

**Herbalry** by RONALD MERRY  
 by Ronald Merry



Whenever people foregather to discuss The Craft - the subject of herbs is eventually raised and much conjecture made. The dilettante seeks usually the aphrodisiac, the Wiccan the wisdom of bountiful Pan.

Simply because of the lack of true herbalists - who have always been around however - the lack caused by environmental patterns of change and ever man's search for the new; knowledge was hard to come by. Until a few years ago, recourse was to old herbals, family lore and superstition.

Along with the surging repugnance of man's environmental mistakes and the need for "new ways to the old ways" came a revival of interest, leading to a positive spread of herbals and the provision of herbs from sources other than the traditional suppliers for example the Health Food movement.

When Alex asked me to write this lecture, I was in a quandary - I had dabbled off and on with herbs since I was 12 years of age - dabbled with the word. Culminating with a positive example of the efficacy of the herbal cure and on Alex's prompting - I made a return to their study. The result is now before you - you must pardon me if I ramble, for the ways of herbs are devious - as is perhaps this epistle!

What I present is a list of herbs I know and use, with a touch upon the American 'peculiar', and invite you to play it from there.

You will find no poisons or 'Kicking' herbs listed. Both are poisonous - for you who would quarrel about 'kicking' drugs, I ask a simple question - when indulging in tripping, is the present and end object you, and therefore the truth? The truth is Wiccan and drugs are not the path to Wicca. Take them and be rejected by Zephyrus (work that one out)!!

Some of the herbs I offer to you will be found in old herbals as 'good against witches', there's a paradox! Quite simple! They were so good that having sought out a witches advice - the remedy was so efficacious as not to bring the sick one back for some time - if at all.

The remedies I give are all 'simple', i.e. the one herb itself is good enough for the ailments it cures or alleviates. There is naught to stop the use of a conjunction of herbs - but the balance of virtues must be struck, and this comes with experience. 'Simples' they were called in the olden times, and I prefer to use them this way. I will use concoctions, but only if I'm querulous of my diagnosis.

Magic as a term enters into the use of herbs but insofar as I know, cannot be taught in as short a lecture as this. No matter how much one reads anyway, still a form of magic or inspired intuition tells me what to prescribe.

My own method for what it is worth, is to question the needy, come down to a right number of herbs and then 'feel' for the sufferer and 'feel' for the herb or herbs. So far in the Covenstead and outside world my way succeeds more than it fails - in this I am greatly assisted by Alex's teaching. (He has also brought out other, latent healing qualities I possessed, and I thank him).

Above all must come the conviction that the magic is within the herb - placed there by the Goddess, for all herbs have a female aspect - use them as she wishes.

**Diagnosis.** In this limited space I cannot instruct you insofar as my own limited powers. A normal person can readily describe his symptoms and a simple knowledge of medicine plus intuition should suffice from this lecture. For I give no poisons and also give dosage. The eyes are the best sign for telling of illness followed by the state of the skin - thence by communication to the body area and then by some magic sympathy the remedy becomes possible.

When diagnosing women, it is important to divorce their monthly trial effects from the actual ills. Beware always of the person sick in mind, who gives himself psychosomatic illnesses; the cure for this lies better with greater teachers.

**Note:** This article was written by Ronald Merry on behalf of Alex's 'Basic Witchcraft Course' which later became known as the Alex Sanders Lectures.



In recent times has sprung up the theory that regular defaecation was the be all and end all, 'make 'em shit and that's it'. I would say scourging is better than purging. Lay off the shits!! Regularity of crapping is no sign at all. The secret of waste elimination - the nonsuch of which is the cause of most minor and major ills - is via the kidneys and watering system. Practically every herb will make you piss more and better. Let's change the motto, 'wherever you be - let your pee go free'. Certain healthy Englishmen and Germans have known this for years and have used for years a traditional herbal drink called BEER.

