

Second Edition 1995
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ISBN 978-0-9777356-5-5

Published by:
One World Press
890 Staley Lane
Chino Valley, AZ 86323
800-250-8171
SelfPublishing@OneWorldPress.com
www.OneWorldPress.com

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD iii

INTRODUCTION v

How To Use This Book

CHAPTER 1 : GENERAL "HOW-TO"
OF HERBISTRY 1

CHAPTER 2 : CAYENNE 27

CHAPTER 3 : CHAPARRAL 53

CHAPTER 4 : CLOVES 85

CHAPTER 5 : COMFREY 105

CHAPTER 6 : GARLIC 139

CHAPTER 7 : GINGER 181

CHAPTER 8 : ONION 203

CHAPTER 9 : PEPPERMINT 223

CHAPTER 10: SLIPPERY ELM 245

CHAPTER 11: YARROW 271

APPENDIX A : PEOPLE PASTE 299

APPENDIX B : HONEY 304

APPENDIX C : RESOURCE LIST 306

APPENDIX D : HERB BUYER'S GUIDE 308

APPENDIX E : TRAVEL KIT GUIDE 310

APPENDIX F : GENERAL USE CHART 312

INDEX 315

FOREWORD

A decade ago, the author of this book contacted me by mail. At that time, I wondered about her single name (*Lalitha is the author's legal, one-word, and preferred name, although for ease of listing we have attached the second name, Thomas, to this publication.—Editor.*) and the term she kept using: “herbistry,” which for me was tantamount to having one of my students run his or her fingernails across a chalkboard. But I gave her the information she wanted and heard no more from her until now.

Some things still haven't changed. But a lot else has. She still goes by one name only, and likes to drag her fingernails across the blackboard: “herbistry” keeps popping up throughout her book. But aside from this, her extensive knowledge relative to the botanicals she has elected to write about is quite impressive to say the least. If I, as a respected medical anthropologist and author of numerous books on medicinal plants myself, have used the logo “give dignity to weeds” to describe my work, then she is entitled to the handle “someone who gives plants personality *and feeling!*”

It shows in *how* as well as what she writes about. These various herbs come alive on the pages, colored not only by her own sensitivities, but also fully endowed with the dynamic energy of her very capable expertise. Lalitha has no sheepskin diploma from the usual North American herbal correspondence school (of which there are several). But she has graduated from the hills and dales, forests and mountains, and meadows and prairies of Mother Nature U. These were the classrooms in which she studied ardently and diligently, applying herself well to the tasks at hand.

In clear and concise terms she takes the guesswork out of herbs. Under her reliable tutelage even the most novice users of botanicals will soon become qualified enough to use those she covers in a safe and effective way. That is saying a *lot* considering just how many other herb books are out there at present. Even myself, who can claim an even three dozen books on the same topic to date, must reluctantly admit that I've had my share of "dogs" along the way. But for Lalitha, this being her first book, it's a true winner in every sense of the word! A reliable gem for consumers to place confidence in, and a marketing reward for the publishing house which decided to issue her work.

My congratulations to you Ms. Thomas (yes, she does have a last name!) on a job well done! Botanical medicine in this country will benefit from your book for years to come.

*John Heinerman, PhD.,
Medical Anthropologist,
Director, Anthropological Research Center,
Salt Lake City, UT 84147*

INTRODUCTION

ATTENTION READER! If you are a book skimmer who avoids Introductions, you will want to make an exception in this case. There are some important opinions here (all mine) about the nature of the material in this book, that will definitely help any hopeful, do-it-yourself home herbalist to proceed with confidence and the proper mood.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

TASOLE.* I began in my early twenties experimenting with herbistry while in college. That put me in touch with large groups of people almost every day. All of us, strangers and friends alike, seemed to get ill and stressed out frequently, and we automatically responded either by going to a doctor (if we had funds), or

**The word is "TASOLE" (pronounced as in 'tassle') and it stands for "True Actual Stories Of Lalitha's Experiences." In each chapter there are many places where I tell stories about my herbal adventures in order to help the reader easily learn how to begin using the Ten Essentials quickly and confidently. Skip them if you are having a crisis and need immediate instructions for application. But do come back to the TASOLE later.*

riding out the health storm on our own (if we had no funds). In either case the typical colds and flu seemed to last the same amount of time and re-occur at all-too-familiar intervals.

I was especially frustrated with the money spent and the lack of real results gained from allopathic health care.

One winter a nasty flu started knocking my friends out by the class-loads, and many of us were losing much-needed work hours. I was in the mood to do something definitive for my own health, especially something that was not the usual allopathic approach. So I went to a local herb store and bought small packets of three well-known healing herbs — goldenseal, myrrh, and Cayenne.* I had read a lot about these herbs and felt confident that my first serious experiment would be a success. What I lacked in knowledge at that time (since I had not yet begun my serious apprenticeship as an herbalist) I made up for in enthusiasm. Besides, I was a little desperate, feeling ill from the usual flu symptoms of fever, body ache, nausea, congestion and intestinal upset.

I mixed the herb powders together and began taking half-teaspoon doses in a little water every three hours or so. It tasted very bitter (and was hot from the Cayenne) but I didn't let that stop me and it was a good thing too, because I started feeling better by the end of the first day and I noted that, in any case, this was a much faster response than the usual medicines produced.

The next day I felt so good that I decided to try out the formula on my friend Bob who had the same symptoms. I gave him a packet of the mixture and told him how to take it, without bothering to tell him what it was. Just like me, he also began feeling much better by the end of the first day. When he took some of the powders to work and began giving them out to sick buddies, they too got the same results and some even suspected that my friend was giving out illegal drugs!

One friend finally asked what this seemingly magical potion was. Because I felt a little mischievous I pretended to have a secret family herbal formula, and declared that the ingredients couldn't be divulged. Yet no one believed me, and I kept hearing rumors all around campus and at various work places about a "miracle drug powder."

*The Ten Essential Herbs are capitalized throughout the book.

A week later when Bob returned to ask for more powders, I found out that he was selling my remedy to his work partners for a fee befitting a "secret miracle drug." Even at a high price it was substantially cheaper than the usual fees for doctors and prescriptions that his buyers were used to, and it seemed to work much better too.

Although this experiment was totally unscientific, the results were widespread enough to cause me to investigate herbistry further. It was a great feeling to have successfully taken my health into my own hands, and I wanted to find out more about how it all worked.

In my 15 years as a professional herbalist (I didn't start counting until I knew what I was doing), I have learned the medicinal uses of dozens of plants from whatever climate I found myself in, from New England to Arizona. I have owned my own herbal remedy company, called Weeds of Worth, which marketed formulas I prepared myself. I have taught and lectured about herbs and their uses to hundreds of students and professionals, and have herbalized myself and others in first-aid offices, kitchens, at the scene of highway accidents, in classrooms, forests, deserts, foreign countries, and on restaurant floors. I have seen people and pets of all ages and descriptions with health needs from life-threatening to humorous be helped substantially with herbistry. (Am I sounding like the proverbial snake-oil salesman yet?) Through all this adventure I have found that there are Ten Essential Herbs that can take care of almost any of the usual health needs that arise in daily life and travels.

These Ten Essential medicinal herbs are, for the most part, readily available anywhere in the world, from American grocery stores to the open-air markets of India or Mexico. So even if you find yourself in a remote village in Nepal and need help for infected bug bites, food poisoning, colds, flus, cuts, scrapes, foul moods or whatever — you can almost always find some of the Ten Essential Herbs and be back on the trip in good shape. At home the Ten Essentials can be kept on hand at all times. When visiting friends who are inexperienced or unprepared in these matters, you may be amazed to find out how many of the Ten Essentials are already in their spice cabinet or refrigerator.

