



IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH WITH
THE SECRETS OF A DISAPPEARING CULTURE

HEALING HERBS OF JAMAICA

by

IVELYN HARRIS

7th Generation Maroon Herbalist

WITH INTRODUCTION BY DR. AL SEARS, M.D.

- SOOTHE HEADACHES, FEVER, MUSCLE PAIN, JOINT STRAIN, AND TENSION
- RELIEF FOR MENSTRUAL PROBLEMS, PROSTATE ISSUES, AND URINARY TROUBLE
- IMPROVE EYESIGHT, SEXUAL STAMINA, BLOOD PRESSURE, AND BONE STRENGTH
- HEAL WOUNDS, RASHES, SORES, STINGS AND BITES

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Foreword

I met Ivelyn a number of years ago while I was doing research in Jamaica. I was particularly fascinated with how the Maroons had developed their own system of medicine and their own methods of healing. I had heard about the ‘Bush Doctor’; her herbal garden, and her knowledge of herbs. Her herbal baths have been featured in the National Geographic and her story has been told as part of a BBC documentary series.

I remember traveling into the mountainous terrain of Portland to meet her. The view was breathtaking. Ivelyn’s home was an example of ‘everything natural.’ Her guest cottage was decorated with stones from a nearby river, her lamps were handmade, she made paper to make lampshades or paper for notebooks, she dried fruits using a solar dryer and dinner was prepared using foods that had been picked only minutes before. In the time I was visiting, people came from near and far for her advice and herbal remedies, for she is respected in her field as an herbalist and ‘Bush Doctor.’

I am excited about this book. Jamaica has a rich culture and so much biodiversity. Much of the information about the plants and their environment exists amongst the people, especially the older generation. As communities change much of this is being lost. The Maroon community is a prime example of that which has withstood external influences to maintain their identity. Their system of medicine is just one example of that which was founded hundreds of years ago and is still maintained today. In this book Ivelyn shares her knowledge on over forty plants that exist in her garden.

Knowledge of these plants has been passed down through the generations. It is this medicine that has aided the survival of the Maroons for hundreds of years.

This book is for herbalists, those interested in Maroon medicinal culture, for people interested in plants in general or for those fascinated with the relationship that cultures have with their botanical environment.

This book is not meant to replace the advice of a qualified practitioner and these herbs are not meant to be used without the guidance of a qualified herbalist.

Make yourself a cup of herbal tea and enjoy!

Simone Gentles Burke, B.Sc. M.Sc. N.D.
Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine

Introduction

I navigated my small rental car on washed-out, mountain roads in a blinding rainstorm. More than once, the car slid dangerously close to the edge of a deep ravine while I fought to keep it under control. I was on a quest to seek out healing herbs in the John Crow Mountains of Southeastern Jamaica, and my journey to get there turned out to be an unexpected adventure.

When I finally arrived with my guide, a petite Jamaican woman emerged smiling from her cottage to welcome me. This was my first meeting with Ivelyn Harris, a native herbalist who has cured thousands of people naturally with the herbs in her garden. Meeting Ivey was the reason for my treacherous journey through the mountain terrain.

What was unique about Ivey? As an important part of my medical practice in South Florida, I travel the world looking for native herbs that are used successfully by indigenous people. The possibility of being introduced to herbs that are unknown to Western medicine grabbed my interest. So did Ivey's reputation throughout Jamaica as a great natural healer.

Ivey built her practice on her experience and knowledge of the rich culture and heritage of her ancestors, the Koromantyn people of Western Africa. The Koromantyns came to Jamaica hundreds of years ago and became known as the Maroons when they were driven deep into the mountains of Jamaica.

There they thrived by living off the fertile land and using native plants as life-saving medicine. So deep was their

knowledge and belief in the healing power of plants, the Maroons had an herbal tea that protected them from deadly yellow fever that was carried to Jamaica by Spanish settlers.

This is Ivey's heritage. And in the tradition of her Maroon ancestors, she has continued to learn and experiment with native plants, formulating her own healing tonics and medicines with properties that enhance the medicinal value of the individual herbs.

People from all over Jamaica and as far away as Europe and the US come to Ivey for her tonics, teas and healing baths. Many of them have chronic conditions that modern medicine cannot cure. Her unique remedies only need to be taken a few times – or less – for the individual to feel relief, or even to be cured. Along with her ancestral knowledge, intuition is frequently her guide in choosing the appropriate healing herbs.

Ivey has over 300 species of medicinal plants and herbs in her garden. In this book you will learn about 42 of them along with 5 of her most popular tonics – remedies that have eliminated the need for prostate surgery, cured chronic back pain, normalized high blood pressure – and much, much more. Many of these herbs are virtually unheard of in the modern world. You'll only learn about them in this one-of-a-kind book.

Ivey is the last of the Windward Maroon women practicing herbal medicine. That's why it's so important that her vast wealth of knowledge is preserved in this and future books. I am honored that she asked me to write the introduction for her book – and pleased to help bring her unique experience with native medicinal plants to a wider audience.

Until now, only a small handful of people had access to Ivey's healing teas and tonics. But that soon may change. With this book and plans for a large herb farm in Jamaica, Ivey's herbal remedies have the potential of helping millions of people. Ivey and I share this goal – to preserve the life-saving herbal wisdom of the Maroon people by making it available to all.

Yours in good health,

Dr. Al Sears

African Minty

Piper methysticum [Piperaceae]

Kava · Cure All · Peace Bush

Ease Stress and Soothe Sore, Aching Muscles



I grew up in a tiny Jamaican village, far off the beaten path. My village is nestled in a high valley between two mountain ranges. To the southeast, the beautiful Blue Mountains wall us off from most of the island. To the northeast, the John Crow Mountains seem to rise almost out of the sea.

Everyone in my village worked hard. Most families grew vegetables on the mountainsides. We kept goats and gathered fruits and edible plants from the forest. The men hunted wild boar and other game. Like our Maroon ancestors, we

lived off the land. Village life may not have been easy, but it was always good.

Hunting and gathering in mountain forests is demanding work. You're always climbing – either up or down. For much of the year it's hot and humid. Biting insects descend in hordes. And the rainy season brings sudden downpours almost daily.

When anyone came back from the bush sore and fatigued, there was no doctor or drug store to give them a pill. Instead, they took a cup of African minty tea to relax. A poultice of African minty also brings quick relief to aching muscles and joints.

Once, I wandered into the mountains in search of roots. I had walked about 4 miles from home, following the donkey trails high up on the mountainside. I was pretty deep in the forest.

I remember feeling a searing pain in my back as I tugged on a root. I had pulled a muscle in my back. I was in so much pain, I could hardly stand up, let alone walk.

But I had no choice. I couldn't call for help – no one would hear me. And it could be days – or even weeks – before anyone else came this way. I literally had to drag myself down the mountain.

I clung to tress beside the narrow trail for support. Bit by bit, a few steps at a time, I made my way down the mountain. Those 4 miles felt more like 400.

When I finally got home, I made a poultice of African minty leaves and applied it to my back. Within minutes, I

could feel the pain beginning to ease. I was back on my feet in no time.

Since then, I've made African minty poultices for more people than I can remember. And it almost always does the trick.

To make a poultice for pain, take 5 fresh African minty leaves and crush them with a mortar and pestle. If you don't have a mortar and pestle, that's okay. Just put the leaves in a clean cloth and pound them slowly with a hammer. The plant has a lot of juice, so you won't need to wet the resulting mash.

When the African minty is crushed and mushy, it's ready. Tie the poultice around your back – or whichever part of your body aches – and sleep with it on for the night. When you wake up in the morning, you'll feel much less pain. You can apply an African minty poultice for up to 3 days, changing the poultice every 8 hours or so, as needed.

I also make a tea of African minty leaves for people feeling agitated or tense. It's very effective with tension headaches. And it's a good stress reliever.

African minty – also called kava-kava – contains kavalactones. These substances fight pain and inflammation much the way aspirin does, but naturally. These kavalactones also help relax muscles, which may explain why African minty is so good at relieving muscle pulls and soreness.¹

I also use African minty with people who have a cold in their lungs or bronchitis... and even arthritis and rheumatism. I've also found the tea useful for urinary tract

infections. Some people notice results from the first drink. It depends on how long they've had the condition.

We were always taught you shouldn't drink too much African minty tea. (As the old saying goes, more of a good thing isn't always better.) When I talked with Dr. Sears about African minty, I discovered why that's a good idea.

A few people in Europe have developed liver problems from taking too much. Dr. Sears says that it's even been banned in a few countries. But he's never heard of anyone getting sick from the amounts used in traditional Maroon remedies.

About the Herb

African minty likes cool moist soil. You can often find it by the side of the road, on river banks and in gardens. It grows many roots in one area and multiplies quickly in fertile soil. The leaves are large and heart shaped.

The mature plant produces several *swords* between the stems and near the leaves. It can grow up to six feet high.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Roots

Tea for TENSION HEADACHE and STRESS RELIEF

Add 1 ounce fresh or dried leaves to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer fresh for 1 minute or dried for 3 minutes, then

steep fresh for 5 minutes or dried for 10 minutes. Strain out leaves. Makes 4 cups.

Drink straight, or sweeten with honey to taste. Take 1 cup of tea three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Tea for URINARY TRACT INFECTION, BACK PAIN, RHEUMATISM, AND BRONCHITIS

Add 1 ounce dried ground root or 1 ounce fresh root to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes on a low flame, then steep until cool. Strain out root and store in a clean bottle.

Take 3 tablespoonfuls every 3 hours for two weeks. Repeat if necessary.

Treatment for SORE THROAT

Simply chew a piece of African Minty root. You'll normally feel relief almost immediately.

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.stevenfoster.com/education/monograph/kava.html>

Arrowroot

Maranta arundinacea
[*Marantaceae*]

Nourishment for Babies and the Sick



Growing up in the mountains of Jamaica, we didn't have an awful lot. My parents could only afford a little two-bedroom house for the eight of us. Even in those close quarters, the rain sometimes fell on our tin roof so hard, we could barely hear each other talk.

We didn't have TV or electricity or any fancy toys. But we didn't mind. We had a grassy little yard to play in, the mountains to explore, and – as long as plants grew in the forest – we never went hungry.

I can remember my sisters and I crowding around our old kitchen table in the morning. If the weather was bad, Mother might still have her little tin lamp burning on the table. She'd scoop each of us a steam bowl of arrowroot porridge. With a little cinnamon or a dash of vanilla, it was filling and delicious. I can't imagine rich children enjoyed their breakfast any more than we did.

Arrowroot is one reason those family breakfasts are such a dear memory for me. You see, we weren't eating some ready-made cereal from the supermarket.

We didn't have supermarkets. We gathered the arrowroot ourselves. And I loved wandering through the mountains with my sisters.

Even today, arrowroot porridge is a popular baby food in Jamaican villages. Lots of grown-ups eat arrowroot porridge for breakfast, too. It's inexpensive and very easy to digest.

Arrowroot is especially good for older folks when they're sick. It isn't high in protein or vitamins, but it provides nourishment when they can't eat most other foods. It's an excellent choice for people who require a bland, low-salt diet for health reasons.¹

You can also use arrowroot powder in place of eggs to bind pastry. One teaspoonful of arrowroot powder equals one egg. Arrowroot powder also thickens gravy and soups.

You can find fresh arrowroot – also called fung quat – in ethnic markets. Arrowroot powder is available in many supermarkets and health food stores.

About the Herb

Arrowroot is a perennial that grows well in garden furrows. It prefers rich, fertile soil in a tropical climate. It grows in clumps of woody roots with straight stalks. Each stalk carries from one to three long smooth leaves. This herb only rarely flowers.

Preparations

Parts Used: Roots

Arrowroot Powder

Take 2 kilograms freshly dug roots of arrowroot. Wash and peel roots and grate the peeled roots into a large container. Add 5 liters of cold water to the grated roots and squeeze through a clean piece of linen cloth into a large stainless steel or enamel container. Avoid getting any pulp from the grated roots in the juice.

Set the juice aside overnight to settle.

In the morning, drain off all the water and allow the wet arrowroot sediment to dry in the sun until it becomes powdery. The drying process should take two to three days. Store arrowroot powder in a clean dry jar.

Arrowroot Porridge

Mix 4 tablespoonfuls of arrowroot powder in 1/8 liter of cold water. Add the mixture to ½ liter boiling water over a low flame. Stir constantly until the porridge thickens. Remove from heat and sweeten to taste. For extra flavor,

add a teaspoon of vanilla, ½-teaspoon of nutmeg and a dash of ground cinnamon. Makes two servings.

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.answers.com/topic/arrowroot>

Bachelor Button

Gomphrena globosa
[*Amaranthaceae*]

Promote Wound Healing and Prostate Health



We get lots of wind and rain here in the mountains. And when you live on the edge of the forest, that means there's always plenty of yard work. I love working in my little yard... but when you spend a lot of time outdoors, accidents happen.

I remember one time, when I was about 22, I was clearing windfall from the yard. We'd had a pretty good storm, and it had blown down some large branches. As I was stacking up the branches, one fell down and cut my leg open. It felt like my leg had just caught fire.

I was really bleeding, so I went inside to clean it up. The cut was bad. The branch had left a 7" gash down my leg that was about a half-inch deep. I was sure I'd have to go to the clinic – a walk of several miles.

But first, I bandaged up my leg and went to see one of the village elders.

She looked at my leg and said, "You don't have to go all the way to the clinic. I'll tell you how to take care of that cut."

"Just take the bachelor button," she continued, "and rub it and squeeze it to get the juice out. Then put the juice on your leg."

I knew my Maroon ancestors used bachelor button to heal all sorts of cuts and sores, inside and out. But this cut was long and deep. Still, I trusted the elder and followed her instructions.

Sure enough, the bachelor button eased the pain and the cut closed up completely in about 5 days. After a while, I couldn't even find a scar. The cut had healed up, just as if I'd seen a doctor.

When I was growing up, the old folks also used bachelor button for excess urination. I still do.

In my practice, I've made hundreds of bottles of bachelor button medicine for prostate problems and frequent urination. Combined with soursop leaves and red water grass, it helps men who have a swollen prostate and a hard time urinating – even if they've had the problem for years.

Bachelor button is a shrub that grows about four feet high. It likes to grow in damp fertile soil, and does well in gardens,

cow pastures and other open spaces. You'll often find it growing at the corners of stones.

Bachelor Button grows straight and jointed, with stems on some of the joints. It has large, rough leaves that are pointed at the tips.

When the plant is mature, it sends out small, green button-shaped pouches. Each pouch has from six to eight tiny white flowers.

When the flowers fall off, the green buttons turn brown. There are several tiny black seeds inside these pouches when they're dried.

Besides cuts, sores and prostate problems, bachelor button is also good for douching for vaginal infections, such as trichomonas and yeast infections. The tea is also helpful for other infections and inside sores.

Preparations

Parts Used: Stems, Leaves, Seed Pouches

Douche for VAGINAL INFECTIONS

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried bachelor button to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer fresh for 3 minutes or dried for 5 minutes. Steep and allow to cool. Strain liquid into douche bag.

This makes one douche.

Repeat for three days until symptoms clear up. If necessary, skip one week, and repeat.

Tea for VAGINAL INFECTIONS and INSIDE SORES

Add ¼-ounce dried or ½-ounce fresh bachelor button to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer fresh for 2 minutes or dried for 3 minutes. Steep fresh for 10 minutes or dried for 15 minutes, then strain off. Makes 3 doses.

Sweeten with honey. Take tea three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week, and repeat if necessary.

Prostate Medicine

Bachelor button compounded with soursop leaves and red water grass is helps relieve prostate problems and frequent urination.

Balsam

Ocimum gratissimum [*Lamiaceae*]

Big Leaf Basil · Fever Tea · Mary Bush

Relief From Colds, Flu and Fever



As a direct descendant of Princess Nanny, I'm proud of my heritage. And in 2003, I fulfilled a life-long dream. I journeyed to Ghana, the home of my Koromantyn ancestors.

Ghana is a poor West African nation, but it's a very beautiful place. I met many distant relatives there, and was welcomed by all the Koromantyn people. I'll never forget when the medicine man confirmed I was a true Koromantyn. It was one of the greatest moments of my life.

While I was in Ghana, I traveled to Aburi National Park, which is famous for beautiful botanical gardens. The park isn't heavily forested. Instead, the trees are spread out and there's a lot of scrubland.

I enjoyed walking along the park's dirt roads, spotting an occasional antelope or bushbuck. But mostly, I was fascinated by the many plants and herbs growing there.

As I walked, I noticed balsam growing along the sides of the road. I told my Koromantyn hosts that we use balsam in Jamaica. It's especially good for fevers and colds.

Much to my surprise, they told me the Koromantyn of Ghana use it for the same purposes. Except they call it "fever tea."

If you have a flu or fever, you can boil balsam into a tea. If you drink 2 or 3 cups, you won't feel the cold or flu the next day.

From the first drink, you can feel relief coming on.

Balsam is one of the healing herbs I use most often in my remedies. When I was growing up, you could see it growing in every Maroon yard.

Balsam is good for colds and flu. It's also good for fever. It relieves gas and cramps in the stomach or bowel, too. It has so many practical uses.

Balsam is also great for relaxation. It's one of the herbs I use in baths for people with almost any kind of ailment. It can be compounded with many different herbs and is very, very powerful.

Some people even believe balsam drives away evil and negative spirits.

I don't know about evil spirits, but I've discovered two good reasons for balsam's success against colds and flu.

First, balsam contains an oil called thymol, which has anti-microbial and anti-viral properties. Plus, the leaves are high in vitamin C.¹

This aromatic shrub likes to grow at the side of the kitchen, in the garden, in gullies with shade... anywhere there is cool, fertile soil. It grows all year round.

When balsam is mature, it produces heavy greenish buds with tiny cream and yellow flowers. When the buds are ripe, the tiny black seeds are a favorite food for the birds.

Preparations

Parts Used: Stems, Leaves, Flowers

Tea for STOMACH GAS, BOWEL PROBLEMS, FEVER, COUGHS, COLDS, RELAXING THE NERVES, TONING UP THE SYSTEM, SOOTHING HEADACHES and RELIEVING CRAMPS

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried balsam leaves and flowers to 1½ pints boiling water. Steep fresh for 5 minutes or dried for 15 minutes. Makes 4 cups.

Strain off tea and sweeten with honey to taste. Drink tea three times a day or as often as needed.

Bath for FEVER

Add 2 pounds fresh leaves, stems, and flowers to 3 gallons cold water. Bring the water to a boil, then simmer for 3 minutes.

