

Herbal Expressions

Herbalist Association of Nova Scotia (HANS) Autumn 2007 Newsletter

A Review of the 5th Annual Herb Fair

by Natasha Paul

HANS is proud to announce that its 5th Annual Herb Fair was heartily enjoyed by all the nature lovers in attendance. This year's event was held on July 28th on McNab's Island where a joyous group gathered to celebrate plants of all kinds across the island's green space. The day started with an opening circle and then flowed into a series of workshops and herb walks offered throughout the day. Participants were invited to bid on the silent auction and the day finished up with a closing circle and our traditional giveaway.

A wide range of workshops were offered to feed our curious minds. The workshop topics ranged from Plant Spirit talks presented by Laurie Lacey and Rita Baruss, *Alchemical Transformations of Addiction* by Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioner John Huzagh, *Herbal Therapeutics for the Epidemic of ADD/ADHA and Autism* by Medical Herbalist, Jeanette Poirier; *Healing Wise A Mothers' Herbal Blessing* by Lana Kim McGeary, BA, CCH; *Sprouting and Health* by Wanda Smith, RNCP and Roberta Evans and *Herbal First Aid* - medicine making by Shirlye Williamson and Natasha Paul. In addition, A *Serpent Wisdom* plant walk was hosted by Medical Herbalist Savayda Jarone and Maryse Thuot; a seaweed walk, by marine biology student, Peter Feige; and a plant identification walk by Akhtar Abbasi.

As our primary mission is to unite a community of earthy plant loving people and to promote awareness of herbs and their medicinal uses across Nova Scotia, HANS endeavors to host the Annual Herb Fair in various locations across the province. Stay tuned for next summer, as there is a rumour that Riverview Herbs has agreed to co-host the 6th Annual Herb Fair. We can't wait to see you there!

For "Bitter" or Worse"

By John Cummings

In this season's "Herbal Expressions," I would like to look at some ideas that resonate with me that are presented in James Green's "The Male Herbal" (The Crossing Press, Freedom, California, 1991).

In this wonderfully informative book, Green proposes the hypothesis that the predominant avoidance and lack of the daily bitter flavour experience in the North American diet is a subtle, primary cause of male and female sexual organ and immune system deficiencies. The argument he puts forth suggests that this lack of bitter flavour is a main factor in common imbalances such as PMS, other male and female sexual dysfunctions, hormonal imbalances, migraine headaches, indigestion, liver and gallbladder dysfunctions, abnormal metabolisms, hypoglycemia, diabetes, etc.

This hypothesis points out that the only bitter foods that Canadians and Americans include in their diet are coffee and chocolate, along with the hops in beer. Irony arises in the fact that with the first two, we usually highly sweeten them, and that bitter beers are rarely drunk in this beer guzzling culture of ours. Even among "green food" eaters, "salad" has lost its original meaning of a small daily serving of bitter greens taken before meals to stimulate appetite and digestion. Many of today's salads consist of watery, tasteless hybrid lettuces which are topped with sweet or tangy, sugar laden dressings and are no longer bitter at all! There is hope however, in the fact that in today's fancy and upscale restaurants it seems to be "de rigueur" to eat bitter (re *gourmet greens*) greens, a trend that will perhaps catch on to the larger population.

One aspect of bitter herbs and foods that seems to be widely understood is the need to taste the bitter flavour, not to simply ingest it. The bitter taste associated with many herbs is the basis for using them to stimulate digestion. When a bitter substance hits your tongue, taste buds tell the brain to signal the mouth to produce more saliva and the stomach to release more acid to help break down the food. Bitters also have a stimulating effect on the pancreas that regulates blood sugar and encourages an increase of digestive enzymes. This bitter action also appears to help the intestinal walls repair any damage by stimulating their self-repair mechanism. Bitter also aids the liver to perform its detoxifying function, and stimulates bile flow which assists proper bowel function (Green, 43). There is also some suggestion that bitter flavours have an anti-depressant psychological effect along with a grounding effect on our consciousness.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has identified bitter as one of the five main tastes along with salty, sour, sweet and pungent. In TCM, bitter taste is often associated with conditions that exhibit a “damp heat” which are often digestion and liver problems. The heart is the organ that is associated with bitter in TCM, which is believed to “house the spirit” and “rule over mental faculties.” Bitter remedies are also said to “tone the psyche.”

