

Herbal Expressions

Herbalist Association of Nova Scotia (HANS) Spring 2007 Newsletter

Plant Circles

by *Natasha Paul*

During the visioning circle held in December last year, HANS members identified seasonal herb circles as an important means of sharing knowledge about herbs and their uses. At these gatherings participants are invited to bring information about or samples of their favourite herbs. On February 6th members joined for the first 2007 gathering, the Beating the Winter Blues Plant Circle. Uplifting herbs were shared, brewed and discussed. *Hypericum perforatum*, commonly known as St. John's wort, was noted for its uplifting affects, use for treating Seasonal Affect Disorder (SAD) and analgesic properties. A tincture can be made from the herbs flowering tops. St. John's wort can also be combined with cayenne and ginger in a salve or ointment to relieve muscle strain. Apparently St. John's wort tempers the sting or burn of the cayenne. Lemon balm and mint infusions or essential oils were also mentioned as refreshing remedies helping one break through the lethargic fog of winter. Chocolate unsurprisingly made the forum and all agreed that chocolate was a delightful comfort bringing joy anytime. The gathering was brought to a close with warm cups of *Withania somnifera* (also known by it's common name – ashwaganda) root tea. Ashwaganda has adaptogenic properties which helps ease the stress and strain of hectic lifestyles. The root can be bought as a whole root or root powder and is made as a decoction with honey and soy/milk. Noted for its sedating effects, the tea was mentioned as a warm night-time favourite.

Early Spring Medicine ~ Coltsfoot – *Tussilago farfara*

by *Savayda Jarone*

One of the earliest flowers of springtime, a common weed found in abundance in most waste places. Each spring I am first greeted by coltsfoot growing out of the cement foundation of my neighbor's house. It is often mistaken for dandelions, but upon close examination their differences are clear. Unlike most flowering plants, coltsfoot produces flowers before leaves. The flowers are shaped like a wheel and are bright yellow. The stems are scaly. The leaves are almost round, paler underneath and covered in a soft downy mesh. The flowers are harvested in early spring and the leaves in late spring.

The name comes from *tussis* (a cough) and *ago* (to banish) – it is a prime lung remedy. It is especially useful for non-productive coughs. It is soothing to dry airways due to its mucilage content. It is an expectorant and anti-spasmodic. It was used in smoking mixtures to treat asthma. It is a traditional springtime remedy used for clearing the excess accumulation of respiratory fluids from damp winter. As a compress, it is a topical wound healer and anti-inflammatory.

Prepared as either a hot or cold infusion, it makes a thick, mucilaginous brew. A tincture can also be made at 1:5 25%. A syrup can be made from the flowers.

There has been controversy over coltsfoot's safety and that of other pyrrolizidine alkaloid (PA) containing plants such as comfrey and borage. Animal experiments have shown PA to be a liver toxin. As is often the case, there are contradictory findings. Coltsfoot has been used medicinally for centuries and herbalists continue to use this powerful herb with awareness, in therapeutic doses, for short periods of time. It is a remedy, not a tonic.

This herb has been used for centuries – its use has been recorded by ancient herbalists such as Dioscorides, Pliny and Culpepper. In former times, a replica of the flower was found above the door of French pharmacies as a symbol of the effectiveness of their medicines.

It can be used as a visionary ally, for love/heart alliance, and spiritual alignment.

As soon as the last snow melts, or around late March, be on the lookout for the sunny yellow blooms of this powerful medicinal weed.

Interview with Jeanette Poirier

by *Shirlie Williamson*

Jeanette Poirier is a Medical Herbalist. She has had an "official" practice in Upper Vaughan for the past three years but has been helping people with herbs for over 12 years. Jeanette has always been interested in plants - she has been gardening since she was 11 and is an amateur botanist – she has always loved tramping through woods and fields with her Field Guide and identifying plants. However, she did not always believe in the healing power of herbs – she figured that if herbs were that good, they would have had a place in traditional western medicine.