I feel a couple of questions in the air:-

The Occult Usage These have been listed by most great herbalists and others through the centuries from Aesculapius, Dioscorides, Galen through Culpeper and Gerard up to present day herbalists. Some I agree with - others I quarrel with; to me the magic is in the herb, but I would that Cheiron was with us, for he knew!! Two present day sources I would mention are W.B. Crow and Anthony Huxley (of Man, Myth and Magic).

Flying Ointment Yes .... which recipe will I not give. They were all poisonous in the main, and if used, were so utilised in a kinky fashion, and Alexandrians are not kinky. Neither were the true Wiccans; believe not certain propaganda and seek the truth. I can give some recipes, if required for knowledge - but consider this knowledge irrelevant to my subject.

How stand you with the other medics?

I shake hands with homeopaths for they acknowledge our sister craft, allopathics put me in a quandary. They despise in general herbalists, tolerate homeopaths, purely on account of our Royal family - yet use the herbal remedies of centuries with no acknowledgement. I accept that mankind advances, and gets hold of wonder drugs which in the main only suppress - herbs cure. Herbs redress the bodily balance and allow the body to heal itself, although I am not aloof to the use of suppressants to kill pain. I'd even allow antibiotics if speed is necessary, for herbal cures take time, as they have to redress the whole system. (As a digression on antibiotics - did you know that European and British peasants used cheese-mould?)

If I fell ill, then I would recourse to a member of The Society of Herbalists or a Homeopathic doctor first. If none around, then an allopath would have to suffice, but I would redress certain of his remedies when and as soon as able.

That's enough preamble; what follows is:-

- (a) The annotated herbs with, in some cases, the known dominion, for those interested.
- (b) How to use them.
- (c) A definition of herbs.
- (d) Bibliography and acknowledgements.
- (e) Where to obtain them.

Olive

(olea europea)

Part used

Oil. (Culinary, the fruit)

Dominion

belongs by tradition to Athene/Minerva.

Medicinal

Emollient, nutritive and aperient. The first pressing of virgin oil should be used for choice, it is green in tinge and more expensive. (Some oils are adulterated with Cotton Seed Oil. The real thing tastes of olives and is not a drying oil, the bastard oil will skin over if spread on a glass).

Good soaps are made from this oil - Castile by adding Sodium Hydroxide and Soft Soap by addition of Potassium Hydroxide. The former was used for pills and plasters, the latter for liniments, cleansing solutions and renal infections.

The oil is useful in bowel diseases generally and is better than Caster Oil as a laxative. It's a good remedy for habitual constipation, removes



internal worms and in large doses will relieve the body of biliary concretions.

Externally it forms part of embrocations, ointments etc., and can be used for rheumatic and cutaneous affections. When rubbed into the skin it is absorbed by the lymphatics and protects the mucous membranes against infection. It makes a good sun tan oil - preferably perfumed with lemon juice.

Inwardly it increases fat, loosens waste material, causes sugar to burn up and dissolves some forms of stone.

Culinary If you can afford it, it's the best oil to cook with or use in salad, for most (I prefer walnut oil).

Cosmetically Experiment!!

Dosage Medicinally, 1 teaspoon - 2 tablespoonfuls, depends upon how drastic the reason.

### Lily of the Valley

(Convallaria majolis)

Part used Flowers, leaves.

Dominion of Mercury.

Medicinal Cardiac, Tonic, Diuretic. Action very similar to digitalis (Foxglove - a poison) without the unpleasant disturbances. Emesis and purgation will ensue however, with a large dose. THEREFORE NO MORE THAN HALF A TEASPOONFUL OF FLOWERS AND/OR LEAVES. (If liquid extract 10-30 minims).

Culpeper said herb 'cools and moistens - a syrup doth control, rest and settle the brains of frantic persons, by cooling the head', and goes on to recommend its use for freckles, spots, sunburn etc.

It was also supposed to restore lost speech and elasticity.

The renowned perfume has a beneficial effect upon the nerves, although I know that it has funny effects upon some.