Limiting the choices of herbs to the Ten Essentials makes this approach to health and beauty-care a simple and practical one. Like many of my students, you may have been intimidated about learning

any herbistry in the past because of a fear of being overwhelmed with the sheer number of herbal choices offered in most herb books, seminars and lectures.

Another hesitation about learning to use herbs for health stems from our upbringing in a culture that emphasizes the allopathic medical model and the “giving over” of health care to professionals who, we are taught, are always more “in-the-know.” (Any trip to a pharmacy in my growing-up years, especially if I were ill, tended to reinforce in me the idea that there were simply too many choices among all those pills, powders, lotions, liquids, etc., for me to be trusted with. It seemed clear that handling my own health was an impossibly complex and possibly dangerous thing — and what could I know about it anyway?) These learned health attitudes persist and often show up particularly strongly when we first entertain the idea of learning a little self-help herbistry.

Ten Essential Herbs is based on the holistic approach to health care — one which views individual symptoms in relationship to the whole bodily system. The allopathic medical model, on the other hand, uses a specific drug to suppress or alleviate a specific symptom while often ignoring the need to balance the body systems as a whole. For example, a painkiller is commonly prescribed for a headache, regardless of its cause. In herbistry we would look to discover whether the headache was caused by indigestion or a congested liver, etc. We would use herbs to relieve the congestion or balance the digestion, thus quickly relieving the headache without undesirable side effects.

The approach I take in my system of Ten Essential Herbs is simple enough for children to use. Children have been a particularly inspiring group of students for me. I have worked extensively with teaching them how to begin identifying and using the medicinal plants that grow in their own back yards. Insect bites, scrapes and bumps are quite common, and children love the feeling of confidence they get from knowing how to handle these situations as a part of their daily activities rather than as a big scary problem. Even a two-year-old toddler can learn to tape a slice of Onion onto an insect bite or bruise, or to get out the People Paste (a powdered herbal mixture; see People Paste Appendix A) and mix a bit for a cut or small burn.

TASOLE: I did volunteer work once for a group of 15 children ages two through eleven and most of our activities took place out of doors. Even the youngest of the children quickly learned to rub a bit of raw Onion on an insect bite or to chew a fresh Comfrey leaf (growing in the yard) into a pulp for a personal poultice on any cut or scrape. Children from about five years old on up began to learn how to make simple herb tea for soothing a stomach or helping a fever to pass. I always kept a fresh raw Onion in an "Onion bag" on the playing field and almost daily I would hear a child call out "Onion bag, Onion bag," which was the signal for a friend to get a bit of the onion for an insect bite that was itching or to prevent a new bruise from forming. The Comfrey plants were also well-used as were the rest of the Ten Essentials in the herb cabinet in the house. The children delighted in teaching parents and new playmates how to take care of themselves with the herbs.

It is common to take the allopathic medical model and simply try to transfer it onto this new exploration of medicinal plants. In herbistry, although we may speak of symptoms, we are thinking in terms of balancing the body systems as a whole and in relationship to each other. This Ten Essentials system is geared toward addressing your health and beauty concerns in a very intuitive style. As you begin trying out the suggestions with which you feel most comfortable, you build experience. Meanwhile, as you read and practice, you can expect to be imbibing what may be an *entirely new mood*—a sense of self-confidence and organic (i.e. intuitive) understanding of which herbs to use and when, together with an equally important sense of humor about your daily bodily needs. As a result, your next experience of a caffeine headache, for instance, may change from a hair-pulling, eye-crossing dash for pain killers or more caffeine, to a confident step toward the spice cabinet for a dash of Cayenne.

It is this overall intuitive approach that makes this book unique. My major intention is to give you a strong taste of how I have approached and taught herbistry, and how I gained confidence in evaluating and responding to my own physical health needs and those of my family and students. I want you to be inspired to do the same. In giving you numerous examples of the possible uses of each herb and explaining how I have handled the many different types of people and personalities

encountered, I am constructing for you the mood, or atmosphere, of thoughtful and creative experimentation that is really the way to proceed.

In addition, I include scientific data on HOW and WHY the herbs work (a detail often missing in many herb books). I also simply explain some details of how the body functions and how to discern your health needs. For a more detailed understanding of herbal chemistry and body functionings, I provide a thorough Resource Guide (Appendix C).

In summary, my theory — Lalitha's Theory — goes like this: *If you grasp the general characteristics, mood, actions, and "personality" of an herb first, then you can use that friendly relationship to apply the herb in an intelligent and effective manner while still maintaining the mood of creative experimentation.*

This book will guide you in that process.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

FOR EMERGENCY USE:

Look in the Index or the General Use Chart (Appendix F) for the references related to your need and go straight to that information. Then, while you are taking care of your muscle ache, or cold, or whatever, you can begin to enjoy yourself in learning Ten Essentials herbistry by following the steps I will outline below.

FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND LEARNING

—*Developing the Intuitive Approach:*

STEP #1: Browse through the book.

- Enjoy the rhymes.
- Read the TASOLES. These are all True Actual Stories Of Lalitha's Experiences (TASOLE) which will inspire you to *take action* with your own self-help needs.
- Understand the layout. Each chapter has a list entitled "APPLICATIONS and ATTRIBUTES (Quick Reference List)." This is a list of all the applications within that chapter. Major uses of that chapter's herb are emphasized within the list. Learning these major uses of each herb is a fast way to begin becoming familiar with each of the Ten Essentials.

At the end of each application within a chapter are several headings that should help you efficiently find the most complete input about that application. These headings are:

ALSO SEE: This will point out other applications *within that same chapter's* list which would give an additional point of view or topic related to the application you have looked up.

ALTERNATIVE OR SUPPLEMENTARY SELF-HELP: All the herbs pointed out here are others among the Ten Essentials that are good *supplementary* herbs which could be used in *addition* to the main herb of the chapter and for the application being studied. The herbs *marked with a "star" (*)* can actually be good *alternatives*, as well as supplements, for the application being studied. To make a decision about which additional herb/herbs, if any, you might want to use, review related applications in those other chapters.

DOSAGE: Most often the dosage of an herb for any application will follow the General Dosage guidelines given at the beginning of each chapter. However, if there are any additional dosage guidelines for a particular application, I will list them here.

STEP #2: Make yourself a cup of tea. See the complete instructions on how to do this in the Applications list (under Tea) in Chapter I, Lesson #2. Peppermint is a tasty herb to start with. Since tea preparation is so integral to herbistry, when you can make a cup of tea you are ready to begin using this book for hundreds of needs. As you go along and gain confidence you can add the other skills of preparation such as Honeyball, Infusion, Decoction, etc. (all described in Chapter I, Lesson #2).

STEP #3: Read Chapter I. Basic herbistry information is presented in this chapter in the form of six Lessons, the basics of a course in Introductory Herbistry. You will be referring back to this chapter frequently for general information, especially for easy instructions in Application Methods and Definitions given in Lesson #2.

STEP #4: Learn the "CORE FIVE." Within the Ten Essentials are a Core Five group of herbs which make an efficient place to begin your learning. These **core five** herbs are CAYENNE, COMFREY, GARLIC, GINGER, and PEPPERMINT. Even with just these five herbs it is quite possible to handle *most* common health needs effectively.