Set one cup aside to drink before pouring water into a bath pan or tub. Place two flat pieces of board across the pan to sit on. Cover yourself and the tub with a sheet and sweat out the fever.

When the bath cools enough to get in, remove the flat boards, get in the tub, and then wash from your head down to the soles of your feet. Then, drink the cup of tea you set aside and go to bed. You should wake up feeling relaxed and healed.

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1. <http://www.medwellonline.net/fulltext/aj/2008/362-365.pdf>

Bitter Albott

Neurolaena lobata [Asteraceae]

Bitá Albut · Cottonweed · Diabetic Bush

Dog Bitter Dia · Jackass Bitters

Heal Sores & Rashes and Purify the Blood



When people come to me with scabies or very dry skin – especially on their elbows, joints and feet – I give them a bitter albott wash. This almost always clears up their problem.

I remember a woman who came to me a few years ago. Her little girl had sores all her body and scalp that wouldn't heal. The mother had taken her to almost every doctor in Jamaica, but nothing they gave her worked.

The poor child was only 6 or 7, and she looked terrible. She had sores and dried scabs all over her body, from head to foot. Her feet and legs... hands and arms... even her scalp was dotted with sores. Some were full of pus.

How that poor little girl suffered!

I made her a soothing bitter albott bath, saving a cup to drink as a tea after she bathed. You should have seen the relief on her face as she lowered herself into the herbal bath. I could tell right away it was going to help.

When you see this girl now, she shines. The sores on her body and scalp all disappeared... and they haven't come back. The bitter albott cleared them all up.

Bitter albott is an herb that cleanses the entire system. Bitter albott ointment clears up many kinds of rashes and skin conditions. Bitter albott medicine purifies the blood and treats diabetes. If you have a pain in the stomach, you can make a tea and the pain will subside.

Back in 1998, a Dr. Chambers came all the way from England to see me, because he wanted to know how the mountain people of Jamaica stayed so healthy without doctors. He was very impressed with the fact that the people don't have cancer, diabetes or the stress that other people have.

Bitter albott was one of the herbs I shared with him. It has hypoglycemic properties, so it promotes healthy blood sugar levels. It also contains compounds that are anti-microbial and anti-viral.¹

When someone comes to me and they look sickly with yellowish eyes, I know they need their blood purified. I give them a bottle of bitter albott blood purifier. It works so well, I can't make it fast enough. I've even had people standing in line, waiting for me to finish a batch!

Bitter albott is a powerful healing herb. This aromatic shrub likes a sunny tropical climate. You'll often find it on riverbanks or at stone corners.

Bitter albott is a tall shrub – growing up to 6' high. When it is mature, it bears golden yellow flowers.

This herb fits the name “bitter.” But don't let the flavor put you off. The tea is good as a wash and taken internally. Tea made from bitter albott leaf purifies the blood. It's also effective for diabetes – because it helps control blood sugar – and tummy ache.

Tea made from the root is useful for joint pain and the swelling caused by arthritis. The tea may also be used as a wash for skin diseases, scabies, sores and as a douche for yeast infections.

Preparations

Parts Used: Roots, Leaves

Tea for PURIFYING THE BLOOD, DIABETES and TUMMY ACHE

Add 20 grams dried bitter albott to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer for 3 minutes. Then steep for 15 – 20 minutes and strain off. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or add two teaspoonfuls of honey. Take twice a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat again for another two weeks, if necessary.

Wash for SCABIES, SORES, COLD SORES and DOUCHE

Add 40 grams fresh or dried bitter albott to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes and steep until cool.

Apply this wash to the affected areas twice a day, until it heals. Douche with this wash twice a day for three days then wait seven days. Repeat until yeast infection clears up.

Compound for PURIFYING BLOOD

Bitter Albott can be compounded with other roots and herbs to make blood purifier. *See page 181.*

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.drugs.com/npp/jackass-bitters.html>

Black Betty

Piper amalago [Piperaceae]
Jointer • Black Jointer
Ease Pain and Soothe Fever and Colds



When I was growing up, my Great Auntie Liz was one of only three midwives who worked in our valley. She was there when each of my sisters and I were born.

When I was ready to be born, my father rode his horse all the way down the mountain to Moore Town to fetch Great Auntie Liz. My mother used to love to tell the story of how she delivered me by lamplight at 4:00 AM.

Back in those days, nobody could afford to have a doctor come to deliver their baby. Besides, the nearest doctor

was more than 14 miles away – and that’s a long trip on horseback. So midwives delivered all the babies.

Black Betty was one of the herbs I saw Great Auntie Liz and the other midwives use. I even remember running out into the countryside to pick some for her when she was busy delivering a baby.

Black Betty helps to ease the pain of childbirth. Great Auntie Liz would boil the black Betty in 5 gallons of water, reserving a cup to be taken as a tea.

After the mother delivered the baby, my aunt would wash her in the bath and then give her a cup to drink. This eased her pain. The bath and the drink would also help the mother expel the afterbirth.

Black Betty has a stimulating effect on mucous membranes. That’s one reason it’s so helpful in childbirth. It also eases gas, nausea and constipation.

Applied to the skin, black Betty increases circulation, which promotes faster healing.¹

For fever, colds and flu, you can also compound black Betty with other herbs – such as balsam – to make a healing bath.

Black Betty grows wild in and around Jamaica’s Rio Grande Valley. It loves to grow in the cool mountains and woodlands, often by a spring, brook or riverside.

The main stem is woody and jointed. It sends off smaller jointed stems that grow shiny, dark green leaves. The mature plant shoots out pollen spikes, 4 – 5 inches long, between these leaves.

Black Betty has been a favorite of the Maroons for centuries. This plant strengthens and relaxes the nerves, and helps hypertension, fever, flu, and colds.

Preparations

Parts Used: Small Stems, Leaves, Pollen Spikes

Tea for NERVES, HYPERTENSION, FEVER, COLDS and FLU

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried black Betty to 1 quart boiling water. Steep fresh for 5 minutes or dried for 15 minutes. Strain. Makes 6 servings.

You can drink this tea straight or sweetened to taste with honey.

Bath for healing PAIN and FEVER

Add 3 pounds fresh black Betty to 5 gallons cold water, and place on the stove with a low flame. When the bath starts to boil, remove from the fire and steep for 3 minutes.

Pour bath into bathtub and add cold water until desired temperature is reached. Lay in the bath and wash the whole body from head to toe for 15 minutes.

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Cerasee

Momordica charantia [Cucurbitaceae]

Cerasee Bitters • Maiden Apple

Clear Up Rashes and Ease Belly Pain



The Maroon people have always eaten what Nature provides, so colitis isn't common. But I did see one case a few years ago.

A man in his 50's came to see me with crippling pain in his colon. I could tell he was sick as he hobbled towards my house.

He was pale and weak, and he walked sort of feeblish as he came up to my house. If he hadn't told me his age, I'd have guessed he was in his 70's.

He told me his doctor said he had colitis. But nothing the doctor did seemed to help. He couldn't eat well and had lost weight. And he was in pain most of the time.

I told him to drink cerasee tea. That's what the village elders had always prescribed for colitis. He drank it for 3 months and his pain was gone. He could finally eat again and got back his strength. Now, instead of looking old, he looks healthy for his age.

Cerasee is very good for your skin, too. It helps any sort of skin rash, including scabies and eczema.

For eczema, I compound the cerasee in a tea with bitter albott and wash the area with it. Then I make a Mary Goule ointment and apply it to the sores. The cerasee tea is a very rapid blood purifier, and that helps clean the system out and gets rid of the condition.

After using it for a while, the eczema goes away and doesn't come back. I've seen people who've had eczema for years completely heal in 3 months. I also tell people with eczema, don't smoke and don't drink because these things will stop it from healing.

I use cerasee for many complaints. It inhibits an enzyme that's linked to psoriasis. It also has anti-viral and antibacterial properties. And a compound in cerasee helps keep blood sugar under control.¹ Cerasee is definitely an all-around healing herb.

Cerasee is a climbing vine. It prefers stony soil and grows wild near fence corners, at the corners of buildings and on shrubs that it can run on. It has delicate yellow flowers and develops a golden yellow seed pod that contains red seeds

when ripe. The leaves have four to five lobes. Cerasee is bitter to the taste.

Cerasee is used to cure belly bottom pain (pain below the navel), diabetes, constipation, colitis, skin rashes, scabies and eczema.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Vines, Roots

Tea for BELLY BOTTOM PAIN

Add 10 grams dried cerasee leaves and vines and 20 grams fresh or dried ground ginger root to ¼-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 5 minutes. Turn off the flame and steep for 10 minutes. Strain off tea. Makes one cupful.

Drink one cupful of this tea daily for three days to relieve belly bottom pain.

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Chocolate

Theobroma cacao [Sterculiaceae]

Cocoa • Cocoa Beans



Sundays were an event when I was growing up. You see, my family was Anglican. But the little church in our village wasn't an Anglican church. The nearest Anglican church was way down in Moore Town... and we all walked there for services every Sunday.

Mother would get us up early and we'd put on our Sunday dresses. Then we'd eat a light breakfast and walk through the village and down to Moore Town for church.

Our Sunday mornings were long, and we didn't get our lunch until afternoon. So Sunday breakfast always included a cup of chocolate tea.

My mother and grandmother wouldn't go through a Sunday morning without their chocolate tea. A cup of chocolate tea will keep you for a long time without being hungry.

Chocolate has always been a favorite among the Maroons. And it still is for me, even today. If you don't have much to eat, you can take a cup of chocolate tea when you get up. Then you can go work in the mountains all morning without feeling hungry.

The tea is made from chocolate beans that are dried, roasted, ground in a mortar and then formed into balls. You can add any kind of milk to the tea, but I like to make mine with coconut milk.

Young chocolate pods also make a good plaster for cuts that have closed up but still have pus in them. The chocolate plaster will pull the festering and infection out. A chocolate plaster will help a fresh cut heal, too.

Sucking on fresh ripe chocolate seeds will cure an irritated tonsil. When I was a child, I often had irritated tonsils. Sucking chocolate seeds cleared up the problem. Even now, if I get a flare-up, the chocolate seeds will cure it.

Raw cacao (the name for unprocessed chocolate) isn't like the chocolate bars you buy in the store. Cacao is very high in antioxidants – 40 times higher than blueberries. That's why it's so useful for infections and inflammation.¹

Cacao also contains magnesium, which relaxes the muscles, lowers blood pressure and detoxifies.

Chocolate comes from a tropical tree that grows up to twenty feet high. It's a long-lived tree that loves fertile soil.

The leaves are longish with pronounced ribs. Young leaves are pink and turn dark green when mature.

The flowers are small with white petals and red cream pollen inside. The flowers develop into ribbed pods. The pods are red when young, but turn green as they mature. When they're fully ripe, the pods turn yellow.

Each pod contains several sappy beans attached to a cordlike middle. One pod holds fifty or more beans.

Chocolate tea tones up the body and is excellent for warming up the body on cold winter days. The sap on the ripe seeds is healing for people that suffer from tonsillitis. Suck on 12 fresh sappy seeds three times a day until symptoms disappear.

Young chocolate is also an excellent remedy for cuts and festering sores.

Preparations

Parts Used: Seed Pods

Chocolate Balls

Burst open 12 chocolate pods. Remove the sappy beans. Place the beans in a burlap bag or a basket. Wash the sap off the beans with fresh, clean water.

Lay a clean piece of burlap in a sunny place. Spread the cleaned beans out on the burlap to dry. Turn the beans over each day while they are drying. In full sun, this should take about a week.

After the beans are dried, bake them in an iron pot on a low flame. Stir constantly until the beans are crispy and the shells can be removed easily. Remove all bean shells.

Grind the beans – along with one nutmeg and three cinnamon leaves – in a mortar until they're smooth and soft. Scoop out the softened chocolate and roll into small balls. Allow the balls to dry and harden. The drying process usually takes a day or two.

Tea for TONING and WARMING BODY

Grate one chocolate ball and add to ½-liter boiling water. Cook over a low flame for 20 minutes.

Add ¼-liter fresh coconut milk to the pan and stir. Heat long enough to warm the coconut milk, but don't allow the mixture to boil.

Sweeten with 3 tablespoons of brown sugar. Add 1 tablespoon vanilla and a pinch of salt. Makes 3 cups.

If one cannot take sugar or salt, drink tea straight.

Plaster for HEALING WOUNDS, CUTS and SORES

Wash a baby chocolate pod. Scrape off the outer skin, and scrape the inner part to make a plaster on a clean piece of gauze. Apply plaster to wound. Use as often as needed until the wound heals.

REFERENCES

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Colic Mint

Lippa alba [Verbenaceae]

Colon Mint • Belly Mint

Banish Menstrual Pain and Stomachache



Colic mint is one of the best herbs for a stomachache and menstrual pain. Let me share how colic mint helped a young girl I met.

About 10 years ago, I went to Montego Bay for Sunsplash. This was a big reggae festival. Practically everybody big in Jamaican music was there. In those days, the music started at dusk and went on till dawn for a whole week.

A lot of people would come in from the countryside for the festival, and there weren't enough hotel rooms for everyone.

Besides, a lot of us couldn't afford to stay in a hotel. But a lot of families would open their homes to visitors for a small fee.

That year, I was staying with a family who had a 17-year-old daughter. The poor girl was having terrible cramps and menstrual pain. She was in so much pain, she couldn't get out of bed. And she was throwing up a lot. Her mother told me she had been suffering this way every month for two years.

So I compounded half an ounce of colic mint with a little ginger and made a tea. I gave the girl a cup of this tea, and her pain started to ease immediately.

She drank another cup before she went to bed, and the pain was gone. She did that for 3 months and her period pain never came back.

Colic mint is also good for stomach cramps from eating bad food.

I remember this happened to my ex-husband and me years ago, after we ate at a hotel restaurant. By the time we got home from dinner, he had a terrible stomachache. So I made him the colic mint tea with ginger.

Instantly, he felt relief.

A few minutes later, I started feeling sick. So I drank a cup of the tea, too. Before long, neither of us felt sick at all. Just one cup of colic mint tea cleared up our bellyaches. (We did drink a second cup in the morning, though – just to be safe.)

For babies with colic, I make a tea with colic mint alone. That usually does the trick. I tell the mother to give her baby a tablespoonful three times a day, as needed. By the next day,

the colic is usually gone. Children between 3 to 6 can take a tablespoonful 4 times a day for stomachache or colic.

I've read that colic mint prevents ulcers in animal studies. This doesn't surprise me, since I've seen it work so well on people's stomach pain. Colic mint also contains compounds that kill bacteria and fungi.¹

This herb grows well in dry, fertile soil. You'll often find it growing at the corner of stones, at kitchen corners and in gardens. It has straight stems that each produce several rough, scalled leaves. Some of the stems bend over when the plant is fully mature.

Colic mint produces small green and cream flowers from May to November. This herb can grow up to three feet high.

Preparations

Parts Used: Stems, Leaves, Flowers

Tea for COLIC and STOMACHACHE

Add ½-ounce fresh or ¼-ounce dried colic mint leaves, stems and flowers to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer fresh for 1 minute or dried for 3 minutes. Steep fresh for 5 minutes or dried for 10 minutes, then strain off. Makes 2 cups.

For adults, this makes 2 doses. For children aged 3 – 6 it's 4 doses. For children aged 6 – 12 it makes 3 doses. Children 12 and over can take the adult dosage.

Drink straight or sweetened with honey to taste. Take tea three times a day.

Tea for MENSTRUAL CRAMPS and PAINFUL PERIODS

Add ¼-ounce crushed ginger and ½-ounce fresh or dried colic mint to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer fresh for 3 minutes or dried for 5 minutes. Steep fresh for 10 minutes and dried for 15 minutes, then strain off. Makes 3 doses.

Drink straight or sweeten with honey to taste. Take one dose three times a day for up to three days, as necessary.

REFERENCES

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Comfrey

Symphytum officinale
[*Boraginaceae*]

Bone Set • Knit Back • Knit Bone



In the old days, there wasn't much interest in the Maroon healing arts. But that is changing.

People see how Maroons living in the traditional way don't have many of the diseases they suffer. And how we stay so healthy – even without doctors. They wonder, “How can that be?”

I'm used to seeing people from all over Jamaica, where Maroon healing is appreciated. But in recent years, I've begun seeing people from much further away. These people

come from many Caribbean islands... from the US and Canada... and even from the UK and other parts of Europe.

I remember one of these visitors was a college professor from the US. She had a painful ulcer. Her doctor told her she needed an operation, but she didn't want it. So she started looking for another way to treat her ulcer.

She found out about me from a Dutch eco-tourism company, and made arrangements to visit me in Jamaica.

It's not an easy trip to my village, but she finally found a taxi driver to take her. They bumped and bounced all the way into the mountains along the gulleys that pass for roads here.

When she arrived, I made her comfrey tea and gave her some leaves and roots to take home with her. A few months later, she wrote to me and said her ulcer had completely cleared up.

If your digestive system is disturbed, comfrey tea will usually relieve the pain.

I've used a comfrey douche treated a few women for trichomoniasis – a common parasite. This is one of the hardest infections to cure, so you need to douche frequently – three times a week for about a month.

Many women also come to me for yeast infections. A comfrey douche taken three times in a week will clear it up. I also recommend a daily cup or two of comfrey tea for women with yeast infections or trichomoniasis.

When someone overworks a muscle or a limb, I use a comfrey poultice to cure the weakness and strain. I've used

this remedy on myself several times. I make a poultice of fresh comfrey leaves, tie it around my arm and go to bed. The next morning, I wake up without any soreness or strain.

A comfrey poultice will also help a joint sprain. I made a poultice for a man who was on vacation in Jamaica and sprained his ankle down at the river. He came to me in a lot of pain and his ankle was very swollen. The comfrey poultice brought the swelling down quickly.

A tea made from comfrey leaves and roots is also good as a wash and soak for cuts, sores, sprains, strains and swelling in the joints. Just soak the affected area in the hot tea – as hot as you can stand it – until the water starts to cool down.

One reason comfrey works so well is that it contains allantoin. Allantoin promotes cell growth and speeds healing.¹

You should be aware that comfrey is banned in the US as an herbal supplement. There are some concerns it could cause liver damage... though I have never seen this problem in my practice.

Comfrey prefers cool moist land. It does best if planted and tended in its own space. The leaves are long and rough with pointed ends. The flowers are white with mild cream and blue.

Preparations

Parts Used: Roots, Leaves

Tea for STOMACH ULCERS, DISORDERS OF THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM and BACK PAIN

Add one fresh or dried comfrey leaf or 10 grams ground comfrey root to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for five minutes. Steep for ten minutes, then strain off. Makes 2 cups.

