



NB CHG

Gardening for Change

Medicinal and Useful Plants
Spring and early summer
availability

Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada, 2024

Disclaimer

- This is a list of locally available useful plants, many of which are wild and available in early spring and onwards. It is not a complete list, just what I consider the most interesting or useful plants
- I am not a prescriber, use these plants at your own risk, do your own research, not all plants work for all people, have fun with making your own creams and remedies
- Text in blue is what I would use it for
- <https://www.eatweeds.co.uk/dandelion-taraxacum-officinale>
- Pictures are nbchg.org sourcing or public domain: <https://picryl.com/>

What diy products I make

- Elderberry tincture (alcohol)
- Elderberry syrup (non alcohol)
- Blackcurrant tincture (alcohol)
- Plantain Salve (simple cuts)
- Multipurpose Salve (calendula, St Johns wort, lavender, plantain in oil, then made into salve) for rashes/ painful injuries
- St Johns Wort Salve: pain
- St Johns Wort Tincture (alcohol) for anxiety/depression/ pain
- Feverfew tincture for fever (have never had to use)
- Various other flowers/ plants for teas: esp yarrow and goldenrod

Responsible Harvesting

- Leave $2/3$ of plant to regrow
- Avoid areas which can be polluted from industry or other means
- Avoid sides of roads which have high salt, fossil fuels and other possible toxins
- Avoid areas pesticides and herbicides are used also areas of recent heavy flooding with river contamination

DIY Remedies

Tea: A tea made from fresh herbs captures between 50 and 90 percent of the effective ingredients of the plant.

- Tools: non-aluminum pot ,a strainer(optional) and a teacup
- Average Dose: 3 to 4 cups in a day
- Ratio: Two cups water to one ounce of dried herb, (1 to 2 tablespoons), or 1 handful of the fresh herb. Pour hot water over herb in a closed container and leave to steep:
- Brewing time: 10 to 20 minutes. Most herbal teas benefit from a longer steeping time, the better to extract the medicinal properties. You can keep the leftovers as a start for a new batch of tea.

DIY Remedies

Infused Oils: used alone or can form the base of salves and balms.

- Not an exact science, strength can vary, important to use a good quality oil, fully cover the plant material to prevent spoiling, sufficient time to allow medicinal quality in plant to infuse into oil.
- The general principal is simple: Oil + heat + herbs = Herbal Oil
 - using heat (fastest)
 - the sun
 - a dark cupboard (slowest)
- Once the herbs have been infused into the oil, strain the mixture, store at room temperature.

DIY Remedies

Tinctures: properties extracted with alcohol, glycerin, or vinegar. (Menstruum)

- **Alcohol** (most common) can extract most plant compounds. Water is also necessary to extract the water-soluble plant compounds.
 - **80 to 100 proof alcohol** such as vodka, brandy and gin provides the alcohol-water ratio you need without having to add anything.
- **Herbs:** Use of one pint of menstruum to two ounces of dried herbs or about two handfuls of fresh, completely cover the herbs, leaving a couple of extra inches of liquid above the herbs to allow for swelling as the herbs absorb the liquid.
- Warm vinegar first before pouring it over the herbs.

Aloe Vera

- Powerful antioxidant
- Prevents Wrinkles
- Relieves Sunburn
- **For years, people have used the secretions of this plant to treat burns, cuts or superficial infections.**
- Break off a leaf and squeeze the juices directly onto area to be treated
- Can be taken orally but best if purchase juice.



Plants to Forage



Wild Camomile Pineapple Weed

- Can be found everywhere, very short plant, works same way cultivated does.



Red Clover

- Makes a great tea
- Harvest young flowers and the leaves that are with them.
- Leaves and flowers are edible
- Used for menopausal symptoms and women's issues
- Nitrogen fixer (good for soil)



Coltsfoot

- Coltsfoot (perennial plant), flower is like a dandelion when it blooms in spring. The flowers bloom and die before the leaves appear.
- anti-inflammatory and antitussive (cough prevention and treatment)
- Coltsfoot flowers can be eaten. They can be tossed into salads to add a wonderful aromatic flavour
- flowers and honey to make a remedy to help calm a cough or to sweeten a bitter herbal tea.
- Dried flowers can be dried and chopped up so that they can be added to pancakes, fritters, etc. Young leaves (bitter) can be added to soups and small amounts fresh young leaves in salads.
- An aromatic tea is made from the fresh or dried leaves/flowers.



