

## Botanical Properties Defined

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**adaptogen** – increase resistance to harmful factors (stressors)

**alterative** – restore proper function of the body; increase vitality

**analgesic** - relieve pain

**anti-catarrhal** - reduce inflamed mucous membranes of head and throat

**anti-inflammatory** - controlling inflammation

**antimicrobial** - destructive to bacteria

**antipruritic** - prevent or relieve itching

**antispasmodic** - calm nervous and muscular spasms or tightness

**astringent** – agent that constricts and reduce secretions

**bitter** - stimulates appetite or digestive function

**carminative** – reduce intestinal gas

**demulcent** – soothe and protect inflamed tissue

**diaphoretic** - increase perspiration to eliminate toxins

**diuretic** - increase urine flow

**expectorant** – assist in expelling excess mucous from the lungs

**hepatic** - having to do with the liver, which filters waste

**hypnotic** – eases a person to sleep; usually strong nervines

**immune modulator** – affects the immune system

**lymphatic** – promote the lymph flow to eliminate toxins

**nervine** - a nerve tonic; eases tension

**tonic** - a substance that increases strength and tone

**vulnerary** – promote healing of wounds and inflammation

## HOW TO USE HERBS AS MEDICINE

### 1. Infusions, Hot or Cold:

- *Hot Infusion*—making a cup of tea. Bring water to a boil then pour over 1-3 teaspoons of the dried herb (the amount in a typical teabag) or place the herb in a tea holder/strainer. Cover the cup or teapot and let it steep: for 5 – 10 minutes.

If you make tea with bark, root or berries then you need to simmer the plant material. This means to bring the water to a boil, add the plant material and turn the heat down to as low as possible for 15-20 minutes. Because the material is denser, more heat is required to make the tea.

- *Cold Infusion* is used to extract the active ingredients with cold water at room temperature for 1 to 8 hours. Cold infusions should be used immediately, or can be stored for up to 72 hours in the refrigerator. Fresh herbs are often used in this form.

### 2. Liquid Extracts, Glycerine Or Alcohol Based:

- *Alcohol Extracts* are usually made with a high proof alcohol (i.e., vodka or everclear grain alcohol). They have a long shelf life (up to 10 years) as long as they are kept in a cool dark place. Alcohol content of at least 25% will prevent organisms from growing
- *Glycerine Extracts* are alcohol free, and have a shelf life of 1-2 years if kept in a cool and dry location. Herbs for children often are prepared as glycerites.
- *Essential Oils* are very concentrated extracts prepared from a distillation process. They are used primarily in the topical form or for aromatic uses, but certain essential oils can be ingested.

### 3. Powdered Plant Material is most often root material ingested by mixing into foods. For instance medicinal mushrooms and ashwaghandha.

### 4. Herbalists also make *Lotions, Salves, and Ointments* for topical use.

### 5. INFUSED OILS, VINEGARS, and HONEY are used commonly in cooking.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Healthy at Home by Tieraona Lowdog, MD
- An Elder's Herbal by David Hoffmann, MNIMH
- Herbal Remedies for Women by Amanda McQuade Crawford, MNIMH
- An Encyclopedia of Natural Healing for Children and Infants by May Bove, ND

## **THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN MAKING MEDICINE FROM HERBS**

1. Quality of the herb is critical: how it is grown, when it is harvested, and how it is dried and stored. Organic is best.
2. Herbs are easy to grow in your garden or in patio pots. For example, lemon balm, peppermint, sage, thyme, holy basil to treat common symptoms like colds, sore throats, cough, insomnia, colic, and bug bites. Remember since you are growing plants for medicine you want to avoid using harmful pesticides and fertilizers.
3. You can gather plants in the wild, referred to as wildcrafting, BUT you need to be sure you know the plant you are harvesting. The medicinal parts of a plant may include only the flower, or flowers and tender leaves, or the berry. Sometimes the bark or roots contain the medicine. The term "aerial parts" includes the leaves, stems and flowers.
  - a. Flowers should be gathered in the first stages of blooming
  - b. Leaves gathered in the morning after the dew has evaporated when fully developed and before flowering
  - c. Fruit are gathered just before they are fully ripe
  - d. Seeds are gathered when they are fully developed
  - e. If you harvest the root, it is gathered in the spring before just as the first shoots appear or in the fall when the plant portion has died back. If a plant is biennial (blooms in the second year), harvest the roots in the fall of the first year or spring of the second year. If a perennial, harvest the roots in the late fall when it is 2 or 3 years old.
  - f. Bark can be harvested in the spring or fall preferable from small or pruned branches.
4. Most herbs are used in the dry form to make medicine. You can also purchase organic dried herbs from reputable growers locally or nationally. Certain plants can be used fresh and used in a cold infusion (i.e., peppermint, lemon balm, and holy basil).