Add 2 teaspoonfuls of honey or drink straight. Drink twice a day for two weeks. Skip a week and repeat, if necessary.

Douche for TRICHOMONAS or YEAST INFECTIONS

Add six comfrey leaves or 100 grams ground comfrey root to 1 liter boiling water. Simmer for ten minutes, then sit to cool. This bath can be used for douching three times a week for three months.

Poultice for STRAINS or SPRAINS

Wash 3 fresh comfrey leaves. Pound leaves in a mortar until they become sticky. Apply poultice evenly around sprain or strained joints and wrap with a bandage. You can leave it on up to twelve hours. Repeat as often as needed.

Poultice for CUTS, SORES or SKIN ULCERS

Use 3 – 5 comfrey leaves, depending on size. Apply poultice directly on the affected area and cover with gauze. Do this as often as needed.

Bath for SWELLING OF THE JOINTS, CUTS, SORES, SPRAINS and STRAINS

Add 5 fresh/dried comfrey leaves or 1 ounce dried comfrey root to 1 pint boiling water. Steep for 20 minutes.

Wash cuts and sores with the bath. Soak sprains, strains, or swelling of the joints in the bath while as hot as you can stand. Continue soaking until the bath is cool. Then apply comfrey poultice.

Poultice for CUTS, SORES or SKIN ULCERS

Use 3 – 5 comfrey leaves, depending on size. Apply poultice directly on the affected area and cover with gauze. Do this as often as needed.

Bath for CUTS, SORES, SPRAINS, STRAINS and SWELLING OF THE JOINTS

Add 5 fresh/dried comfrey leaves or 1 ounce dried comfrey root to 1 pint boiling water. Steep for 20 minutes.

Wash cuts and sores with the bath. Soak sprains, strains, or swelling of the joints in the bath while as hot as you can stand. Continue soaking until the bath is cool. Then apply comfrey poultice.

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Cow Foot Leaf

Pothomorphe peltata [Piperaceae]

Cow Foot Leaves • Cow Hoof
Relief for Hemorrhoids and Other Pain



I don't see piles – hemorrhoids – all that often in the Maroon community. Like so many other complaints, they seem to be less common among people who live “close to the Earth.”

But when someone does come to me with this painful problem, I give them cow foot leaf. The ground leaves work beautifully in a poultice with a touch of castile soap.

I remember a woman in her early 50's came to see me a few years ago all the way from the US.

She had such bad piles she could barely sit down. They gave her excruciating pain.

Her doctor wanted to operate. But she desperately wanted to avoid the knife. So she began searching on the Internet. She found a reference to me on a website, and contacted a travel agent I know. Then she made the long journey to Jamaica to see me.

I don't know how she managed to survive the trip to my village from Moore Town. I can only imagine her pain traveling up and over the hillsides along the rutted road into the mountains. All that bouncing about must have been agony!

She told me what her doctor had said about needing an operation. But I said to her, "No, because when you operate on them, they will come back."

So I made a cow foot leaf poultice for her, and she applied it to the piles. By the next morning they were gone. She applied the poultice 3 or 4 more times, and they were gone for good. She never had to go back to the doctor again for the piles.

The cow foot leaf poultice also worked for my sister when she was about ten years old. Every time she went to the toilet, her bottom would come out. This went on for about a year. Then she used a cow foot leaf poultice after she went to the bathroom a few times. The piles never came back – even after she had 6 kids.

I don't know why the poultice with the castile soap works for piles, but it does. It has saved several people I know of from painful surgery.

Cow foot leaf also works for headache. Warm the leaves and tie them to your head with a bandage or scarf. In less than 30 minutes, the pain will be gone. I've also used it successfully for muscle spasms and general pain.

Cow foot leaf is found all across the Rio Grande Valley, in Portland and other parts of Jamaica. This mild aromatic plant grows best in shaded fertile soil. You'll find it in gullies and cow pastures, and at fence corners.

The plant is named for its large hoof-shaped leaves, eight to ten of which hang on one main stem. When the plant is mature, it shoots up several swords on bunches between the leaves, and young seedlings spread from the roots.

Cow foot leaf can grow up to five feet high.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves

Poultice for HEMORRHOID or PILES

Ground together 3 large fresh leaves with a tiny piece of castile soap. Apply this poultice to hemorrhoids (piles) and leave overnight.

Repeat as often as needed until symptoms disappear.

Treatment to alleviate PAIN, MUSCLE SPASM and HEADACHE

Warm 3 - 4 large leaves and apply to the painful area. Leave covered until ache goes away (usually less than 1 hour).

Dandelion

Cassia occidentalis [Fabaceae]

Piss A Bed

Banish Bladder Trouble



Dandelion is one of those herbs with a very colorful common name: “piss a bed.” And the name is appropriate.

I remember the elders in my village used dandelion as a bedwetting cure when I was just a child. They’d give a child who wet their bed 2 or 3 tablespoons of dandelion tea, and the child’s problem would clear up in no time. It’s very effective.

Dandelion tea is also very good for excess urine.

A few years ago, one of my aunts was having a terrible time with excess urine. She was about 75 at the time, and she couldn't get any rest at night. She'd go to the bathroom, settle into bed, and – just as she was dropping off to sleep – she'd have to go again.

Poor Auntie was at her wits' end.

When she came to see me, I gave her dandelion tea. For three days, she drank one cup in the morning and one cup at night. Now she doesn't have the excess urine anymore. She sleeps through the night like a little girl.

Dandelion tea is *the cure* for people in this age group with a weak bladder and excess urination.

The tea also cleans the urinary tract – like if your urine is cloudy. You can drink the tea and it will clear it up. Most people only have to drink it 2 or 3 times.

For gallstones and kidney stones, I use the dried root to make a tea, as well. I've only treated 2 or 3 people for this, but everyone that drinks dandelion tea gets rid of the stones.

The dandelion I use isn't the same plant you have in the US. Our dandelion looks like a pea pod, not a flower. You use the fried roots and roasted seeds from the pod to make the tea.

Dandelion should be used with caution. It can be toxic if you take too much. So I'm always very careful to warn my patients not to take any more than I tell them.

Nobody's ever gotten sick from dandelion using my directions.

Dandelion has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. It also relaxes smooth muscles and can lower blood pressure. It's also very healthy for the liver.¹ It's a very powerful herb.

Dandelion likes plenty of sun and tropical soil in gardens, at the corners of buildings and on open lands. The leaves are long and pointed at the end with smooth edges.

When the plant is mature, golden flowers appear in bunches at the top. The flowers turn into pods – a lot like peas – with seeds. This plant can grow up to four feet high.

Preparation

Parts Used: Seeds

Tea for GALLSTONES, WEAK BLADDER and URINAL TRACT CLEANSER

Add 2 teaspoons ground roasted seeds to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 3 minutes. Steep for 15 – 20 minutes, then strain off. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten to taste. Take one cup of tea twice a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary, until symptoms are gone.

REFERENCES

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Dog Blood

Rivina humilis [Phytolaccaceae]
Belly Bush · Period Pain Bush
Relief for “Women’s Troubles”



In Jamaica, we say that dog blood is a young girl’s best friend. Women here use it for cramps, pain and irregular periods. It’s very effective for menstrual trouble.

I also use dog blood for a problem we call “black tube.” That’s when your fallopian tubes get blocked up and you can’t get pregnant.

Some women sit in a cold place or eat bad food or have an abortion and this causes their tubes to block.

A few years ago, a man came to see me because his wife couldn't have a baby. They were heartbroken, because they wanted a child so much.

I told him I had an herb that would help her get pregnant. I boiled the dog blood medicine and gave him a bottle to take to his wife. After three months, she came to see me and I gave her another bottle. Three months later, she came to see me again... to tell me she was pregnant.

Another woman was so desperate, she came to see me all the way from England. She and her husband were going to break up because she couldn't have a baby.

She was crying and weeping, but I told her not to worry. I gave her the dog blood medicine, and now she has 2 babies.

I've used dog blood with so many women. If you have black tube, it's the best thing.

Women with black tube or late periods can also take a hot sitz bath and drink the tea afterwards. They can take it 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off.

I've seen some women cured after only 2 weeks if their condition is mild. If they have chronic problems – such as periods that don't come – they have to do it longer. The bath and the tea help clean them out.

Dog blood gets its name from its bright red berries. When they're crushed, the juice looks a lot like blood.

Dog blood thrives in cool, fertile soil in gardens and cow pastures. It also grows on the mountainside and even along the sides of roads.

When mature, flowers grow from every stem. They're tiny and whitish-cream colored. The berries are green when young and red when ripe. The birds of the Blue and John Crow Mountains love to feast on them.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for MENSTRUAL PROBLEMS

Add ½-ounce dried dog blood leaves, flowers and stems to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer for 1 minute. Steep for 15 minutes, then strain off. Makes 2 cups.

Drink warm, straight or sweetened with honey to taste. Drink twice a day, once in the morning and once at night before going to bed.

Hot sitz bath for TARDY PERIODS

Add 1 pound fresh dog blood to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer for 3 minutes, then pour into a small basin.

Place two strips of board across the basin to sit on. Cover yourself with a towel from the shoulders to the waist and sit until the bath is cooled off.

Fever Grass

Cymbopogon citratus [Poaceae]

Citronella · Lemon Grass · Mosquito Grass

Fever Cure Kills Parasites, Too



Back in the early colonial days, they say Jamaica didn't have yellow fever. But the Spanish brought it to the island, and it swept across the plantations. Many people died. We even have a mountain called "Yellow Fever Mountain" – because so many people died in that area.

The yellow fever outbreak killed a lot of people back then. But it didn't kill many of my Maroon ancestors. That's because they knew about fever grass. They made a tea of fever grass and other herbs that cured the fever. So while many died on the plantations, the Maroons were safe.

When my daughter was about 3 months old, she got Dengue fever from a mosquito bite, and I got it right after. Dengue is also called “break-bone fever,” because it gives you terrible pain in your bones and joints.

I was living in Kingston at the time and didn’t have all the herbs in my garden that I do now. As sick as I was, I had to go out and look for the herbs I needed by the side of the road – especially the fever grass.

I made a tea and a bath from the herbs. The fever grass tea and the bath cured both of us and we didn’t have to go to the doctor. I still prescribe fever grass tea for any bad fever.

Fever Grass is very respected in the valley where I live. Most people, even if they don’t have a garden, have Fever Grass in their yard. The herb is also popular to use as a seasoning in vegetarian meals.

I use fever grass in a tea for babies with colic and colds. It cleans out their system and heals them. You can also compound it with guava bud to clean parasites out of your system. I use this compound for children that get worms.

I don’t see a lot of adults with parasites. But I remember getting an urgent telephone call a few years ago.

I was San Francisco attending a class – about as far from home as I could get. A man called from Jamaica, and he sounded desperate. I think I was his last resort, because he didn’t believe much in herbal medicine.

He had visited Cuba for about 6 weeks and got sick when he came back to Jamaica. He was only about 35 years old, but a parasite he’d picked up in Cuba had left him almost crippled. And nothing seemed to help.

I couldn't see him, but I told him what to do over the phone... Get some fever grass and guava bud, boil it very strong and drink it. The tea got rid of the parasites and cured him. Today, he's a believer in herbal medicine and has a garden of his own.

Fever grass grows in large dense clusters with several roots and long, thin grassy leaf blades. It has a sweet lemon aroma. This herb likes to grow in furrows on fertile soil, and can be found in most gardens in Jamaica. Fever grass doesn't grow wild; it has to be planted and cared for.

The Maroons use fever grass to cure yellow fever and all other fevers. The tea also soothes colds, flu, asthma and headache. It's good for relieving gas in the stomach, and is an excellent remedy for babies with cold and colic.

Fever grass kills bacteria and fungi. It also helps detoxify the liver, kidneys and bladder. This may be why it's so effective against parasites.¹

Fever grass has so many uses. The dried or fresh herb makes a delicious spice for all sorts of foods, from meaty dishes to vegetarian meals. You can even burn the leaves to rid an area of mosquitoes.

Preparations

Parts Used: Roots, Leaves

Tea for all FEVERS

Add 15 grams of fresh or dried fever grass to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer for 1 minute, then steep for 10

minutes. Strain off tea and add 4 teaspoonfuls honey. Makes 2 cups.

Tea for baby with COLIC or COLD

Add ½-ounce fresh or ¼-ounce dried fever grass to 1 pint boiling water. Steep fresh for 3 minutes or dried for 10 minutes. Strain and sweeten with honey to taste. Makes 6 doses.

To be given warm three times a day before meal.

Bath for all FEVERS

Add 8 ounces fever grass to 10 liters cold water in a pot on the stove, and bring to a boil. When the bath starts to boil, turn the heat down and simmer for 5 minutes. Set aside one cup to drink before pouring bath into bath pan.

Place two flat pieces of board across the pan. Sit on the boards, and cover with a sheet or towel for 10 – 15 minutes. By then, sweating will start.

Use a bath rag and wash from head to feet. You should start to feel the fever leaving your body.

After bathing, drink the cup of tea you set aside and go to bed.

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Fit Weed

Eryngium foetidum [Apiaceae]

Convulsion Weed · Spirit Weed

Stop Seizures... Lose Weight... Lower Blood Pressure



If you've ever come across someone having a bad seizure, it can be pretty scary. They're lying on the ground, shaking with convulsions and maybe foaming at the mouth. You really don't know what to do.

I've seen this happen twice.

Fortunately, though, my herbal teachers taught me what to do for these seizures.

Fit weed grows wild all over the valley where I live. And it's the best thing for seizures. I just beat the weed to make

a poultice and hold it over their nose. The pungent smell revives them quickly.

Over the years, I've treated four people who had seizures – three men and a girl. I always treat them with fit weed. Two of them still live nearby and they don't have convulsions anymore.

Fit weed is good if you're overweight, too.

One of my cousins came to see me because she felt fat and wanted to lose weight. I gave her fit weed tea to drink – and some to take with her.

In just six months, she lost 25 pounds.

She didn't have to diet or change the food she ate to lose the weight, either. She just drank the fit weed tea. Today, she looks great.

When people come to me with high blood pressure, I give them fit weed tea. Then they don't have high blood pressure any more. It's also good for fainting spells, fever and menopausal symptoms.

You can usually find fit weed in grocery stores that sell South American foods. Many South Americans use it in their cooking.

Fit weed even has a spiritual side. People in my valley often call it "spirit weed," because they say it wards off evil spirits.

Fit weed likes to grow in cool damp grassy woodlands. The leaves are split in six or seven shallow lobes, spreading from stout stalks. The flowers are yellowish green and bloom from March to October.

Preparations

Parts Used: Whole Plant

Tea for MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS, FAINTING SPELLS, FITS and FEVER

Add 15 grams fresh or dried fit weed leaves and flowers to ¼-liter boiling water. Steep for 15 – 20 minutes, then strain off. Makes 1 cup.

Add 2 teaspoonfuls of honey or drink straight.

Tea for OBESITY and BLOOD PRESSURE

Add 10 grams fresh or dried fit weed – including roots – to ¼-liter boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes, steep for 10 minutes, then strain off. Drink straight for good health.

Treatment for people who have FAINTING SPELLS or FITS

When the attack comes on, get 1 ounce of fresh fit weed. Crush or pound the fit weed and hold it over the nose of the person to inhale until he or she revives.

Follow with a warm cup of fit weed tea.

Ginger

Zingiber officinale [Zingiberaceae]
Ginger Root • Jamaican Ginger
Relieve Sore Throats, Colds and Stomachache



Ginger is an amazing herb. The root has healing properties and the leaves are good for fever. I use ginger whenever I get a sore throat. And I give it to other people, too.

Just clean off a piece of ginger root, put it in your mouth and suck on it. You can actually feel the sore throat leaving.

This happened to me not long ago on a bad rainy night. I had to run some errands, and couldn't avoid going out – in spite of the pouring rain.

Sure enough, when I woke up in the morning, I could feel a cold coming on in my throat. So I got a piece of ginger, sucked out the juice and ate it. The sore throat went away and I didn't need to take it again.

Ginger is warming, so it soothes coughs and sore throats. It has anti-viral properties, too, which may explain why it's so effective against colds.¹

If you don't have ginger root, you can use ginger powder. Just make a gargle with warm water, and it will kill the sore throat. It's so easy – and it works every time. Everybody should keep a little ginger root on hand for these ailments.

People in the valley make a refreshing, healing ginger beer drink. I've shared my own ginger beer recipe with many people, and they love it. You can use honey or molasses as a sweetener, but I prefer brown sugar.

Ginger can also be compounded with other herbs for many different ailments. With colic mint, it's effective for period pain or food poisoning. I also use it with cerasee for stomachache or menstrual pain. It's wonderful for cramps – including menstrual cramps – gas and colic. It relieves all cold symptoms, too.

Ginger calms inflammation. Studies also prove it's effective against nausea – especially from motion sickness, pregnancy and surgery.² I've found it works for almost any kind of stomach problem.

Ginger grows in all the parishes in Jamaica, but it doesn't grow wild. It has to be planted and cared for. It usually grows in clumps. The leaves are long, narrow and pointed, with distinctive center ribs.

In Jamaica, the ginger root is fiery hot. The ginger you get in the US isn't so strong, so you need to use more for the healing properties.

Preparations

Parts Used: Roots

Tea for CRAMPS, MENSTRUAL CRAMPS and COLDS

Add 1 ounce fresh or dried crushed ginger root to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer for 3 minutes. Strain and sweeten with honey to taste. Makes 4 cups. Drink tea as often as required.

Tea for COLIC, TUMMY ACHE and SORE THROAT

Add 1 ounce fresh or dried crushed ginger root to 1½ pints boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes, and then strain. Drink straight. Makes 6 doses.

For sore throat, use tea and gargle as often as needed.

Ginger beer drink

Add 2 ounces fresh or dried grated ginger to 3 quarts cold water. Add the juice of 3 lemons or 4 limes and sweeten to taste with brown sugar, molasses or honey. Let sit for 1 hour and then strain. Serve cool or with chipped ice. Makes 12 servings.

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Guava

Psidium guajava [Myrtaceae]

Good for Stomachache with Gas and Diarrhea



When I was growing up in the valley, you couldn't go to the doctor every time you felt sick. The nearest doctor was miles away... and it was a long walk down the mountain. So, just like our Maroon ancestors, we relied on the knowledge of traditional herbal healers.

Even today, people will come to me, instead of a doctor, when they have problems like bad belly. Bad belly is when your stomach is upset and growls all the time.

When you have bad belly, you usually have a lot of gas, too. And it can be quite painful.

