



WESTERN HERBS

for Martial Artists and Contact Athletes

Effective Treatments for Common Sports Injuries

SUSAN LYNN PETERSON, PH.D.

**64 herbs available
in health food stores
everywhere!**

For bruises, sprains, strains,
breathing, dislocations,
adrenaline, and more!

FOREWORDS BY
CAROLYN DEAN, M.D.
DAVID H. PRICE, L.A.C., M.O.M., B.A.





HERBS FOR BRUISES, SPRAINS, STRAINS, DISLOCATIONS, BREATHING, ADRENALINE, AND MORE!

"In one volume, accurate and dependable Western herbs that are safe and effective treatments for sports injuries. A wonderful job."

—Carolyn Dean, M.D., N.D., author of *The Magnesium Miracle* and *Solve it with Supplements*

"Destined to become an instant classic both for herbalists and martial artists."

—David H. Price, L. Ac., M.O.M., B.A.

"Well researched and concise... Provides an accessible alternative to Chinese herbal medicine for the athlete and martial artist."

—Tom Bisio, author of *A Tooth from the Tiger's Mouth*

"Well researched, practical, helpful and informative. This book has earned a place on my bookshelf."

—Jennifer Lawler, author of *Martial Arts for Dummies*

"This book will be treasured... Destined to become a classic!"

—Brigitte Mars, herbalist, author of *Desktop Guide to Herbal Medicine*

"A unique and interesting tome, a valuable contribution to the serious practitioner's bookshelf."

—Lawrence A. Kane, author of *The Way of Kata*

Healing with herbs has long been a tradition in the martial arts. Most martial artists are aware of this legacy; few are fortunate to study with teachers who understand and can teach the traditional Chinese formulas. The rest of us pick up what we can, wherever we can. This book is for the rest of us.

Western Herbs for Martial Artists and Contact Athletes explores herbs that are readily available in the West. Sixty-four herbs common to Europe and/or North America are considered. Each herb is examined for its effectiveness, safety, and how to specifically use it to enhance martial arts and contact sports training.

Readers will be able to choose an herb to meet a specific need, understand how to purchase it, prepare it, and use it safely.

"This book offers one solution for the intrepid martial artist with an interest in herbal therapies. The author explores the myriad possibilities in our own native Western traditions of herbology. The result is a delightful and scholarly addition to both the herbal and martial arts literature. Pragmatically organized, the prose is, nonetheless, lively and enjoyable, avoiding the dry language found in many older herbals and making this a wonderful read."

—David H. Price, L. Ac., M.O.M., B.A., from his foreword.

Susan Lynn Peterson, Ph.D., holds a 5th degree black belt in Shuri-ryu karate, is the author of five books, including two martial arts books and an award-winning theology text. She is a contributing writer to martial arts magazines and health and fitness websites. Peterson has spent many years and thousands of hours investigating the way herbs have been used in various cultures to treat injuries. Susan teaches karate and operates her communications business in Tucson, Arizona.



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Advance Praise for *Western Herbs for Martial Artists and Contact Athletes*

In this one volume you can access accurate and dependable Western herbs that are safe and effective treatments for sports injuries. Dr. Peterson has done a wonderful job of organizing the information and presenting it in an understandable and usable way. As a writer, I can only imagine the hundreds, no, thousands of hours that went into this volume.

—Carolyn Dean, M.D., N.D., *from her foreword*

Generated out of a sincere interest to assist other martial artists in making wise choices about how and when to use or not to use herbal treatments to augment their martial arts practices, the author has utilized her considerable expertise in research and her natural flair for writing to create a book destined to become an instant classic both for herbalists and martial artists.

—David H. Price, L. Ac., M.O.M., B.A., *from his foreword*

A well researched and concise treatise on the herbs used to treat trauma and sports injuries. Provides an accessible alternative to Chinese herbal medicine for the athlete and martial artist.

—Tom Bisio, L. Ac., author of *A Tooth From The Tiger's Mouth*, *The Essentials of Ba Gua Zhang*, *Zheng Gu Tui Na*

A well-researched guide that is practical, helpful and informative. This book will be especially useful for Westerners without much background in Traditional Chinese Medicine. *Western Herbs for Martial Artists and Contact Athletes* has earned a place on my bookshelf.

—Jennifer Lawler, martial artist, author of *Martial Arts for Dummies*, *Dojo Wisdom*, *The Self Defense Deck*

Such a practical, wise and well-researched guide to successfully using herbs! This book selects herbs from both Western and Eastern traditions and provides information on safety, dosage, usage and all things valuable on each plant. This book will be treasured by martial artists and health professionals of all traditions. Destined to be a classic!

—Brigitte Mars, A.H.G, Professor of Herbal Medicine, brigittemars.com, author of *Rawsome!*, *Desktop Guide to Herbal Medicine*, *Beauty by Nature*, *Addiction Free Naturally*

Herbs can be a great way to help heal bruises, scrapes, swellings and other injuries from all kinds of contact sports. Since ancient times, martial artists in China have been using herbal treatments. Peterson's book is unusual in that it looks at herbs readily available in the West rather than Eastern remedies.

—Bruce Fratzis, Taoist lineage holder, author of *Opening the Energy Gates of Your Body*, *The Power of Internal Martial Arts and Chi*

While much has been written about traditional Asian remedies, many of which are challenging to come by in many parts of the world, this is the first time I have seen a treatise on Western herbs. Peterson's examination is methodical and comprehensive, documenting findings in a way that makes the subject matter highly accessible for martial artists (and athletes of any type). Specifically, readily available herbs that can help with bruises, scrapes, cuts, sprains, breaks, dislocations, breathing, adrenaline management, and other issues and ailments common to those who practice the fighting arts are discussed in detail. Her nine principles for using medicinal herbs safely set the context, while descriptions of affects, dosages, dangers, risks, and usefulness of each plant round out the information. *Western Herbs for Martial Artists and Contact Athletes* is a unique and interesting tome, a valuable contribution to the serious practitioner's bookshelf.

—Lawrence A. Kane, martial artist, author of *Surviving Armed Assaults*, *Martial Arts Instruction*, *The Little Black Book of Violence*, *The Way to Black Belt*, *The Way of Kata*

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Warning: Readers are encouraged to be aware of all appropriate local and national laws relating to self-defense, reasonable force, and the use of weaponry, and act in accordance with all applicable laws at all times. Neither the authors nor the publisher assume any responsibility for the use or misuse of information contained in this book.

Nothing in this document constitutes a legal opinion nor should any of its contents be treated as such. While the authors believe that everything herein is accurate, any questions regarding specific self-defense situations, legal liability, and/or interpretation of federal, state, or local laws should always be addressed by an attorney at law.

When it comes to martial arts, self defense, and related topics, no text, no matter how well written, can substitute for professional, hands-on instruction. These materials should be used for academic study only.

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	vii
Foreword Carolyn Dean M.D.	xi
Foreword David Price	xiii
Acknowledgements	xv
Introduction	xvii
Chapter One: Using Herbs Safely	1
Why Herbs?	1
Gentleness	1
Complexity	2
Novel Effects	2
Safety with Herbs	3
Good Herbal Habits	8
Chapter Two: The Herbal	17
Agrimony	17
Aloe Vera	20
Andrographis	23
Anise	25
Arnica	28
Ashwagandha	31
Astragalus	34
Bilberry Fruit	37
Borage Oil	40
Bromelain	43
Calendula	46
Capsicum	49
Caraway	54
Catnip	56
Cat's Claw	58
Cayenne	60
Chamomile	61
Chilis	64
Cinnamon Bark	64

Cloves	67
Coltsfoot	70
Comfrey	72
Devil's Claw	75
Echinacea	78
Elder	82
Eleuthero (Siberian Ginseng) Root	84
Eucalyptus	86
Evening Primrose Oil	90
Fennel	93
Fenugreek	96
Feverfew	100
Fish Oil	102
Flaxseed	106
Garlic	110
Ginger	115
Ginkgo Biloba	119
Ginseng	123
Goldenrod	126
Goldenseal	128
Gotu Kola	131
Hops	134
Horse Chestnut Seed	137
Horseradish	140
Horsetail	142
Lavender	145
Licorice	149
Marshmallow	152
Myrrh	154
Nettles	156
Passionflower	158
Peppermint Oil	161
Peppers	165
Rhodiola	165
Rosehip Seed Oil	168
Rosemary	170
Sage	173
Shepherd's Purse	176
Siberian Ginseng	177
Slippery Elm	178
St. John's Wort	180