Green concludes that it is nutritionally important and enjoyable for us to re-establish an appreciation for bitter flavours which, in turn, he argues, would diminish our addiction to salty and sweet flavours, which has led to high rates of obesity in our culture. He asserts that our North American collective habit of a lifetime of avoiding bitter flavoured herbs and food has created a chronic dysfunction in our organs of digestion, assimilation and excretion, thereby creating secondary hormone imbalances. As a result, menstrual pain has become the norm, as are prostate problems for most males in later years.

It is suggested that to curb one's craving for sweets, when the urge occurs, simply drop a few drops of a bitter herb or tincture on the tongue and simply observe the diminishing effect it has on the sweet craving! Diabetics, pregnant woman and those with gastric ulcers should avoid strong bitters until they have consulted with a skilled practitioner due to the potential of contraindications.

Common bitter foods include young Dandelion greens, Cress, Endives, Wild Lettuce and Beet greens. Common bitter herbs are Mugwort, Blessed Thistle, Barberry, Dandelion Leaf, Yarrow, Chamomile, Hops, Yellow Dock, Wormwood and Gentian. As a practical aside, as any good bartender can tell you, a squirt or two of Angostura Bitters with a little water gives relief to hangovers by stimulating the flow of internal juices and enabling a quick detoxification, preparing oneself for another night of merriment!

A Review of the Women's Herbal Conference

by Lorie-Ann Martin (Cheendana)

I was well steeped in the infusion of 550 herbal women who gathered in New Hampshire for the Women's Herbal Conference in August. It was a fantastic gathering with something for everybody with high quality workshops and awesome teachers, excellent food, lots of singing and chanting, drumming and celebration. I loved that there were many mothers with their infants and many young children (and a sweet kids program too). There was also a notable group of teen women, learning about herbals, their bodies and ceremony. There were also a beautiful handful of elders, many whom have been going to this gathering for many years. This was the 20th anniversary of WHC and I met several mother/daughter duos who have been going to this gathering annually pretty much from the beginning.

This is a heads up for next August! The date for 2008 is August 22-24th with an early bird special of \$255 (regular fee is \$285) which includes camping, meals and workshops. What a wonderful way to celebrate yourself, the healing power of women and honouring the earth together. Truly an inspirational experience! I hope you can join in for next summers' event!

I would like to let you know that I do have the United Plant Savers slide show, both as slides and now I have the DVD. I am happy to lend or perhaps have an evening to watch it together. 902-538-3977 chee@somagardens.com

Interview with Wanda Smith

by Shirlie Williamson

Wanda Smith is a Holistic Nutritionist, teacher and student herbalist. She has also been a piano teacher for 20 years. She has 4 children and two grandchildren. She is also an active member of the Toastmaster's Club. Wanda and her husband have extensive gardens – growing a lot of different herbs and vegetables.

Wanda has a clinic in Fall River - Vital Essence where she helps her clients determine their health goals, and designs lifestyle plans to help them attain their goals. She is also teaching workshops at Planet Organic with Roberta Evans. The following workshops are presently scheduled:

Nov. 17 Wheatgrass/rejuvelac

Dec. 1 Healthy Holidays

They are planning to offer workshops in January on nutmilks and seaweed

Wanda became interested in working with herbs in 2004. She had just finished her certification as a holistic nutritionist with the Canadian School of Nutrition and was looking for further training in an area that would be complementary to her new career path. She found the six month summer herbalism course taught by Danette Steele. Wanda fell in love with herbs. She finished Danette's summer course and went on to take Danette's six month winter herbalism course in the fall/winter of 2004-2005.

Wanda's first encounter with the Herbalist Association of Nova Scotia was at the Herb Fair in July 2004. Early in 2005 Wanda joined HANS and then, in July 2005, Wanda joined the Board of Directors of HANS.

Wanda is presently enrolled in a 3 year Clinical Herbalist program with the International College of Herbal Medicine which is run by Isla Burgess, an herbalist from New Zealand who has taught several workshops in Nova Scotia..

What is your favourite herb? Rosemary. I cook with it and also make teas and tinctures with it.

What is your favourite kind of medicine to make (tinctures/vinegars/creams/etc.)? – I like to make tinctures and infusions. I have nettle infusions almost every day.