It is an ancient medicinal herb, and although I've said go easy others say herb is perfectly safe as normal tea preparation, but in this case flowers only are recommended. It is known that this herb does not accumulate in the blood as does digitalis.

Dosage Preferably of flowers  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon for normal tea brew in wineglassful doses.

Avens (Geum Urbanum)

Part used Whole herb

Dominion of Jupiter

Medicinal This is also Herb Bennet or Colewort. An astringent, styptic tonic, febrifuge and stomachic. Constant use of this one is highly effective in any weakness, or debility of the system. It's good for diarrhoea, sore throat and leucorrhoea. Reputed to break up congealed blood from falls etc. The juice has been used as a styptic for those allergic to alum in shaving cuts. It's tonic use was once utilised to add strength to some herbs.

History Nothing out of the way recorded, this is a herb of the people, so common in use it became an everyday herb.

Gardenwise Prefers shady damp ground, flowers yellow June to August. *Plant seeds in August or transplant plants. Try as an indoor plant.*

Valerian (Valeriana Officinalis)

Part used Rhizome

Dominion of Mercury

Medicinal Anodyne, antispasmodic, nervine. Used in all cases of nervous debility, hysteria, sleeplessness. Good for nerves, without inducing a narcotic effect. It is similar in action to Skullcap but is reckoned *a better* than this for action on the sensory nerves. Hence it is better for irritable *nervous* conditions.



If flatulence is combined with the nervous symptoms use valerian. It should not, however, be used for a long cure as some bodies nervous systems can become over-used to it.

Dosage 1 teaspoon to 1 cup of cold water - steep overnight - drink before sleep.

History Valued highly by the Nordic races and is mentioned as far back as Hippocrates in its usage, and occurs in Saxon herbals of the eleventh century. The name Valerian comes from 'Valere'. The smell of it once led to its use as a spice now forgotten, but the same smell has a fantastic fascination for cats and earthworms and rats. Funnily enough, in the right strength it's reputed to attract women. Burnt as an incense it can have a certain effect upon certain people.

Gardenwise By seed or root division. The seeds germination rate however, is only about 50/50 and sowed on the surface as they need light to germinate. Likes a slightly dampish soil.

Afterthought One can make the usual tea - 1 teaspoon to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint boiling water, also with good effect, but the cold steeping method is reckoned better than this.

Rosemary

(Rosmarinus Officinalis)

Part used all above ground

Dominion of the Sun

Medicinal Tonic, astringent, diaphoretic and nervine. Contains calcium, tannins and volatile oil. Good for weak digestion, wind, nerve pains, stimulating the circulation and increases blood supply. It is a proven heart tonic which is not drastic. Use for treatment of high blood pressure, headaches and all nervous ailments. For all female ills, impure blood, gastritis, bad liver and obesity.

Externally on wounds of all kinds, for bites or stings, as a wash for dandruff or insecticide.

I must stress its use as a nervine - it's been found good against migraine even. It is also supposed to be good for restoring the memory.

History All round the Mediterranean you will find its story - it is nothing to do with roses - its name means 'dew of the sea'. Crusaders learned it from the Saracens and hence its introduction into Britain where it flourishes. Shakespeare of course knew it, 'there's Rosemary for Remembrance'. On this topic Greek students were known to twine garlands of Rosemary in their hair to aid memory and stimulate their minds.

Culinary Use in soups, marinades, for fish, you name it and Rosemary has a use. I put slivers under the skin of lamb when roasting, for example, and our lamb is remarked upon ad lib. It can even be used freshly chopped to flavour jams and sweetmeats.

Cosmetic The tea may be used as a hair lotion or the obtainable oil rubbed into the scalp. The same tea lotion or oil can be used upon spots and sores. I constantly find other uses for the herb, and currently experiment with it as an aftershave.

Dosage Medicinal 1 teaspoonful for usual brew with  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint water. Chew **chew** fresh leaves in place of above, they will maybe help you to stop smoking if **smoking if** you smoke.

Gardenwise Seeds, cuttings or divisions in slightly sandy soil, **sandy soil** sheltered with southern aspect. Susceptible to frost and winds.