Tea Tree Oil	184
Thyme	186
Turmeric	189
Valerian	192
Willow Bark	195
Witch Hazel	197
Yarrow	199
 Chapter Three: Preparing the Herbs	 203
Infusions	204
Decoctions	206
Syrups	207
Tinctures	208
Infused Oils	210
Essential Oils	212
Creams and Salves	213
Powders and Capsules	217
Compresses	218
Poultices	219
Plasters	220
Liniments	221
Inhalants	221
Massage Oils	222
 Chapter Four: Applications and Uses	 223
Joint Pain and Inflammation	223
Sprains	225
Fractures	226
Bruises and Contusions	227
Wounds	230
Muscle Cramps	233
Aching muscles	234
Scars	235
Plantar Warts	236
Coughs, Colds, Breathing Problems	238
Athletic Performance Enhancement	241
Regulation of the Fight-or-Flight System	242
Battered Feet or Hands	244
Fungal Infections	246
Flatulence and Other Digestive Problems	247
Massage Oils	248

Chapter Five: Herbal Contraindications	249
Herbs that may increase the risk of bleeding	249
Herbs that affect blood sugar levels	249
Herbs that may lower blood pressure	249
Herbs that may have a laxative effect	249
Herbs that may make you drowsy	249
Herbs that contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids	250
Herbs that may affect liver function	250
Herbs that may affect heart function	250
Herbs that may have a diuretic effect	250
Herbs that have monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) activity or that interact with MAOI drugs	250
Chapter Six: Further Resources	251
Finding Herbs	251
Finding Herb Seeds	251
Finding an Herbalist	252
Miscellaneous Resources	253
Chapter Seven	255
Glossary	255
Notes	259
Bibliography of Frequently Cited Works	335
Index	337
About the Author	347

Using Herbs Safely

Why Herbs?

Why herbs? Walk the aisles of any drugstore or supermarket, and you'll see hundreds of "over-the-counter" remedies. Why not use them? And beyond that, why not rely on just what the doctor gives you? In 2006, Americans walked right past standard remedies to spend \$22.3 billion on herbal supplements. They would not be spending that kind of money if they didn't see some kind of attraction. What draws people to herb use?

Gentleness

One reason people turn to herbal remedies is gentleness. Herbs are typically less refined, less distilled than standard remedies.

For example, Mormon tea contains pseudoephedrine, the same active ingredient as the over-the-counter cold remedy Sudafed®. The actions of Mormon tea aren't as harsh, however, because the plant contains less of the active ingredient than Sudafed, the plant's pseudoephedrine is buffered by other ingredients, and it hasn't been distilled to magnify the effect. Furthermore, with Mormon tea, you get the liquids that are so crucial to a cold, and you get the warmth and the steam, which soothe irritated tissues. Moreover, you *don't* get the fillers and the red dye #40. Similarly, if you compare prescription sleep aids with herbal remedies, you'll see the difference between something that knocks you out and something that helps you sleep. Even if you don't appreciate the difference in the evening, you will in the morning when you're trying to clear the residual from your system.

In short, one of the differences between herbal care and standard Western medicine can be the difference between a nudge and a shove. Mormon tea, willow bark, thyme, eucalyptus, peppermint—all these herbs have distilled, more potent counterparts in over-the-counter medicines. Using the herbal version sometimes gives you the option of taking a gentler amount of the active ingredient.

It is not true, however, that all herbal remedies are less potent than their counterparts. Some are more potent, perhaps dangerously so. If you use Listerine®, for example, you get the disinfectant properties of thymol (an active ingredient in thyme) in a well-tested form. If you decide to "go herbal" and use the essential oil of thyme or thymol straight, you could kill yourself with it if you don't take proper precautions. Though, in general, herbs are gentler than their refined counterparts, some herbs are not at all subtle in their effects. If you're going to use herbs, especially internally, you must know the difference between the two.

Complexity

Another benefit that draws people to herbal remedies is the complexity of herbs. Most prescription and over-the-counter medicines have one or two active ingredients in some kind of carrier. By contrast, herbs usually contain a blend of several chemicals, each with active properties.

What that means is that sometimes herbs are a fortunate blend of several active ingredients working in concert. For example, arnica contains not just the anti-inflammatory compounds that it's famous for, but also chemicals that function as antiseptics and anesthetics. Some herbs—hops for example—don't have a single verifiable active ingredient, but all the ingredients together have a verifiable cumulative effect, especially when blended with other herbs. In other words, one reason to use herbs is a faith—and I choose that word deliberately—in nature's benevolent complexity. A corollary of that statement of faith is the belief that when we refine an herb into a single active ingredient, we may be refining out benefit as well as "inactive" ingredients.

Is such faith warranted? Partially. To be honest, though, herbs' complexity can be either the good news or the bad news. The bad news is that you may be getting problematic ingredients with helpful ones. For example, borage oil contains a powerful anti-inflammatory, but it also contains the liver toxin pyrrolizidine. Licorice is an outstanding remedy for coughs, but it also contains glycyrrhizin, which messes up the electrolyte balance of the body. The bottom line is that some herbs have a beneficial complexity; some have hidden harmful ingredients. Only careful investigation will tell you which is which.

Novel Effects

Another reason people use herbs is to gain effects not available in standard Western medicines. If you go to your doctor and ask for something to help keep you from getting a cold this winter, chances are the doctor won't be able to help you. The herbal shop down the street, however, has echinacea, andrographis, elderberry, astragalus, and all manner of other exotic sounding herbs, each claiming to offer help in warding off a cold. Similarly, if you go into the doctor with a bruise from heavy training, the doctor will probably tell you to ice it and hope for the best. Go to the local herb shop, and the proprietor may give you arnica, bromelain, perhaps some comfrey.

For most people, money, time, or just a fear of doctors has created a line between significant ailments and ordinary ones. If annoyance with a physical problem exceeds a certain level, they'll go into the doctor. Below that threshold, however, is where they turn to herbs. Frankly, this realm of "ordinary ailments" is where herbs excel. They can help clear up minor annoyances, they can help foster health and well-being, and they can make you feel better while you're healing. An herb may not "cure" a cold, but neither will a visit to the doctor. Furthermore, a nice cup of chamomile tea will probably make you feel better than sitting for a couple of hours in a doctor's waiting room.

Herbs typically are gentler, have fewer side effects, treat not just major physical malfunctions but minor day-to-day physical annoyances, and they don't require a trip to the doctor. Perhaps that's why sales of herbs have taken off in the last decade. However, with the rise in

CHAPTER TWO

The Herbal

Agrimony

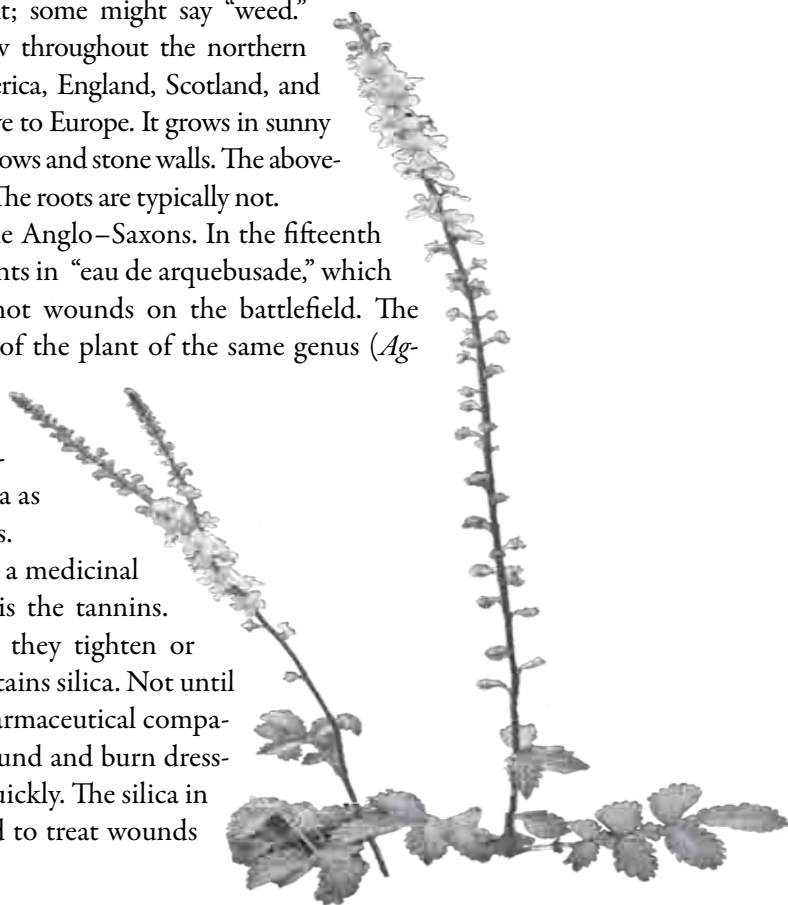
Scientific name: *Agrimonia eupatoria*

Also known as church steeples, cocklebur, sticklewort, philanthropos, stickwort, liverwort, common agrimony

Agrimony is a perennial plant; some might say “weed.” Various species of *Agrimonia* grow throughout the northern hemisphere, including North America, England, Scotland, and China. *Agrimonia eupatoria* is native to Europe. It grows in sunny fields and waste areas, and in hedgerows and stone walls. The above-ground parts are used medicinally. The roots are typically not.

