fever, diarrhea, and vomiting have been known to respond to treatment with the juice of basil leaves. Also if the rash associated with chicken pox is delayed, basil leaves with saffron will bring them to the surface more quickly.
9. Stress: Basil leaves can be used as an anti-stress agent. Chewing 12 basil leaves twice a day can prevent stress. It will purify the blood and help prevent many other common ailments.
10. Mouth Infections: Chewing a few leaves twice daily can cure infections and ulcerations of the mouth.
11. Insect Bites: Basil can be used preventatively and as a curative. A teaspoonful of the basil leaf juice taken every few hours is preventative. Rubbing the bites with juice can relieve the itching and swelling. Also a paste of the root is effective for treating the bites of insects and leeches.
12. Skin Disorders: Basil juice applied directly to the effected area is good for ringworm and other common skin ailments. Some naturopaths have used it successfully in the treatment of leucoderma (patches of white or light-colored skin).
13. Tooth Problems: Dry basil leaves in the sun and grind into powder for a tooth cleansing powder. You can also mix with mustard oil to make herbal toothpaste. Both of these methods will counter bad breath and can be used to massage the gums, treat pyorrhea, and other dental health problems.
14. Headaches: Basil is a good headache remedy. Boil leaves in half a quart of water, cooking until half the liquid remains. Take a couple of teaspoons an hour with water to relieve your pain and swelling. You can also make a paste of basil leaves pounded with sandalwood to apply to your forehead to relieve headache and provide coolness in general.
15. Eye Disorders: Basil juice is a good for night-blindness and sore eyes. Two drops of black basil juice in each eye at bedtimes each day is soothing.

More information located at: <http://www.offthegridnews.com/alternative-health/medicinal-uses-and-health-benefits-of-basil>

CILANTRO: a rich source of vitamin K, this herb strengthens bones and helps prevent the onset of bone diseases.

Some of the many known health uses include...

- Rich in flavonoids and phytonutrients, which are known for their antioxidant properties and help fight free radicals
- Chock full of minerals like iron and magnesium. Both essential nutrients
- Effective against indigestion and helps settle the stomach
- Because it's a natural anti-inflammatory, it may help to ease the symptoms of arthritis
- Cilantro seeds can help to lower cholesterol and control blood sugar levels, Lowers bad cholesterol and raises good cholesterol
- Helps prevent and treat nausea
- Excellent source of dietary fiber

Folk Medicine and Traditional Uses...

Iranians have used it to treat insomnia and anxiety. In India they make it into a drink. The seeds are boiled in water, then cooled and drunk as a diuretic.

- See more at: <http://www.bespokespices.com/benefits-of-cilantro.html>

GERMAN or ROMAN CHAMOMILE: used for infusions, teas and salves, treats indigestion, anxiety and skin inflammations. As a tea, it serves as a mild sedative to help with sleep.

- Used as a tea Chamomile flowers are used internally for many common physical symptoms, including menstrua: l cramps, stomach cramps, indigestion, flatulence, diarrhea, fever, colds, congestion, headaches, insomnia, nausea, vomiting, stress, nervousness, and poor digestion.
- For babies, it is helpful with symptoms of colic and teething pain.
- Externally, Chamomile flowers can be ground into a paste (grind with mortar & pestle and add some water or unsweetened tea - add oatmeal slowly as needed for consistency) and used to treat skin irritations such as ulcers, infections, rashes, and burns.
- The flowers can also be used in a bath to ease the pain of hemorrhoids and cystitis, and the essential Oil can be applied to combat neuralgia and eczema. To prepare a bath, put a handful of flowers in a mesh bag or a knee high stocking, hang it on the tap using string or whatever, and run the bath water over it
- Lastly, Chamomile flowers can be used in a steam inhaler for respiratory and allergic problems such as asthma, hay fever, and sinusitis.

More information: <http://gardensablaze.com/HerbChamomileMed.htm>

LAVENDER: A tea made from lavender has many uses with one of the foremost being its ability to have a calming effect on a person's mind and body. To that end, lavender can promote a sense of well-being and alleviate stress. It is also useful for dealing with various gastrointestinal issues such as upset stomachs and flatulence.

Because it is a strong antiseptic, lavender tea, when applied topically, can help heal cuts, wounds and sores. It can also be used to mitigate bad breath.