Each of the Core Five herbs is marked by the *symbol of an Apple Core* on the first page of that herb's chapter.

Pick one of these five that is attractive to you. For instance, you might choose to learn about Garlic first. Read its rhyme, Personality Profile and TASOLES. The rhymes are especially good memory joggers and I have used them with children ages six and up with great success.

Next, choose one or two major uses of that herb, especially one you might currently need to learn about, such as the nerve/tonic uses of Garlic. Read them over, referring back to Chapter I (especially Lesson #2) as necessary for elaboration and clarification. When an herb has a tonic use, this is often the most practical application to start with as it gives a good overview.

If at all possible try to find a situation in which to apply what you are learning, even if it is simply an ear infection on your cat. It really helps to use an application soon if you can.

STEP #5: Start making connections. *Experiment.* Depending on whether you are the type who likes learning many facets of a subject at once, or one who likes to stick to one part until it is mastered, you would now proceed to either:

- a) Start cross-referencing the application you have picked, with others of the Ten Essentials that have similar applications. See how each herb is used *singly* and then in combination for that same application.

Review Chapter I, Lesson #6, for brief instruction in using herbs singly and in combinations.

or

- b) Continue studying one herb of the Core Five, (or any of the Ten Essentials), and its applications, one by one, until you have a good grasp of "who" the herb is and what it does. Then proceed to study another one.

I want to emphasize again that it is easily within our means to overcome our past fears about taking care of our own health and our feeling that we must rely upon others to "heal" us. This Ten Essentials System is a focused and powerful way to start.

CHAPTER I

GENERAL “HOW-TO” OF HERBISTRY

In this chapter you will receive six easy lessons in basic herbistry:

- Use the Four Big Questions
- Application Methods and Definitions
- Utensils for Herbal Preparations
- Potency of Herbs and the Forms They Come In
- How to Store Your Herbs
- Use the Ten Essentials Separately or in Combinations

Don't be afraid of making a mistake. The Ten Essentials were chosen for their potency and safety.

Throughout your use of the Ten Essential Herbs, you will be continually referring back to this chapter to hone your herbistry skills and build understanding in herbal vocabulary.

LESSON #1: USE THE FOUR BIG QUESTIONS

Four questions need to be answered in each situation you encounter. These are:

- What are the first priorities?
- What herbs address the priorities?
- What herbs do I have on hand?
- How are the herbs best applied in this case?

If you keep these questions in mind and consistently apply them as you learn the Ten Essentials System, you will quickly develop an easy and confident approach that will automatically click in when you need it.

Keep in mind that the great charm of this system is flexibility. Usually there will be more than one good choice among the Ten Essentials for any need you will face. Another charm is practicality. Many of the Ten Essentials can be found day or night at the 24-hour supermarkets that are omnipresent these days. Although it won't take much effort to keep all ten in stock, there is rarely a cause for concern if you find yourself, on occasion, without your "favorite" herb. With this system you will understand how to make do with whatever is available.

Let's begin. I will "talk" you through the general process involved with each of the questions. Using these questions you will be developing a consistent style or approach, a framework through which you will think out each health situation and determine the practical applications, methods, and herbal actions needed.

QUESTION #1:

"What Are the First Priorities?"

****Use Observation and Past Experience.***

When faced with a health need, begin the evaluation (often done in moments) through careful observation of general symptoms. Also use common sense and whatever growing knowledge you have so far acquired of how the body works. With family and friends you will have the additional benefit of your past observations of them in their "normal" state, and so you will easily assess whether there is cause for concern or not. (I often laugh when I think of what I consider "normal" for myself, family, and friends. Think about it. Don't you just want to laugh out loud?)

TASOLE: Fred, a new acquaintance, began to have a choking fit during a lecture we were attending at a friend's house. He staggered out of the living room and into the kitchen where he stood gripping the sink while struggling for breath. The situation worsened (in my eyes) when he slowly sank to the floor, gasping out the words, "I can't breathe." It all happened so suddenly, and I felt I had every reason to suspect that he might die on the spot if I didn't act quickly.

I was about to give him a big dose of Cayenne and start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation as first aid prior to taking him to the hospital, when a woman friend of his walked through the kitchen and saw us on the floor. Fred was still gasping mightily, turning white and blue by turns, and the look on my face must have revealed my approaching panic. This other woman, however, seemed unconcerned and casually said, "Oh, this often happens to him when certain touchy subjects are talked about such as in the lecture this evening. Just take him completely outside for a minute or two and he'll be fine right away." Fred seemed to relax a bit after her remarks and although he was still gasping and choking, he got up and stumbled out the door onto the porch. In about one minute he was totally back to normal, breathing easily. Together we went back to the lecture, and the subject matter had conveniently changed. That was it! No hospital bill, no ambulance, no mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, no herbs, just a change of scenery! This is an example of the benefit of past observation of what is "normal" for a particular person!

****Take A Broader View***

In discerning the priorities we begin to broaden our ways of viewing symptoms. To facilitate this understanding I have included a category at the end of every herbal application called "ALSO SEE." This category specifies other applications within that same chapter that you should "Also See" for a broader understanding of the circumstance you are investigating. For instance, in addition to seeing a headache predominantly as a pain to be relieved, your thinking might run along broader lines: a *headache* could be seen as a restriction of *circulation* to the head, perhaps from a known cause such as *anxiety*, *caffeine withdrawal*, or *digestion* upset. *Menstrual* cramps might be seen as a *muscle spasm* (in this case of the uterus), as are leg cramps, *spastic colon*, or dry

heaves of the *stomach*, all variations of muscle *spasm*. A honeybee sting can be viewed in the broader sense of poisonous *insect bites* as could the stings or “bites” of wasps, spiders, etc. If a cut were bleeding profusely the first priority would be *bleeding*, yet that application might also refer you to additional priorities in helping the cut such as *wounds*, *skin*, and *infection*. (The italicized words are some of those you might find in the “Also See” category at the end of an application to which you have referred.)

Taking a broader view allows you to see the commonalities underlying bodily symptoms and how these correspond to the helping actions of the herbs. This is not to say that every case that involves spasms of any kind (for instance), should always be followed through in exactly the same way. Many spasms or cramps of varying types can be relieved through use of herbal anti-spasmodics or nervines, yet the follow-up for menstrual spasms (cramps) might involve nutritional supplementation such as calcium, whereas stomach spasms (vomiting) may involve a follow-up of a simple soothing broth, or sucking on ice chips to relieve dehydration. Going to a “bottom line” in this way and starting your self-help from there is a very effective way to begin.

“Broader View” thinking helps to simplify things and encourages you to get to the root cause of a self-help need efficiently and with confidence. What some students have started off seeing as a scary, unique, and mysterious health crisis necessitating a drastic remedy with possible unhealthy side effects, now is seen as easily handled *causes* and *effects*. For example, without using Broader View thinking our reaction might be, “Quick! Get me a painkiller! I have a sudden headache and nausea for *no apparent reason*.” When we begin to use Broader View thinking, the fear and mystery lessen, we make more reasonable and healthy choices, and our mental scenario might go like this: “Oh yeah! I ate three hamburgers and two banana splits which resulted in a headache from indigestion. I need some Peppermint oil to help my digestion and relieve this type of headache.” We begin to learn and observe that *what appeared as disjointed and unconnected symptoms are all connected through the functionings of the body and emotions as a whole*.