The Greeks used it. So did the Anglo-Saxons. In the fifteenth century, it was one of the ingredients in “eau de arquebusade,” which was a remedy for treating gunshot wounds on the battlefield. The Meskwaki Indians used the root of the plant of the same genus (*Agrimonia gryposepala*) as a styptic for nosebleeds.⁶ Another relative of agrimony, *xian he cao* (*Agrimonia pilosa*), has been used in China as a remedy for bleeding and wounds.


Agrimony became popular as a medicinal plant for two reasons. The first is the tannins. Tannins are astringent, meaning they tighten or constrict skin. Agrimony also contains silica. Not until the late twentieth century did pharmaceutical companies began using fine silica on wound and burn dressings to heal these wounds more quickly. The silica in agrimony, however, has been used to treat wounds for centuries.





Agrimony, *Agrimonia eupatoria*
(Courtesy of Joan Simon)

What is it good for?

Much of what we know about agrimony is anecdotal. The number of studies conducted regarding its safety and efficacy can be counted on one hand. It does contain catechin tannins, an astringent. Commission E recommends it for several uses, both topical and internal. If you're looking for scientific research to tell you agrimony is safe and effective, however, you're going to have to wait because it's just not there right now. Traditional use, however, recommends it for the following:

Sore throats. We have a sound oral tradition through several cultures that says agrimony is good for sore throats and laryngitis. Used as a gargle, it can help take down swelling and relieve pain.⁷ It also contains flavonoids and Vitamin C. Commission E recommends it for oral and pharyngeal inflammation. 

Skin Injury or inflammation. Commission E recommends it for topical use. It can aid in the healing of wounds and bruises, and because of its astringent properties, it may help stop bleeding. Because of the silica and tannins in agrimony, it can be particularly useful for scrapes and wounds that tend to weep. Some preliminary research suggests that it may also be mildly antiseptic and may help the body fight bacteria, viruses, and fungi.⁸ 

Muscle aches. Anecdotal evidence suggests that agrimony is good for muscle aches when used in a hot bath. If you have dry or sensitive skin, however, the tannins in agrimony may aggravate that problem. 

How do you use it?

Infusion (taken internally for sore throat). Infusion brings out the best in agrimony.⁹ Infuse one teaspoon of the dried leaves, stems, or flowers in a cup (8 ounces) of hot water and let it steep for 5 to 15 minutes. Infusions can be drunk as tea or used as a gargle or rinse for sore throats or mouth wounds.

Decoction (for topical use and as a gargle). Prepare a very strong decoction and allow the mixture to cool. Soak a compress in it and apply it to the affected area several times a day. For a sore throat or laryngitis, gargle and spit the decoction up to three times a day. A decoction gargle can also be used for mouth injuries. Rinse and spit; don't swallow.

Tincture. Tinctures are possible but work somewhat less well than infusions and decoctions.

Ointment (for wounds). See method two for creams and salves in Chapter 3 for instructions on how to make an ointment from an infusion or decoction.

Dosage: How much do you use?

No scientific information is available about how much agrimony is safe. A traditional dosage is

3 g of the herb daily used internally

One cup of tea (1 teaspoon of the herb, brewed approximately 5–10 minutes) at a time, no more than three times per day

¼–½ teaspoon of the tincture, three times per day.

What should you be aware of before using it?

We don't know much about the potential risks of agrimony. It hasn't been studied much at all.

These are the precautions we do know about (or at least suspect):

If you can't insure the purity of your ingredients and the sterility of your procedures, don't use a homemade ointment on an open wound.

Agrimony is high in tannins. No high-tannin herb should be taken internally over the long term (more than a few months).¹⁰

Don't take it internally if you are also taking butterbur.

Don't take it internally if you are constipated. Don't use large doses internally because they can lead to constipation.

Agrimony taken internally can affect blood sugar levels. If you are diabetic, check with your doctor before taking agrimony internally. Be cautious when using it in conjunction with herbs known or suspected to affect blood sugar levels. (See Chapter 5 for a list.)

If you are taking a diuretic (including some blood pressure medicines) check with your doctor before taking agrimony internally.

If you are prone to high blood pressure, check with your doctor before taking agrimony internally, as agrimony can raise blood pressure, especially if you take it in high doses.¹¹

Be careful about sun exposure after using agrimony internally. Sun sensitivity reactions have been reported.¹²

No scientific information is available about how well agrimony is tolerated topically.

Note that though agrimony is sometimes known as "cocklebur," it is not the common cocklebur found throughout North America.

Also, be aware that the Chinese agrimony, *xian he cao* (*Agrimonia pilosa*), and *Agrimonia eupatoria* have different properties and are *not* interchangeable.

Aloe Vera

Scientific name: *Aloe vera*, *Aloe vulgaris*, or *Aloe barbadensis*

Also known as Barbados or Curaçao aloes

The *Aloe* genus contains at least 324 species of herbs, shrubs, and trees.¹³ The most commonly used medicinal aloe is *Aloe vera*, and it is the one we'll be referring to here. *Aloe vera* is a succulent, meaning that it is a plant that stores water in fleshy leaves or stems. It grows wild in Africa and Madagascar, but because of its medicinal and decorative properties, it is now a common houseplant throughout the world. It also grows perennially outdoors in the frost-free parts of Florida, Texas, and Hawaii. Aloe leaves contain a clear gel that can be squeezed or scraped from the outer skin. It is this gel that is used medicinally.

For centuries, aloe gel has been used for burns and minor wounds. We have evidence of its use dating back to before the first century. Alexander the Great is rumored to have conquered Madagascar so his army would have an adequate supply of aloe to treat wounds. Cleopatra used it as part of her beauty regimen. Hippocrates and Arab physicians also used it. The Egyptians called aloe the “Plant of Immortality” though not because of its health benefits but because it can live for long periods of time bare-rooted, without soil.¹⁴ In both Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine it is used, among other remedies, as a treatment for eczema.¹⁵ In traditional Arab medicine, it's used for wound healing.¹⁶

What is it good for?

Minor burns. Aloe is best for first degree burns. It may also be used on small, minor second degree burns. This use has centuries of folk medicine behind it. In fact, the use of aloe

on burns has good recognition not just in the popular culture, but also in segments of Western mainstream medicine as well. Animal studies show great advantage to using aloe on burns of all severities.¹⁷ Clinical studies show that burns can heal in about two-thirds the time when treated with aloe.¹⁸

Minor wounds. Aloe can also be used

on cuts, scrapes, and other minor wounds and skin irritations. The traditional evidence for using aloe to treat minor wounds is also strong. At the very least, aloe provides a protective barrier over the wound. That much is fairly universally agreed upon.¹⁹ The gel also contains several active ingredients that have been isolated in the laboratory: pain relievers, anti-inflammatories, and ingredients that relieve itching and increase blood flow to an injured area. Some research suggests that it may also have antifungal, antibacterial, and antiviral properties.²⁰ Clin-