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| • restlessness, | • meteorism (abdominal | • vomiting, |
| • insomnia, | swelling from gas in the | • nausea, |
| • nervousness, | intestinal or peritoneal | • intestinal gas |
| • depression. | cavity), | (flatulence), |
| | • loss of appetite, | • upset stomach. |

More information on lavender: <http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-supplements/ingredientmono-838-LAVENDER.aspx?activeIngredientId=838&activeIngredientName=LAVENDER>

Lavender can also be used in cooking and make a tasty shortbread cookie.

Lavender Shortbread Cookies

From our site: <http://krisandlarry.com/2014/07/29/essential-oil-tuesday-lavender-shortbread-cookies/>

INGREDIENTS

- 2 sticks unsalted butter, softened to room-temperature
- 1 tablespoon dried lavender flowers
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 cups flour (We substituted a gluten-free flour blend for ours) – plus extra for rolling.
- Lavender Essential Oil (about 3 drops) - Optional

Directions:

1. In your blender or food processor, pulse blend together the sugar and the dried lavender flowers until flowers are smaller and the mixture is fine.
2. In a mixer, combine the flour and the sugar mixture.
3. Add butter and 3 drops of PURE essential oil. *(You may add a few drops of red and blue food colors if you want to make them purple... we don't use dyes so this wasn't an option for us.)*
4. Mix until well blended.
5. Roll dough out to about .25 in thick and cut with a cookie cutter.
6. Place on cookie sheet and bake.
7. Remove to cooling rack.

Bake at 325 for 15 minutes – Makes about 2 dozen cookies depending on the size of your cutter

LEMON BALM: reduces stress and anxiety, promotes sleep, improves appetite, and ease pain and discomfort from indigestion. In the past, lemon balm was steeped in wine to lift the spirits, help heal wounds, and treat venomous insect bites and stings.

As with many other herbs in your healing garden, lemon balm promotes relaxation and a sense of calm.

- Insomnia treatment
- Digestive aid
- Anxiety
- Indigestion and heartburn
- Wound treatment
- Headaches
- Fever reducer
- Decreased congestion
- Cold sores
- Nervousness

Read more: <http://naturalsociety.com/medicinal-uses-of-lemon-balm-grow-own-medicine/>

LEMONGRASS: Lemongrass is a plant. The leaves and the oil are used to make medicine. Lemongrass is used for treating digestive tract spasms, stomachache, high blood pressure, convulsions, pain, vomiting, cough, achy joints (rheumatism), fever, the common cold, and exhaustion. It is also used to kill germs and as a mild astringent.

- Lemongrass is an herb with a plethora of uses medicinally, from being a stomach soother to being an effective insect repellent and fungicide. A limited study done at the University of Wisconsin revealed that some people taking prepared Lemongrass capsules (140 mg) daily for three months experienced a significant reduction in cholesterol levels, and that their cholesterol levels returned to their previous highs when they stopped taking the preparation. Obviously, this indicates that Lemongrass may help reduce cholesterol in certain individuals.
- Make a Tea and drink 1-4 cups per day to relieve congestion, coughing, bladder disorders, headaches, fever, stomach aches, digestive problems, diarrhea, gas, bowel spasms, vomiting, flu symptoms, as a mild sedative, and to promote perspiration - and as a possible cholesterol lowering agent. Rather than discarding the tea bags, use them externally for the problems described below. An Oil can also be made, 3-6 drops of which can be put on a sugar cube for the same purposes as above. The leaves can also be dried and made into a powder for use in Capsules. Please see the link below for more details.
- Externally, an Oil can be made with Lemongrass to be applied at 10 drops or so directly to the affected area in cases of athlete's foot, cuts, scrapes, lower back pain, sciatica, sprains, tendonitis, neuralgia, circulatory problems, and rheumatism. It can also be tried on the face to help clear up acne and clean skin pores, and the fresh leaves can be crushed and rubbed on the skin as an on-the-spot outdoor insect repellent.
- Use Lemongrass in the bath for a soothing aromatherapy experience by placing a mesh bag with a handful of leaves under the running bath water, then letting the bag soak in the water with you as you bathe. Very relaxing.
- Lemongrass is safe for use in moderation, but should be avoided by young children, pregnant women, and people with kidney or liver disease.