QUESTION #2:**"What Herbs Address the Priorities?"**

I find this a very entertaining question to answer. In this Ten Essentials System there are many ways to respond to any given situation, each quite effective yet each possessing a quality, a creative nuance of its own, that compares somewhat to the choice of colors and materials in painting.

Look in the Index or in a specific chapter under a major symptom or health need such as bleeding, vomiting, headache, burn, nausea, toothache, etc., or refer to the General Use Chart, Appendix G. This chart focuses on the most potent uses for each herb, whereas the general Index and each chapter list a much greater variety and flexibility in each herb's use. You most likely will find more than one choice listed amongst the Ten Essentials for any application, so at this point, especially if quick action is called for, your first choice will be the most-potent-for-the-job herb that you already have on hand. These first-choice herbs are specified by dots or squares on the General Use chart in Appendix G, and by applications printed in bold type within each chapter in the Applications and Attributes (Quick Reference List).

If the situation has flexibility as to the time frame for taking action, you may find yourself wanting to experiment with more than one of the choices or with mixing herbs together for the enhancement of each other and increased potency. (This is described further in Lesson #6.) At the end of each application in every chapter, there is a separate category called *"ALTERNATIVE OR SUPPLEMENTARY SELF-HELP."* Here is where I have listed other herbs among the Ten Essentials that either have similar action to the herb you are reading about (good alternatives, indicated with a star "★") or that have actions that could give additional yet different help along with the herb you are reading about (supplementary herbs, no star). I always suggest to my students to take advantage, whenever possible, of opportunities to try different herbs or a complementary mixture of herbs for similar needs. This leads to a basis for comparison of the herbal actions and gives first-hand experience of the creative nuances I mentioned earlier. An example of this is the choice between Cayenne or Comfrey root for bleeding. Although they are both very effective for bleeding, upon using them you may discover Cayenne to be your choice for immediate first aid in bleeding wounds while Comfrey, with its mucilaginous qualities

and tissue-healing capabilities, may be your long-term choice for wounds that bleed intermittently while the tissue needs help regenerating over a period of time. Also, although Cayenne stops bleeding fast, it may not be practical in some instances, such as for children or invalids who may touch a wound with some Cayenne on it and then touch their eyes or other sensitive areas inadvertently. In these cases you have the potent alternative of Comfrey root. It often happens that simple practical considerations such as these may determine the choice of herb.

QUESTION #3:

“What Herbs Are Readily Available?”

“Readily available” means which herb or herbs (of the choices suggested in a given application) do you have access to “right now.” For example, you may need emergency help in stopping the bleeding of a wound and see that Cayenne and Comfrey root are both good choices. You may have developed a preference for Cayenne, yet if Cayenne is not right at hand and Comfrey root is, then of course you grab the readily available Comfrey root. When you have flexibility in a situation, such as in planning to make a cough syrup for future use, you will find all of the Ten Essentials readily available at a store or through mail order.

If you are really serious about giving this Ten Essentials System a firm place in your self-help repertoire, you will want to have all ten herbs on hand as a matter of habit. However, I have handled many health needs with the herbs gotten from a grocery store on the spur-of-the-moment when I have found myself in unprepared circumstances. This is comforting to keep in mind. Also, if you cannot quickly get one or more of the herbs needed, this is rarely a cause for concern. Many of the herbs have overlapping uses, a great convenience of this system. Simply look under the heading “Alternative or Supplementary Self-Help” at the end of an application. The herbs that can be used as alternatives are clearly marked with a star (*).

Always keep herbs labeled with ink or marker that won't rub off or smear easily. It won't do any good to have the Ten Essentials on hand if you forget what's what and find them unlabeled!

QUESTION #4:**"How Are the Herbs Best Applied
in This Case?"**

Since there are so many ways to apply an herb, you will want to narrow down the choices by deciding first whether an internal or external application is called for. Each chapter has internal and external dosages listed separately. Even if you will be needing both internal and external applications, just take it one step at a time. After having fun practicing with my suggestions you may well be able to invent some applications of your own.

For those of you who may want to progress to more advanced techniques of herbal preparation and application such as the making of complex tinctures and the treatment of more serious illness, refer to one of the two-starred (**) reference titles in the Resource List, Appendix C.

Go on to Lesson #2 to begin learning the details of application methods for internal and external use. Go to Lesson #6 for further instruction in mixing an herbal formulation.

**LESSON #2: APPLICATION METHODS
AND DEFINITIONS**

This lesson is one with which you will want to become very familiar, so that you have the knowledge to act with firm confidence when handling a self-help need.

Determine whether you are needing an internal or external application and then proceed to that list. (See p.8 or p.20). If you are needing both internal and external applications, make the applications step by step in the order of your priority. For instance, with a bleeding wound, your first priority is to stop the bleeding. That would be an external application. Then you might proceed to an internal application of a tea or encapsulated herb for additional help in the prevention of infection or to help soothe pain.

APPLICATION METHODS - INTERNAL USE:*(Quick Reference List)*

BOLUS
CAPSULES
CHILDREN'S IDEAS
DOSAGE EQUIVALENTS
DECOCTION
EAR DROPS/WASH
ENEMA
GARGLE
HONEYBALL
INFUSION
LOZENGE
NASAL RINSE
RICE PAPER
SUPPOSITORY
SWEETENERS
SYRUP
TEA
TINCTURES

BOLUS: A bolus is a convenient suppository for inserting herbal help into the vagina. Powdered herbs are made into a thick clay-like consistency using melted cocoa butter, water, or honey, and are then rolled and patted into small shapes and dosages convenient for inserting into the vagina. When cocoa butter is used (usually the best idea), warm it enough to just melt the cocoa butter, mix the cocoa butter with your powdered herbs to a stiff consistency and form it into convenient bolus shapes. Put the formed boluses into your refrigerator where the cool temperature will make the cocoa butter firm. Keep the cocoa butter boluses stored in your refrigerator until used, as they will become soft at room temperature. When water is used, place the formed boluses on a cookie sheet in the oven at a low temperature of 120 degrees or so. When they are dry and hard you may store them

in an airtight jar. When inserting a water-based bolus into the vagina, use a little lotion or gynecological jelly as a lubricant for easy insertion. When honey is used as the moistening agent, simply mix a small amount of it with the herbs to make a very stiff clay-like consistency. Form it and then stiffen by storing it in the refrigerator. Although a honey bolus can work very well, it will not be as firm as the two other types, yet is usually firm enough for vaginal use.

CAPSULES: Powdered herbs are often put into gelatin capsules as a convenience in taking them. You can buy capsules in most health food stores and even in an ordinary pharmacy, although they are a little more expensive there. Capsules come in varying sizes from "000" (fairly large to swallow) down to size "0," which are the smallest I have found commonly available. Most herbs can be purchased already encapsulated in size "0" capsules, yet it is much more economical, and herbs are probably fresher and more potent, if you buy the herbs in bulk, by the ounce, from the best source you can find and then fill the capsules yourself. I have found that three very full size "00" capsules (the size I prefer when it is up to me) are the equivalent of about one teaspoon powdered herb. There are some drawbacks to using capsules, however. I often prefer not to use gelatin capsules as there is a very potent process that is initiated in the mouth, brain, and digestive tract by having the herbs interact directly with the saliva and enzymes in the mouth. Capsules prevent this initial important process that happens in the mouth and can slow the herb's effect in the digestive tract. Also, I have often seen encapsulated herbs come out, capsule intact, from either end of the body, and this does not encourage my confidence in them as an herbal conveyer, especially if a person has any digestive weakness. You will just have to use your own judgement with respect to convenience and taste in deciding this question for each circumstance.