Aloe Vera

Preparing the Herbs

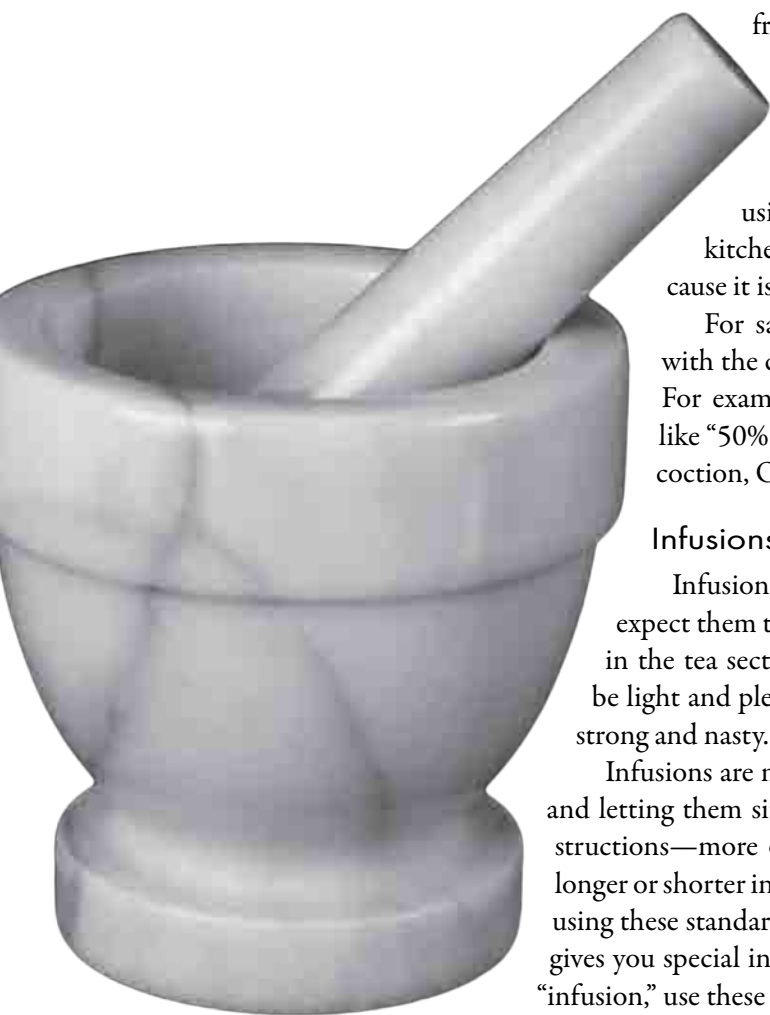
It's possible to use herbs without making your own preparations. A wide variety of commercial preparations are available. Many of them, however, are quite expensive, especially if you are buying from overseas. Fortunately, many preparations can be made with dried herbs which are becoming increasingly available in health food stores, vitamin stores, and online. You can also find some fresh herbs online. The "Further Resources" Chapter at the end of the book can give you some ideas about where to look.

Generally, when working with herbs, glass, ceramic, enamel, or pottery containers are best. If you don't have a glass or enamel pot you can use on the stove, stainless steel or copper is a decent second choice. Avoid aluminum, iron, or tin. Stir with wooden spoons. Store the resulting mixtures in glass or ceramic. Your best bet is to have pots dedicated just to working with herbs. In fact, if you are going to work with herbs that are toxic, it's a good idea to dedicate some of your pots and utensils exclusively to topical and/or toxic preparations. Sure, you'll clean them well after each use, but there's always the chance of a bit of herb-impregnated wax sticking to the inside. The last thing you want when you're making a nice stew is bits of arnica or menthol getting into it.

In addition to pots, you'll also need a gram scale—herb weights are typically given in grams—and various measuring spoons and cups. If you plan to crush herbs, you'll need a sturdy mortar and pestle. You *don't* want to use an electric food processor or grinder to crush herbs because you want to keep the heat due to



Dark glass storage bottles for storing herbal preparations



Use a mortar and pestle for crushing herbs

friction to a minimum. That kind of heat changes herbs. For decoctions and infusions, you'll need a strainer, maybe some cheesecloth or coffee filters. Again, exercise caution when using kitchen utensils. Don't use your kitchen strainer for toxic, topical herbs because it is very difficult to get completely clean.

For safety's sake always label your bottles with the contents, the procedure, and the date. For example, your label might say something like "50% cinnamon, 50% fresh ginger root, decoction, October 21, 2009."

Infusions

Infusions are essentially teas. However, don't expect them to be the wimpy herbal brews you find in the tea section of your grocery store. Some may be light and pleasant tasting, but others can be quite strong and nasty.

Infusions are made by pouring hot water over herbs and letting them sit. Some herbs will require special instructions—more or less herbs, hotter or cooler water, longer or shorter infusion. Most, however, can be infused using these standard instructions. Check the herbal. If it gives you special instructions, follow them. If it just says "infusion," use these instructions.

Note: If the tap water in your area is heavily laden with chemicals and fluoride, you would do well to consider filtered or distilled water for your infusions.

Standard infusions

1 ounce (30 g) dried herbs or 2 to 3 ounces (75 g) fresh herbs

2 cups water

If you are making an infusion with seeds like anise or fennel, bruise the seeds lightly. Put the herbs in a pot with a secure lid. Ideally the pot should be nonmetallic. A teapot works well. Boil the water in a separate kettle. Cool it a few seconds, just long enough to stop the boil. Pour the water over the herbs and let them infuse covered for ten to fifteen minutes. After they've steeped, pour the resulting infusion through a strainer or coffee filter. What you don't use immediately can be stored in the refrigerator for up to a day. Infusions should

Applications and Uses

First of all, it bears saying: use your head. Some injuries require a doctor. Get professional help to stitch cuts, assess the severity of breaks or severe bruising, and render an opinion on chronic problems. Then if the doctor sends you home saying something along the lines of “it’s just a sprain; stay off it,” herbal remedies give you an option that may help decrease the time you need to baby the injury before returning to training. These remedies are not to be used instead of standard medical care. They are not intended to replace commonly accepted first aid procedures. Their purpose is to give your body some herbal help while it goes about healing injuries and illness.

Secondly, know your body. If you tend to have sensitive skin, don’t just slap an unknown poultice on a new injury. Test the herb first on healthy skin. Start to use it slowly to see how well you tolerate it. Some herbs have powerful effects, not all of them pleasant. Some people react more strongly to herbs’ effects than others. Assess your past history with herbs and your willingness to take risks before using any herb.

Thirdly, know the herb before you use it. Before mixing up one of these remedies, read the information about the herb in this book and in a couple of other books or Web sites as well. No one book or teacher can tell you everything. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to an herbalist, a naturopath, or a doctor with training in herbal medicine. It is your responsibility to educate yourself about what you put into and on your body.

Fourthly, when combining herbs, less is more. Simples (remedies using only one herb) are common and appropriate for many uses. Adding smaller amounts of a second or third herb can enhance the effect of the first or cancel it out if you don’t know what you’re doing. Adding several different herbs will sometimes just give you mud. Until you know what you’re doing, get your combinations from trained herbalists. Though I have not used all these combinations myself, I have gotten them from what I consider to be reputable sources.

Joint Pain and Inflammation

If you have joint pain in multiple joints, or if the pain lasts longer than you would expect for a minor injury, you need to be evaluated by a doctor. If you are already being treated for joint pain, talk to your doctor about whether one of these remedies complements the treatment you and she or he have already agreed upon.

Many of the herbal remedies for joint pain operate on the principle of counterirritation. “Counterirritation” is when you apply an irritant to treat an irritant. For example, let’s say you have a mosquito bite. It itches, so what do you do? You scratch. You purposely irritate the skin and by doing so relieve the itch of the bite. Part of counterirritation is simply

creating a diversion.¹⁷¹⁴ The sensations on the skin take the mind away from pain deeper in the body. The effects, however, go beyond diversion to the neurological. When the body is continually exposed to a counterirritant, sensory neurons are depleted of neurotransmitters. The cause of the pain remains, but the pain signal no longer reaches the brain because of the lack of neurotransmitters. This leads to reduction in sensation of pain. When the exposure is discontinued, the neurons recover.¹⁷¹⁵

This deadening of pain is both the good news and the bad news. On the one hand, it makes you feel better until you can heal. On the other hand, it also deadens the body's natural warning system, the system by which pain persuades you to stop doing something that is hurting you. What a counterirritant doesn't do is fix the underlying problem. You don't heal yourself using a counterirritant; you simply take the pain or itch down a notch.

Here are a few formulas for joint pain. Most operate on the principle of counterirritation.

*General joint pain, including arthritis*¹⁷¹⁶

Make a massage oil of
10–20 drops eucalyptus oil
10–20 drops rosemary oil
½ tablespoon almond oil
Make a liniment of :
¼ teaspoon powdered cayenne (red pepper)
1 cup grain alcohol

Joint pain from minor injuries

Make a massage oil of
5–10 drops of yarrow oil (essential oil) in 1–½ tablespoon of infused St. John's wort oil.¹⁷¹⁷

If the injury is still swollen, don't massage deeply but rather spread the oil lightly over the surface of the skin.

Joint pain from exertion

Make a massage oil of
5–10 drops of ginger essential oil
1–½ tablespoons almond oil.
1–2 drops of eucalyptus oil (optional)

Joints inflammation

Other herbs can actually go to the root of the pain and inflammation, and help heal joint inflammation. These herbs are taken internally. Note that you should not be combining these herbs without professional supervision.

Bromelain: especially knee pain, both from swelling and arthritis.

Cat's claw: for both swelling and inflammation.

Evening primrose oil: for use in joint pain due to arthritis.