More Information at: <http://www.gardensablaze.com/HerbLemonGrassMed.htm>

OREGANO: Oregano has been used as a culinary and medicinal herb for thousands of years. It has a beneficial effect upon the digestive and respiratory systems and is also used to promote menstruation.

- It should not be used medicinally by pregnant women though it is perfectly safe in small amounts for culinary purposes. The leaves and flowering stems are strongly antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, cholagogue, diaphoretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, stimulant, stomachic and mildly tonic. The plant is taken internally in the treatment of colds, influenza, mild feverish illnesses, indigestion, stomach upsets and painful menstruation.
- It is strongly sedative and should not be taken in large doses, though mild teas have a soothing effect and aid restful sleep. It should not be prescribed for pregnant women.

- Externally, oregano is used to treat bronchitis, asthma, arthritis and muscular pain. The plant can be used fresh or dried - harvest the whole plant (but not the roots) in late summer to dry and store for winter use.
- Oregano is often used in the form of an essential oil that is distilled from the flowering plant. A few drops of the essential oil, put on cotton wool and placed in the hollow of an aching tooth, frequently relieves the pain of toothache.
- This plant is one of the best natural antiseptics because of its high thymol content. The essential oil is used in aromatherapy to treat the same kinds of complaints that the herb is used for.

More information on Oregano: <http://www.naturalmedicinalherbs.net/herbs/o/origanum-vulgare=oregano.php>

PARSLEY: When brewed as a tea, parsley can help supplement iron in a person's diet, particularly for those who are anemic. Drinking parsley tea also boosts energy and overall circulation of the body, and helps battle fatigue from lack of iron. Other uses? Parsley tea fights gas and flatulence in the belly, kidney infections, and bladder infections. It can also be an effective diuretic. Helps prevent tumor formation and breast cancer.

- natural cure for bladder problems, prostate or kidney.
- Parsley root is a diuretic that has been used for various forms of dropsy (abnormal accumulation of fluid in body tissues or a body cavity), congestion of abdominal viscera, etc.
- Some herbalists recommend parsley as a natural remedy for fever.
- Parsley has a beneficial effect on blood circulation and helps to eliminate toxins from the body.
- Parsley also stimulates blood flow in the pelvic area and uterus. Parsley seeds can be used as a tea to eliminate menstrual problems. It gives good results in the treatment of amenorrhoea and dysmenorrhoea.
- Parsley leaves have antiseptic effect, purifying the digestive system, urinary tract, bladder, uterus.
- According to some studies, parsley juice, taken every morning before breakfast is the remedy for gonorrhoea and all urinary tract infections. Parsley tea gives a drink effective against rheumatism.
- It stimulates digestion. Finally, parsley freshens breath and successfully conceals the smell of garlic.

More info on Parsley: <http://www.all-natural-cure.com/parsley.htm>

PEPPERMINT: Peppermint has a long tradition of medicinal use. Archaeological evidence places its use far back as ten thousand years ago. It is commonly used to soothe or treat symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, indigestion, irritable bowel, and bloating and more.

The leaves and stems contain menthol which in addition to use medicinally, is used as a flavoring in food, and a fragrance in cosmetics. The plant is prolific, growing well in moist, shaded areas as well as in sunnier locations. The roots emit runners that can quickly overtake the garden so most gardeners prefer to plant peppermint in pots.

The easiest way to acquire a peppermint plant? Find a friend or neighbor that is growing peppermint to break off a stem. Place it in a glass of water and in a very short period of time, roots will form and you will have your own peppermint start. (We always have peppermint plants available on our homestead. So if you would like a cutting, let us know!!)

- common cold,
- cough,
- inflammation of the mouth and throat,
- sinus infections,
- respiratory infections.
- digestive problems
- heartburn,
- nausea,
- vomiting,
- morning sickness,
- irritable bowel syndrome (IBS),
- cramps of the upper gastrointestinal (GI) tract and bile ducts,
- upset stomach,
- diarrhea,
- bacterial overgrowth of the small intestine,
- gas
- Oil can be used to reduce fevers and to help with allergy symptoms
- Some people also use peppermint for menstrual problems, liver and gallbladder complaints, preventing spasms during endoscopy procedures, and as a stimulant.
- Peppermint oil is applied to the skin for headache, muscle pain, nerve pain, toothache, inflammation of the mouth, joint conditions, itchiness, allergic rash, bacterial and viral infections, relaxing the colon during barium enemas, and for repelling mosquitoes.