Oxeye Daisy

- Common in open wild areas
- All parts are edible, but leaves are best as a salad green
- Roots and spring shoots are edible raw
- Leaves are low in carbohydrates, rich in several vitamins and potassium while the petals are high in beta-carotene and niacin



Dandelion

- Parts Used: Leaves, Flower, Roots
- Medicinal Uses: Supports the gut and liver
- Safety Issues: For some, dandelion can be a powerful diuretic when taken in high doses or too frequently. Avoid if you have a latex allergy.
- the greens contain vitamins and beta carotene, folate, thiamine, riboflavin, calcium, iron, potassium and manganese.
- **Personally, I use for dandelion tea/ coffee or nutrition, not medicinally.**
- **Spring: young leaves**



Lambs Quarter (Pigweed)

- Leaves, flower, seeds can be eaten raw
- Seeds (cooked) can be ground into bitter black flour
- Contains oxalates, use in moderation if eaten raw



Horsetail

- Young stems edible, rich in antioxidants and minerals
- Avoid excess use, can decrease thiamine levels (Vitamin B1), also avoid if you have edema, gout, heart and kidney disease.
- Only use young shoots (while leaves pointed up, not out or down) they can be eaten raw or steamed as a wild vegetable. Or they can be dried and used as a tea.
- Horsetail is high in silica, mature ones make good pot scrubbers



Above: young shoot
Below: spore form, early spring



Mullein

- “Candlewick plant” use the dried leaves and stems to make lamp wicks.
- Properties: *Anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiviral, soothing for respiratory problems
- Mullein tea (flowers/ leaves) is a traditional treatment for respiratory problems.
- A fresh poultice leaves make an excellent antimicrobial, astringent first aid remedy for minor burns & insect bites.
- Mullein leaf tea is slightly bitter; flowers are sweeter
- CAUTIONS: Do not eat mullein seeds, always strain mullein leaf tea to remove tiny hairs, avoid if pregnant or breast-feeding.
- Mullein flowers infused in olive oil are also used to ease the pain of swollen rheumatic joints.



Plantain

- High in vitamin c, a, k,
- seeds can be eaten like rice or chia, young leaves cooked or fresh
- Medicinal Uses: Externally, crushed leaves can treat bug bites, and nettle rashes by reducing inflammation and pain.
- Can be used internally, as a tea, for inflammation due to excessive coughing.
- **I use as a healing salve made from infused oil.**



Purslane

- Looks like a succulent, jointed like stems.
- Low in calories and fats; rich in dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals, omega 3 fatty acids, and antioxidants
- Contains oxalic acid, use in moderation and should not be used with kidney disease or if your uric acid is high



Self-Heal or All Heal



- Parts Used: Flowers, Leaves
- Medicinal Uses: Externally, it aids in the healing of cuts, sores and any open wounds. It also has anti-inflammatory properties.
- Makes a nice tea along with clover and other flowers
- Vitamins, flavonoids, rutin, rich in antioxidants

Spruce Tips

- Spruce trees, bear cones and have needles, rather than leaves. All varieties of spruce are edible.
- The young tips of the spruce are new shoots with tender needles. They have a delicate, lemony flavor with a woody after taste.
- Spruce tips are high in vitamin C and make a great tea for warding off colds.
- Harvest spruce tips in the spring when they first emerge from their papery covering and are still light green and tender. Simply pinch the new growth off the end of the branch, and remove any of the covering



Other evergreens to eat

- Both the spruce and the fir trees have needles which attach to the branch singly. Pine, on the other hand, is always attached in groups of 2 – 5 needles.
- The spruce needle is sharper than the fir and is easy to roll between your fingers. The fir tree has a flat needle which won't roll.
- Pines and firs are also edible and can be quite tasty as well.

Strawberry Spinach

- Grows wild across North America, easily self seeds
- Tolerates frost, early spring green
- Heat tolerant, leaves used like spinach, fruits edible too
- Seeds very tiny.



Wild Sorrel

(Yellow Wood sorrel)

- Leaves, flowers and seed pods edible raw
- Sour, lemony flavor
- Antioxidant, good for gut and liver
- Contains vitamin C
- Use in moderation as it contains oxalic acid, do not use if you have gout or kidney issues.
- Oxalic acid is considered a mordant, can be used to set color into the fabric or paper you wish to dye.