Herbal Contraindications

Herbs that may increase the risk of bleeding¹⁷⁸⁹

Increased risk of bleeding supported by reports or studies:

Ginkgo biloba, garlic, saw palmetto.

Increased risk of bleeding theoretically possible:

alfalfa, American ginseng, angelica, anise, *Arnica montana*, asafetida, aspen bark, birch, black cohosh, bladderwrack, bogbean, boldo, borage seed oil, bromelain, capsicum, cat's claw, celery, chamomile, chaparral, clove, coleus, cordyceps, *danshen*, devil's claw, *dong quai*, evening primrose, fenugreek, feverfew, flaxseed or flax powder (not a concern with flaxseed oil), ginger, grapefruit juice, grapeseed, green tea, *guggul*, gymnema, horse chestnut, horseradish, licorice root, lovage root, male fern, meadowsweet, nordihydroguaiaretic acid (NDGA), onion, papain, Panax ginseng, parsley, passionflower, poplar, prickly ash, propolis, quassia, red clover, *reishi*, Siberian ginseng, sweet clover, rue, sweet birch, sweet clover, turmeric, vitamin E, white willow, wild carrot, wild lettuce, willow, wintergreen, and yucca.

Herbs that affect blood sugar levels¹⁷⁹⁰

Aloe vera, American ginseng, bitter melon, burdock, fenugreek, fish oil, gymnema, horse chestnut seed extract (HCSE), marshmallow, milk thistle, Panax ginseng, rosemary, Siberian ginseng, stinging nettle, and white horehound.

Herbs that may lower blood pressure¹⁷⁹¹

aconite or monkshood, arnica, baneberry, betel nut, black cohosh, bryony, calendula, California poppy, coleus, curcumin, eucalyptol, eucalyptus oil, ginger, goldenseal, green heliobore, hawthorn, Indian tobacco, jaborandi, mistletoe, night blooming cereus, oleander, pasque flower, periwinkle, pleurisy root, shepherd's purse, Texas milkweed, turmeric, and wild cherry.

Herbs that may have a laxative effect¹⁷⁹²

alder buckthorn, aloe dried leaf sap, black root, blue flag rhizome, butternut bark, *dong quai*, European buckthorn, eyebright, cascara bark, castor oil, chasteberry, colocynth fruit pulp, dandelion, gamboges bark, horsetail, jalap root, manna bark, plantain leaf, podophyllum root, psyllium, rhubarb, senna, wild cucumber fruit, and yellow dock root.

Herbs that may make you drowsy¹⁷⁹³

calamus, calendula, California poppy, capsicum, celery, cough elecampane, German chamomile, goldenseal, hops, *kava*, lemon balm, sage, saffron, shepherd's purse, Siberian ginseng, skullcap, stinging nettle, valerian, wild carrot, wild lettuce, and yerba mansa.

Herbs that contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids

borage, comfrey, boneset (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), coltsfoot.

Herbs that may affect liver function¹⁷⁹⁴

ackee, bee pollen, birch oil, blessed thistle, borage, bush tea, butterbur, chaparral, coltsfoot, comfrey, DHEA, *Echinacea purpurea*, *Echium* spp., germander, *Heliotropium* spp., horse chestnut (parenteral preparations), *jin bu huanly* (*Lycopodium serratum*), *kava*, lobelia, L-tetrahydropalmatine (THP), mate, niacin (vitamin B-3), niacinamide, Paraguay tea, periwinkle, *Plantago lanceolata*, pride of Madeira, rue, saffron, skullcap, *Senecio* spp., groundsel, tansy ragwort, turmeric, *tu san chi* (*Gynura segetum*), *uva ursi*, valerian, and white chameleon.

Herbs that may affect heart function¹⁷⁹⁵

adonis, balloon cotton, black hellebore root/melampode, black Indian hemp, bushman's poison, cactus grandifloris, convallaria, eyebright, figwort, foxglove or digitalis, frangipani, hedge mustard, hemp root or Canadian hemp root, king's crown, lily of the valley, motherwort, oleander leaf, pheasant's eye plant, plantain leaf, pleurisy root, psyllium husks, redheaded cotton bush, rhubarb root, rubber vine, sea-mango, senna fruit, squill, strophanthus, uzara, wallflower, wintersweet, yellow dock root, yellow oleander. Notably, *bufalin* or *chan suis* is a Chinese herbal formula that has been reported as toxic or fatal when taken with cardiac glycosides.

Herbs that may have a diuretic effect¹⁷⁹⁶

artichoke, celery, corn silk, couchgrass, dandelion, elder flower, horsetail, juniper berry, *kava*, shepherd's purse, *uva ursi*, and yarrow.

Herbs that have monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI) activity or that interact with MAOI drugs¹⁷⁹⁷

Headache, tremors, mania, and insomnia may occur if ginseng is combined with supplements. Some examples are 5-HTP (5-hydroxytryptophan), California poppy, chromium, DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), DLPA (DL phenylalanine), ephedra, evening primrose oil, fenugreek, *Ginkgo biloba*, hops, mace, St. John's wort, SAMe® (S-adenosylmethionine), sepia, tyrosine, valerian, vitamin B6, and yohimbe bark extract.

In theory, ginseng can increase stimulatory effect of caffeine, coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate, guarana, cola nut, and yerba mate.

Further Resources

Finding Herbs

Because for medicinal herbs you will generally be using larger quantities of herbs than you would be for cooking and because you will be steeping out oils and other active ingredients, you might consider using organic herbs, even if you generally don't go organic. Growers of organic herbs in the United States will generally be certified by the National Organic Program (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/indexNet.htm>).

Here are two sources of herbs that I've used:

Frontier Natural Products Co-op

<http://www.frontiercoop.com/index.html>

Frontier is a high-tech, highly reliable outfit. They test each lot of herbs for safety and potency. If you go to their Web site, you'll see that they pride themselves on their formally-trained staff and high-tech equipment. They are a member of AHPA, Co-op America, National Cooperative Business Association, and are certified USDA organic. Minimum order is a pound, but you can sometimes find Frontier products in bulk bins at your local health food store if you want smaller quantities.

Mountain Rose Herbs

<http://www.mountainroseherbs.com>

In business since 1987, they offer all organic herbs including bulk herbs, essential oils, grape alcohol tinctures, supplies for making herbal preparations, seeds, etc. They also carry some ready-made balms and salves. They are scrupulous about freshness. You can order herbs in smaller quantities from them. Furthermore, just about everything mentioned in this entire book—herbs, supplies for making preparations, bottles—everything is available from this one supplier. They offer a print catalog or online ordering. Mountain Rose herbs bears the following seals: AHPA, Co-Op America, Bio-Dynamic, Fair Trade certified herbs, and Oregon Tilth Certified Organic. Their chemical-free facility is powered by 100% renewable energy.

Finding Herb Seeds

Horizon Herbs

<http://www.horizonherbs.com/>

This is the one of the major sources for seeds, rootstock, and potted plants.

Index

- abdominal pains 189
- abrasion 46, 62, 87, 129
- abscesses 108
- aches 146
- acne 87, 169, 184
- acupuncture 245
- adaptogen 32, 38, 84, 120, 124, 130, 165
- ADHD 104, 107
- adrenal support 41
- adverse reaction 11
- aescin 137, 227
- aggression 104
 - reduction of 243
- agrimony 17, 229, 230
 - for coughs with excess phlegm 240
 - for mouth injury 233
- AIDS 58
- alcohol (in tinctures) 208, 209
- alertness 65, 88, 146, 163
- allatoin 225
- allergy 120, 150, 156
- allicin 112
- alliin 111, 112
- allylisothiocyanate 140
- almond oil 224, 232, 235, 244, 248
- aloe gel 20
- aloe vera 20
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - for mat burn 232
 - for plantar warts 237
 - internal use 22
 - laxative effect 249
- alpha linolenic acid 102, 106, 186, 187
- American Herbalists Guild 252
- American Herbal Products Association 253
- analgesic 43, 76, 87, 94, 154, 156, 157, 162, 163, 170, 187, 229
- andrographis 23
 - for flu 238
 - for plantar warts 238
- anesthetic 68, 146, 162, 170
- anethole 94, 95
- angelica 230
- anise 25
 - for congested cough 239
 - for cough 239
 - for cough with bronchitis 239
 - for gas pains 248
 - risk of bleeding 249
- antibacterial 62, 64, 87, 94, 152, 174, 176
- antibiotic 50, 111, 112, 116, 159, 186, 230
- antibiotics (medicine) 78
- antifungal 112, 245
- antihistamine 115, 162
- anti-inflammatory 29, 43, 46, 59, 62, 64, 68, 71, 76, 87, 90, 91, 94, 100, 104, 127, 132, 142, 150, 154, 156, 163, 168, 178, 186, 190, 198, 229
- antimicrobial 26, 50, 54, 73, 111, 127, 135, 143, 146, 157, 162, 163, 170, 174, 181, 184, 186, 200
- antioxidant 32, 37, 73, 108, 112, 153, 168, 174, 198, 200
- antipruritic 162
- antiseptic 54, 68, 86, 87, 129, 146, 184, 186, 200
- antispasmodic 54, 87, 147, 150, 162, 170, 186
- antithrombotic 116, 154
- antiviral 83, 87, 111, 150, 162, 181
- anxiety 32, 61, 104, 132, 134, 135, 145, 159, 163, 181, 193, 243, 244
- aphrodisiac 159
- apigenin 61
- appetite 166
- arnica 28, 225, 227
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - for battered hands and feet 245
 - for bruising 227
 - risk of bleeding 249
- arquebusade water 17, 229
- arteriosclerosis 91, 112
- arthritis 32, 40, 44, 50, 59, 76, 91, 101, 108, 116, 150, 156, 170, 187, 190
- ashwagandha (for endurance) 242
- asiaticoside 132
- aspirin substitute 195
- asthma 44, 70, 87, 89, 103, 111, 120, 140, 156, 187
 - allergic reaction and 241
- astragalus 34
 - for endurance 242
 - for plantar warts 238
- astringent 142, 174, 197, 200
- atherogenic diet 90