Some people inhale peppermint oil for treating symptoms of cough and colds, and as a painkiller. In foods and beverages, peppermint is a common flavoring agent.

More information on Peppermint: <http://www.webmd.com/vitamins-supplements/ingredientmono-705-PEPPERMINT.aspx?activeIngredientId=705&activeIngredientName=PEPPERMINT>

ROSEMARY: Boosts brain power and cognitive function. The needles of the delightfully fragrant rosemary plant can be used in a tea to treat digestive problems. The same tea can also be used as an expectorant and as a relaxing beverage that is helpful for headaches. Other healing uses include improving memory, relieving muscle pain and spasms, stimulating hair growth, and supporting the circulatory and nervous systems.

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| ☒ Reducing anxiety, elevating mood | ☒ Protects against DNA damage | ☒ Improving circulation |
| ☒ Boosting memory | ☒ Arthritis treatment, anti-inflammatory | ☒ Detoxifying the liver |
| ☒ Brain protection | ☒ Skin tonic | ☒ Cancer prevention (due to containing carnosol, a compound found to have anti-cancer properties) |
| ☒ Calming effects | ☒ Hair tonic | |
| ☒ Pain relief | ☒ Digestion soother | |
| ☒ Headache relief | ☒ Immune booster | |

Read more about rosemary: <http://naturalsociety.com/rosemary-benefits-health-growing-own-medicine>

SAGE: Did you know that the genus name for sage is “salvia” which means “to heal”? In the first century C.E. Greek physician Dioscorides reported that sage stopped bleeding of wounds and cleaned ulcers and sores. He also recommended sage juice in warm water for hoarseness and cough. In modern times, a sage tea is used to sooth mouth, throat and gum inflammations. This is because sage has excellent antibacterial and astringent properties.

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| • Diaphoretic, | • nervine, | • antagalactagogue |
| • carminative, | • vermifuge, | (decreases secretion of milk), |
| • stimulant, diurectic, | • diuretic, | • uterine stimulant, |
| • antispasmodic, | • stomachic, | • reduces blood sugar levels |
| • antidiarrheic, | • antiseptic, | |
| • expectorant, | • anithydrotic, | |
| • tonic, | • astringent, | |
| • aromatic, | • promotes estrogen, | |

Additional Information on Sage: <http://medicinalherbinfo.org/herbs/Sage.html>

THYME: Back during medieval times, thyme was given to knights before going in to battle. The purpose was to infuse this manly man with vigor and courage.

These days, thyme used to relieve coughs, congestion, indigestion and gas. This perennial is rich in thymol, a strong antiseptic, making thyme highly desirable in the treatment of wounds and even fungus infections. Thyme is a perennial that does well, even in cooler, Pacific Northwest climates.

Down through the centuries it has been used for various ailments, from melancholia to epileptic seizures. In ancient times thyme was one of the first herbs used as incense. It was often mixed with equal parts of lavender and sprinkled on the floors of churches in the Middle Ages to eliminate any unwanted odors. In ancient Egypt, thyme was one of the ingredients used in the mummification process. It has also been used as a perfume among some ancient cultures.

In recent years it has been prescribed by herbalists for intestinal worms, gastrointestinal ailments, bronchial problems, lack of appetite, diarrhea, menstrual cramps, the common cold, and laryngitis. In Germany it is used to treat whooping cough and emphysema.