St. John's Wort

(Flower buds, flower , leaf)

- St John's wort is used as an antidepressant, also for pain and healing.
- Buds when squeezed produce red color, leaf held up to light shows tiny holes in leaf
- Large doses cause sensitivity to light.
- Can interact with other commonly used medicines. Always talk with your healthcare provider before using this herb.
- **I use topically for arthritis pain/ pain/ and in salves for wounds, in tincture for depression**



Usnea aka old man's beard

- Usnea is a greyish-green lichen with medicinal properties that grows on trees, rocks and shrubs. Pulled apart it has a white core.
- Don't pull off trees as it is slow to grow, collect wind falls
- Tonic for the immune system, antibiotic and antiviral properties, helps heal respiratory system and urinary system..
- Edible but not tasty, best made into a tincture



Wild Violets (NB Flower)

Also viola/ jolly jump-ups

- leaves and blossoms are edible, either raw or cooked
- high in vitamin C, can use to make into jelly, syrup or vinegar, also good for salad or tea
- Violets are antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and are good for coughs and colds, eczema, dry skin, bug bites, and varicose veins.



Willow (*Salix spp.*)

- Bark and leaves are used
- Harvest young branches, peel a bit of bark off the branch, it should taste bitter like aspirin. This is where the medicine is.
- Anti-inflammatory, for pain (internally/ external), reduces fever,
- Dehydrate for tea or make a tincture
- Caution: contains salicin – do not use if you are sensitive to aspirin (ASA) if you are sensitive to aspirin avoid using willow.



Yarrow

- All parts can be used, leaves and flowers are easiest for harvesting
- Internally the tea reduces fevers, lowers blood pressure, is anti-inflammatory, and aids with symptoms of diarrhea.
- Externally, it slows bleeding when applied topically to wounds in the form of a poultice.
- I use for a tasty tea, dehydrates easily to preserve.
- Safety Issues: Should not be taken extensively when pregnant.



Raspberry/ Blackberry

- Parts Used: **Leaves**, Roots, **Berries**
- Medicinal Uses: **Tea** made from bark and leaves, used internally, can aid in symptoms of diarrhea and inflammation
- Chewing leaves, bark, or gargling tea can aid in mouth or throat irritations.

Black Currant/ Elderberry

- **black currant leaves as a tea/ berries as a tincture for immunity**
- **Elderberry flowers and berries for tea or tincture for immunity**

Plants to think of Growing



Calendula

- Great to protect veggies from 'bad bugs'
- Reduces pain and swelling, healing properties
- Repels mosquitoes naturally
- Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory
- To be safe, avoid the herb if you're allergic to marigold, pregnant or lactating.
- **I use in oil to make skin salves**



Chamomile

- Harvest young, newly opened flower heads regularly and dehydrate.
- Used (tea or compress) as a sedative for anxiety and relaxation, and for skin conditions.
- Chamomile may interfere with the way the body uses some medicines, causing too high a level of the medicine.



Comfrey(comfort)

- known as knitbone or boneset.
- Uses vary, always external (wrap whole bruised leaves around the injury or apply warm poultices/ compress from leaves or roots).
- harvest a few roots and dry them, or hang undamaged leaves to dry.
- Not recommended to be taken internally and not to be used on broken skin
- In the garden use as a mulch, or for compost tea to feed plants.



Lavender

- The scent of this medicinal herb calms and relaxes.
- Long history of using lavender as an anti-inflammatory and antiseptic.
- Eases pain, scent helps with anxiety, migraine, insomnia and depression.
- **I preserve in oil and use to make salves**
- **As a tincture to preserve the scent as a spray.**



Lemon balm

- A relative of mint, not as invasive
- relieves anxiety, insomnia, wounds, herpes, insect bites, flatulence, and an upset stomach. It also speeds the healing of cold sores.
- Great in water as a flavoring or in tea
- Dehydrate is easiest way to preserve
- **I use for a relaxing tea**



Peppermint

- Plant very invasive in the garden
- Eases stomach disorders, Fights bad breath, soothes headaches
- Reduces stress
- Relaxes muscle pain
- **I use in tea especially after a heavy meal**
- **Dehydrating is the best way to preserve**

Remember: Harvest Responsibly (and safely)

- Be very careful where you harvest, look for sources of pollution, including edges of roads and highways, old industry sites, areas that use pesticides and herbicides. Avoid these areas.
- When harvesting, leave 2/3 of plant undisturbed to regrow. Don't harvest more than you can use.
- Mushroom harvesting: it is a 'thing' right now, always have an expert to guide you
- ***some plants like Chaga and Usnea grow slowly, and harvesting can endanger these valuable resources.