- atherosclerosis 107, 116
- athlete's foot xix, 65, 87, 171, 185, 246, 247
- athletic performance 51, 124
- autism 104
- Ayurveda 20, 31, 96, 132, 150, 190
- back pain 28, 50, 73, 76, 147, 196, 235, 248
- bacteria 246
- baldness 171
- basil 230
- bath oil 211
- benzoic acid 163
- berberine 129
- beta carotene 230
 - and wound healing 235
- beta-pinene 200
- bilberry 37
 - for a tendency to bruise easily 229
- black eye 228
- bleeding 51, 127, 154, 174, 176, 178, 197, 230, 233
 - increased risk of 92, 102, 105, 114, 118, 161, 191, 249
- bloating 189, 248
- blood flow 103
- blood platelet 195
- blood pressure 65, 103, 112
 - high 7, 97
 - low 249
- blood stagnation 227
- blood sugar 19, 22, 36, 65, 97, 105, 249
- body temperature 166
- bo he 162
- boils 108, 159
- bone building 143
- borage 40, 90, 104
 - and liver function 250
 - contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids 250
 - risk of bleeding 249
- brain waves 120
- breathing 115
- British herbalism 10
- bromelain 43, 224, 226, 249
 - for bruising 227
- bronchitis 70, 94, 116, 149, 162, 178, 187, 239
- bronchoconstriction 103
- bruises 18, 28, 37, 43, 73, 83, 91, 117, 127, 135, 138, 146, 170, 181, 193, 197, 200
 - that are old and yellow 228
- burdock
 - and blood sugar levels 249
- burns 20, 71, 80, 117, 129, 142, 143, 146, 153, 157, 179, 181, 184, 200, 213
- butterbur 19
- butylthiocyanate 140
- caffeine 134, 146
- calamint 229
- calcium 143
 - and muscle cramps 234
- calendula 46, 227, 230, 231, 232
 - and drowsiness 250
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - for abrasions 232
 - for itchy sores 231
 - for plantar wart 237
 - for soothing fungal infections 247
 - in all-purpose skin salve 233
- calluses 246
- camphor 170, 171, 200, 231
 - for myalgia 235
- cancer 58, 104, 129
- candida 65, 94
- canker sores 129, 154, 233
- capsaicin 49
- capsicum 49, 224, 249
 - and drowsiness 250
 - for clogged nose 241
 - for cold feet 246
 - for colds 241
 - for colds and flu 238
 - for laryngitis 240
 - for metabolism of carbohydrates 242
 - for myalgia 235
- capsules 217
- caraway 54, 163
 - for flatulence 248
 - for flatulence and indigestion 248
 - for gas pains 248
 - for nervous stomach 243
- carbohydrates
 - metabolism of 242
- cardiovascular health 103, 112, 189
- carminative 116, 147
- carrier oil 210
- cartilage 143
- cassia cinnamon 65
- catarrhs 87, 94, 149, 186
- cat's claw 58, 224
 - risk of bleeding 249
- catnip 56

- for insomnia 244
- central nervous system 134
- chamomile 61, 230, 244
 - and drowsiness 250
 - for abrasions 232
 - for allergic asthma 241
 - for anxiety 244
 - for bruising 228
 - for flatulence 248
 - for irritated nose 239
 - for itchy sores 231
 - for relaxation 243
 - for scuffed feet 245
 - risk of bleeding 249
- chapped lips 154
- chapping 200
- Chinese herbal medicine xvii, 34, 245, 252
- cholesterol 65, 90, 97, 107, 110, 111, 112, 116, 189
- chronic fatigue 84, 124
- chuan xin lian 23
- chyun sam ling 23
- cinnamon 64
 - for athlete's foot 246
 - for fungal infections 247
 - for motion sickness 248
- circulation 121, 132, 147, 170
- Cisapride 54
- cis-linoleic acid 90
- clotting 143
- cloves 67
 - for scraped gums 233
- cocoa butter 215
- cold blaster 241
- cold infusion 205
- colds 23, 50, 62, 78, 79, 82, 87, 111, 116, 129, 140, 149, 162, 174, 178, 200, 238
- cold sores 163
- cold tonic 238
- colic 116, 162
- colitis 104
- colliquative 173
- coltsfoot 70
 - and liver function 250
 - contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids 250
- comfrey 3, 73, 225, 231
 - contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids 250
 - for myalgia 235
 - in all-purpose skin salve 233
- Commission E xviii, 9
- compounds 7
- compresses 218
- concentration 84
- congestion 87, 97, 186
- connective tissue 226
- constipation 107
- contamination 4, 5
- Cordyceps sinensis 166
- coronary heart disease 103
- corticotrophin releasing hormone 104
- cough 25, 70, 94, 111, 116, 140, 149, 152, 162, 178, 186
 - congested 239
 - irritated 239
 - with bronchitis 239
 - with excess phlegm 240
 - with twitchy throat 239
- counterirritant 50, 141, 156, 162, 170, 187, 221, 223, 231, 234
- courage 170, 186
- cramps 87, 137, 170
- cranberry 37
- creams 213
- Crohn's disease 58, 104
- croup 111
- culinary herbs 8
- cuts 46, 87, 184
- cyanide 83
- dan shen 173
- decoction 206
- decongestant 87
- deglycyrrhizinated licorice extract 151
- dementia 119
- demulcent 107, 150
- Department of Health and Human Service Healthfinder 254
- depression 104, 146, 181, 244
- dermal curette 237
- dermatitis 46, 107, 181, 200
- developmental disorders 103
- devil's claw 75
 - for back pain 235
 - risk of bleeding 249
- DHA 103
- diabetes 65, 97
- diaphoretic 82
- diarrhea 38, 162, 189
- Dietary Supplement Information Board 10, 253

- digestion 54
- ding heung 67
- ding xiang 67
- disinfectant 184
- diuretic 126, 142, 250
- docosahexaenoic acid 106
- docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) 102
- dok chan 67
- dosage 10
- drowsiness 250
- dyspepsia 54, 189
- eau de arquebusade 17, 229
- echinacea 78
 - and liver function 250
 - for canker sores 233
 - for colds 238
 - for colds and flu 238
 - for plantar warts 238
 - in all-purpose skin salve 233
- Eclectic School xviii
- eczema 41, 46, 91, 146, 157, 211
- edema 117, 127, 137
- eicosapentaenoic acid 102, 106
- elder 82
- elderberry
 - for chapped skin 232
 - for colds 238
 - for coughs with excess phlegm 240
- elderflower
 - diuretic 250
 - for injured hands 245
- eleuthero 84
 - for stress 242
- emery board 237
- emollient 97, 107, 178, 214
- emotions 166
- emulsifying wax 214
- endurance 31, 35, 165, 166, 242, 243
- Epsom salt 228, 230, 245
 - for bruising 228
 - for muscle cramps 234
- equisetic acid 144
- essential oil 212, 215
 - in an inhalant 221
- Essiac 178
- eucalyptol 88, 170, 171, 174, 185, 200, 231
 - and low blood pressure 249
- eucalyptus 86, 162, 224, 246
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - for chapped skin 232
 - for clogged sinuses 241
 - for feet 245
 - for fungal infections 247
 - for myalgia 235
 - for reaction time 242
- eugenol 67, 68, 69, 200
- evening primrose 90, 224, 232
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - for cracked feet 245
 - risk of bleeding 249
- exercise performance 112
- exercise recovery 97, 103, 130, 242
- exercise tolerance 112, 124
- expectorant 94, 111, 116, 150, 186, 239
- fat 91, 97
- fatigue 84, 91, 112, 124, 166
- fear 104
- feet
 - cold 246
 - cracked heels 245
- Felter, Harvey Wickes xviii
- fennel 93, 229
 - for black eye 229
 - for congested cough 239
 - for coughs with twitchy throat 239
 - for gas pains 248
- fenugreek 96
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - for exercise recovery 242
 - for sore throat 240
 - risk of bleeding 249
- fever 62, 79, 100, 159, 195
 - lack of sleep during 244
- feverfew 100, 196
 - risk of bleeding 249
- fight-or-flight 103
- fingers
 - jammed 226
 - sprained 74, 225
- fish oil 102, 225, 232
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - for cracked feet 245
 - for stress 242
- flatulence 26, 54, 94, 116, 147, 162, 171, 189, 248
 - provoking 107
- flavonoids 103
- flaxseed 102, 105, 106
 - for cracked feet 245
 - risk of bleeding 249