This is my own herb along with eyebright. I could extol its virtues for ever, but time is ever passing. Grow Rosemary and you grow good.

Vervain

(Verbena Officinalis)

Part used Flowers, leaves and stalks.

Verbena Officinalis

Dominion of Venus.



MedicinalMedicinal

Nervine, tonic, emetic, produces copious perspiration. Gerard says 'many old wives fables are written of Vervain leading to witchery and sorcery'. Maybe the old wives were right if the sorcery of the Wiccans was used to heal.

It can be used to good advantage in early stages of colds, fevers, nervous disorders, certain types of fits and palsies. The herbalist Joseph Miller says that it is good for Jaundice, Gout, Liver and Spleen and being a good headache reliever was therefore good against diseases of cold and phlegmatic causes. Also, outwardly good for sores, inflamed eyes. Both Pliny and Dioscorides say that 'water in which the herb has been steeped if sprinkled in a room will make the guests merrier'. This is oft quoted of *Verberna Officinalis*, I say it applies to *Lippia Citriodora* or Lemon-scented *Verberna* which has little medical use but is useful in perfumery. Basically, Vervain is best used as a nerve tonic - this does not preclude its other uses, especially fever reducing. I have used it to good extreme effect in prescribing it for insomnia and nervous exhaustion, and effectively in headaches. It contains tannins, saponine, mucilage, glycoside verbernaline, along with a mysterious bitter substance.

Dosage 1 teaspoon dried herb or 2 heaped teaspoons of fresh herb to half-pint boiling water, brew for 5 minutes, strain and drink neat or with honey. (If obtaining dried, make sure it is from a good herbalist as if not dried carefully, the glycoside may fade out).

History Considered as sacred as Mistletoe by the Druids and was once called 'herba veneris' through its reputed aphrodisiacal properties, which more than likely meant no more than destroying 'first night nerves' and allowing restfulness between assaults. Perhaps its use as a body and eyewash stems from here. But the body wash would refer better to 'Lippia Citriodora'. The London Pharmacopoeia of 1937 recommended the hanging of Vervain around the neck to dispell dreams.

Gardenwise Readily grows from seed in Spring or from cuttings of non-flowered shoots, by division of root stock also. It requires a rich soil and sunny sheltered position. It forms an attractive plant. No good for apartment dwellers, it is scentless and grows sometimes to 2½ feet high and spreads as much.

Eyebright

(Euphrasia Officinalis)

Dominion

of Sun and Leo

Medicinal

Reputed good for memory, but main use was for an eyewash to remedy disease and weakness of eyes such as ophthalmia etc. Parkinson inferred that if only we 'turned it up with our strong beere' it would help dimness of sight. (Anything at present would improve some English beer, it's so watery that the continual "running" weakens the eyes - hence the increase in bespectacled Englishmen).

Further to this, my own research into this tiny herb (which I can only get dried and have searched years to find some to grow) leads me to offer it as a specific relief for sinus and catarrhal conditions of the head.

Dosage One teaspoonful of dried herb to ½ pint of boiling water, brew covered for 15 minutes and then strain and drink, night and morning for preference. The same tea of course can be used as eyewash but make sure every piece is strained off from liquid.

History Named after the linnet by the Greeks, this bird telling man of its purpose according to legend. The Saxons knew of its use, and their soothsayers seem to have 'tripped' on it, although it's so innocuous I can't believe this use. Reputedly used by Archangel Michael.

Gardenwise

With its brilliant blue flowers, an exquisite and lovely plant about 4 inches high can be grown as a lawn edge or better in a rockery, as the plant is a parasite. Grow by root division - hard to find though.

Having given a rather random selection, perhaps I should give a few words on herbs which are regarded as American.



Some of these, obviously, are well known in England, and the two-way traffic in herbs will, I hope, continue for aye.

On most of these I can give no domination, for insofar as I am aware, no American herbalist has performed this task - I remain open to correction however.