To clear up bad belly, I just give them guava buds. I have them chew the buds well and suck out the juice. That gets rid of the bad belly.

If you have diarrhea or a cold in your intestines with gas and bad diarrhea, guava will cure it, too. This happens a lot to children who live on farms. They're always picking up something when they play outside in the rain. I make them a tea with guava bud and this will get rid of it. One cup usually does the trick.

Guava is very high in quercetin. Quercetin is a plant pigment – called a flavinoid – that calms spasms and clears up diarrhea. I've also read that guava has antibacterial properties.¹

Guava has one of the highest levels of vitamin C of any fruit that grows on the island. It's also a natural cleanser and disinfectant. Even if you've had strong smelling fish or meat in a bowl, washing it with guava leaf will leave it smelling fresh and clean. Many people here use the leaves to wash their dirty dishes and to get rid of household odors.

Jamaicans also use guava to make drinks and jelly. Chewing on the young buds cures bad breath. Herbalists use guava for menstrual problems and compound it with fever grass for people who have parasites in their system.

Guava trees grow all over Jamaica. Guava will grow almost anywhere you plant it – up to thirty feet high. The flowers are white with four or five petals with cream on the inside. These flower buds turn into fruit which is green and golden yellow when ripe. In Jamaica, some guavas produce crops all year round.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Buds, Ripe Fruits

Treatment for STOMACHACHE

Slowly chew 3 fresh guava buds and swallow the juice. When the buds are well chewed, swallow them and drink ¼-liter cold water. This is a very good remedy for any kind of tummy ache.

Guava jelly

Wash 2 dozen ripe guava fruits, and slice each into four parts. Add the slices to a stainless steel 3 – 4 quart pot with 1 quart of boiling water. Simmer for 15 – 20 minutes, then turn off stove and allow the guava mixture to cool cool.

Separate the liquid from the boiled guavas with a strainer. Wash out the pot and pour the guava liquid back in, adding 1 pound brown sugar.

Boil over a low flame until the liquid starts to turn thick. To judge if it's time to stop boiling, use a stirring spoon to drop a small amount of the thick liquid onto a plate. If it's ready, it will gel.

Tea for GASTROENTERITIS and DIARRHEA

Get 7 Guava leaves, fresh or dried. Put the leaves in a pot with 1 pint cold water. Bring to a boil.

When tea starts boiling, lower the flame and simmer for 10 – 15 minutes. Sweeten with 2 teaspoons honey or drink straight.

Take tea as often as needed until diarrhea stops. This tea usually relieves symptoms quickly.

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Jack Ina Bush

Eupatorium odoratum [Asteraceae]
Christmas Bush
Relax and Ease Tension



Jack ina bush is one of my favorite healing herbs. It gives results some people call miraculous. Here's an example I'll never forget:

A college professor in his late 40's came to see me from the US. He had so much tension in his body, he was all bent over.

He told me he hadn't stood up straight for 14 years.

When he arrived at my house, he was so bent over, he stood about 4 feet, 6 inches tall.

I brought him into the kitchen and made him a cup of tea while I made dinner. Then I took him into the garden for a walk. Using my ancestral knowledge, I chose 11 different herbs to help him – including Jack ina bush.

After dinner, we talked while I boiled the herbs to make him a healing bath. Then we took the mixture back to his cottage.

I set aside a cup of the hot herbal tea for him to drink. Then I poured the rest into a large tub. “Add enough warm water to this so you can soak in it,” I told him. “The warmer, the better. Then drink the cup of tea and go to bed.”

The next morning, he came to see me. I was shocked. For the first time in 14 years, he was standing straight. And he wasn’t the little man I’d met the day before. He stood over 5 feet, 8 inches tall!

Later that day, a taxi made the slow, jolting journey up the mountain to pick the professor up. It was the same driver who’d dropped the professor off... but the driver didn’t recognize him.

The professor’s system had been so stressed and tense, it had just closed up his muscles and tendons together. But the bath with the Jack ina bush and the other herbs relaxed them and set him free.

Jack ina bush is very popular for colds, coughs and herbal baths. It helps people with diabetes, as well. A bath made from Jack ina bush will get rid of fatigue and ease over-exertion. You can also compound it with various other herbs to make healing baths.

In my research, I've found several studies on Jack ina bush. Work with animals shows it kills staph and E. coli bacteria and speeds up the healing of wounds. Other studies found it increases urination. So, besides all its other good effects, Jack ina bush may turn out to be useful for bladder infections, too.^{1,2,3}

Jack ina bush is an aromatic, shrubby herb. It grows best in damp, rich-to-stony soil in woodlands. The flowers are white and appear from October to January. It dies back after flowering and springs up again in March and April.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for COLDS, COUGHS, BRONCHITIS, FEVER and DIABETES

Add 2 ounces fresh or 1 ounce dried Jack ina bush leaves and stems to 1 quart boiling water. Steep fresh for 5 minutes or dried for 15 minutes. Makes 6 cups.

Drink tea three times a day – before meals and at bedtime – until symptom clears up.

May be sweetened with honey to taste.

Bath for OVEREXERTION, FEVER and PAINS OVER THE BODY

Add to a large pot: 3 pounds fresh Jack ina bush stems, leaves and flowers and 3 gallons of cold water. Place on the stove over a low flame.

When the bath starts to boil, remove the pot from the stove and steep for 5 minutes.

Pour the bath into the bath pan and place two pieces of flat board across the bath pan to sit on. Cover yourself with a sheet. When sweating starts, sit for another 5 minutes, or until bath is cool enough to wash with.

Wash from head to toe.

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Jamaican Peppermint

Satureja viminea [Lamiaceae]

Kitchen Mint · Sweet Mint · Tea Mint

Calm the Heart, Warm a Chill and Tone the Body



The Windward Maroons have an old saying: “Any kitchen without peppermint is not a Maroon kitchen.”

From the time I was a little girl, I can remember that everyone’s mother had peppermint in her kitchen.

Even today, nearly every family in the valley keeps it on hand.

Peppermint has so many uses. For instance, it takes gas out of the stomach and chills out of the body. If you go out in the rain, you may come down with a chill – or something we

call ague fever. If you drink a hot cup of peppermint tea, it will tone up your system and you'll feel warm and nice.

Peppermint brings the body back to normal, so it's good to drink a cup of peppermint tea first thing in the morning.

It's good for headache as well. Whenever I get a headache, I just drink a cup of peppermint tea, and it goes away.

People say peppermint strengthens the heart. I know it's true, because I've taken peppermint tea for heart palpitations myself.

If you become frightened and your heart is racing, it will help you calm down.

Jamaican peppermint is stronger than in other countries. When you pick the leaves and smell them, you'll notice the scent is very pungent and strong.

Animal studies on Jamaican peppermint show it's good for pain and inflammation. One study found it's as effective as morphine.

And I can tell you it's a lot safer to use!

Jamaican peppermint contains a substance called carvacrol. Carvacrol kills many bacteria, fungi, viruses and parasites.^{1,2} I'm sure this helps with toning the body.

Peppermint likes to grow on cool, dry land. It grows in most of Jamaica's parishes, but not wild. Peppermint has to be cared for, so you'll often find it in kitchen gardens.

It has heavy buds with small leaves. The mature herb sprouts delicate, aromatic white flowers from October to March.

Preparation

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for CHILLS, HEADACHES, HEART PALPITATIONS, GAS IN THE STOMACH, BRINGING THE BODY BACK TO NORMAL and STRENGTHENING THE MUSCLES OF THE HEART

Add 20 grams dried peppermint to ½-liter boiling water. Steep for 15 – 20 minutes. Strain off and add 4 teaspoonfuls of honey. Makes 2 cups of tea, for any of the symptom above.

When using fresh peppermint, add 15 grams to ½-liter boiling water. Steep for 5 minutes, strain off tea. Add 4 teaspoonfuls of honey or drink straight.

If there's no fresh peppermint available, peppermint oil can be used in cases of gas in the stomach, or chills. Just add 5 drops of peppermint oil to ¼-liter warm water and drink.

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John Charles Bush

Hyptis verticillata [Lamiaceae]

John Charles

Clear up Skin Problems Quickly



Years ago, a man brought his 13-year-old daughter to me with a terrible rash all over her body. She had been suffering for four or five years.

The rash was very itchy, and the poor girl scratched herself all the time. In fact, she scratched until she bled. She had scratched so much, her body was covered with dry, scabby sores. She looked almost as bad as she felt.

The man had taken his daughter to see many doctors, but none of them could help her.

Finally, he came to me out of desperation.

I wasn't sure what caused the rash, but I had seen that kind of condition when I was a child. I remembered the old herbalists used a combination of herbs – but especially John Charles bush. They would make a bath for the sufferer, and the herbal bath cleared up their rash.

So I made the same bath for this girl, using John Charles bush and the other herbs. She used the bath once, and the rash and sores went away. She's in her 30's now and has never had it again.

John Charles bush will clear up a cold in the stomach. Drink it as a tea and you will spit out the phlegm and other impurities that are in the stomach. It also helps remove mucus from the lungs. It eases gas and relaxes the entire body, too.

John Charles bush tea is excellent in the mornings to tone up the stomach muscle.

I often use John Charles bush as part of a relaxing herbal bath. It soothes sores, rashes or any dryness on your skin. You can use it alone, but it's stronger when compounded with other herbs.

Compounded with red sage, fever grass, balsam and lime leaves, John Charles bush makes a good bath for relaxing the body. With bitter albott and comfrey, it's very good for people who suffer from skin diseases, sores and ulcers.

The famous botanist, Dr. Jim Duke, says John Charles bush is also useful for many other problems. These include respiratory congestion, viruses, bacteria, high blood pressure, and arthritis. He recommends this herb for women with uterine fibroids – a kind of tumor that grows in the womb.¹

John Charles bush doesn't grow wild. You have to plant and tend this aromatic shrub. It does well planted at the corner of buildings, in gardens and around the yard. It can grow up to five feet long in cool, fertile soil.

The leaves of John Charles bush are small and pointed, with scalloped edges. When the plant is mature, flowers grow on each stem. The flowers are delicate and cream colored, with a little white and pale yellow pollen on long stems.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for PHLEGM IN THE STOMACH, COLDS, GAS and to RELAX THE ENTIRE BODY

Add ¼-ounce dried or ½-ounce fresh John Charles bush to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer dried for 3 minutes or fresh for 1 minute. Steep dried for 15 minutes or fresh for 10 minutes. Drink straight or sweeten with honey to taste. Makes 2 cups.

Take one cup first thing in the morning and another last thing at night before going to bed.

Relaxing herbal bath

Add 8 ounces dried John Charles bush, 8 ounces fresh red sage, 8 ounces fresh fever grass, 8 ounces fresh balsam and 8 ounces fresh lime leaf to a 3 or 4 gallon pot of cold water. Bring to a boil.

When the bath starts to boil, lower the flame and simmer for 5 minutes. Steep for 5 – 10 minutes. Then pour the bath into a tube, straining out the leaves. Dilute with cold water.

Lay in the bath for 15 – 20 minutes, washing your entire body. You'll feel tremendously relaxed. It is best to use this bath just before going to bed.

Wash for SKIN DISEASES, SORES and ULCERS

Add 12 ounces fresh or 6 ounces dried John Charles bush, 12 ounces fresh or 6 ounces dried bitter albott, 12 ounces fresh or 6 ounces dried comfrey to a 2 gallon pot of cold water. Bring to a boil.

When the wash begins to boil, lower the heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off the flame and steep until the bath is cool enough to wash affected areas. Makes 3 washes.

Repeat as often as necessary.

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Khus Khus Grass

Vetiveria zizanioides [Poaceae]
Moth Grass • Mat Grass
An Excellent Fever Cure



The Maroon people have used khus khus grass for centuries. First, they weaved it into mats for walls and floors.

Later, my ancestors discovered khus khus grass has healing properties, too.

The root of khus khus grass makes a very healing bath for flu and fevers. It's especially good for what we call ague fever. (Note: In some places, ague is another name for malaria – but not in Jamaica. What we call ague fever is like a fever

that attacks the nervous system. This fever comes with shaking and trembling. The shaking starts in the stomach and then spreads to the whole body.)

I remember a man came to me a few years ago suffering with ague fever. He was really suffering... shaking all over, with chills and a high fever.

I made him a tea and bath from khus khus grass root and two other herbs. He laid in the bath for about 15 minutes. When he got out, I put him on the bed and wrapped him in a sheet.

He started sweating almost right away. He sweat so much, the sheet was soaked right through. In just a little while he got up, feeling much better. He hadn't felt like eating for two days, but his appetite was back, too.

I haven't come across many studies of khus khus grass. But it shows promise for killing some drug-resistant bacteria. It also may be effective against inflammatory bowel disease and urinary tract infections.¹

Sometimes I distill the khus khus grass roots and add a little alcohol to make a perfume. I get many compliments on this scent. To distill khus khus or other herbs, I have a small distiller that captures the oil.

The oil is like the soul of the plant.

To make an essential oil, I put the root in some olive oil and put them into my solar dryer for about 15 days. Then I strain off the liquid and put it in a clean bottle. The essential oil can be used for aromatherapy. It's good for flu, fever and relaxation.

Khus khus and other essential oils can be used in a bath if you don't want to use green herbs. The oil is as strong as the plant itself.

Khus khus grass is planted all over Jamaica. People plant it on gully edges, along garden borders, and anywhere they want to prevent erosion. Khus khus grass grows in thick clumps with many fragrant roots.

Preparation

Parts Used: Leaves, Roots

Bath for FEVER or FLU

Use ½-pound fresh khus khus root, ½-pound fresh fever grass leaves and roots, ½-pound fresh balsam. If fresh herbs are not available, you may substitute ¼-pound of each herb, dried.

Add the herbs to a 3 – 4 gallon pot of cold water, on a medium flame. When the bath starts to boil, lower the flame and simmer for 5 minutes. Then steep for 5 minutes.

Pour the bath – straining out the leaves – into a tub. Place two pieces of board across the bath tub to sit on, and cover yourself with a sheet or blanket until sweating begins. Keep sweating for 15 minutes, then wash your entire body with the bath. Go straight to bed.

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King of The Forest

Senna alata [Fabaceae]

Candle Stick

Normalize Blood Pressure and Relieve Constipation



King of the forest is one herb I use over and over. It grows wild everywhere in Jamaica, and it has a pleasant taste, so many people here drink king of the forest tea.

That's why you don't see many cases of high blood pressure on the island.

I remember a man came to me when he was in his 60's. He had very high blood pressure.

He'd already been to many doctors, but the pills they gave him didn't help.

So I made him a tea from the leaves of king of the forest. I told him to take sips all through the night – every time he woke up.

He drank the tea for about two weeks, and his blood pressure came right down. He drank the tea from time to time for the rest of his life. He lived into his 90's, but he never had blood pressure problems again.

If you have low blood pressure, king of the forest tea helps, too. The herb seems to regulate your blood pressure, not just bring it down.

King of the forest helps with other problems, too. Once, an older man with liver spots came to see me. He was covered with spots all over his back from the nape of the neck to the bottom of the spine.

The medicine his doctor had given him didn't make them go away. He just didn't know what else to do.

I gave him king of the forest tea to drink. I also had him rub the juice on his liver spots. In three or four weeks, the spots were gone and they never came back. I had him use both the tea and juice, because his liver spots were so bad. But the juice usually does the trick, even without the tea.

King of the forest tea also gets rid of worms and parasites. My mother and grandmother always used it when their children picked up worms. It cleanses the system.

You can also use the seedpods as a tea to relieve constipation. Just drink the tea before you go to bed, and it will loosen up your bowels by the next day. It's very powerful, so you don't need much. Your bowel movement will be normal.

King of the forest is also called senna, and it's widely used for it's laxative properties. In fact, you can buy senna laxatives in any drug store.

In small studies, king of the forest killed bacteria and fungi. It may even be effective against tumors. Compounds in the bark – called tannins – can relieve irritable bowel and draw impurities out of the skin.¹

You'll often find king of the forest growing in cow pastures, gardens and on dry, fertile tropical soil. This aromatic herb grows up to eight feet high

When it's mature, king of the forest produces yellow golden flowers on long spears, which turn into pods with seeds.

It usually flowers from October to April.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Seedpods

Tea for BLOOD PRESSURE, BLOOD CLEANSER, WORMS and OTHER PARASITES

Add 3 fresh or dried leaves to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer for 1 minute, then steep for 15 minutes. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten with two teaspoon of honey. Drink tea morning and night for two weeks. Test blood pressure at the end of two weeks.

Skip one week and repeat if necessary.

Tea for relieving CONSTIPATION

Add 13 – 15 seedpods to ¼-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 10 minutes, then steep for 10 minutes. Strain off and drink straight at night before going to bed.

Juice for liver spots

Crush and juice 5 – 7 fresh king of the forest leaves. Apply juice to liver spots until they disappear.

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Mary Goules

Wedelia trilobata [Asteraceae]

Calendula • Mary Goals • Mary Gold

Get Rid of Growths – Inside and Out



Mary Goules is a powerhouse herb. When I was 18, it even saved my life.

I had moved from my family's village in the mountains to Kingston. I had a pretty good job working at the university. Everything seemed to be going my way.

But then one day, I got a terrible pain in my abdomen. I wound up in the hospital, and the doctor told me I needed an operation. I had appendicitis. He scheduled my operation for the next day.

That night, my grandmother came to me in a vision. She told me to go home and take the Mary Goules.

In the morning I told the doctor I wasn't going to have the operation. I was going home instead. He said, "If you do that, you'll be signing your own death warrant." I told him I was going home anyway.

I knew a man living just outside of Kingston who kept an herb garden. I went to him and asked him for some of the Mary Goules my grandmother mentioned in my dream. I dried the herb a little and made it into a tea.

Every time I drank the tea, I felt better. Soon, I could get up and move around without any pain.

In 2 weeks, I was able to go about my normal business. I went back to my job and was able to do whatever I wanted to do.

I drank the tea for almost 3 months – 2 weeks on and a week off. I didn't have any more trouble. The herbal tea had cured my appendicitis.

That's what inspired me to go back to my village to be an herbalist. I knew that was where I belonged.

Since then, I've prescribed Mary Goules many times - especially to clear up growths. I've even used it on myself.

Once, I had a lump growing on my leg that wouldn't go away. So I rubbed Mary Goules ointment on it for about 2 months. The lump went away and never came back.

I remember a woman in her 30's came to see me looking about three or four months pregnant. But she wasn't pregnant. She told me she had a tumor growing in her belly.

I gave her the Mary Goules, compounded with another herb, as a tea, and the tumor went away for good.