- flu 23, 50, 62, 78, 79, 82, 116, 129, 200, 238
- focus 243
- Food and Drug Administration 9, 22, 253
- Food and Nutrition Information Center 254
- food processor 203
- formulas 13, 223
- foxtail 3
- fractures 73, 143, 179, 226
- Frontier Natural Products Co-op 251
- fungal infection 47, 68, 112, 113, 246
 - athlete's foot 246
 - calendula for soothing 247
 - jock itch 247
 - ringworm 247
 - toenail 247
- fungi, molds and xvii
- fungus 87, 94, 111, 146, 159, 163, 171, 184, 185, 187, 246
- Fyfe, John William xviii
- Galen 180
- gamma linolenic acid 40, 41, 90, 92
- gan cao 149
- garlic 110
 - for colds 241
 - for colds and flu 238
 - for fungal infections 247
 - for plantar warts 238
 - for strep throat 240
 - garlic lemonade 241
 - garlic wine 241
 - risk of bleeding 249
- gas 248
- gas pains 248
- GBE 119, 121
- generally recognized as safe 26, 55, 63, 66, 69, 83, 95, 98, 118, 135, 141, 148, 164, 169, 172, 175, 187, 190, 194
- ginger 115, 189, 224, 225
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - for athlete's foot 246
 - for cold feet 246
 - for colds 241
 - for flatulence 248
 - for hand and foot bath 245
 - for motion sickness 248
 - for pain 244
 - risk of bleeding 249
- gingerols 115, 117
- gingivitis 111, 154, 186, 200
- ginkgo biloba 119
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - for mental focus 243
 - risk of bleeding 249
- ginseng 123
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - and caffeine 250
 - and drowsiness 250
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - for mental focus 243
 - risk of bleeding 249
- ginsenosides 124
- glycerin 214
 - in tinctures 209
- glycogen 31
- glycosides 140
- glycyrrhizin 150
- goldenrod 126, 230
 - for coughs with excess phlegm 240
 - for mouth swelling 233
 - for mouth wounds 233
- goldenseal 129
 - and drowsiness 250
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - for plantar warts 237
 - for split lip 233
- gotu kola 132
 - and scar prevention 235
- gram scale 203
- grapeseed 211
- Grieve, Maud xix
- gums, scraped 233
- hand 245
 - swollen 245
- hay fever 200
- headache 100, 120, 147, 157, 162, 195, 244
- heartburn 243
- heart disease 103, 104
- heart function 250
- heart rate 103
- heavy metals 104
- heels, cracked 245
- helenalin 29
- hemoglobin 32
- hemorrhoids 129, 137, 176, 197
- hemostatic 198
- herbal ice 225
- Herb Med 254
- herbs of undefined safety 157
- high fat diet 98
- Hippocrates 20, 25, 96, 152, 180

- homeopathy 6
- honey 65, 138, 147
 - for sore throat 240
- hops 134, 244
 - and drowsiness 250
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - for anxiety 243
 - for insomnia and anxiety 244
- Horizon Herbs 251
- horse chestnut
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - and liver function 250
 - for bruising 227
 - risk of bleeding 249
- horse chestnut seed 137
- horseradish 140
 - for clogged nose 241
 - for colds 241
 - risk of bleeding 249
- horsetail 142, 226, 230, 250
 - for fractures 226
 - laxative effect 249
- hot oil infusion 210
- huang-qi 34
- huang-qui 34
- hu lu ba 96
- hydrastine 129
- hyperactivity 103
- hyperglycemia 97
- hyperhidrosis 173
- hypericin 182
- hyssop 229
- ibuprofen 44
- ice 225, 227, 228
- if not what the label says xvii
- immune support 23, 24, 34, 59, 79, 84, 111, 127, 129, 178, 193, 238
 - for plantar warts 238
- immunosuppressant 33, 36
- impotence 32
- indigestion 244, 248
- infection 79
- inflammation 97, 101, 103, 107, 116, 127, 129, 137, 138, 143, 159, 162, 181, 190, 197
- infused oil 210
- infusion 204
- inhalant 221
- insect bites 46, 71, 197
- insomnia 56, 61, 134, 146, 159, 160, 192, 244
 - chronic 245
- insulin resistance 97, 107
- interactions 11, 13
- International Bibliographical Resources on Dietary Supplements 253
- irritable bowel 163
- irritation 101, 143, 178, 233
- itching 162, 190
- jintan 25
- jock itch 87, 247
- joint
 - crepitus 76
 - hyperextended 132
 - inflammation 224, 245
 - injury 143
 - injury with nerve involvement 226
 - pain 43, 50, 76, 101, 116, 140, 141, 150, 156, 178, 187, 197, 221, 223
 - swelling 104
- Kan Jang 23
 - for flu 238
- kava 3
- kuan dong hua 70
- labeling 4
- lactate threshold 124
- lan he lian 23
- laryngitis 18, 70, 140, 240
- lavender 145, 226, 230, 231
 - for abrasions 232
 - for insomnia and headache 244
 - for muscle cramps 234
 - for myalgia 235
 - for pain 244
 - for relaxation 243
 - for sleep 244
- laxative 107, 249
- learning 119, 166
- lemon balm 229
- licorice 149, 239
 - for congested cough 239
 - risk of bleeding 249
- ligament 132, 154
 - torn 44
- lignans 108
- limbic system 103
- liniment 51, 157, 163, 221–229, 234, 235
- linoleic acid 107
- lipids 90
- lipophilic triterpenoidal esters 91
- liquiritin 150

- listeria 94
- liver function 250
- lupus erythematosus 104
- mango butter 215
- MAOI activity 250
- marjoram 229
- marshmallow 152
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - for irritated throat 239
 - for throat irritation 233
- massage oil 211, 222, 248
 - for achy muscles 248
 - for back pain 248
 - for feet 246
 - for joint pain 224
 - for joint pain from exertion 224
 - for minor injuries 224
 - for muscle cramps 234
 - for old bruises 228
 - for rheumatism 117
 - for sprains 225, 226
 - for sprains in the recovery stage 74
- maximal oxygen uptake 124
- medicinal herbs 8
- Medline Plus Medical Encyclopedia* 254
- memory 68, 119, 120, 124, 132, 146, 166, 170, 243
- mental performance 107
- menthol 162
- metabolic syndrome 97
- methylbutanol 134
- microwave oven 205
- mi die xiang 170
- migraine 100, 104, 196
- mislabeling 4
- M.N.I.M.H. 252
- The Modern Herbal* xix
- molds and fungi xvii
- mood 146, 170
- mood disturbances 120
- Mormon tea 1
- motion sickness 115, 248
- Mountain Rose Herbs 251, 252
- mouth
 - canker sores 129
 - gingivitis 154
 - inflammation 61, 62, 174
 - injury 67, 127, 233
 - irritation 186
 - pain 67
 - sores 154
 - split lip 233
 - swelling 233
 - ulcers 174
 - wounds 18
- mo yao 154
- mucilage 70, 97, 107, 152, 178, 232
- mucus 82, 129, 157
- multiple sclerosis 104
- muscle
 - aches 18, 88
 - aches due to exertion 235
 - cramps 193, 234
 - delayed onset muscle soreness 44, 103
 - glycogen resynthesis 97
 - injury 43
 - myalgia 18, 50, 73, 76, 87, 140, 162, 181, 195, 197, 198, 234, 235, 248
 - myositis ossificans 228
 - oxygen saturation 166
 - relaxant 193
 - spasms 121, 147, 171
 - strain xix, 73
 - tension 244
- mustard
 - for cold feet 246
- mustard oil 140, 176
- mu ze 142
- myositis ossificans 228
- myrrh 154
 - for canker sores 233
 - for sore throat 240
- National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine 254
- National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine 252
- National Herbalists Association of Australia 253
- National Institute of Medical Herbalists 252
- National Institutes of Health 253
- naturopathic physicians 252
- nausea 115, 147, 162
- neck up rule 238
- nerve
 - injury 181, 236
 - pain 162, 232
- nervous system 159
- nettle 134, 156
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - and drowsiness 250