What is the first herb book you ever bought? David Hoffmann, *The Complete Illustrated Holistic Herbal*

What is your favourite herb book? Kerry Bone, *A Clinical Guide to Blending Liquid* and Rosemary Gladstar, *Herbal Healing for Women*

What is your vision of the future of the herbal medicines in our world? - I would like to see a school of herbalism started in Nova Scotia offering individual classes and a certification program. It would help to raise awareness of herbalism in this area.

Garlic

by Savayda Jarone

In my opinion, no vegetable or herb better symbolizes medicinal food than garlic.

It has long been a valued medicine worldwide. Garlic was one of the main ingredients in the famous Vinegar of the Four Thieves. In 1772, four grave robbers raiding plague victim's corpses were amazingly immune to the plague. Their secret was garlic and herb infused vinegar. To prevent infection they ingested it and breathed through cloths soaked with it. Pliny, of ancient Rome, advised garlic for more than sixty different health problems.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) comes in many varieties such as the hard neck, soft neck, rocamboles, purple stripes and porcelains. Our local farmers markets are a great place to find Nova Scotian grown garlic. Garlic is easy to grow and now is the time to plant garlic for harvesting next summer and fall. Start with a good quality, organic or unsprayed garlic bulb. A garlic bulb consists of several "cloves", which is the part we eat, and also the part that is planted. Individual cloves should be separated from the bulb no more than a few days before planting; better yet, do so just before planting. Plant the cloves about 2 ½ times their size deep, with the pointed tip facing up. Space them 6-8 inches apart in rows one foot apart. Some

gardeners recommend covering them for the winter with a layer of mulch, such as raked leaves.

This humble food has a long history of use for the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. It has over one hundred known compounds that work in combination to make it the valuable medicine that it is. It is a potent anti-biotic and immune stimulant and is useful for respiratory conditions, digestive disorders, cardiovascular disease, and cancer prevention. It is my first choice as an antibiotic; bacteria do not become resistant to its powers. Not only does it destroy bacteria, but it is also anti-viral, anti-fungal, and anti-parasitic. When traveling to foreign lands, eat plenty of it to prevent traveler's belly.

It is a prime cardiovascular remedy. It acts as a vasodilator and helps to reduce high blood pressure. It is an anti-coagulant and is highly effective at reducing cholesterol and plaque build up in the arteries.

As a respiratory remedy, it loosens up phlegm in the lungs. It is effective in the treatment of asthma, bronchitis, sinusitis, colds and seasonal allergies. An old time remedy for coughs in children is to crush garlic and rub it over the soles of their feet at bedtime. It is an excellent ear-ache remedy. In a double boiler, warm olive oil and crushed garlic for about five minutes. Strain and cool to room temperature. Put 3-5 drops in each ear at bedtime, and as needed.

In my experience, it works as well as, if not better than, over-the-counter medications for candida infections, both topically and systemically.

I recommend eating a single clove of raw garlic daily to prevent colds and flu. Cooking destroys most of its medicinal properties, so it is best added to prepared food after it has been served. I stir it into bean, pasta or grain dishes, or make a salad dressing with it for drizzling over raw and cooked vegetables. It can also be chopped and steeped in olive oil, honey, or cider vinegar, which extracts and preserves its medicinal properties. Crushing garlic ten minutes before consumption allows for its cancer-fighting allyl sulfur compound to become activated. The therapeutically active ingredients are the smelly ones, so deodorized garlic pills are basically useless.

“Wear your garlic breathe proudly” says Garlic Goddess Pat Reppert. Her website contains great garlic recipes. www.garlicgoddess.com

Savayda is a medical herbalist and educator and can be reached at 454-8481 or wildoats@ns.sympatico.ca

Garlic Recipes – Tasty Ways to Eat your Clove a Day

GARLIC HONEY

This recipe was provided by Isla Burgess, a Herbalist from New Zealand, who has taught many workshops in Halifax

Carefully remove the outer skin of approximately 12 cloves of garlic. Roughly chop and cover immediately with honey. Manuka honey is my favourite because of its added anti-bacterial action.

Put it in the fridge and leave for 2-8 hours

Take 1 tablespoon (or more) daily – or spread it on your toast!