Another time, a man came to see me with a growth on his eyelid. It was very sore and swollen. His doctor told him he had to operate on his eye to remove it. I gave him the same Mary Goules ointment I had used on my leg. I told him, “Rub a little ointment on your eyelid every day.” He did, and in less than three months, it went away.

Mary Goules is a whole-body cleanser. The tea is effective for gas in the stomach, diarrhea and for purifying the blood stream. I’ve found it helpful with cancer, too. It’s also a healing wash for athlete’s foot.

This herb is good for growths – inside or out. If you have scabies or cold sores, it will also get rid of them. If you wash the sores with a tea of Mary Goules and plantain – and take my blood purifier – the sores will clear up, even when prescription medicines don’t work.

Research shows Mary Goules boosts the immune system and speeds healing of wounds. This herb contains a powerful essential oil and salicylic acid. Used on the skin, they’re anti-microbial and antioxidant... so it’s good for a variety of skin conditions.¹ Germany’s Commission E has approved Mary Goules for several applications, including slow-healing wounds and skin ulcers.²

Mary Goules is an aromatic creeping vine that extends up to six feet. It grows all year round and flowers abundantly from May to October. The flowers are golden or yellow; the stems are reddish green. The leaves are fleshy and have three pointed ends. It does well in gardens, cow pastures and

other fertile lands. You can find Mary Goules in most of Jamaica's parishes.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for CANCER, GROWTHS, DIARRHEA, GAS IN THE STOMACH and CLEANSER FOR THE BLOOD STREAM

Add 10 grams of dried Mary Goules to ¼-liter of boiling water. Simmer for 1 minute, steep for 10 – 15 minutes, then strain off. Sweeten with 2 teaspoonfuls of honey or drink straight.

Drink for 2 weeks. Skip one week and repeat if necessary.

Wash for SKIN ULCERS, SORES, SCABIES, ATHLETE'S FOOT and COLD SORES

Add 40 grams fresh Mary Goules or 20 grams dried Mary Goules to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer for 5 minutes, then let sit until cool enough to wash affected areas.

Note: Maroon tradition says that Mary Goules is most effective when it's picked in bright sunshine during the full phase of the moon.

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Milkweed

Chamaesyce hirta [Euphorbiaceae]

Kidney Weed • Wart Bane

Eliminate Kidney Stones and Stomach Spasms



When I returned to my village after living in Kingston, I had a lot of stomach problems.

Perhaps it was because I hadn't eaten so well for some of the time I was in the city. I'm not sure.

But when I returned to the mountains, I knew what to do for my stomach. I drank milkweed tea. Sure enough, my stomach problems went away. Milkweed tea is especially good if you have stomach spasms. It will clear them up quickly. It's also very good for kidney stones.

A few years ago, a man in his 50's came to see me. He had kidney stones so bad, he could barely urinate. And he was in so much pain, he had stopped working. His doctor said he would have to insert a tube in his penis so he could urinate.

I gave him milkweed tea to drink. In 2 weeks he passed the kidney stones. It was painful. But once the stones passed, he could urinate normally. He said that was much better than the tube.

The milkweed tea has worked for many other people with kidney stones, kidney problems and a weak bladder. It's so effective for kidney problems, Jamaicans also call it kidney weed. Milkweed flowers even look like the kidneys.

I also use milkweed in my blood purifier and back pain medicine. It cleans up the system and purifies your blood. It's also good for warts. There haven't been many studies done on milkweed. But one animal study found that milkweed – in very small doses – slowed the breakdown of cartilage.¹

This delicate herb is a powerful healer that is rarely noticed. But it thrives beside buildings, by roadsides and on dry stony ground.

Milkweed grows as one straight stalk with joints. It sends off stems every two or three joints, with two or three leaves at each joint. When the herb matures, it develops a clumpy, flat, fluffy-looking flower that holds tiny seeds.

Milkweed flowers in August, dies down in December and springs up again in late January to April. When the fresh stem is picked, it has a white milky juice, which gives it its name.

There is a milkweed plant that grows in the US. But it's not the same plant as Jamaican milkweed. The two plants are not alike. In fact, the milkweed that grows in the US can be very toxic.

Preparations

Parts Used: Roots, Stems, Leaves, Flowers

Tea for KIDNEY STONES, WEAK BLADDER and STOMACH SPASM

Add 15 grams dried or fresh milkweed to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 10 minutes, steep for 10 minutes, then strain off tea. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten with honey. Take one cup first thing in the morning and last thing before going to bed. Take dosage for two weeks, then skip one week and repeat if necessary.

Treatment for WARTS

Pick fresh milkweed and apply the fresh milk directly on warts regularly until warts drop off.

Compounds for BLOOD CLEANSER and BACK PAIN

This herb can be compounded with other roots and herbs to make blood purifier and back pain medicine. *See pages 181 and 185.*

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Passion Fruit

Passiflora edulis [Passifloraceae]

Passion • Sweet Cup • Passion Flowers

Tea for Conjunctivitis and Depression



Back in the mid-1980's, pink eye – conjunctivitis – swept through Jamaica. This infection causes swelling, redness, pain and itching – all in the eye. You wake up in the morning with crust in your eyes, and your vision may get blurry, too.

Pink eye is very contagious, and it was a big problem – especially in poor neighborhoods, where people couldn't afford to take the whole family to see a doctor. So I had a lot of people coming to see me from all over the island. They all wanted to know how to get rid of the pink eye.

Fortunately, here in Jamaica, we have the best thing for pink eye. And it grows right in many people's yards.

When people came to me for pink eye, I told them to make a tea from the passion flower and wash their eyes. The tea cleans the eyes and removes mucus and other matter.

Passion flower tea is good for women who feel depressed as they go through menopause. I've given it to many women and I've seen how well it works. Passion fruit (and the flower) doesn't necessarily help other menopausal symptoms. Piaba is better for that. But passion flower tea eases the depression that goes with menopause.

Passion flower tea works for depression from other causes, too. When you drink one cup of the tea, the depression lifts away. Often, one cup is all you'll need. But if the depression comes on again, just drink another cup.

Do this until you don't feel depression at all.

In animal studies, passion fruit shows anti-hypertensive, tranquilizing, sedative and hypnotic properties. This helps explain why it works so well for depression. I haven't seen any studies on passion fruit and depression in people. But it helped lower high cholesterol in one human trial.¹

The ripe fruit of the passion vine also makes a refreshing nutritional drink.

Passion fruit doesn't grow wild. It has to be planted and cared for. The vine grows in thick clusters and likes to run on trees, fences or on built up arbors made from sticks or bamboo.

The leaves have two to three lobes. When the vine is mature, it sends out several little pouches that turn into beautiful purple and white flowers. These flowers produce green oval shape fruits that turn golden yellow when they are ripe.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Fruits

Tea for DEPRESSION and SORE EYES

Add seven fresh or dried passion flowers to ¼-liter boiling water. Steep for 20 minutes, then strain off. Makes 1 cupful.

For *depression* drink straight or sweeten with honey to taste. Repeat dosage twice a day for two weeks.

For *sore eyes* use tea straight. Allow tea to cool thoroughly, and use tea to wash sore eyes two or three times a day until eyes are healed.

Refreshing natural drinks

Wash and dry a dozen ripe passion fruits. Cut open fruits and scrape out contents into 1 liter of cold water. Mix around for 5 minutes. Then strain off juice and sweeten to taste with brown sugar or honey.

Serve cool or add chipped ice.

REFERENCES

1. The fruit and stems of this plant are used to cure depression and sore eyes. The fruit makes a nutritional drink.

Pennyroyal

Satureja brownie [Lamiaceae]

Squaw Balm • Squaw Mint • Tickweed

Soothe an Aching Tooth or Ease Painful Stings and Bites



When people come to Jamaica, they're seduced by its natural beauty. Especially here in the mountains. The nights here are so dark, you can see more stars than you ever imagined. The breeze carries the scent of a hundred different flowers. And the air is full of the soothing sounds of the forest. It truly is magical to live here.

A few years ago, a journalist came from Washington, DC magazine came to our valley to write a story on the Maroons. Like so many others, he was entranced by the beauty of our mountain home.

One night, he got it in his head to go outside to “pee under the moon.” But he went out barefoot. Out in the yard, he stepped on a centipede, which stung him on the toe.

Centipedes are venomous... and their sting can be very painful and swell badly. By the time the journalist had limped to my house, he was in tremendous pain. He thought he was going to have to pack up without finishing his assignment.

I looked at his toe and it was starting to swell. Fortunately, I had a mixture of pennyroyal and other herbs for insect bites and poison already made.

I gave him the medicine and then made an herbal bath for his toe with the pennyroyal and two other herbs.

By morning, he was able to put on his shoes and walk over a mile to the village. That night, he walked back to his cottage like nothing ever happened to his toe.

He told me he had been skeptical about herbal medicine before, but now he was going to tell everyone that it really does work.

Pennyroyal works on any sort of insect sting. It's also a good herb to take for headaches and tooth aches. I've used it for toothache a couple of times myself.

I make a gargle you hold in your mouth to soak the tooth. After a while, you spit it out. You can actually feel the pain moving up the root and then easing out. People that I give pennyroyal to for toothaches tell me it really alleviates the pain.

In studies, pennyroyal increases sweat and stimulates blood flow to the uterus and pelvic area. It is also reported

to be an effective insect repellent. The essential oil made from pennyroyal is toxic – even in small doses.^{1,2} Pregnant women should avoid drinking pennyroyal tea or medicine, as it can cause spontaneous abortion.

The pennyroyal plant is small and viney and spreads in patches. The leaves are tiny and round; the flowers are equally small and white. Pennyroyal grows low down to the ground, on cool damp soil, and needs to be cared for.

Preparations

Parts Used: Whole Plant

Tea for FEVER, HEADACHE, COLDS, NERVOUSNESS, COLIC and INSECT BITES

Add 10 grams fresh or dried pennyroyal to ½-liter boiling water. Steep for 15 – 20 minutes, then strain off. Add 4 – 5 teaspoonfuls honey or drink straight. Makes 2 cups.

Gargle for TOOTHACHE

Add 20 grams fresh or dried pennyroyal to ¼-liter boiling water. Add ¼-teaspoon salt, and simmer for 5 minutes. Strain. Let stand until it's cool enough to hold in the mouth.

Take a mouthful, and soak tooth with lukewarm tea as often as needed.

Poultice for INSECT BITES and STINGS

Take 1 ounce fresh pennyroyal and pound into a poultice. Apply the poultice directly to the sting or stings for quick relief.

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2. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-pennyroyal.html>

Piaba

Hyptis brevipes [Lamiaceae]

Paba • Woman Piaba

Relief from Menopausal Symptoms



Piaba is a woman's best friend. I've seen it help so many women with menopausal symptoms. It calms them when they are nervous or agitated state. And it soothes heat flushes.

A few years ago, a woman came to me because she couldn't stop weeping and crying all the time. She just couldn't handle menopause. I made her piaba tea, and she stopped feeling so sad. She got rid of her heat flushes too. Today, you wouldn't know she was the same weepy woman who came to me. She's a happy woman again.

Piaba helps prevent going into early menopause, too.

One of my friends started going through early menopause in her 30's. She got heat flushes from about the age of 35. But she drank piaba tea and healed herself. She is now 47 and still has her period.

Even women who get estrogen pills from their doctor turn up at my door. Sometimes, the estrogen doesn't help them. They still get heat flushes and they can't take it. So I give them the piaba tea. It soothes the heat flushes and calms their irritability and menopausal stress.

Every woman in the valley takes piaba when she starts going through menopause. I've taken it myself and I can testify that it works.

If you have menopausal stress, you drink a cup and lay down and you feel calm.

In the US, piaba is best known as a UV blocker used in sunscreen products. But studies show it also inhibits the breakdown of estrogen in the liver. This is one reason it works so well for menopausal symptoms.

In studies using larger amounts, piaba also reduced women's vaginal dryness and restored their sex drive.¹

Piaba is a precious herb for women. A woman can drink the tea any time she starts feeling the symptoms of menopause and the feelings will go away.

This delicate aromatic shrub grows well in cool tropical soil – though it needs a fair amount of sun. It is usually a seasonal herb, but sometimes grows all year round. It can reach a height of about two feet.

When the herb is mature, it flowers. The flower is made up of tiny purple blossoms on thick buds, and has a pleasant smelling aroma. The leaves are scalloped at the edge.

Preparation

Parts Used: Whole Plant

Tea for calming IRRITABILITY, NERVOUS TENSION and MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS

Add 1 ounce fresh or dried piaba to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 2 – 3 minutes. Steep dried for 10 – 15 minutes or fresh for 5 minutes, then strain off tea. Makes 2 cups.

Sweeten with honey or drink straight. Drink tea two times a day, first thing in the morning and last thing at night before going to bed. Take for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

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Plantain

Plantago lanceolata [Plantaginaceae]

English Plantain • Plantain Leaves • Ribwort

Healing for All types of Sores



One day, when I was about 11, I was playing on the mountainside above my village. A goat was tied up nearby, grazing contentedly. I decided it would be fun to play with the goat.

As I was untying the goat, something spooked it, and it bolted. But I had tangled my foot in the rope. As the goat ran, the rope tightened around my foot.

As I went down, the rope tightened. It dragged hard across my foot, tearing the flesh.

I was left with a throbbing, painful sore on my foot.

After three months, the sore still wouldn't heal. It hurt so much, I could hardly walk to school. Then a village elder, an herbalist, noticed my open sore one day and said he could help me.

He took three plantain leaves and warmed them over the fire, rolled them in the palm of his hand and put the juice on the sore. Oh, did that hurt bad! It was all I could do not to cry.

But by the next morning, my foot was so much better. The throbbing pain I'd felt for three months finally stopped.

The herbalist applied the leaves to my sore three more times and the sore healed up completely. I'll never forget it. That was when I first realized I wanted to be an herbalist.

I've seen plantain help a woman with goiter – a swelling in the neck. I made her a poultice. After about six applications, the goiter went down and it never came back. I knew the plantain would work because my grandmother told me about it when I was growing up. I'd seen her use it, too.

Plantain is also effective for cold sores and herpes. You boil a tea with plantain and Mary Goules – they work together perfectly – and make it very strong. (You can add goldenseal to the tea as well.) Wash the sores with the tea. Next, warm some plantain leaves by the fire (stove flame) and rub them in the palms of your hands to get the juice out. Then rub the juice all over the sores.

I did this for a friend of mine who had cold sores all over her face. I didn't touch the cold sores myself, but had her

rub the plantain on her face. It was painful, but the plantain burned the cold sores out. Within two or three days, she didn't have the cold sores anymore. As far as I know, they've never come back.

Another young lady had genital herpes, and I told her to do the same thing – wash the sores with the tea and put the plantain juice on it. It got rid of her herpes. The last I knew, she hadn't had another flare-up.

Plantain is approved for upper respiratory infections by Germany's Commission E. It's recommended for inflammation of the skin, too.¹ I've also heard that a plantain poultice relieves bee stings, though I've always used pennyroyal.

Plantain grows best on cool dry land in ditches, by the sides of houses and in gardens. It grows low to the ground, like a small leafy lettuce.

Plantain sprouts in January and dies down in October. When the plant is mature, it has long spurs between the leaves, which produce seeds and tiny cream-colored flowers.

Preparations

Parts Used: Whole Plant

Tea for CLEANSING THE BLOODSTREAM, LUNGS PROBLEMS, KIDNEY PROBLEMS and SORE EYES

Add 10 grams dried or fresh plantain leaves to ¼-liter boiling water. Steep for 20 minutes, then strain off tea.

Makes 1 cup.

Sweeten with 2 teaspoonfuls of honey or drink straight.

Poultice for WOUNDS and SORES

Grind 7 fresh plantain leaves to make a poultice. Apply the poultice directly to the affected area. Cover with a clean, thin bandage. Use as often as needed.

Poultice for GOITER

Grind 9 fresh plantain leaves into a poultice. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ -teaspoonful of salt to poultice. Apply poultice to goiter, and wrap with a clean bandage. Use until goiter disappears.

Wash for HERPES and COLD SORES

Add 9 fresh plantain leaves to $\frac{1}{4}$ -liter boiling water. Steep until cool, then wash cold sores.

Warm 3 plantain leaves and roll them in the palms of the hands until they become juicy. Rub plantain juice over cold sore, then lay the leaves over affected area. Apply this twice daily, and drink plantain leaf tea three times a day.

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Red Sage

Lantana camara [Verbenaceae]

Common Sage • Sage

Heal Bleeding Wounds & Cure Sleep Problems



Red sage is a very special herb. My Maroon ancestors used it as a cure for all kinds of ailments.

Red sage tea makes the whole body active – “wakes it up.” It also increases circulation... gets rid of coughs and colds... cures bronchitis, asthma and kidney trouble... and clears gas from the stomach. It quiets the nerves and stops the bleeding of wounds.

It’s also used for high fever and as a hair wash to rid the scalp of dandruff.

Red sage is also a favorite spice in Maroon kitchens. Many families use red sage as a spice in most meals. This relaxes the whole body after a hard day's work on the farm.

Red sage will even help people who sleep too much. I know, because it worked on my ex-husband.

I can remember I'd be outside working while he was inside sleeping all the time. He would go to sleep at 10 o'clock at night and at noon or 1:00 the next day, he'd *still* be in the bed. And he was only 31 or 32!

The longer we were married the worse it got. For a long time, I thought it was just laziness. But then I remembered an elder had told me, in the old days, herbalists gave red sage to people who slept too much.

I decided to see if it would work on my husband. So I started giving him red sage tea to drink. I gave it to him for 2 weeks on and a week off for 6 weeks. He began sleeping less. And in less than 3 months, his sleeping spells stopped.

After that, I would make him an occasional cup of red sage tea, just because it's very healthy. He's in his 50's now and the sleeping spells never came back. He told me he only needs eight hours of sleep a night. We're not married any more, but he says he's still grateful to me for helping him get his life back.

Red sage also makes an effective poultice for people with bleeding cuts.

A few years back, a man came running down the mountain to see me. He'd been working on his farm and cut his hand open with a machete. The cut was pretty bad, and he couldn't stop the bleeding.

One thing my mentors taught me was not to wash a cut with water right away – because that will make it stay open. So I grabbed some red sage and pounded it and rubbed it in the palm of my hand so it would get moist. Then I bound it over the cut with a bandage. In less than five minutes, the cut stopped bleeding.

About three hours later, I took the bandage off and cleaned the cut with another herb. Then I used a young chocolate pod to make a plaster. The plaster made the cut close up and heal.