Then her husband became ill. He was diagnosed with hepatitis C, which led to cirrhosis of the liver and then liver cancer. He tried conventional treatments, but they were not working for him. He had been put on Interferon but had to stop because of the side effects. He was very sick and weak. He was bloated with fluid, had difficulty urinating, was full of toxins, delusional and could barely walk. One doctor told him he had 4 – 6 months to live.

Friends urged them to try herbal medicine and, as a last resort, she decided to find out more about it. Her daughter was living in Vancouver and knew a doctor turned herbalist, Dr. Philip Chambers. He gave them guidance regarding dietary changes and herbs. She also met with an herbalist in a health food store who gave her guidance. She started doing research – learning more about the digestive system – finding out more about the herbs. She bought her first herbal book, [The Way of Herbs](#) by Michael Tierra, and she started growing and wild crafting some of the herbs she learned about.

She started him on a mostly vegetarian diet and herbs for the liver (milk thistle and a lot of bitters) to help reduce toxins and he started getting better. He got very well for a while. He was able to help her in the garden, even digging up rocks and carrying them away. Initially, they had found 4 small tumours on his liver. Three stopped growing, but one continued to grow and unfortunately, 3½ years later he lost his fight. The improvement in his health during that time was so dramatic that Jeanette became sold on herbal medicine.

People started coming to her – friends and acquaintances – asking for her help with serious health problems. Her husband was a salesman, and told everyone he talked to how she was helping him. People started asking her what herbs they should take and she knew she didn't have the knowledge to help them. She gave them dietary advice and shared what she knew about herbs. This kindled an old dream she had of being a doctor. She decided to go into alternative medicine. She first thought about naturopathy but she has always loved plants, she was connected with plants and she wanted to maintain her relationship with plants.

About 2 years after her husband passed away, she moved to Vancouver to help her son and his wife with their new baby, her first grandchild. She attended Dominion Herb College in Burnaby and took the first 2 years of her degree there. She moved back to Nova Scotia and did the final 2 years of the degree with Dominion Herb College through distance education.

Jeanette did her thesis on herbal and nutritional treatment of Autism. At 18 months, her grandson was diagnosed with mild Autism. He would sit in a corner and read to himself. He knew all his colours and letters. But he wouldn't speak or make eye contact with anyone. She had been giving him flax seed oil because he was born with eye problems and couldn't see very well. This didn't help much so when he was 2 years

old, she switched to a mixture of fish oil and other essential fatty acids and within 2 weeks he started talking. Within a few weeks he had 50 words. Almost all autistic children have gut issues. She gave him yoghurt every day and a mostly Mediterranean diet. She made salads of cooked veggies dressed with raw garlic and lemon juice which he loved. He ate copious quantities of raw garlic and lemon juice in this way which helped knock out the pathogens in his gut.

Jeanette has a herbal medicine practice in Upper Vaughan (which is on the #14 Highway between Windsor and Chester). She has a fully stocked dispensary. Most of her tinctures are manufactured by others – made with organic grain alcohol and biodynamically grown herbs. Most of her tea blends, creams and oils are made by her from organic herbs she grows herself or wild crafts.

She and another herbalist, Michele Haddal, organize herb walks and workshops during the summer months. Jeanette has spoken about herbal medicine at Garden Clubs, at Mount St. Vincent University, at Acadia University, and other places.

Jeanette was one of the founding members of the Herbalist Association of Nova Scotia and was on the Board of Directors of HANS for 3 years. She is a member of the Politics and Standards Committee of HANS.

What is your favourite herb? It's a tie - lemon balm and hawthorn.

What is your favourite kind of medicine to make (tinctures/vinegars/creams/etc.)? – I like making tea blends – different combinations. I get inspired or need something and come up with a great blend. For instance a friend was over at my house and was very distressed – man problems. So I went to my cupboard and made up a mixture of herbs for the heart and herbs for the nervous system. She fell asleep after drinking the tea. Then a distraught teenager asked me for help and I thought maybe that same blend would help her. Her mother called up a few days later to thank me for giving her daughter back. The blend has become very popular – I call it Heart and Mind Tea.