Some good alternatives to capsules in many situations are herbal Honeyballs, Rice Paper or Tinctures (see these applications). The simplest method is to put the required dose of herb into the mouth and wash it down with water, juice, or tea. Children and people who have trouble swallowing capsules often find these ideas helpful.

Always remember to drink plenty of water to help with the dispersion of the herbs, encapsulated or otherwise. Occasionally I find a person who has what I call a "burp back" effect soon after swallowing encapsulated herbs. This is characterized by a burping that has the flavor of the herbs that were in the capsules. If this happens it means

that the capsules are not dissolving quickly enough. The situation can often be remedied by drinking an additional glass of water (warm water works best). Other tricks to possibly prevent “burp back” are 1) poke a pinhole in each end of the capsule before swallowing it (this is a bit of a hassle if you must take capsules very often) or 2) take the capsule together with a small bit of light food such as a bite or two of fruit, or 3) take the herbs out of the capsule altogether and drink with some water or juice.

Review Dosage Equivalents in this list to determine equivalents between teas, decoctions, infusions, and capsules, and for hints on adjusting an herbal formula to minimize digestive stress.

CHILDREN’S IDEAS: There are several ways to make it easier to offer herbs and herbal preparations to children. Most of them are described separately in this list under Honeyball, Syrups, Lozenges, Decoction or Infusion (ways to offer herbs in concentrated and therefore smaller doses). Check the Dosage Equivalents and Sweeteners sections in this list, too.

Here are a few more ideas:

- 1) Make a decoction or infusion of an herb or herbs and soak dried raisins in it. The raisins soak up the herb liquid, automatically adding the raisin sweetness, and make it easy for children to ingest the herbs. You will need to measure the amount of liquid before you soak the raisins, so you can figure out how many raisins need to be eaten for a dose of herbal brew.
- 2) Small amounts of powdered herbs can be mixed with a spoonful of applesauce and then followed with one or two more spoonfuls of plain applesauce if needed.
- 3) Raw Garlic (usually crushed) and other fresh or dried herbs can be offered mixed in honey. Honey buffers the spiciness of Garlic and enhances the assimilation of any herb. (See Honey, Appendix B.)

DECOCTION: A decoction is a concentrated brew made by gently simmering “tougher” forms or parts of herbs such as roots, barks, and woody stems (either fresh or dried). It is different from an infusion which is a concentrate made by steeping (not simmering) the more delicate parts of the herb such as leaves, flowers, light stems, etc. (See Infusion in this list.) A decoction is a concentrated version of an herbal tea, commonly made by gently simmering one ounce of herb

in 2 cups of water for 20 to 30 minutes. A decoction is usually taken 1/4 to 1/2 cup at a time as needed. If you are a beginner, practice with the tea form of preparation first before going for the decoction or infusion.

If you are combining herbs that call for different preparation methods (i.e., steeping and simmering), simply prepare the simmered herbs first, strain them out when their preparation is finished, and steep the "steeping herbs" in that hot brew for the allotted time.

Start with the purest water possible and avoid using aluminum or cast iron pans in preparing herbal mixtures. (See Lesson #3: Utensils.)

Don't make the mistake of thinking a stronger brew such as a decoction or infusion must always be better than the strength of a simpler, ordinary cup of tea. My new students are often surprised at the results from an average-strength cup of tea and consequently change their "stronger is better" thinking. As you gain experience, you will be able to recognize those situations that do call for a stronger brew such as a decoction, infusion, or tincture. Sometimes it may be more convenient to take fewer doses of an herb or sometimes a situation does call for stronger and more concentrated action than a simple cup of tea provides.

Review Dosage Equivalents in this list to make the proper substitutions between a cup of tea and a decoction.

DOSAGE EQUIVALENTS: Here are some equivalents that will come in handy when you are trying to figure out the most convenient way to administer an herbal preparation. These are approximate equivalents to give you a general idea of where to start and are not meant to be rigid rules or to replace common sense.

1 cup tea = 2 size "0" capsules

1 cup tea = 2 oz. (4 Tbsp.) decoction or infusion

1 cup tea = 1/2 tsp. powdered or 1 tsp. crushed/chopped herbs
(either taken plain in mouth or made into a honeyball, etc.)

1 cup tea = tincture as per manufacturer's suggestion for dosage
(usually drops per 1/2 cup of water)

For the most efficient action of the herb, unless otherwise specified, take it on an empty stomach as a tea, or, for other forms such as capsules, with a full glass of water. This allows the herb to have maximum impact rather than to be diluted and buried in the digestive action of a stomach full of food.

Occasionally an herb or herbal formula is uncomfortable to an empty stomach. If this is the case, it is a good idea to add 1/2 to 1 part buffering and/or stimulating herb to the formula, such as Ginger, Slippery Elm, or Comfrey, or take the herb with a small bite or two of simple food such as fruit. These ideas almost always work well, yet you can take the herbs with a meal or light snack if you must.

Review additional preparation and dosage details in this list under Capsules, Children's Ideas, Decoction, Gargle, Honeyball, Infusion, Rice Paper, Syrups, Lozenges, and Tinctures.

Also see Lesson #6 in this chapter called *Use the Ten Essentials Separately or in Combinations*.

EAR DROPS/RINSE: Most commonly, herbal oils such as Garlic oil are used for ear drops. For an ear rinse, a tea or decoction or infusion is used. This can be followed with a drop or two of olive oil or Garlic oil to aid in lubrication. Usually 2 to 4 drops of oil is a good amount to put into an ear. Hold it in by putting a bit of cotton in the ear. A bulb syringe can be used to gently inject an herbal tea of the proper temperature (body temperature or slightly warmer) into the ear to help relieve an ear wax congestion. Always treat both ears even though only one ear may be in distress. Ear difficulties may "travel" from one ear to the other, especially if you are dealing with an infection.

ENEMA: During any illness it is important to help the body eliminate toxins as quickly and easefully as possible. The colon is a major eliminative channel. Using an enema at the proper time will help the colon cleanse and renew the body. The colon can also help distribute an herbal action throughout the body. (Some of the most commonly used herbs for enemas are Garlic, Slippery Elm, and Yarrow. See Chapters VI, X, and XI.)

Do not use enemas consistently or casually. Frequent use can lead to a habit which would be harmful. But when you are ill with any of a number of inconveniences, from flu to colds to dysentery to mononucleosis, an enema can help to end the misery and speed your way to well-being. It gets impressive results and is quite simple.

The herbal brew for an enema can be a decoction, infusion, or tincture. It should be a little warm to approximate the internal body temperature. To make the brew, use 1 Tbsp. herb per cup of boiling hot water, steep or simmer 15 minutes, then cool to desired temperature. Fill an enema bag with two quarts of the concoction for an adult, or

one quart for younger children under 10 years old.

For babies or infants, use a bulb syringe to gently insert the liquid into the rectum. Do this repeatedly until one or two cups of liquid have been injected or until their automatic intestinal reflex causes their bowels to evacuate, whichever comes first. With a baby the scenario is often that you give the bulb syringe injection of liquid (perhaps 1 to 4 oz. gets in), then it is automatically evacuated, then you repeat the injection, then it is evacuated, three to five times. In this way the colon is helped to empty completely. Remember that with infants or small babies, the colon evacuates automatically and fairly quickly as soon as any pressure builds up as they have not yet learned bowel control. It is wise to have the child in a tub or basin of some kind and to have the enema bag or bulb syringe fairly low to the body to insure milder water pressure. Before beginning the enema, fill a tub or basin with hot water and then empty and dry it to warm it up for its occupant.