My teachers also taught me not to let a cut heal too quickly. So I took the plaster off after three days. When I took the plaster off, I applied plantain to the wound, because it's milder.

In less than a week, the man could use his hand again. It still hurt a little, but it was healing well. In two weeks, his hand was as good as new.

I also use red sage a lot during the winter months. In Jamaica, that's when the temperature drops and it rains. The children always pick up coughs and colds this time of year. Some of them even suffer from bronchitis and asthma.

Red sage tea is one of the best herbs for these conditions. For asthma and lung problems, you can use it alone or compound it with other herbs.

Researchers have found that the essential oil of red sage kills bacteria and fungi.¹ As far as I know, red sage's wound-healing properties have only been studied on animals. But in those studies, it sped up the healing process, eased closure of the wounds and reducing scarring.²

This herb normally grows in gardens, in cow pastures, on the road side and in the hot tropical countryside. The flowers are red and gold. The berries are green at first, but turn purple when they're ripe.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for circulation, coughs, colds, bronchitis, asthma, kidney trouble, stomach gas, quieting nerves and high fever

Add 10 grams fresh or dried red sage to ¼-liter of boiling water. Simmer for 3 minutes, then steep for 10 minutes. Strain off tea. Makes one cupful.

Add 2 teaspoonfuls of honey or drink straight. Enjoy this wonderful healing tea for health and relaxation.

Bath and poultice to stop bleeding of wound

Add 20 grams fresh or dried red sage to ¼-liter of boiling water. Boil on a low flame for 5 minutes, turn off flame, and let tea cool off.

Bathe bleeding wound with warm tea for 5 minutes. Then grind 9 – 11 fresh leaves into a poultice. Apply this to the wound and let the powers of Sage heal the wound.

Compounds for blood cleanser and back pain

This herb can be compounded with other roots and herbs to make a blood purifier and back pain medicine. *See pages 181 and 185.*

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Search Mi Heart

Rhytidophyllum tomentosum
[*Gesneriaceae*]

Strong Heart · Heart Bush

A Tonic to Strengthen the Heart



Search mi heart has a very powerful effect on the heart. It's so well known for strengthening the heart, many people also call it "heart bush."

Almost 20 years ago, a man in his late 60's came to see me. He said, "Every time I eat, it feels like my heart shuts down." He had to lie down after every meal. The feeling in his heart scared him so much, that he had almost stopped eating.

He'd lost a lot of weight and was very weak and frail.

I told him what he was doing would actually make his heart worse. Then I made him a search mi heart tonic.

“For the next three months,” I told him, “drink a cup of this tea from time to time.”

He’s now 86 and he doesn’t have the heart problem anymore. In fact, he’s stronger today than he was when he first came to see me so long ago.

I take search mi heart tea myself for heart palpitations. I use it when I get a scare or eat something that doesn’t agree with me.

Just one cup calms my heart down and lets it beat at its regular pace. This tea is also good when you get up in the morning and go to bed at night.

Some people say that search mi heart is good for people who have a hole in their heart. That may be true, but that’s not something I learned from my grandmother or the elders in the village. I haven’t found any research on it, either. But if you want to have a healthy heart, I would suggest an occasional cup of search mi heart tea.

Search mi heart grows on the rocky sides of waterfalls, rivers banks and in woodlands. This non-aromatic shrub has long velvet looking leaves. When the plant is mature, it produces a cream-colored, basket-like flower at the top that sends out five to seven spurs.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Flowers, Roots

Tea for HEART PALPITATIONS

Add 5 dried leaves and flowers to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 10 minutes, steep for 10 minutes, then strain off. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten with honey. Take one cup in the morning and one at night. Repeat dosage if needed.

Tonic for STRENGTHENING THE HEART

Add 10 grams dried root to ½-liter water. Boil on a low flame for 20 minutes, then strain off tea. Sweeten with honey to taste. Makes 4 doses.

Take two doses per day, one in the morning and one at night.

Sinkle Bible

Aloe vera [Aloeaceae]

Aloe • Aloes • Bitters • Single Bible

A Healing Herb for the Whole Body



Most of the world calls it aloe, but we call it sinkle bible or single bible because it's like a bible for the human body. The body can always use sinkle bible. I've seen sinkle bible help people with asthma, arthritis, lung problems and stomach ailments. It's good for nearly every complaint you can imagine.

The skin of the leaf has a laxative effect. You can soak the skin in warm water to make a drink to cleanse the stomach, bowel, intestines, bladder and kidneys. Sinkle Bible gel can be mixed with arrowroot, honey, cinnamon and nutmeg to

make a tonic for people that suffer from asthma, arthritis, and lung and stomach problems.

When I was growing up, my great aunt – one of my mentors – even cured people who said they had stomach cancer using a sinkle bible tea.

I've only had one experience like that. It was with a man of about 35 who came to see me a few years back. He had chronic stomach problems that he thought might be cancer, though he never went to the doctor to verify it.

He told me that it felt like something was crawling around in his stomach – especially when he was hungry. But sometimes after he ate, it felt like the food was creeping around there, too. He wasn't in a lot of pain... just uncomfortable. But the feeling seemed to leave him very weak.

I said I didn't know what was wrong with his stomach. "But," I told him, "sinkle bible is one herbs that will help your stomach... and other complaints, too."

So I made him a tonic with the yellow juice from the leaves and the skin – the same one I use for asthma, arthritis and lung problems. And it worked. The feeling in his stomach went away and hasn't come back.

I see him running around in the village from time to time. And it's a good thing he got his strength back. Because he now has 3 or 4 daughters.

I've also made a sinkle bible tonic for many people with arthritis. One 78-year-old woman came to see me with crippling pain in her wrists and shoulders. As far as I know, after she took the tonic, she never suffered from arthritis

again. Sinkle bible tonic is good for arthritis, but it works on any kind of joint pain.

I boil the yellow juice and the skin in water to make a drink to cleanse the colon. Sinkle bible helps cleanse out any impurities. The yellow juice from freshly picked leaves can also be put directly on ringworm. In just two or three days, it dries up. The juice cures ringworm on any part of the body.

We use sinkle bible to cool down sunburn and other burns, too. Just scrape the gel from the leaf and apply it to the sunburn. If you put it on quickly enough, it will keep your skin from peeling off all at once and getting raw. Your skin will never rise up and blister.

I make a sinkle bible tonic to strengthen the whole system. I often use this herb myself, for health and as a beauty aid.

Sinkle bible's many health benefits have been proven in many studies. Internally, the gel boosts the production of cells that kill bacteria and tumors. Used on the skin, it relieves the pain of wounds, lowers inflammation and increases blood flow to an injury. Many store-bought laxatives also contain aloe. But you have to be careful if you use them. They can give you cramps or irritate your digestive system.¹

Sinkle bible is an aromatic herbaceous plant that grows well in dry, stony soil. It has long, pointed, fleshy leaves, with prickles along the edges. When the leaf is cut open, it has a clear gel inside.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves

Cleansing drink

Split one medium-size sinkle bible leaf into two halves. Scrape out the clear gel and put it aside. Cut up the skin, and soak it in 1 liter of warm water for 6 – 8 hours, then strain off. Makes 6 drinks.

Drink this three times a day for one day. This can be done one day a week, or as often as needed.

Tonic for ASTHMA, ARTHRITIS, LUNGS PROBLEM and CANCER OF THE STOMACH

To make sinkle bible tonic, use all the gel that was put aside, along with 20 grams of arrowroot, 6 tablespoons honey, 1 teaspoon nutmeg and ½-teaspoon cinnamon.

To prepare the arrowroot, bring ¼-liter water to a boil. Mix the arrowroot in a small portion of cold water and stir the arrowroot mixture into the boiling water. Allow to cool.

When the arrowroot mixture is cool, add the sinkle bible gel, honey, nutmeg and cinnamon. Blend or beat with an egg beater into a smooth, thick tonic. This makes four drinks.

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Sorrel

Hibiscus sabdariffa [Malvaceae]

Christmas Flower • Common Sorrel

Eliminate Kidney Stones & Soothe Fevers and Stings



Although it's not wild, sorrel grows all around Jamaica. It's a garden favorite, because the fruit makes one of the most delicious drinks you could ever imagine. At Christmastime, families all over the island make the sorrel drink. It's a favorite holiday tradition.

I have the last of mine in the refrigerator right now... and I don't want to drink it – I want to savor it.

Sorrel is more than a tasty drink. It has many medicinal uses, too. For example, the root will get rid of kidney stones.

A while back, a man in his early 50's came to see me because he had kidney stones. The stones made it hard for him to urinate, and he was in a lot of pain.

His doctor wanted to operate. But he didn't want the doctor to cut him open. So he came to me for an herbal cure. So I made him sorrel tea.

He used the tea for six weeks – two weeks on and two weeks off. Then he passed two of the kidney stones. Within three months, he had passed all of them. And to this day, they haven't come back.

I also use a sorrel tea – made from the roots, flowers and leaves – for ague fever – a fever and shaking that sometimes develops from the flu. When I was growing up, our village elders used sorrel for ague fever, too.

I remember a woman came to see me after she went swimming in the river. The next day, she came down with ague fever and couldn't stop shaking. I made her the tea and it brought her right out of it. Sorrell tea cools down the body, so it's also good for heat flushes caused by menopause.

The tea is a good blood purifier, too. But shouldn't be used with sugar for this. Sorrell seed tea kills intestinal worms and parasites. My mother always used this tea if one of my sisters or I got worms when we were children.

If you combine the root and the leaves with pennyroyal, you can make a tea and a wash for insect bites and stings. I've used this combination successfully with two people who had centipede stings.

Sorrel is a member of the hibiscus family. In human studies, the tea lowered blood pressure. It also cuts the risk of gout

by helping the body to get rid of uric acid. The tea increases blood flow to the skin and dilates the pores, which helps the body to cool down from fever or environmental heat. This may be one reason it works so well for ague fever. Test-tube studies show sorrel extract has anti-cancer properties.^{1,2,3}

Sorrel is grown throughout the tropical world. But it's not the same plant called wood sorrel in the US. Interestingly, though, I've read that wood sorrel is also used to fight fever.

There is a modified sorrel that grows year-round, but I'm writing about the original sorrel, which grows seasonally. Sorrel seeds are scattered in May to June, and the fruit matures in November, December and January.

Sorrel flowers are peach-colored with red. When the flower falls off, it leaves a small red fruit on the stem. The fruit has little pointed tips on the top with four or five lobes around a bulb containing several seeds. Sorrel will grow up to six feet high.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Roots, Seeds

Tea for HOT FLASHES and AGUE FEVER

Add 4 ounces fresh or dried sorrel flowers, leaves and roots to 1 quart boiling water. Steep for 30 minutes, then strain off. Makes 4 cups.

Cool and drink straight as often as needed.

Tea for WORMS and PURIFYING THE BLOOD

Add 1 ounce sorrel seeds to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer for 10 minutes, then steep until cool. Strain off. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight. Take one cup twice a day for one week. Skip three days and repeat until symptoms go away.

Tea for INSECT STINGS

Add 1 ounce, combined, ground roots, leaves and seeds to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer for 2 to 3 minutes, then steep for 15 minutes. Strain off tea. Makes 2 cups.

Apply the wet warm herbs to the sting or stings. Take the tea as often as needed until sting heals.

Tea for JAUNDICE and KIDNEY STONES

Add 1 ounce fresh or dried ground sorrel root to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 5 minutes, then steep until cool. Makes 6 doses.

Take one dose three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Refreshing drinks for four

Add 1 ounce crushed ginger root and 8 ounces fresh or 6 ounces dried sorrel flowers to 1 quart boiling water. Simmer for 1 minute, then steep until cool. Strain off drink and sweeten with honey, brown sugar or your favorite sweetener. Cool in refrigerator. Makes 4 drinks.

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Soursop

Annona muricata [*Annonaceae*]
Nerve Food
Help for Prostate and Nerve Problems



I've used soursop in my prostate tonic for a long time. And it works very well, too. People have traveled from near and far to get it.

A few years ago, a man from the US came to see me for help with his prostate. He was having terrible trouble with his urine flow. His doctor told him he had a growth in his prostate and needed surgery.

But like so many other men, he didn't want anyone fooling around down there with a knife – not even a doctor.

So before he had the surgery, he decided to explore his options. He learned about me from a travel agent I worked with and decided to come see me.

I'm sure he must have been a little nervous when his cab driver turned onto one of the rutted gulleys we call roads here in the mountains. He probably never expected to be bouncing up through the forest in the back of an old jalopy.

When he finally reached the village, he was relieved. And he was even more relieved when I told him I thought I could help.

I made him a very strong prostate medicine with soursop and had him start taking it right there. Then I gave him another two bottles to take home. I asked him to be sure to tell me how it worked.

Before too long, he got in touch with me. He said his urine flow was back to normal, and he hadn't even finished the second bottle. He told me he felt like his prostate problems had just disappeared.

When he went back to the doctor, that's exactly what the doctor found. Nothing. The growth was completely gone. I talked to the man again recently, and he hasn't had trouble with his prostate since.

Another man came to see me because he could barely urinate. His urine would just drip out. I gave him a bottle of the same prostate medicine. Pretty soon, his urine flow was normal again. I've used this prostate tonic to help many other men, too.

Soursop tea calms nervousness. I also use it – compounded with other herbs – in a nerve tonic. Here in Jamaica, we give

soursop tea to children who wet their beds. It works very well. I've also seen it cure older people with a weak bladder.

There hasn't been much human research done with soursop. But in test-tube experiments, it kills certain type tumor and cancer cells. Studies done with animals show it kills parasites and at least some herpes viruses, too. It may also help lower lipid (fat) levels in the blood.¹

Soursop can grow up to ten feet high. The tree prefers dry, fertile soil – especially if it's stony.

The leaves are light green when young, then become darker and shiny as they mature. The flowers are yellow and bell-shaped. They have three to five thick petals. The flowers produce spiky green fruits. When the fruit is ripe, it becomes soft to the touch. Inside, it holds white juicy pulps with black seeds.

Preparations

Parts Used: Small Stems, Leaves, Bark, Ripe Fruit

Tea for NERVOUSNESS and WEAK BLADDER

Add 5 fresh or dried leaves – with stems – to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 10 minutes, steep for 10 minutes, then strain off tea. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten with molasses or honey. Drink 1 cup in the morning before breakfast and 1 cup at night for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if needed.

Compounds for PROSTATE PROBLEMS and NERVE TONIC

Soursop leaves, stems and bark can be compounded with other roots and herbs to make prostate medicine. *See page 179.*

Soursop leaves can be compounded with other roots and herbs to make nerve tonic. *See page 189.*

Nutritional juice

Use 2 kilograms ripe soursop fruits. Remove the skin. Place pulp in a 3 liter mixing container. Add 2 liters cold water to pulp. Squeeze on pulp until the juice thickens. Strain off juice, and sweeten with organic brown sugar or honey to taste. Place juice in refrigerator to cool. Makes 8 servings.

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Spanish Needle

Bidens cynapiifolia [Asteraceae]

**Chamomile · Wild Chamomile ·
Rabbit Feeding**

Relief for Menstrual Problems, Toothache and More



Not too long ago, my friend, Dr. Al Sears, was visiting from the US. We were sitting on my little porch, enjoying the mountain breezes and talking about herbs.

At some point, I mentioned that Spanish needle was used to cure gonorrhea. He hadn't heard of this use of the herb, so I told him about another doctor who had come to visit...

This doctor had come to my village from the Netherlands a few years back. He was interested in the traditional uses

of some Maroon herbs, and had come to see me. I told him about several herbs that were new to him, including Spanish needle.

I told him how Maroon healers traditionally used Spanish needle to cure toothache and relieve cramps. How it was good for heartburn and high blood pressure. And how it cleared up pink eye.

Then I mentioned that, mixed with another Jamaican herb, Spanish needle will cure gonorrhea. But it's not a quick cure. It must be taken for 3 months – two weeks on and one week off.

When I told him about the gonorrhea cure, the doctor asked me to work on one of his patients. So I gave the man the two herbs for the next 3 months, and he was cured of gonorrhea.

Like passion flower, Spanish needle can be used as a wash for pink eye. It's also very good for sore, tired eyes. I've used it this way... on myself, and many other people, too.

Washing the eye three times will start to bring results, but I use it six or seven times to fully clear up pink eye.

Spanish needle also relieves toothaches. You hold the warm tea in your mouth, and it starts to pull the bacteria out and ease the pain. But don't swallow the tea with all the bacteria in it. You spit it out after you soak the tooth.

The tea is a tonic for the female organs; it regulates menstrual flow and relieves cramps. I also use Spanish needle's lovely yellow and white flowers as a beauty bath once or twice a month.

Spanish needle makes your skin feel softer. You can see your skin looks younger. I've taken Spanish needle baths for years, and people are always telling me how good my skin looks. It's one of my best beauty secrets.

Extracts from one type of Spanish needle inhibit the growth of the parasite that causes malaria. In animal studies, researchers have confirmed Spanish needle's effects on blood pressure. They've also shown it improves insulin resistance. Spanish needle also kills several types of disease-causing bacteria.¹

This herb grows in most of the parishes in Jamaica. It grows about twenty to twenty-five inches high. Once it matures, it flowers all year round. The flower petals are white. Each flower has a golden yellow middle with dark spots. When the flowers fall off, they leave tiny, spiky seeds. Spanish needle has a mild aromatic scent.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for HEALTH

Add 10 grams dried Spanish needle to ¼-litre of boiling water. Steep for 10 – 15 minutes, then strain off tea. Add 2 teaspoonfuls of honey. Makes one cup.

Tea for FEMALE ORGANS, TO REGULATE MENSTRUAL FLOW and RELIEVE CRAMPS

Add 2 ounces fresh or 1 ounce dried leaves, flowers, and stems to 2 pints boiling water. Steep fresh for 10 minutes

or dried for 20 minutes. Strain. Drink straight or add honey to taste. Makes 4 cups.

Tea for RED EYES, SORE EYES and TOOTHACHE

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried flowers to 1 pint boiling water. Steep for 10 – 15 minutes. Strain through a clean piece of cheesecloth and allow to cool if using to wash the eyes.

For toothache, use the tea as warm as possible. Hold the warm tea in the mouth for several minutes, then spit it out. Repeat at least six times.

Bath for BEAUTY

Add 8 ounces fresh Spanish needle to 2 gallons of boiling water. Boil for 5 minutes. Pour out bath into a tub, add cold water to desired temperature and wash from head to toe.