What is your favourite herb book? – Bertram's [Encyclopaedia of Herbal Medicine](#).

Where do you get your herbal seeds? – Most of my herbs are perennials which I started many years ago. But if I need seeds I usually get them from Richter's.

What is your vision of the future of the herbal medicines in our world? - I would like to see medical herbalists being recognized as valid practitioners. I'd like people to recognize they will get superior treatment from medical herbalists. I'd like to see medicinal herbs becoming part of what ordinary people do at home to look after themselves and their health. People becoming more in harmony with nature by developing a relationship with plants as part of good health. People

following the wise woman tradition - where we don't merely substitute herbs for drugs, but instead recognize our place in nature and that we are part of that fabric, the web of life, and not separate from that and that we respect animals, plants, everything that's out there and see ourselves as part of that web. The plants are our allies – they provide us with food, tools, clothing and medicine. They are also food for our souls and spirits with their beauty and energy. I hope that more and more people will come to awareness of their awesomeness. I believe that we herbalists and “plant people” need to pass on what we know. We need to share it with others any time someone is ready to listen.

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future... Earth Charter

by Michele Graveline

It is common knowledge that we have much to be concerned about when it comes to human's destructive ways affecting the natural world. Contemporary environmental educators are recognizing that if we want to see any real progress toward healing our ecological wounds, there must be some serious transformation in the way people think, feel and behave towards the natural world. I share the opinion with many educators in this field that educational efforts need to be more holistically based, touching people deeper than just providing the scientific facts. Moreover, since we cannot wait 30 years for the next generation to make these changes, people of all ages need to be re-introduced to the natural world and the reality that we are actually part of it, that we are indeed within the web. Certainly there are many avenues one could find when seeking to be reminded or re-introduced to their ecological surroundings. However, drawing on Herbalism, it seems clear to me, that it truly is one of the most natural environmental educators owing to its holistic nature and the fact that it is of the earth.

Holism in humans, refers to the interactive summation of the mind, spirit, emotion and body. For anyone that has walked a herbal path for any length of time, you know how each of the attributes of your whole self have been affected by the use of these wonderful earth medicines. Granted the most common understanding is how it affects the body, how it may heal a wound, an inflammation or a trouble in a system. However, what about those times, when after a long emotionally draining day, you sip a lovely cup of chamomile tea? Can you recall how your spirits lifted as you spent time interacting with live plants? Mentally, herbal medicine can affect us in so many different ways, from relying on a herb to clear the mind after an exhausting mental activity to learning of them.

Regardless of the method of use, it is herbalist's uniqueness that the plants are used in whole form thus creating a profoundly organic experience. It is this lesson that herbal

medicine gives us; through the use, practice and interaction with them, we are able to walk in the reality, that we are part of the natural world. It is a time when we interact with something from the natural world with positive results. In these times, our environment is a place the majority would just as soon not be inconvenienced by and so regards in brutally negative ways. Therefore, for those of you that have been relying on the herbal way of life for some time, it surely has become part of your own natural way, and so when you cross paths with others just learning, encouragement is such a blessing for both of you, for the plants and for the earth.

This, as a budding environmental educator, is my plea to herbalists young and old, that you recognize the simplicity of how herbs serve to remind us of our belongingness within the natural world. With spring upon us, it is such a joyous time to head outdoors in search of those plants emerging from the warming soil or to relish the simple magic of a cup of steeped tea while enjoying the offerings of the spring air. It is a time to remember that as we engage in these activities, as we encourage others to take up the lifestyle, we are encouraging a remembrance of our actual place within our natural environment. Herbalism is environmental education in a most beautiful simplistic form, as it provides opportunity to engage in a holistic experience with our ecological surroundings. Let us as herbalists and herb enthusiasts spread the word, let us share the reality of what role plant medicines can do for ourselves and our relationship with the natural world.