If you have no experience with administering enemas, you can begin to develop your own technique by trying the following: Hang the enema bag one or two feet above your body where it (your body, of course) will be reclining perhaps on a clean rug or towel spread on the floor (probably in a bathroom), or in a dry tub or basin (usually for very young children) in a warm room. A primary idea with an enema is to administer it into the colon slowly and gently. If the bag is hung very high up, this makes the water pressure too strong for best efficiency and comfort. Enema bags come equipped with a hand-operated clip that opens and shuts the tubing, thus regulating the flow of liquid as you decide. Cover the enema tube tip (or bulb syringe tip, for babies) with an unscented mild cream or lotion such as baby cream or petroleum jelly and insert it gently into the anus as you lie on your left side. (For babies you should opt for what is most comfortable for the child.) Lying on the left side facilitates the entry of the enema into the descending colon. Allow perhaps one cup of liquid to enter the lower part of the colon and then pinch off the tubing so that you may take the enema tip out of the anus temporarily and sit on the toilet to evacuate this small amount of fluid. The point here is to clear the anus of any fecal matter that may have accumulated at the anal opening. This helps the rest of the enema to flow into the colon more comfortably. If you are using an enema to help a case of diarrhea or dysentery, this first step won't be necessary. Add a little water back to the enema bag so that you still have the full amount you planned for the enema. Continue as before, being careful to monitor the flow of the

liquid with the hand-operated clip. It is usually best to allow the enema to flow into the colon in small (perhaps one cup) amounts. Continue to lie on your left side at first; then rotate onto your back or other side to help the enema flow more easily. Whenever you feel pressure building up in the colon, clip off the water flow and relax perhaps gently massaging the abdomen while the liquid makes its way inside the colon. When the pressure slackens somewhat, you will then open the tubing clip and continue administering the enema. Two quarts of enema solution is not the entire holding capacity of the colon in an adult and this amount is usually held easily by adults. After the enema is administered, it is then evacuated into the toilet. It is important to stay warm while taking an enema as this facilitates relaxation.

Occasionally an enema will not evacuate easily. This is often due to a spastic colon which holds the liquid in until the colon relaxes, or to dehydration in the body which can result in the body actually absorbing most of the enema liquid so that there is not much left to be evacuated. In either case there is no cause for worry as the body naturally balances itself either by evacuating the enema when the colon relaxes or by using the water it has absorbed.

After an herbal enema (especially a garlic enema) it is sometimes a good idea (usually for adults) to follow it, perhaps an hour to a day later, with an enema of plain water that contains a double or triple dose of liquid or powdered acidophilus (double or triple what the manufacturer suggests for oral use). This will immediately replenish the healthful digestive bacteria in the colon that are usually very depleted during illness. The acidophilus enema hastens the return of healthy bowel action, especially in those whose intestinal action is easily disturbed.

EYEWASH: Always rinse both eyes even if only one eye seems to need help. Put a well-strained herbal tea in an eye dropper, and keeping your eyes open, gently squeeze a few drops into each eye. At this point your eyes will start blinking and this is fine. Sometimes I have dipped a lint-free cotton cloth in an herb tea and then squeezed the tea slowly off the cloth into the eye of a person lying down to receive it.

GARGLE: A gargle is used when you are needing help with a sore, dry, infected, or strained throat. Crushed or powdered herbs can be made into a tea, decoction or infusion for this purpose, or two to four drops of herbal oil such as Clove or Peppermint can be mixed in a cup

of warm water and used. The temperature of your gargle is up to you. Additional additives for gargles are 1/2 to 1 tsp. sea salt per cup of herbal mixture or 1/8 to 1/4 cup alcohol-based mouthwash per cup of cooled mixture.

HONEYBALL: It is most efficient to make enough honeyballs to last one or two days at a time instead of making them singly. Measure an amount of powdered herbs to start with, perhaps one or two days' worth. For example, if you wanted to take 1 teaspoon of an herb powder four times a day, one day's amount would be 4 teaspoons. If you wanted to measure an amount to last two days, in this example, you would then pre-measure 8 teaspoons of the herb. Having previously measured your herb powders, mix them with just enough raw, uncooked, "un-anythinged" honey (whatever is the best you can find) to make a stiff clay-like consistency which can be rolled into a long "rope" of perhaps 1/2-inch thickness. Take this "honey roll" mixture and cut it into single doses. In my present example, this would mean that if you mixed 8 teaspoons of herb with honey, this would equal 8 doses and therefore you would divide that particular "honeyball rope" into 8 pieces. This would give you one dose four times a day for two days. Got it?

Each dose can be chewed briefly or pinched apart and rolled into tiny honey balls for swallowing like pills. It usually takes much less honey than you think, so knead it in carefully and patiently as you mix. If on your first try you get a mixture that is a bit too loose, or even runny, you can either add an additional measured amount of dry herbs to stiffen it some or simply spoon up a proper dose and take it like a wonderful honey elixir. Take a day's worth of the honeyballs in a little packet along with you to work, school or wherever, and *store the rest in the refrigerator.*

In addition to being a binding agent, the honey serves the purpose of enhancing the digestion and assimilation of the herbs and it will also have antiseptic action if it is good raw honey. Usually it is best to make no more than two days' worth at a time to insure the best potency. (See Honey, Appendix B.)

Honeyballs are a favorite way to administer herbs to children. A variation on the honeyball method is to soak dried raisins in an herbal decoction or infusion and then give these "herbal raisins" to the child to eat. For most herbs among these Ten Essentials, the flavors mix well with the raisins.

Honeyballs can be made equally well using light or dark unsulphured molasses or glycerin (available at health and drug stores). An essential oil, such as Peppermint or Clove oil, could be added for flavor or herbal action, if needed, according to your taste buds.

INFUSION: An infusion is a concentrated version of an herbal tea, commonly made by steeping (usually covered) one ounce of herb in 2 cups of water for 20 to 30 minutes. (To steep, bring the water to a boil and then turn off the heat *before* adding the herbs.) An infusion is usually taken 1/4 to 1/2 cup at a time as needed. If you are a beginner, practice with the tea form of preparation first before going for the infusion or decoction. An infusion is made from the more delicate forms or parts of herbs such as flowers, leaves, powdered herbs of any type, and delicate, thin stems (either fresh or dried), all of which need to be steeped (as opposed to simmered) to extract them. If you want to make a concentrate of a plant part that is “tougher,” such as roots, barks, nut shells, woody stems, etc., this would be simmered (not steeped) and is called a decoction (see Decoction heading in this list).

If you are combining herbs that call for different preparation methods (i.e., steeping and simmering) simply prepare the simmered herbs first, strain them out when their preparation is finished, and steep the “steeping herbs” in that hot brew for the time called for.

Start with the purest water possible and avoid using aluminum or cast iron pans in preparing herbal mixtures. (See Lesson #3: Utensils.)

Beware of “stronger is better” thinking which says that a decoction or infusion must always be better than the strength of a simpler ordinary cup of tea. My new students are often surprised at the results from an average strength cup of tea. However, as you gain experience you will be able to recognize those situations that do call for a stronger brew such as a decoction, infusion, or tincture. You may find it is more convenient to take fewer doses of an herb (which is accomplished with a stronger brew), or that a situation does call for a stronger and more concentrated action than a simple cup of tea provides.