- neuralgia 135, 140, 162, 228
- nicotine 144
- nightmares 160, 192, 244
- night vision 37
- NIMH 252
- nitric acid 112
- nitric oxide 112, 186
- nose
 - clogged 51, 140, 241
 - inflammation 174
 - irritated 239
 - nosebleeds 17, 176, 199
 - runny 51, 157, 162
- NSAID 116
- obesity 97
- oil
 - almond 211
 - avocado 211
 - carrier 210
 - essential 212
 - hot infusion 210
 - infused 210
 - olive 211
 - sesame 211
 - soybean 211
 - sunflower 211
 - types of 211
- ointment 213
- olive oil 211
- omega-3 102, 106
- omega-6 fatty acid 40, 90, 107
- onion
 - for colds 241
- optimism 170
- organic herbs 251
- osteoarthritis 29
- pain 76, 137, 146, 147
 - blocked by counterirritant 50
 - relief 50
- papillomavirus 236
- parthenolide 100, 101
- passionflower 159, 244
 - for anxiety 243
 - for sleep 244
 - risk of bleeding 249
- p-cymene 187
- peppermint 161, 229
 - for colds 239
 - for flatulence and indigestion 248
 - for heartburn 243
 - for muscle cramps 234
 - for myalgia 235
 - for reaction time 242
 - for tension headache 244
- perspiration 173, 200
- petroleum jelly 213
- phlegm 83, 150
- photosensitivity 95, 133, 182, 202
- plantar warts 21, 47, 130, 236
- plaster 220
- platelet aggregation 90, 112, 117, 189
- Pliny 93, 152
- polyunsaturated fatty acids 168
- potassium
 - and muscle cramps 234
- poultice 219
 - comfrey for sprains 225
- preparations 203
- propolis 238
- prussic acid 109
- psoriasis 104
- p tyrosol 166
- pumice stone 237
- puncture wounds 230
- pyrrolizidine alkaloids 41, 42, 71, 74, 90, 250
- reaction time 88, 146, 163, 242
- red blood cells 32
- relaxation 146, 243
- ren shen 123
- restlessness 159
- RH (AHG) 252
- rheumatism 101, 179
- rhinitis 129, 156
- rhodiola 165
 - for endurance 242
- rhodioloside 166
- R.I.C.E. 225
- ringworm 87, 247
- risk tolerance 14
- rose hip seed oil 168
 - and scar prevention 235
- rosemary 170, 224, 228, 229, 246
 - and blood sugar levels 249
 - for digestive problems 248
 - for itchy sores 231
 - for myalgia 248
 - for stiffness 228
- rosmarinic acid 73
- rubefacient 162, 221
- runny nose 51, 162

- sage 173, 229
 - and drowsiness 250
 - for myalgia 235
 - for sore throat 240
- sal butter 215
- salicylic acid 67, 195, 237
- salmonella 94, 111
- salve 213
- Sambucol
 - for colds 238
- san huang san 225
- savory 229
- scar 132, 154, 168, 235
- scientific names 6
- Scoville unit 52
- scratches 197
- scurvy 176
- sedative 56, 61, 134, 159, 175, 192, 202
- serotonin 103, 115, 166
- shea butter 215
- sheng jiang 115
- shen jin cao 142
- shepherd's purse 176, 230
 - and drowsiness 250
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - diuretic 250
- shogaols 115, 117
- SHR-5 166
- sialogogue 78
- Siberian ginseng 123
- silica
 - in agrimony 17
 - in horsetail 142
- sinus, clogged 241
- sinusitis 24
- skin irritation 20, 152
- sleep 244
- slippery elm 178, 232
 - for sore throat 240
- sores 87, 91, 138, 197
- sore throat 18, 38, 70, 91, 97, 140, 149, 152, 174, 178, 190, 240
- spasmolytic 193
- split lip 233
- sprain 73, 83, 170, 174, 181, 225, 233
- staphylococcus 94, 111, 181
- stimulant 167
- St. John's wort 180, 224, 226, 227, 232
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - and nerve healing 236
 - as massage oil 248
 - for bruises with nerve involvement 228
 - for depression with anxiety 244
 - for insomnia 245
 - for sleep 244
 - in all-purpose skin salve 233
- stomachic 54
- strains 73, 198
- strep 70, 111, 150, 240
- stress 40, 104, 107, 120, 124, 146, 165, 166, 193, 242
- sunburn 46, 61, 146, 179, 197
- sunflower oil 211, 248
- sun sensitivity 19, 95
- Swedish Herbal Institute 167, 238
- swelling 83, 101, 127, 135, 137, 146, 181, 200
- syndrome X 97
- syrups 207
- tannins 17, 38, 71, 146, 174, 198, 200
- tea tree oil 184
 - for athlete's foot 246
 - for calluses 246
 - for feet 245
 - for fungal infections 247
- tendon 154
- terpeniol 200
- terpinen-4-ol 184
- Theophrastus 180
- throat irritation 233
- thujone 200, 201
- thyme 186, 226, 229
 - for congested cough 239
 - for coughs with twitchy throat 239
 - for feet 245
 - for foot bath 245
 - for fungal infections 247
 - for mouth wounds 233
- thymol 1, 29, 186
- thyroid 33
- Tiger Balm 162
 - homemade 234
- tincture 208
 - in an inhalant 221
- tinnitus 120, 121
- tissue injury 120
- traditional herbalists 10
- trans-retinoic acid 168
- trauma salve 227
- triglycerides 65, 97, 98, 103, 111, 189

- turmeric 115, 189
 - and liver function 250
 - and low blood pressure 249
 - for gas with bloating 248
 - risk of bleeding 249
- ulcerations 80
- ulcers 58, 189
- upper respiratory tract infection 79, 116, 129
- urinary tract problems 126
- Urol mono 127
- U.S. Dispensatory xviii
- U.S. Government Nutrition Information Clear-
inghouse 254
- U.S. Office of Dietary Supplements 254
- valerian 134, 160, 192, 239, 244
 - and drowsiness 250
 - and liver function 250
 - and MAOI drugs 250
 - for insomnia 244, 245
 - for nighttime anxiety 244
- varicose veins 170
- vasodilatation 119
- venous insufficiency 132
- vinegar 228
 - in tinctures 209
- violent behavior 103
- virus tea 238
- vision 37
- vitamin A 82, 104, 168, 230
 - and wound healing 235
- vitamin C 82, 230
 - and wound healing 235
 - for colds 238
- vitamin E 103, 230, 246
 - and wound healing 235
 - to preserve infused oils 210
- VO₂peak 166
- vulnerary 163
- weight control 98, 104
- wen jing 142
- white blood cells 73
- willow bark 195
 - risk of bleeding 249
- wintergreen
 - for myalgia 234
- witch hazel 197, 232
- wormwood 229
- wounds 20, 46, 61, 73, 80, 100, 127, 132, 135,
142, 143, 152, 157, 163, 170, 176, 178, 180,
181, 184, 190, 193, 199, 200, 230, 232
- xiao hui xiang 93
- yarrow 199, 224, 230
 - diuretic 250
 - for chapped skin 232
 - for coughs with excess phlegm 240
- yeast 111, 127, 159, 171
- yi jian xi 23
- zinc
 - for colds 238

About the Author

Susan Lynn Peterson has made a career of writing about complex topics in a straightforward entertaining way. Building on a lifetime of interest in health, especially alternative healing practices, she has spent three years and thousands of hours investigating the way herbs have been used in various cultures to treat injuries. *A Martial Artist's Guide to Western Herbs* is her fifth book. Her first three books, published by Tuttle Publishing and Zondervan Publishing House, a subsidiary of Harper Collins, have been translated into five languages. For the first book, she earned a Gold Medallion Book award nomination. She has also contributed to several national magazines including *Black Belt*, *New Body*, *Complete Woman*, and *Fighting Woman News*.



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