Trees

by Michele Graveline

Poem by Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

With spring arriving, take the time to locate a tree and begin a yearlong journey with it. Whether it is nearby or further away, try to visit it regularly and make note of the subtle changes

that happen throughout the seasons. Notice the buds that began in the autumn, now begin to burst as the weather warms. What changes take place as the first spring rains wash the tree of its winter coat? Look at the changing colours of leaves (needles) from spring to summer to autumn, feel the texture of them. Do any stay on in the winter? Touch the bark; is it smooth or deeply furrowed? Does it remind you of anything? Remember our reciprocal breathing relationship with trees. Try drawing the tree, writing a poem, saying hello, having a conversation or just sit with it. Find your own way to interact with this glorious being. In the end you will have given a tree your attention for one year. Not much really considering all they give us.

Herbs around the World

by *Akhtar Abbasi*

(courtesy 'A history of the Principal drugs of vegetable origin in British India' by William Dymock, published in 1890)

Latin Name: - *Myrtus communis*

English: - Myrtle

Indian: - Vilayati – mehndi

Arabic: - Aas

Growing regions: - Europe, China, and North Western areas of India & Pakistan.

Before pepper was known myrtle berries were employed as spice to season food, and wine was flavoured with them.

The myrtle occupies a prominent place in writings of Hippocrates, Pliny, Dioscorides, Galen and the Arabian writers. According to Pliny following is the summary: - The berries arrest haemoptoe, are used in dysentery, an application to indolent ulcers & inflamed eyes, in wine as antidote to mushroom poisoning, cures scorpion bite, bladder inflammation, headaches, abscesses, aphthaea, leucorrhoea & other mucous discharges. Juice is diuretic but constipates. Ointment made with it cures skin eruptions + darkens the hair. Dried leaf powder arrest sweats, in fomentations check white flux, corrects prolapsus of womb & rectum, cures ulcers, burns, erysipleas, otorrhoea, alopecia, arrests haemorrhage, application to lentigo, pterygion, panaris, condylomata, & swelled testicles. A wine made from berries was used for most of these purposes and was regarded as a tonic.

Subsequent ancient writers following Galen, ascribe to myrtle the opposite qualities of cold & hot or astringent and stimulant, the former residing in leaves, the later in berries.

In 1876 Delieux de Savignac recommended diluted tincture of leaves as astringent lotion. He used powder in doses of 1 to 4 grams internally in chronic catarrh of bladder & in menorrhagia & infusion in chronic bronchitis.

Of late years volatile of myrtle leaves is used externally as antiseptic & rubefacient. Fragrant water distilled from flowers & leaves is known as Eau d' ange in France.

Traditional Pakistan Recepties

by *Yasmin Akhtar*

1. Chapli kabab:

Ingredients

1/2 kg minced meat
1 tsp salt
2 tbsp ginger-garlic paste
2 tsp red chilli powder
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp all spice powder
1 tbsp anar dana
1 tbsp coriander seeds
4 tbsp tomatoes thinly chopped
4 tbsp spring onions thinly chopped
2 eggs
1 tbsp corn flour
Oil for frying

Method

Marinate minced meat in a bowl with all the spices for at least two hours. Add tomatoes, green onions, eggs, corn flour and mix well. Now take approximately one and a half tablespoon of the minced mixture in your hand. Place it in the centre of the palm. Roll it to form a smooth ball. Flatten the ball by pressing firmly between your palms. These kebabs are a little bigger in size than the usual ones. Heat oil in a frying pan and fry well. Serve the spicy chapli kababs with lemon, onion rings and salad.