MARINATED GARLIC

This recipe was provided by Danette Steele, a Herbalist from Toronto, who has taught many workshops in Nova Scotia

½ cup of fresh peeled whole garlic cloves

¼ cup Tamari soy sauce

¼ cup raw honey

¼ cup pure water

Mix all ingredients together in a glass jar and cap it tightly. Place this in the refrigerator and let it age for at least one month.

GINGER-GARLIC TEA

Andrew Weil, M.D., author of *Spontaneous Healing* (Knopf, 1995), makes a potent ginger-garlic tea to fight off colds and the flu. Simmer one teaspoon of grated ginger in one cup of water in a covered pot for five minutes. Strain; add one clove crushed garlic, one tablespoon fresh lemon juice, and one-quarter teaspoon cayenne powder. Sweeten with honey if desired.

Herbal Skin Care Recipes

by Shirlie Williamson

With the changing seasons, a lot of us are taking a closer look in our mirrors and noticing a few signs on our skin of too much sun, wind, seawater and partying. Autumn and early winter are times when I rev up my skin care routine. Now, you can go to almost any cosmetic counter and find lots of choices – but, why spend a lot of money when you can make excellent nutritious and cheap formulas at home – without chemicals required for "shelf life". I wanted to share a few of my favourite recipes with you.

ROSEMARY GLADSTAR'S MIRACLE GRAINS

(taken from Rosemary Gladstar, *Herbal Healing for Women*,)

- 1 cup - finely ground oats
- 2 cups - white clay
- ¼ cup - finely ground almonds
- ⅛ cup - finely ground lavender
- ⅛ cup - finely ground rose petals

Optional A drop or two of lavender, peppermint or orange essential oils

Grind all ingredients together in a blender or coffee grinder. Mix all ingredients together and store in a glass container.

To use – scoop a tablespoon (approximately) in your hand and mix with a little water. Use to cleanse your face.

OPTIONS

Replace part of the almonds or oats with cornmeal. Replace the lavender and rose petals with other skin herbs (eg. plantain, calendula, coltsfoot, chamomile, mint). Mix the miracle grains with honey instead of water.

STEAMS

Pour 3 cups of boiling water into a glass bowl. Add 3 tsps of dried herbs. Put a towel over your head and breathe in the steam for 10-15 minutes. Rinse with

warm water followed by cool water. Do not steam if you have skin disease, capillary problems, heart problems or asthma.

SOME CHOICES OF HERBS ARE:

For Normal to Oily Skin – mint, yarrow, burdock, raspberry leaf

For Normal to Dry Skin – chamomile, comfrey, red clover, calendula, marshmallow root

MASKS

There are many options for making masks, but the basic instructions are the same, mix the ingredients together to make a thick paste, spread the paste over your face. Leave on for 15 minutes then rinse with cool water. Follow with a moisturizing cream. Some suggestions for masks are:

- Clay (use green or grey clay for oily skin, white clay for dry or normal skin) mixed with distilled water
- Avocado and banana
- Soak Rosehips in distilled water until soft - blend until smooth
- Ground oats or almonds mixed with honey
- Egg yolk mixed with a few drops of almond oil (do this one in the tub – it's very messy but it makes your skin feel great!)

ROSE SKIN TONER

- 2 cups witch hazel
- 1 ½ cup distilled water
- 2/3 cups fresh rose petals
- 3 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 4 drops rose essential oil

Place rose petals and rosemary sprigs in witch hazel and water. Gently mix then let the mixture sit for one hour. Strain into a glass bottle and add rose essential oil. Mix well.

Splash or spritz on face after cleansing.



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

The HANS event committee is planning a fun filled year of herby gatherings and events. We hope to see you at the following events. For more information see our website.

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| October 27-28, 2007 | Professional Development Weekend with Terry Willard – Medicinal Mushrooms and Herbal Essences |
| November 29, 2007 | Herbal Prize Bingo at Spencer House – 7:00 – 9:00. |
| December 13, 2007 | Potluck - the theme will be the singing of songs, especially those with plant energies in them. Please bring favorite song words in multiple copies and any instruments you would like - resident piano provided. For more information contact Rita Baruss - 405-1577 |

HANS membership is only \$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 committees – Communications/Outreach/Membership, Education/Events, Organizational Development and Politics/Standards.

HANS Board of Directors meetings are held on the first Thursday of every month and are open to all HANS members. As they are held at different places each month – if you are interested in attending please contact Lynn Marie Mattie – 902-758-3466.