- Thyme has antiseptic qualities that make it useful for a mouthwash and to combat tooth decay. Its antiseptic qualities also make it useful in cases of anemia, bronchial ailments, and intestinal problems, as well as a skin cleanser. It has been known for anti-fungal properties that can be used to treat athlete's foot and has anti-parasitic properties that are useful against lice, scabies, and crabs. It has shown useful for colic, excess gas, sore throats, and as a hangover remedy. Thyme also proves beneficial as an expectorant to loosen and expel mucus.
- Make a poultice by mashing the leaves into a paste for use on skin inflammations and sores. Using thyme for an anti-fungal or parasitic agent can be done by mixing four ounces of fresh thyme to a pint of vodka or fresh vinegar with "the mother" still in the container (the mother is the vinegar starter). Crush the thyme leaves slightly and let sit 12 hours or overnight. Or buy the essential oil and use it sparingly. Apply to the affected area.
- For gastric issues or bronchitis, make a tea of 1 teaspoon leaves to each cup of boiling water and steep 10-15 minutes. Use only once a day. Add small amounts of honey to sweeten, if desired.
- Infusions of thyme have also been useful in soothing and healing muscle spasms and skin irritations. Thyme also contains a compound that is helpful in preventing blood clots.
- Aromatherapy of the essential oil of thyme has been used to boost the mind, body, and spirit. Vapors of thyme's essential oil have been effective for treating respiratory infections. Thyme oil or infusion can be added to bath water to aid bronchial problems and soothe rheumatism.
- Burning thyme can repel insects and a dilution of thyme oil can be used externally as a deodorant and antiseptic that will prevent mildew. An ointment made with thyme has been used to treat warts. And some have said that it is useful to help new mothers to expel the afterbirth. Thyme ointment can be made from its leaves to soothe the discomfort associated with gout and killing worms internally.
- Thyme has many helpful actions. It has been used as an antiseptic, anodyne, disinfectant, antitussive, anti-inflammatory, rubefacient, demulcent, aperitif, carminative, diaphoretic, depurative, digestive, diuretic, expectorant, fungicide, nervine, pectoral, sedative, stimulant, and vermifuge.
- The leaves and stems are the most common parts of the plant that are used.

More Info on Thyme: <http://www.offthegridnews.com/alternative-health/medicinal-uses-of-thyme/>

WESTERN YARROW: Yarrow's most widespread function is to stop bleeding, which it is still used for today. It is said that Achilles used the plant to arrest the bleeding of his soldiers' wounds—thus the name of the genus, *Achillea*, was derived. Seasoned hikers are usually aware of the blood-clotting and antimicrobial benefits of applying yarrow to their cuts. Yarrow may be applied directly, or used in a salve or poultice for minor cuts and wounds.

Yarrow has also been used as a remedy for cold and early fever, due to its diaphoretic properties. A tea may be prepared by steeping 1 teaspoon of dried yarrow in 1 cup of boiling water for 10 to 15 minutes. Drink 3 cups per day. (Because it has a sour flavor in tea, we add peppermint into the tea as well.)

The herb has also gained notoriety for its anti-inflammatory abilities. Thus it has been used for a number of conditions, from intestinal and female reproductive tract inflammations to hemorrhoids. Aside from these major applications, yarrow was used for a hodgepodge of maladies, including baldness, urinary tract infections, hypertension, and dysentery. It was even an ingredient in salads and beer over the years.

Information on Yarrow: <http://www.motherearthliving.com/health-and-wellness/common-yarrow-uses.aspx>

How to Make an Herbal Tea

(GREAT INFORMATION ON Herbs and herbal tea!) <http://thepaleomama.com/2014/03/10-healing-herbs-for-survival-garden/>

The process of making a pot of herbal tea is in itself healing. Perhaps that has something to do with the proactive effort involved in doing something positive for one's own self and well-being. And luckily, brewing an herbal tea is easy.

To make an herbal tea, first bring some cool water to a boil. While waiting for the water to boil, fetch a non-metal container that will be used to brew the tea. A quart mason jar works nicely for this purpose. You do not want to use a metal container since the metal may interfere with the purity and taste of the tea.

Add 2 tablespoons of fresh (or 1 tablespoon of dried herb or crushed seed) to the empty pot or jar for each cup of water. Then, and this is the important part, add an extra 2 tablespoons of fresh (or 1 tablespoon of dried) herbs "for the pot." So, for example, if you are making 2 cups of hot tea, you would use 6 tablespoons of fresh herbs or 3 tablespoons of dried herbs.

Pour the boiling water over the herbs and let them steep, covered, for about 5 minutes give or take. There is no exact time since everyone's strength preference is difference. When ready, strain the herbs and pour the tea into a cup. At this point you may want to garnish your heavenly – and healing – cup of tea with honey, citrus fruits or addition herb sprigs.

For iced tea, increase the quantity of herbs in the basic recipe by 1 1/2 to allow for dilution from the melting ice.