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Strong Back Burr

Desmodium incanum DC [*Fabaceae*]
Man Strong Back • Black Burr • Flat Burr
Relief for Aching Backs



Strong back burr is a great medicine for men. I use it in my back pain medicine. And with so many families in our valley farming on the mountainsides, I see more than a few sore backs.

A man came to me after he strained his back while working on his farm. He had a family to care for, and couldn't afford to spend several days – or even weeks – lying on his back in bed. But he couldn't get any relief from the pain.

It was so bad, he could hardly work at all.

I gave him a bottle of my back pain medicine to take home with him. Sure enough, he called me soon after and said, “I don’t believe that something can work so fast. I feel like new.” But then he told me he wanted 12 more bottles of the back pain medicine.

“Twelve bottles?” I asked. “I thought your back wasn’t bothering you now.”

“It isn’t,” he said. “I want the medicine for my friends who have sore backs, too.”

Since then, he told me his back hardly bothers him at all any more. And if it does start to ache, he just takes the medicine and it goes away.

I’ve used strong black burr on myself, too.

Once, I was up in the mountains gathering materials to make baskets. As I was pulling fig tree roots, I heard something pop in my back. I didn’t think anything of it then, and continued working.

Later, on my way home, my back started to feel stiff and sore. By the time I got home, I could barely move. So I took one ounce of the back pain medicine every 2 hours, and by the time I went to bed, my back was feeling fine.

It’s almost as if these herbs seek out the weak tendons and muscles and knit them back together to make them strong.

I combine strong back burr with many other herbs for different ailments. I’ve made well over 1000 bottles of medicine containing strong back burr.

Studies show strong back burr has a relaxing effect on the tubes in your lungs, so it’s good for asthma. It helps clear the

lungs and nasal passages, too.¹ It may also normalize high liver enzyme levels. Strong back burr has anti-spasmodic and muscle-relaxing properties. That's one reason it's so good for relieving lower back pain.²

This non-aromatic herbaceous plant does well at the corners of buildings, in cow pastures, at stone corners and even on roadsides.

Strong back burr grows straight, but with several stems that like to pull the main stem to the ground. When the plant is mature, it flowers at the top of each stem. The flowers are green with touches of red and blue. These flowers produce several bunches of flat green burrs that turn brown when they are ripe.

Preparation

Parts Used: Whole Plant

Tea for SLEEPLESSNESS, BACK PAIN, EXCESS URINE and STRENGTHENING THE BODY

Add 20 grams dried strong back burr to 1 liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 15 minutes, steep for 10 minutes then strain off the tea. Makes 4 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten with honey to taste. Drink one cup twice a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Compound for BACK PAIN

Strong back burr can be compounded with other roots to make back pain medicine. *See page 185.*

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Sweet Broom

Scoparia dulcis [Scrophulariaceae]

Gripe Bush • Baby Broom

Relief for Bladder Problems and Bed-wetting



My Maroon ancestors used sweet broom for their babies for 300 years. I can remember my mother making sweet broom tea, too, whenever one of my younger sisters had the gripe.

Gripe is sort of like a cold in the bowel. It gives babies a lot of pain in their stomachs, and they develop yellow, stringy stool.

When babies have gripe, they cry very hard and kick and grab from the pain.

When this happens, the mother gives the baby “gripe water” – which is really a tea made from sweet broom. I gave gripe water to my own baby when she needed it. It eases the pain and calms them right down. Many women in the Maroon community still use sweet broom for their babies. You just give the baby a tablespoonful three or four times a day, and it will stop the gripe. It’s a big help to mothers.

In Maroon families, we also give sweet broom tea to older children who wet the bed. It soothes the urinary tract, bladder and kidneys. I know of many children who have taken sweet broom tea for bed-wetting. It works every time.

Sweet broom tea also helps adults who urinate too often. Because most people in Jamaica grew up taking sweet broom, and know about it, there aren’t too many cases of urinary frequency here.

In animal tests, sweet broom relieves pain, calms inflammation, and shows anti-spasmodic properties. In other studies, it lowered blood pressure and strengthened the heartbeat. Japanese researchers have even discovered that sweet broom kills cancer cells.¹

Sweet broom is a non-aromatic herb that likes grows well along rivers, in cow pastures and in gardens with cool shade and soil. The flowers are tiny and white with light yellow in the middle. The stems are thin. When mature, this herb bears tiny seeds in tiny cases.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems, Seeds

Tea for GRIPE IN YOUNG BABIES

Add ¼-ounce fresh or ½-teaspoon dried leaves, flowers, stems and seeds to 4 ounces boiling water. Steep the fresh herb for 5 minutes or the dried for 10 – 15 minutes. Strain off the tea and sweeten with honey.

Give baby 3 full tablespoons three times a day for as long as needed.

Tea for ADULT WITH KIDNEY and BLADDER PROBLEM

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried leaves, flowers, stems and seeds to 1 pint boiling water. Steep the fresh herb for 5 minutes or the dried for 10 – 15 minutes. Strain. Makes 4 doses.

Drink every three hours for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Tea for CHILDREN FROM 3 – 12 YEARS OLD WITH KIDNEY AND BLADDER PROBLEM

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried leaves, flowers, stems and seeds to 1½ pints boiling water. Steep the fresh herb for 5 minutes or the dried for 10 – 15 minutes. Strain. Makes 6 doses.

Give every three hours for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat if necessary.

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Tree of Life

Bryophyllum pinnatum
[Crassulaceae]
Life Plant • Leaf Of Life



The tree of life has many uses. For skin ulcers, sprains, insect bites and stings, a tree of life poultice is just the thing.

You warm the leaves over the fire and beat them with a mortar. (If you don't have a fire, the leaves will work at room temperature. They're just not quite as effective.) Apply the poultice directly to the sore or sting.

This is one of the herbs I compound for serious bites and stings... such as from a centipede.

Several years ago, a man came to me with a cut that had turned into an infected sore. The sore was about 3 inches around, and it looked as though I could see dead flesh inside.

But I warmed the tree of life leaves over the stove, applied castor oil to the warm leaves and covered the sore with them. Overnight, the poultice drew out all the pus and impurities that were in this nasty sore until it was red and clean.

I showed him how to make the poultices, and he applied them until the sore was completely healed.

The tree of life also helps sore or runny eyes – what some people call a cold in the eyes. First, warm the leaf over the stove and then rub the leaf in the palm of your hand to juice it. Then put one drop of the juice in each eye. If you do that 2 or 3 times, it will heal your eyes. One leaf of the tree of life plant produces about one tablespoon of juice.

If you get frequent colds or chest congestion, tree of life tea will strengthen your immune system. Many people have come to me because they get regular colds. They say their doctor tells them they have a weak immune system and need better nutrition. For these people, I make a cough mixture, a tonic or a tea.

For a cough mixture – good for coughs, congestion and colds – you warm the leaves, juice them and add honey and lime. Then you cook it down to thicken it a bit. Take one tablespoon three or four times a day. It soothes the throat and boosts the immune system.

The tree of life tea will help bring the immune system to life. It's good for all kinds of immune problems, menstrual problems and to cleanse the intestines of harmful bacteria.

The tree of life is one of the most powerful herbs we have. Drinking a cup or two every week will do you a lot of good. This herb really lives up to its name. It's one of the greatest plants I've ever seen.

In laboratory tests, tree of life kills many kinds of bad bacteria. There haven't been many studies on this herb in humans. But animal studies show how useful it can be. The extract has been shown to relieve pain, reduce inflammation, and lower blood sugar.^{1,2}

Tree of life does best in the shade... at house corners, fence corners and almost any shady corner on fertile soil. The thick leaves grow on straight, fleshy stems. The leaves are scalloped with a thin purple border on the edges. When the plant matures, it sends up long stems with small pink and cream bellflowers.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Stems

Tea for ASTHMA, SHORTNESS OF BREATH, BOOSTING THE IMMUNE SYSTEM and TO CLEANSE THE INTESTINES OF HARMFUL BACTERIA

Add 5 fresh or dried leaves, with stems, to 1 pint boiling water. Steep for 5 – 10 minutes. Strain and drink straight or add honey to taste. Makes 3 doses.

Take this tea warm three times a day.

Juice for CHEST COLD

Warm 3 leaves and juice them.

This should yield 2 - 3 tablespoons of tree of life juice. Add a pinch of salt. Take one tablespoon three times a day for as long as needed.

Cough mixture for COLDS, COUGHS and CHEST CONGESTION

Warm 13 fresh tree of life leaves over a fire. Rub the leaves between your palms until they become juicy. Squeeze the juice into a small pot. This should yield at least 6 – 8 tablespoons of juice.

Add the juice of 3 limes and 2 ounces honey to the pot. Simmer on a low flame for 5 – 7 minutes. Remove from flame and allow to cool. Store in a bottle.

Take one tablespoonful every three hours for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Poultice for SKIN ULCERS, SPRAINS and INSECT STINGS

Grind 7 fresh leaves into a poultice. Apply the poultice evenly to the affected area. Apply a fresh poultice twice a day, morning and night, as often as needed.

Juice for SORE EYES

Warm one fresh leaf and rub it between the palms of your hands. Squeeze the juice into the eyes with head tilted back. Do this twice a day or as often as needed.

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Tuna

Opuntia tuna [Cactaceae]

Prickly Pear • Tuna Plant

Get Rid of Headaches and Nagging Back Pain



Tuna plant tea is good for stomach pain and ulcers, constipation, and even backache.

A taxi driver suffering with bad back pain came to see me a few years ago. Many of the roads in Jamaica are rough, and all the bouncing around made it hard for him to work. He was in constant pain.

I told him to get two or three tuna leaves, slice them up and put them in a pint of water. Leave the mixture outside for 24 hours until it becomes thick. Then make 3 doses from

the liquid to drink. He took a total of 6 doses and got rid of his back pain for good.

I've used tuna for my own back pain, too.

When I was young, before I made my back pain medicine, I went up the mountain to look for roots. As I was tugging on a particularly tough root, I felt something pop in my back.

After I got home, I bathed and had a cup of tea, and everything seemed fine at first. But just a little while later, I could hardly walk.

I made a tuna mixture by slicing the tuna leaves and putting them in a quart of boiling water. I strained the juice and let it sit for 24 hours. I also sliced several tuna leaves and ate them. After eating the tuna leaves and drinking the mixture, I didn't have to go to the doctor. The pain just went away.

Tuna works for other pains, too.

One hot, humid day, I came down with a really bad headache. I sliced the tuna leaves, warmed them and tied them around my head. In less than 5 minutes, the pain was gone. The tuna leaves removed the pain.

Tuna grows all over Jamaica. When I was growing up, many Maroon women and girls used it as a hair conditioner.

In fact, Maroon women were using tuna as a hair conditioner for generations before such products were sold in stores.

Tuna gets rid of dandruff, too. You rub it into your scalp, leave it on for a day and then rinse it out. That should get rid of your dandruff. It's very effective.

Healing plants like this make me think that we live in God's pharmacy. You just need to know what to take and what to give.

Researchers have discovered that tuna contains antioxidants and compounds that fight inflammation. Some studies also show it lowers LDL cholesterol.

Athletes use tuna for pain, too. They take it to relieve sore muscles and speed recovery after they work out.¹

Though tuna isn't native to Jamaica, you can find this cactus growing all over the island. It prefers dry, stony soil.

The leaves are thick, fleshy and paddle-shaped. When tuna matures, it blossoms with reddish brown flowers.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves

Tea for BACKACHE, CONSTIPATION and STOMACH PAIN

Slice a half of a tuna leaf and add to ¼-liter boiling water. Steep for 20 minutes, then strain off. Makes one cupful.

Add 2 teaspoons honey or drink straight.

Treatment for HEADACHE

Slice 2 tuna leaves, warm them by the fire and place them evenly around your head. Bind the warm tuna to your head with a scarf.

Hair conditioner

Scrape the gel out of the tuna leaves. After washing your hair, rub the gel into your hair and scalp. Leave it on for 15 minutes, then rinse.

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Vervain

Stachytarpheta jamaicensis
[*Verbenaceae*]

Burvine · Nerves Bush

Tea for Insomnia, Nerves and Hemorrhaging



Vervain is a real life-saving herb. Healers give it to women who hemorrhage after childbirth.

It will also stop hemorrhaging after a fall or injury.

I remember a young woman who had gone up to her family's garden on the mountain. She had picked a basketful of vegetables and started back down the mountain when she slipped. As she slipped, she tried to catch the basket of vegetables she had been carrying on her head.

She fell all in a jumble and strained something internally.

The poor woman had already been bleeding heavily from her period. But now she was really hemorrhaging. Between her bumps and bruises and the bleeding, she had a hard time getting down the mountain.

When she finally got home, she couldn't stop the bleeding, so she came to see me. I gave her a cup of vervain tea right away, and some of the vervain herbs to take home with her.

With the first cup of tea, the hemorrhaging slowed down. And by the time she drank her third cup the next morning, her period was back to normal.

People here on the island also drink vervain tea for insomnia. I was having trouble sleeping myself just recently. So I took one cup of vervain tea in the morning and one at night and slept like a baby. It calms you and helps you fall right to sleep.

When I was a child, my mother and grandmother gave us vervain tea for whooping cough, and it went away. Vervain is good for colds, coughs, weak stomachs and bladder problems. It has many, many uses.

This is also one of the best herbs for nerve problems and headaches from nervous tension. The Maroons call it "nerves bush." Vervain tea will calm you right down. It works on its own or can be compounded with other herbs in a nerve tonic.

Vervain is one of my favorite herbs because it has so many uses. When compounded with certain other herbs, it makes a nice tonic for your entire system. Vervain tea is very

cleansing for the entire body and can be drunk as often as desired. This soothing herb is often used as a table tea.

Scientists have found compounds in vervain with many health-promoting benefits. They kill viruses and bacteria and fight tumors and inflammation. Vervain also protects the liver, heart and nervous system. One active chemical in the plant, hispidulin, opens up the lungs and has anti-asthmatic and anti-spasmodic properties. Hispidulin also normalizes clot-forming, sticky blood.¹

Vervain loves to grow in gardens, cow pastures and along roadsides. It does best in flat, cool, fertile soil.

There are two types of Vervain. One has purplish-green stems and small bluish-purple flowers. The other one has light purplish-green stems and bluish-white flowers on spikes. When the herbs are mature, they both have similar leaves growing on a woody main stem with several small stems.

Both types of vervain are effective for the uses I've mentioned here.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves, Stems

Tea for NERVOUS TENSION, COLDS, FEVER, COUGHS and WHOOPING COUGHS

Add 2 ounces fresh or 1 ounce dried vervain to 1 quart boiling water. Steep fresh for 10 minutes or dried for 20 minutes. Strain and sweeten to taste with honey. Makes 6 drinks.

Take tea three times a day for as long as necessary.

Tea for HEADACHE, WEAK STOMACH, MENSTRUAL CRAMPS, HEMMORAGE, INSOMNIA, BLADDER PROBLEMS and TO TONE UP THE SYSTEM

Add 1 ounce fresh or ½-ounce dried Vervain to 1 quart boiling water. Steep fresh for 5 minutes or dried for 15 minutes. Strain off. Makes 4 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten to taste with honey. Take one cup twice a day, first thing in the morning and last thing at night before going to bed.

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Water Grass

Commelina diffusa (Red)
[*Commelinaceae*]

Red Water Grass • Green Water Grass
Relieve Swollen Joints and Prostate



Quite a few years ago, a man came to see me for a sprained ankle. He had been swimming in the river, stepped on a stone, slipped and twisted his ankle pretty badly.

Like a lot of sprains, this one didn't seem too bad at first. So he started walking home, thinking he was okay. But it didn't take too long for the pain and swelling to start. So he decided to come see me. By the time he made it to my house, he could barely walk. The swelling was pretty bad.

I took some green water grass, beat it up and put it on his ankle. In less than three hours, the swelling was drawn out and he could walk on his foot a little. He was fine, as long as he didn't put a lot of pressure on it.

By the next morning, he could walk on his ankle normally without any pain at all. That's why I say water grass will ease any strain, sprain or swelling.

Because it relieves swelling so well, I use water grass in my prostate medicine. It even drives down swelling in the prostate. It's also good for frequent urination. So many men ask me for this medicine, I can't make it fast enough.

I use water grass for women, too. Many young women come to me with bladder and urinary tract infections. I boil up water grass tea for them, and it cures the infection. It's very effective.

There haven't been many studies done on water grass. But one animal study showed it kills fungus and bacteria, and contains antiseptic and antioxidant compounds. The authors suggested these qualities would make water grass useful for healing wounds.¹

There are two kinds of water grass – red and green. In my herbal practice, I use red water grass in my tonics and the green variety for strains and sprains. But if you don't have one type, you can use the other in its place.

Green water grass grows wild in cool mountainous lands. Red water grass also grows wild, but only in a few places. I find it mostly beside cool, undisturbed waters: along springs, rivers and swampy areas.

Both types of water grass have similar smooth, pointed leaves and blue flowers when mature. They run as vines that can measure up to three feet. Both produce a sticky jelly-like sap when crushed.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Vines

Poultice for SWELLING OF THE JOINT CAUSED BY SPRAIN AND STRAIN

Get ¼-pound fresh red or green water grass leaves and stems. Crush the water grass into a sticky poultice. Evenly place poultice around the sprain or strain area, and bandage for 24 hours. Change dressing, wash area with warm water, and repeat until area is healed.

Tea for URINAL TRACT INFECTION or BLADDER PROBLEMS

Add ½ -ounce fresh or ¼-ounce dried red or green water grass to 1 pint boiling water. Simmer fresh for 1 minute or dried for 2 minutes. Steep fresh for 10 minutes or dried for 15 minutes, then strain off. Makes 3 doses.

Drink straight. Take one dose three times a day after meals for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat until symptom clears up.

Compound for PROSTATE PROBLEMS and FREQUENT URINATION

Red water grass can be compounded with bachelor button and soursop leaves to make prostate medicine. *See page 179.*

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Wild Hops

Humulus lupulus [Cannabaceae]

Hops

Control Blood Pressure and Ease Tension



I use wild hops in most of my herbal baths. It helps the body to relax. But wild hops is good for headaches, high blood pressure and nervousness, too.

I stay in touch with a group of women who are originally from the village, but now live in England.

Unlike the folks that live here in the village, they've all developed high blood pressure. So they come to see me every year for wild hops to take back with them for tea and herbal baths.

The truth is, most of the people who move away from the village to live abroad end up with diabetes and high blood pressure. They don't have the protection that living in harmony with nature provides.

Very few people in the village have high blood pressure. But for those few who do, wild hops is the herb they take to control it.