Review Dosage Equivalents in this list for help in making the proper substitutions from a cup of tea to an infusion, etc.

LOZENGE: If you want to make throat (or cough) lozenges, first make an herbal syrup as a base. Begin by heating 1 cup honey or molasses to the "hard-crack" stage on a candy thermometer. The next step is to add 1/4 cup powdered or chunked dry herbs for about 10 minutes of simmering or steeping. At this point if powdered herbs were used, they are left in the lozenge. If chunked herbs were used, they are usually strained out for aesthetic reasons. It won't matter if the honey cools off somewhat when the herbs are added if the syrup was already brought to the "hard-crack" stage of heat. The reason you add the herbs second is that it takes a good while (perhaps half an hour or more) to get the honey or molasses hot enough and sometimes this is long enough to overcook the herbs. However, if fresh or "wet" herbs are used (i.e. raw onion), the herbs must be cooked *with* the honey to the hard crack stage. Spread (or place in small blobs) this hot mixture onto a buttered cookie sheet to cool into tasty bits to suck on. As the mixture cools part way it is easy to score it with lines to facilitate breaking it up later. Don't forget to butter the cookie sheet.

Use these lozenges freely as desired and experiment with the proportions of herb to syrup, and with cooking methods, once you have the basic idea. Good herbs to start with are Onion or Slippery Elm. See the Cough or Congestion applications in those chapters (Chapters VIII and X).

NASAL RINSE: Using a well-strained herbal tea of a comfortable temperature, gently breathe the tea up one nostril (hold the other one closed) until the tea begins to drain down into the back of your throat. Spit out the tea from the mouth and blow your nose as needed. You might use a cup to hold the tea up to the nostril for this procedure. Do the procedure on the other nostril. Repeat the nasal rinse, one nostril at a time, as needed.

PILLS: See Honeyball and Bolus sections in this list. If you are following the bolus instructions, use the *water method* and form the herbs into a convenient pill size for oral use.

RICE PAPER: You can buy small packets of this special paper, made of rice starch, at many health or herb stores. It is a good alternative to capsules for taking herbal powders. A dose of herb powders is simply wrapped in the rice paper and swallowed with water as a pill or capsule would be.

SUPPOSITORY: A suppository is for insertion into the anus, often for help with hemorrhoids. To make a suppository, see the Bolus application above and follow the instructions for making a bolus using the *cocoa butter* or *water* methods. Shape the suppository for easy insertion into the anus. A bolus and a suppository are essentially the same thing. It is only their names which are different to indicate their use.

SWEETENERS: Good sweeteners to use in herbal preparations, when they are needed, are raw honey, unsulphured blackstrap molasses (light or dark), glycerin (from a drug or health store), or barley malt (from a health food store). Additionally, powdered herbs could be mixed in a sweet spoonful of applesauce or honey. Also see Children's Ideas above. (Review Honey, Appendix B.)

Please avoid using processed sugar and synthetic sweeteners (sugar substitutes) in herbal preparations as these do not have positive results for physical and emotional well-being.

SYRUP: A Syrup is a great form of herbal preparation for administering to children, for making cough syrups or for preparing herbal elixirs and tonics. Here is a basic syrup recipe from which you can continue to create potions. (Also see Lozenge, in this list.)

BASIC HERBAL SYRUP

Mix 1/4 cup (4 Tbsp.) powdered or chunked herb or herb mixture with 1 cup raw honey or light unsulphured molasses in a saucepan. Heat the mixture and simmer gently or steep for 20 minutes while stirring occasionally. Strain. Use freely by the teaspoon for younger children (under 8) and by the tablespoon for older children and adults as often as every hour if it is for a cough. That's it! If you want it thinner, feel free to add a little water. If you started with powder, it will be a thicker brew as you do not (cannot) strain it out. If you started with the herbal chunks, you will get a juicier brew as the chunks are strained out after brewing. Some people really like having the herb powder left in for extra potency and some find the texture not to their liking and prefer to strain the herb out. It is an esoteric and personal decision. Of course this recipe is a basic starting place and I expect you to experiment freely with proportions to suit your needs.

Slippery Elm or Onion make a great herbal syrup. Look in the Cough or Congestion applications in those chapters to get started (Chapters VIII and X).

TEA: To make an herbal tea, the rule of thumb is 1 teaspoon of herb per cup of water, steeped or simmered for 10 to 15 minutes. Flowers, leaves, powdered herbs, and delicate stems are steeped. Fresh green, (undried), herbs or heavier plant parts such as roots, bark and woody stems should be simmered slowly (not a fast hard boiling, please). Steeping and simmering are both done with a lid on the pan to preserve volatile oils and plant nutrients from evaporating. An exception to this is if you intentionally want to evaporate, and thereby concentrate, a tea. In this case use no cover (for quickest evaporation), or leave the cover somewhat loose (for slowest evaporation).

If you are combining herbs that call for different preparation methods (i.e., steeping and simmering) simply prepare the simmered herbs first, strain them out when their preparation is finished and steep the "steeping herbs" in that hot brew for the time called for.

Start with the purest water possible and avoid using aluminum or cast iron pans in preparing herb teas. (See Lesson #3: Utensils.)

TINCTURES: These are herbal concentrates most often prepared in an alcohol, glycerin or vinegar base. They can be bought commercially or often made at home. Tinctures are sometimes used in place of capsules, tea or other application forms for convenience or more concentrated effect. For the purposes of this book, the art of tincture-making is not discussed in depth. However I have starred several good sources of instruction in the Resource Guide, Appendix C, at the back of this book. One good source is *Natural Healing With Herbs*, by Humbart Santillo. Also see the Yarrow Tincture application in the Yarrow chapter (Chapter XI) for a simple basic recipe.

APPLICATION METHODS - EXTERNAL USE*(Quick Reference List)*

BATH
FOMENTATION/PACK
LINIMENT
PEOPLE PASTE
POULTICE/PLASTER
POWDERED HERBS
SALVE
SOAK

BATH: For an herbal bath I make 2 to 4 quarts of decoction or infusion (see Decoction or Infusion applications, above), strain it, and add that to a tub of bath water. When adding a powdered herb directly to a bath, I generally start with 1/4 cup of herb because this is usually mild enough for anyone and then I may work up from there. Sometimes I take the powdered herb and steep it on the stove for 10 or 20 minutes for extra activation and then add the whole mixture to the bath. Powdered herbs rinse down the drain easily, no problem. Yet another method is to take chopped fresh or dried herbs, wrap them in cheesecloth, and put this herbal package directly into a bath of hot water as it is filling up. This makes a mild “tea” right in the tub and is fine in cases where you want a milder brew in the bath. Many herbs among the Ten Essentials make great baths, including Ginger, Peppermint, Yarrow, and Comfrey.

FOMENTATION: This method is very similar to a poultice; however in this case a cloth is soaked in an infusion or decoction (see Decoction and Infusion applications above, in the Internal Use list) from which all the herb has been strained. The soaked cloth is then applied to the body. A fomentation has no herb fiber present whereas a poultice does. It is sometimes helpful to keep the fomentation warm by covering it with a heating pad or hot water bottle. Be sure to also look at the instructions under the “Poultice” application below.

LINIMENT: A liniment is a liquid preparation that is generally rubbed into sore muscles and joints or into areas needing improved circulation such as in chillblains and frostbite. Liniments are easily made by making a decoction or infusion and then adding 1/4 to 1/2 part olive oil and/or rubbing alcohol to get the consistency desired (also see Lesson #6). Another method would be to soak herbs, using infusion or decoction proportions, in rubbing alcohol for one or two weeks, strain the mixture, and then add the desired amount of olive, sesame, or almond oil into the herbal rubbing alcohol for a liniment.

