

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Harvest a Medicine Chest

By Cynthia Brian

“Flowers always make people better. Flowers are sunshine, food and medicine to the soul.” – Luther Burbank



Make a sunflower tea from the leaves and flower petals to treat colds and coughs.

Photos Cynthia Brian

Whether you have a sore throat or a sore hip, your prescription for optimum health may be as close as your garden. Since the dawn of humanity, even before recorded history, herbs and plants have been used for medicinal purposes. Ancient cultures including the Chinese and Egyptian documented on papyrus the benefits as early as 3000 BC. One fourth of pharmaceutical drugs we find on the market today are derived from botanicals. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 80 percent of the Earth's population depend on herbal remedies as primary health care.

The falling autumn leaves signal the beginning of the influenza season as most of us rush to our local internist or drug store for the updated flu shot. I have already been vaccinated and now am preparing my first aid kit with natural remedies from my garden pharmacy. Many fruits, vegetables, herbs, seeds, and leaves that are growing in your garden can be harvested not

only to be added to your dinner menu, but to boost your immune system, clean wounds, calm bites, reduce fevers, and arrest pain. Always consult your physician before beginning any new regimen and of course, if you need medical attention, seek a physician.

Here is a short list of my favorite common specimens and the ailments they relieve.

Mint: Spearmint, peppermint, hyssop, or any mint except pennyroyal (poisonous), is not only great for making your breath smell fresher, but is useful for soothing headaches, reducing fatigue, calming stomach aches, fighting nausea, and keeping colds and flu at bay. For indigestion or diarrhea, chew on peppermint leaves. Nosh on mint raw, add it to salads, garnish dishes, or make mint tea. Mint is one of the wonder drugs.

Catnip: Besides making cats euphoric, catnip relieves cold symptoms, toothaches, flatulence, and breaks fevers. It is a member of the mint family, can be

eaten raw or made into teas. Pregnant women should not consume catnip as it may induce contractions.

Rosemary: This Mediterranean herb is part of the mint family also. It's called the "remembrance" plant be-



Remember rosemary to boost memory and aid with circulation.

cause it improves circulation to the brain. The oil in the flowers act as antibacterial and anti-fungal agents. Add rosemary to meats on the barbecue grill.

Sage: The name says it all. Salvia, derived from the Latin, salvere, meaning to be saved. Sage is a lifesaver as it aids in multiple ways. Sage reduces diarrhea, relieves cramps, kills bacteria, minimizes inflammation, reduces swelling, and fights colds. Make a poultice or salve for cuts, burns, and bruises.

Red Clover: It may be growing in your lawn or you may use it as a cover crop. The pink flowers can be made into a broth to ease coughs and colds.

Allium: Increase your intake of onions, garlic, leeks, shallots, and chives not only for the aromatic culinary delights, but also if you suffer from arthritis, rheumatism, or joint pain. Researchers have found diallyl disulphide, a substance found in alliums inhibit enzymes that cause damage to joint protective cartilage. Raw or cooked the delicious allium appear to boost your immune system. When we were kids, we even put a clove of garlic in our ears with a bit of olive oil to battle earaches. Garlic is reputed to keep vampires away, too.

Parsley: After a garlic infused meal, a bite of fresh parsley sprigs freshen your breath. Parsley also inhibits the secretion of histamines, which cause allergies and hay fever. A tea of parsley seeds or leaves is also helpful as a diuretic or laxative.