Skullcap (Scutellaria Interifolia)  
Part used Flower, leaves, stalks  
Dominion of Mercury  
Medicinal Tonic, nervine, spasm reducing and astringent. One of the finest nervines found and can be used for all nervous disorders. Reckoned a specific for St. Vitus' dance and hydrophobia. It should be considered for use in all fear states, mental confusion and lack of concentration. Can be tried in migraine. It is said to strengthen the heart and is therefore good for cardiac irritability.

Dosage 1 rounded teaspoon to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint boiling water, i.e. normal tea. Or brew one pint and take in wineglass doses where nervousness is continuous. No harmful effects whatsoever follow its use.

History Called Skullcap or Scullcap because its blossoms resembled a human skull. Its other names of Mad-dog Weed or Madweed come from its use in hydrophobia and St. Vitus' dance. The blue flowers gave the clue under 'the doctrine of signatures' to its use for brain and nerves. Blue flowers contain potassium and phosphorus in quantity which are brain and nerve minerals - who says there is no magic in herbs. Blue was regarded as a sedating colour.

Gardenwise Grows about 1 foot high with blue flowers in July and August in most soils from seed or root division. Plant is endemic to U.S.A. so should grow well. One of your names for it is Quaker Bonnet.

Slippery Elm (Ulmus Fulva)

Part used Inner Bark  
Dominion No dominion given - English Elm is Saturn's prerogative and this is similar genus.

Medicinal Diuretic, emollient, demulcant, pectoral. A most valuable medicine from nature. Can be used in all cases of weakness, inflammation of the stomach, chest, kidneys etc. Its soothing action helps any part it touches and as a food it is better than porridge. It's use as a poultice is renowned, boils, ulcers, skin eruptions, chilblains, etc., are healed rapidly by its use. Some reports say that duodenal ulceration can be cured by this preparation alone.

This is the greatest blessing to have come to us from the U.S.A. and the dosage is quoted upon every tin or packet. Combined with other remedial herbs it aids their action, sometimes speeding recovery even more.

Bugleweed (Lycopus virginicus)

Otherwise Sweet or Water Bugle, Gipsywart.

Part used all, apart from roots.

Medicinal Sedative, astringent, and mildly narcotic. Used in coughs. 1 teaspoonful of dried herb to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of water as tea in frequent wineglassful doses.

Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana)

Otherwise Spotted Alder

Part used Bark, leaves.

Medicinal If you don't know this one, give up the course. One of the best astringents, tonics and sedatives known. For internal and external bleedings and piles, bruises, sprains and strains and varicose veins. Can be taken internally in Tincture form, 30-60 minims.



Lady's Slipper

(Cypripedium Pubescens)

Otherwise

American Valerian, Nerveroot

Part used

Rhizome

Medicinal

Antispasmodic, nervine, tonic. Soothes pain, brings sleep, good for headaches, female frailities, neuralgia. In particular those of the above with connected hysterical tendencies. It tastes bitterly acrid and should be taken in honey water.

Dosage

Powdered root 1 drachm to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint water, as is the liquid extract.

Supposed aphrodisiac for females, reason being it calmed down hysteria of cerebral excitement at what was happening and made a relaxed lady. Not necessary in the permissive society.

Cayenne(Capsicum minimum  
Capsicum frutescens)Otherwise

African, Guinea, Birch Pepper, Chillies, Blume, Red Pepper.

Part used

Fruit

(Part of the potato family, believe it or not)

Medicinal

Stimulant, tonic, wind breaking, causes counter-inflammation in homeopathic manner. The most true stimulant in herbalry. It gives natural warmth and adjusts circulation. Colds can be cured by 2 grains of Capsicum Powder in warm water, taken at onset. So many things contain this in herbal remedies that all I can say is the English phrase 'you pays your money and takes your choice'. It forms part of most composition powders and essences.

Alex and I know of an aphrodisiacal use for this - which we will reveal upon request.



from the original source documents  
(c) 2006 Ordine Scatere Stellae