Wild hops is a healing herb. That's why the bath is so good for people with back problems and tension in their body. A fresh wild hops bath is the best. But if you can't get the fresh herb, the dried herb is good, too.

A relaxing wild hops bath drains the tension right out of your body.

Animal studies show that wild hops calms the nervous system. There aren't many other studies that show its benefits, but wild hops is used in herbal medicine for insomnia, nervous tension and loss of appetite.¹

Wild hops is a non-aromatic shrub and grows up to five feet high on rich, tropical soil. It grows all year round on woody trails, in cow pastures, at stone corners and in gardens.

The leaves are slightly red when they're young, but turn green – with pronounced ribs – when they mature. The mature plant flowers at the top of stems. The flowers turn into seed pods from August through February.

Preparations

Parts Used: Leaves, Flowers

Tea for TENSION HEADACHES, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, NERVOUSNESS and RELAXING THE WHOLE BODY

Add 20 grams dried wild hops to ½-liter boiling water. Simmer on a low flame for 5 minutes. Turn off flame and steep for 15 – 20 minutes. Makes 2 cups.

Drink straight or sweeten with honey. Take one cup in the morning and one cup at night before going to bed.

Relaxing herbal bath for the entire body

Add 100 grams wild hops, 100 grams balsam, 100 grams fever grass, 100 grams red sage, and 100 grams Jack in a bush to a 5 gallon pot with 4 gallons of cold water. Place all the herbs in the pot with cold water on a stove with a medium flame. Bring to a boil. Monitor the pot constantly to prevent the mixture from boiling over.

When the bath starts to boil, lower the flame and simmer for 10 minutes. Then pour hot bath – omitting the herbs – into a bathtub. Dilute with lukewarm water to desired temperature. Lay in the bath for 10 – 15 minutes. Wash from head to toe.

*When boiling herbal baths, it is best to use fresh herbs. If there are no fresh herbs available, dried herbs can be used.

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Ylang Ylang

Cananga odorata [Annonaceae]
Deal Tree • Perfume Tree •
Matches Stick Tree



Ylang ylang trees grow wild in the mountains of Jamaica. When the seeds are ripe, they're covered with birds. It's truly a beautiful sight.

I distill the flowers of ylang ylang to make perfume. I also use the distilled oils with other oils for aromatherapy.

An aromatherapy bath with ylang ylang oil will turn off premenstrual stress and tension and ease depression.

A few years ago, a woman came from England. She had been in a terrible car accident and just couldn't get over it.

She was very depressed. I made her a hot bath with only ylang ylang oil, and she fell fast asleep in the tub.

About 15 minutes later, I called to her, and she woke up with a start. “Oh my God,” she said, “I was going off to sleep in the bath.”

That night, she was so relaxed, she slept all through the night for the first time in a long time. She took some ylang ylang oil – along with some other herbs – back to England with her.

Ylang ylang oil is also good for massage therapy. When I give people a ylang ylang massage, they tell me how relaxed they feel the next day. I’ve had so many people make nice comments after they’ve taken the herbs I give them, because they can’t believe how much better they feel.

Ylang ylang is a very important tree in Jamaica. The Maroons used the board of the ylang ylang tree to make partitions for their houses, because of its soft nature. In Kingston, they even use the wood of the ylang ylang tree to make matchsticks. In Jamaica, we have the best-smelling matches in the world.

Ylang ylang grows very tall. When the flowers bloom, the whole yard smells like ylang ylang perfume. It is a wonderful experience. And a healing one, too.

Just being near these herbs is good for you. I can remember coming home from a trip to Kingston – 80 miles from home – on a dark, rainy night. Walking up to my cottage, I felt so tired and lonely.

But when I opened the gate, I could smell the beautiful perfume of my ylang ylang – and all my other herbs. Then I

felt the two hibiscus at my gate reach out and hug me. One touched my neck and the other one touched my leg. It was like they were saying, “We’re here for you.”

That was about 15 years ago, and I’ve never felt lonely again.

Ylang ylang trees grow throughout Jamaica’s Rio Grande valley, and a few other parishes in Jamaica. These trees love damp, cool, fertile soil. They often sprout in gullies and cow pastures.

Ylang ylang oil is used in aromatherapy for its calming effect on the nervous system. Aromatherapists claim it can lower high blood pressure. It’s also said to have a beneficial effect on the skin by balancing the production of sebum.¹ One study showed that extracts from ylang ylang bark kill bacteria and fungi.²

Ylang ylang can grow up to thirty feet high, and produces lots of flowers throughout the spring and summer. The flowers are light green, and turn golden yellow when they are ripe.

After the flowers fall off, they produce lots of plumb-like fruits. These fruits are green when they’re young, but turn black when ripe. The leaves of the tree are long and pointed and have pronounced ribs.

The ripe golden flowers, with their relaxing fragrance, can be distilled by using a distillation kit... or through absorption... to make essential oil.

This oil is used in relaxing baths for depression and for people who suffer from hypertension.

Preparations

Parts Used: Flowers

Oil via absorption

Combine ½-liter cold pressed olive oil and ¼-kilogram of dried ylang ylang flowers in a glass jar. Cover the jar and place it in the sun for 15 days. Or, you can keep it near the fire on a stove while cooking for 15 days. At the end of 15 days, strain off the oil with a clean piece of cloth, and store in a clean dry jar.

Bath for DEPRESSION, STRESS and HYPERTENSION

Fill a bathtub with warm water, add 2 tablespoonfuls of ylang ylang oil to the tub and stir the bath around.

Lay in bath – making sure the whole body is submerged – for 15 minutes. This bath can be used once a week – especially on weekends, when there is enough resting time.

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Prostate Medicine

for SWOLLEN PROSTATE and
ALLEVIATING EXCESS URINE



SOURSOP LEAF



RED WATER GRASS



BACHELOR BUTTON

In my chapter on soursop, I told you the story of a man from the US who had a growth on his prostate that had almost completely blocked his urine flow.

His doctor told him surgery was the only way he could get relief. But he didn't want the surgery. So he came to see me.

This is the prostate medicine I gave him.

It's very powerful. I wasn't surprised when his doctor told him the growth had completely disappeared – before he'd even finished the second of the three bottles I gave him.

I give this medicine to men who have a swollen prostate and can't urinate. But I give it to women, too. In women, it relieves excess urine. I've given it to many women with urinary tract infections, too.

This prostate medicine is one of my most popular remedies. I've made more than 1,000 bottles over the years. But no matter how much I make, people always want more. I've provided directions below on how I prepare it.

Ingredients: Soursop leaf, bachelor button, red water grass

Preparation: Use 2 ounces of each ingredient. Put the herbs in a large pot with 2 quarts cold water. Bring pot with herbs to a boil on medium heat. When the pot comes to a boil, lower the flame and simmer for 5 – 10 minutes.

Turn off the stove, let the mixture cool and strain off. Store in bottles for 7 days to ferment.

Use: Take one ounce three times a day for two weeks.

Blood Purifier

for **CLEANING THE BLOODSTREAM**
and **RIDDING THE BODY OF TOXINS**



MILKWEED



RED SAGE



COUNTRY ELBOW



BITTER ALBOTT



SARSAPARELLA

When the Maroons first ran away to the mountains, they had to live off the land. My ancestors learned which plants were good to make almost everything they needed.

And many of these crafts have been handed down from generation to generation – just like herbal medicine.

Over the years, I've learned many of the old traditional crafts. And I sometimes sell the baskets and other items I make at craft fairs.

Several years ago, I met a woman at one of these fairs in Kingston, 80 miles from my home. We got talking about traditional Maroon crafts, and I mentioned I was an herbal healer.

She became very interested and told me her story. She was in her 50's and had suffered with a yeast infection for years. She had been going to the doctor the whole time, but she still had it. It would go away for a week or two and then come right back.

Nothing else she had tried helped, so she asked me for a bottle of blood purifier.

When the fair ended, I went home and didn't expect to hear from her again. But just a few weeks later, she came all the way up the mountain looking for me. She said that one bottle of blood purifier had cleared up the yeast infection. She was so happy, she asked for two more bottles.

I still hear from her from time to time, and she hasn't had a yeast infection since. That's how well blood purifier works.

Along with some herbs we've already discussed, blood purifier also contains country elbow vine and sarsaparilla root – an herb that grows under the earth in the mountains.

I give blood purifier to people with diabetes. It gets rid of tinea and ringworm, too.

When people come to me, and I don't know what is wrong with them, I usually give them the blood purifier. I learned when I was a child that cleaning the bloodstream is one of the best things for someone who's sick. Usually, whatever is making them sick will go away.

I've used blood purifier for lots of people with diabetes and yeast infections.

Like most herbal medicine, blood purifier works fastest if you take it when you first get sick. If you wait until you're very sick, it usually takes longer for the herbs to work. I never get sick anymore, because I'm always taking the herbs to stay healthy.

Ingredients: Milkweed, red sage, country elbow, bitter albott, sarsaparella

Preparation: Use 2 ounces of each herb. Put them in a pot with 3 quarts cold water. Bring the mixture to a boil on medium heat. When the pot comes to a boil, lower the flame and simmer for 25 – 30 minutes. Turn off the stove, let the mixture cool and strain off. Store in bottles for 7 days to ferment.

Use: Take 1 ounce three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Back Pain Medicine

for BACKACHE CAUSED BY
STRAIN OR SPRAIN



MILKWEED



RED SAGE



STRONG BACK BURR



COCONUT ROOT



ALLMAN STRENGTH

Do you remember the story of the farmer who liked my back pain medicine so much he bought 12 bottles for his friends? Well, he's not the only one.

A few years ago, a young man came to see me about chronic back pain. He had suffered a broken back in an accident. This left him with almost constant pain – even after his spine had mended. He was desperate for relief.

I gave him a bottle of back pain medicine. It worked so well, he came back to see me in a few weeks - and bought a case of 12 bottles for himself and his friends.

Many other people living in the village and on the farms have come to me for back pain medicine. Usually, they take one bottle and they don't have to come back for any more.

I've written out directions for this powerful herbal remedy below. Besides some herbs we've already talked about, my back pain medicine includes coconut root and allman strength – another local root.

Ingredients: Milkweed, red sage, strong back burr, coconut root, allman strength

Preparation: Use 2 ounces of each ingredient. Put the herbs in a large pot with 3 quarts cold water. Bring the mixture to a boil on medium heat. When the pot comes to a boil, lower the flame and simmer for 25 – 30 minutes. Turn off the stove and let the mixture cool. Strain off and sweeten with 6 ounces honey. Store in bottles for 7 days to ferment.

Use: Take 1 ounce three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Wood Root Tonic

for **STRENGTHENING THE BODY,
TONING UP THE SYSTEM and
SEXUAL PROBLEMS**



BLACK WHIST



PURON BARK



CHANAY ROOT



RAW MOON



ALLMAN STRENGTH

This is a tonic for men that I can't make fast enough. It's potent like an aphrodisiac. People come to me from all over Jamaica for wood root tonic.

I've had young men come and buy 3 or 4 bottles to improve their sexual stamina. Older men who have trouble getting an erection take it, too. It won't help if a man is completely impotent... I've seen it work wonders for men who were pretty close.

I'm sure my wood root tonic has saved more than a few marriages.

Wood root tonic boosts a man's stamina for sex. It helps him perform longer and maintain an erection longer. It keeps the body strong, as well.

None of the roots I use in this tonic are covered in this book. But this tonic is so popular, I thought I should mention it.

Ingredients: Black whist, puron bark, chaney root, raw moon, allman strength

Preparation: Use 2 ounces of each ingredient. Put the roots in a large pot with 3 quarts cold water. Bring the mixture to a boil on medium heat. When the pot comes to a boil, lower the flame and simmer for 25 – 30 minutes. Turn off the stove and let the mixture cool. Strain off and sweeten with 6 ounces honey and 3 ounces molasses. Store in bottles for 7 days to ferment.

Use: Take 1 ounce three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Nerve Tonic

for NERVOUSNESS CAUSED BY
STRESS AND TENSION



YOUNG BANANA



COCONUT ROOT



SARSAPARELLA



SOURSOP LEAF



IRONBROOM

All of the herbs in this tonic are good for the nerves. But they are much more powerful together than alone. I remember an older gentleman from the village – one of my neighbors – came to see me with his hands just shaking.

I knew he was a hard worker. He worked a lot of hours to support his family, and didn't get enough sleep. Now, he was just trembling with nerves.

He told me he had been to several doctors and none of them could help him.

I gave him a bottle of nerve tonic, and he never had to come back for another one. The last time I saw him, he had no more shaking.

I see so many people with nerve problems. They're under a lot of stress. They work hard and don't get enough sleep. This really messes up their nerves.

And it's not just the older folks. Quite a few young men and women come to me for nerve tonic because they work so hard and are under a lot of stress. I have teachers and children come to me, too, because they work and study hard. Everyone I know gets better after they take my nerve tonic.

I even use it myself. When I'm getting ready for a craft show, I'll sometimes stay up for 24 hours straight making preparations. Then I find myself jumping in my sleep and I know it's my nerves. So I take the nerve tonic, and I calm right down.

Ingredients: Young banana, coconut root, sarsaparella, soursop leaf, ironbroom

Preparation: Use 2 ounces of each ingredient. Put the herbs and roots in a large pot with 3 quarts cold water. Bring the mixture to a boil on medium heat. When the pot comes to a boil, lower the flame and simmer for 25 – 30 minutes. Turn off the stove and let the mixture cool. Strain off and

sweeten with 4 ounces honey and 2 ounces molasses. Store in bottles for 7 days to ferment.

Use: Take 1 ounce three times a day for two weeks. Skip one week and repeat, if necessary.

Conclusion

Over the centuries, the New World has become a melting pot of cultures. In a similar way, Jamaica has become a melting pot of healing herbs.

Plants my Koromantyn ancestors used in Africa grow here. I still remember finding balsam – a plant I’ve often used in my medicines – growing in Ghana’s beautiful Aburi National Park. I can only guess that my distant ancestors carried this healing herb with them to Jamaica.

I also include many native plants in my practice. The Arawak Indians generously shared their herbal knowledge with my ancestors. Today, the Arawak are gone, but their culture lives on in the use of plants such as cow foot leaf and dog blood.

Other plants came to the island with settlers from from Asia and Europe. Ylang ylang comes all the way from Southeast Asia. But its use is common in Jamaica today.

Maroon healers used ylang ylang’ beautiful scent to calm anxious nerves long before anyone had heard of aromatherapy.

I even use plants from nearby neighbors. Guava, for instance, made a short journey to Jamaica. It’s native to South and Central America.

You probably couldn’t find so many healing plants in such a small area anywhere else in the world.

You probably couldn’t find so much healing knowledge as close to being lost anywhere else, either.

I am the last of the Maroon healers, trained up in the traditions of my ancestors. The knowledge I have was passed down to me – generation by generation – directly from Princess Nanny.

And now I've passed some of that healing knowledge on to you. I've shared the herbs I use most often, along with a few of the most powerful healing herbs I know.

For hundreds of years, these herbs have helped the Maroon people healthy. It's my hope that these herbs can bring the same healing and comfort to people around the world.

About the Author



My name is Ivelyn Harris. I'm a descendant of the Maroons. My ancestors refused to be slaves and escaped into the mountains of Jamaica – the same mountains where I was born many years later.

I was born in Cornwall Barracks, nestled in the Rio Grande Valley in the parish of Portland. To the southeast of my home lie the Blue Mountains and the rest of Jamaica. To the northeast, lie the John Crow Mountains and the sea. As a young girl, my world consisted of the valley, the nine villages scattered through its forests and the mountains.

Growing up in the Maroon community I learned and loved our rich traditions. My mother, grandmother and aunties taught me the importance of plants for food and medicine.

Today, I'm so very honored to be continuing the herbal culture of my family. A tradition my family traces directly back to Princess Nanny, the first leader of the Windward Maroons and Jamaica's only national heroine.

I'm writing this book to preserve some of the herbal secrets I learned from my elders. Otherwise, I fear it will be lost when I am gone.

For hundreds of years, this knowledge was passed down from generation to generation. But not any more.

Most young people today dream of moving to the city where there are jobs and an easier life. And I can't blame them. I had that same dream once.

When I was about 14, I ran away to Kingston. At first, I worked as a babysitter and went to school in the evenings. Then, for several years, I drifted from one job to another until I finally started a small business for myself in Kingston.

But through all this, I was restless. I wasn't in the village anymore, but I still felt drawn by my roots. I was searching for peace of mind.

In my early 20's, I got very sick. The doctor told me I had appendicitis and needed an operation. Simple country girls didn't argue with doctors, so I found myself lying in a hospital bed with an IV dripping into my arm.

But that night, I had a life altering experience. My grandmother, a traditional herbalist, came to me in a dream.

In my dream, my grandmother showed me some herbs. She told me to leave the hospital and go home. She said to use the herbs she showed me to heal my condition.

In the morning, the doctor came to see me before my operation. I asked him to discharge me, because I wanted to go home and boil the herbs in my dream.

He told me I was crazy and refused to discharge me. But I insisted, and he eventually gave me a paper to sign, which he called my own "death warrant."

As the nurses unhooked my IV, they told me that I could go home... but if I died, they wouldn't be responsible. But I went home anyway.

I got the herbs and made a tea from them, just as my grandmother had told me in the dream. I drank the tea for three months, and got a little better every day. I never did have the operation. I just drank the herbal tea and I was healed.

After this experience, I felt an even stronger urge to go back to my roots. I also began to have dreams and visions about herbal healing. My dreams told me to go home to Portland, where I belonged. So I packed my few possessions and hitched a ride on a market truck headed into the mountainous valley.

When I returned to the valley, with its lush, green vegetation, I knew I was home. This was where I belonged. I felt inspired. I had a renewed appreciation for the healing power of plants... my ancestors... and all of Creation.

I was 28 then, and longed to feel even closer to my home. So I went deep into the mountains where the beauty lay. I built a hut there in the forest and stayed for three years.

During that time. I lived off the land. My appreciation for its beauty – and for the healing, nurturing power of its plants – grew greater day by day.

After 3 years, it was time to return to the village. Ever since – for more than 20 years – I have used traditional herbal remedies to heal people far and near.

So here I am, living in Cornwall Barracks, my childhood home. I tend an herb garden, with over 150 medicinal plants, amidst the spectacular and unspoiled beauty of the lush green mountains and valley.

We are blessed here with daily showers, abundant sunshine and soothing mountain breezes – making this one of the most fertile spots on the island. It is here that I work to keep Maroon tradition and culture alive by handing down my knowledge of these traditional healing herbs.

With this book, I hope to pass on that healing knowledge to future generations of the Maroon people. And to people all over the world.

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