2. Chicken Jalfarezi

Ingredients

Boneless chicken pieces 2 1/2 lbs
onion large 1 chopped
garlic cloves 4 peeled & chopped
ginger 1" chopped
cooking oil 6 tbsp
Turmeric powder 1 tsp
corriander powder 2 tbsp
cumin powder 2 1/2 tsp
Chilli powder 1 tsp
Tomatoes 1 small can or 2 fresh medium size cut
Salt 1 1/4 tsp or to taste
Water 4 cups
Garam masala powder 1 tsp
Corriander leaves fresh or dried (2 tsp)

Method

Wash chicken & remove water fully. Place onion, garlic & ginger in blender to make a paste. In frying pan heat oil over medium heat and add the paste. Stir fry for 6 min. Add turmeric powder, coriander powder, cumin powder & chili powder, adjust heat to low, fry for 5 min stirring frequently. Add half tomatoes stir & cook for 3 min. Now add chicken, stir & cook until chicken changes colour (6 - 8 min). Add balance tomatoes. Add salt & water, bring to boil, cover & simmer until chicken is tender. Stir occasionally so the sauce does not stick to bottom. Add green chillies, garam masala & coriander leaves simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off heat & is ready to eat.

By the Sun and the Moon

by Lynn Marie Mattie

At this time of year we become especially aware of the seasons. The transition from winter to spring brings about a personal thawing in each of us as we awaken in synchronicity with the earth. This is the astrological New Year. Spring begins on the Spring Equinox, when the sun changes from Pisces to Aries. This year it takes place on March 20th.

Aries (March 20th – April 19th) is the fire that’s gets us moving so that we can leave behind the rest-fullness of winter. Aries is also the energetic energy of new beginnings and planting seeds. Although, in our climate, we are sometimes limited to what seeds we can get started indoors. We can maximize this drive by planting spiritual seeds or ideas, or planning our gardens for the year.

As the sun moves into Taurus (April 20th - May 20th), we begin to work with the earth and soil. The melt and the rain help to loosen up the ground to prepare it for planting and for roots growing down. It’s time to till/work the soil. We become more aware of our own earth energy, our bodies, and it’s a great time to get back to eating healthy and going for walks. Don’t be afraid to get your boots full of mud.

When the sun is in the air sign Gemini (May 21st – June 21st) our minds blossom, bringing us inspiration, imagination and ideas. As daylight hours expand, it’s time to take advantage of the warm weather and spend as much time as we can outdoors. Open your senses to nature. Hear the birds sing. Feel the sun on your face, the breeze in your hair, and the earth beneath your feet. Let your spirits soar!

Don’t miss these powerful days...

- March 3rd Lunar Eclipse in Virgo
- March 18th New Moon in Pisces
- Solar Eclipse
- March 20th Sun enters Aries
- Spring Equinox – Ostara
- April 2nd Full Moon in Libra

- April 17th New Moon in Aries
- April 20th Sun enters Taurus
- April 30th Beltane, Moon in Scorpio
- May 1st May Day
- May 2nd Full moon in Scorpio
- May 16th New Moon in Taurus
- May 21st Sun enters Gemini
- May 31st Full Moon in Sagittarius - Blue Moon (the second of two full moons in one month)
- June 14th New Moon in Gemini
- June 21st Sun enters Cancer
- Summer Solstice – Midsummer
- June 30th Full Moon in Capricorn

See the following table for lunar (moon) data. It is taken from ‘Guided by the Moon: Living in Harmony with the Lunar Cycles’ by Johanna Paungger and Thomas Poppe, 1996. This is a brilliant book that I use often in my moon study. I will be using this information for my garden this year and also their suggestion to use the moon in fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) for fruit, the moon in earth signs (Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn) for root, the moon in air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) for flower, and the moon in water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) for leaf. Enjoy.

	April			May			June		
S	1	Vir	T	1	Lib	F	1	Sag	
M	2	Lib	W	2	Sco	S	2	Sag	
T	3	Lib	T	3	Sco	S	3	Cap	
W	4	Lib	F	4	Sag	M	4	Cap	
T	5	Sco	S	5	Sag	T	5	Cap	
F	6	Sco	S	6	Sag	W	6	Aqu	
S	7	Sag	M	7	Cap	T	7	Aqu	
S	8	Sag	T	8	Cap	F	8	Pis	
M	9	Sag	W	9	Aqu	S	9	Pis	
T	10	Cap	T	10	Aqu	S	10	Ari	
W	11	Cap	F	11	Aqu	M	11	Ari	
T	12	Aqu	S	12	Pis	T	12	Tau	
F	13	Aqu	S	13	Pis	W	13	Tau	
S	14	Pis	M	14	Ari	T	14	Gem	
S	15	Pis	T	15	Ari	F	15	Gem	
M	16	Ari	W	16	Tau	S	16	Can	
T	17	Ari	T	17	Tau	S	17	Can	
W	18	Tau	F	18	Gem	M	18	Leo	
T	19	Tau	S	19	Gem	T	19	Leo	
F	20	Gem	S	20	Can	W	20	Leo	
S	21	Gem	M	21	Can	T	21	Vir	
S	22	Can	T	22	Leo	F	22	Vir	
M	23	Can	W	23	Leo	S	23	Lib	
T	24	Can	T	24	Vir	S	24	Lib	
W	25	Leo	F	25	Vir	M	25	Lib	
T	26	Leo	S	26	Vir	T	26	Sco	
F	27	Vir	S	27	Lib	W	27	Sco	
S	28	Vir	M	28	Lib	T	28	Sag	
S	29	Lib	T	29	Sco	F	29	Sag	
M	30	Lib	W	30	Sco	S	30	Cap	
			T	31	Sco				

Where to Find Herbal Information on the Web

by Shirlie Williamson

Isla Burgess' site	http://www.herbcollege.com
Christopher Hobbs' site	http://www.christopherhobbs.com
Susun Weed's site	http://www.susunweed.com
Culpeper, Nicholas, 1616-1654.	
Good historical source.	http://www.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm
A Modern Herbal, by Mrs. M. Grieve (first published in 1931)	
Good historical source.	http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/mgmh.html
Information from different sources - scientific, Chinese, Aurvedic, Folklore, etc., with a good bibliography.	http://www.wildrosecollege.com
Magical uses of herbs.	http://spell.obsidianstar.net
David Hoffman	http://www.healthy.net/scr/center.asp?centerid=24
Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Database by James Duke, author of the Green Pharmacy	http://www.ars-grin.gov/duke
Michael Moore	http://www.swsbm.com/homepage
A great source for herbal links	http://www.henriettesherbal.com
To find out more about specific diseases	http://www.merck.com/mmpe/index.html
David Winston	http://www.herbaltherapeutics.net/herbal_therapeutics_library.htm
A bunch of health-related books online, including The Green Pharmacy and Dr. Duke's Essential Herbs by Dr. James Duke and	http://www.mothenature.com/Library/bookshelf/index.cfm



Website: www.herbalns.org
E-mail: admin@herbalns.org

The HANS Events Committee is planning a fun filled year of herby gatherings. See you at the following:

Seedy Saturday – March 10th – 2:00 – 4:30 at the Captain William Spry Recreation Center in Spryfield

Spring Awakening Plant Circle – March 25th – 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at Lynn Marie's in Shubenacadie.
Call 902-758-3466 for directions..

Plant Sale – May 19th – 9:00 – 12:00 at Planet Organic, Quinpool Road, Halifax.

HANS 5th Annual Herb Fair – July 28th – 9:00 – 5:15 at McNab's Island.

HANS membership is \$25.00 a year (August 1st to July 31st). This is a great opportunity to meet with other herbal enthusiasts! Members are encouraged to join any of our four committees – Communications, Education/Events, Organizational Development and Politics/ Standards. For more information about membership or future listings, see our website www.herbalns.org or e-mail admin@herbalns.org