Powdered herbs such as Cayenne or Ginger could be soaked in the rubbing alcohol as above, and then left in the alcohol and used as part of the liniment.

PEOPLE PASTE: See People Paste, Appendix A.

POULTICE/PLASTER: A poultice, generally, is a preparation of the fresh, dry, ground, or powdered form of an herb or herbal mixture that is applied directly to skin or wrapped in thin cotton or wool cloth and then applied.

There are many words that basically mean poultice and some herbalists use them interchangeably. For your information I will describe them separately here because it is good to know how the terms will be used in resource materials.

Poultices can be made from dried or fresh herbs. Usually the more tender parts such as leaves or flowers are used in a poultice, as roots are too rough and are generally made into a fomentation (herbs strained out).

To make a poultice, with dry herbs, activate them in a small amount of boiling hot water, steeped or simmered (see Decoction of Infusion applications) 10 to 30 minutes and applied to the body part as needed. (Apply very warm or at room temperature.) When getting the herbs activated and moistened for a poultice, use enough water to have a wet and pliable preparation but a smaller amount of hot water than you would use for actually making a decoction or infusion. This is a practical detail to learn or you'll end up with a soupy mess. A soupy mess will still work fine, but you may want to strain it a bit.

To keep a poultice damp, when this is called for, I cover the poultice with plastic wrap or a cut-up plastic bag and tape the edges all around onto the skin with breathable surgical tape. Any tape will do in an emergency, but many types of tape will very quickly cause a rashy

irritation on the skin. I have found that breathable surgical tape (purchased at drug stores) usually prevents this. To help keep a poultice warm, when this is called for, you may try a hot water bottle or a heating pad held or wrapped over the damp poultice. An additional cloth may be laid over a wet poultice to prevent a heating pad from contacting the wetness.

In the case of a fresh herb poultice such as raw Onion or fresh Comfrey leaves, simply slice, grind, or pulverize the plant material into a convenient form, adding a small amount of hot water to the poultice if needed to achieve the proper activation or consistency (e.g., fresh, ground up Comfrey leaves will require a little hot water).

If a bruise, bite, etc., is not too large, I will probably tape a conveniently-sized slice of Onion or Garlic over it. This "slice poultice" is quick, and easy to hold in place. For more serious situations like an open wound, I generally prepare the appropriate poultice in a form that provides a thick and potent herbal pulp that will mold to contours more effectively. For a bug bite, poison ivy, or small wound, an almost instant poultice can be made outdoors by identifying and collecting a few leaves of a convenient herb (such as Yarrow or Comfrey), chewing them into a pulp, and applying them immediately.

A plaster is quite similar to a poultice (and I use the words interchangeably) yet specifically the word "plaster" is used to refer to powdered herbs moistened into a paste and then spread (like frosting on a cake) about 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick onto a natural fiber cloth which is then applied to the skin, sticky side down. Use a moistening agent such as aloe vera gel (great for burns and skin rejuvenation as well as being a natural antiseptic), honey (full of minerals and enzymes, and good as both a tissue rejuvenator and a natural antiseptic), glycerin (an emollient, a good carrier, and extremely soothing), water, unsulphured blackstrap molasses (has lots of healing minerals and iron), olive oil (or other healing oil like sesame or almond), etc.

Which moistening agent you choose, as well as the temperature of it, depends upon the application. Honey works great on just about everything, so if you are in doubt, go for the honey when making this type of plaster or poultice. (See Honey, Appendix B.)

Another word you may sometimes hear or read is fomentation. A fomentation is a type of poultice (herbs strained out) in which a cloth is soaked in a decoction or infusion and applied to the area of need. (Please review the Fomentation application in this list.)

Poultices/plasters/fomentations can be left on from 20 minutes to overnight depending on need. In severe cases they can be used continuously as long as the affected area is washed regularly with an antiseptic herb (Yarrow, Chaparral, Garlic water, Clove) or other antiseptic wash. In such cases the poultice is changed at regular intervals, perhaps two to four times a day, to keep it fresh. When leaving a poultice on overnight, change it first thing in the morning.

POWDERED HERBS: Powdered herbs can be applied directly onto a wound, rash, insect bite, etc., or can be mixed with an appropriate moistening agent to form varieties of paste-like poultices. Some common moistening agents, used according to the need of a particular circumstance, are: aloe vera gel, honey, olive oil, water, glycerin. (See People Paste, Appendix A, for additional examples of powdered herb use.)

SALVE: Any of the Ten Essentials can be made into the convenient form of an herbal salve by preparing them in olive oil. A common proportion is 3 or 4 Tbsp. of herb(s) per cup of oil. Depending upon the herb's texture, steep or very slowly simmer (see Tea application in this list) the herb/oil mixture for about one hour. This concentrated herbal oil can be used as is, or thickened with beeswax to the consistency of a lotion or salve by regulating the amount of beeswax added. Start with 4 Tbsp. of melted beeswax added to 1 cup of the warm herbal oil and stir while the salve cools and thickens. If the preparation is too loose you can always warm it up and add more beeswax.

SOAK: Bruises, sprains, rashes, insect bites, infections, etc., often require or benefit from soaking. The soaking liquid is a decoction or infusion (see Decoction or Infusion applications) made of the desired herb(s) for the purpose. To help soothe and heal the effects of a trauma, strain or stress, a rash, etc., for the entire body, an herbal bath is the greatest! (See Bath application.)

LESSON #3: UTENSILS FOR HERBAL PREPARATIONS

In preparing any herbal substance it is wise to pay attention to the type of utensils used. For brewing concoctions, such as tea, on the stove, it is always best to avoid using aluminum or cast iron pots. These metals often disintegrate with cooking and boiling, thereby becoming an unhealthy part of the herbal preparation. Stainless steel, glass, or ceramic pots and bowls are good choices for making herb tea, mixing powdered formulas and making other preparations. Use stainless steel stirring spoons whenever possible or, as I do, keep a set of clean wooden spoons aside that are used for nothing else except making your herbal preparations. For a tea strainer, it is best to get stainless steel or bamboo reed as, again, these materials will act in a positive way with the herbs.

LESSON #4: POTENCY OF HERBS AND THE FORMS THEY COME IN

For the most efficient action of the herb, unless otherwise specified, take it on an empty stomach as a tea, or, for other forms such as capsules, with a full glass of water. This allows for maximum impact of the herb without its being diluted and buried in the digestive action of a stomach full of food.

Occasionally an herb or herbal formula is uncomfortable to an empty stomach. If this is the case it is a good idea to add a buffering and/or stimulating herb to the formula, such as Ginger, Slippery Elm, or Comfrey, or to take the herb with a small bite or two of simple food such as fruit. This almost always works well, yet you can take the herbs with a meal or light snack if you must.

Here is some input on the quality and potency of the herbs you keep on hand. In herbistry we are always on the look-out for the freshest, most potent, properly harvested and dried, and least contaminated materials available. In the U.S., spices (a category which includes many medicinal herbs) are one of the most commonly irradiated, sprayed, and fumigated foods (especially the imported ones, which most of them are). Whenever possible, therefore, many herbalists prefer to grow and dry their own plants to insure potency and purity. There is also a growing availability in the U.S. of "wildcrafted," organic medicinal plants, which are plants grown and/or gathered wild within the country. These are usually unsprayed, un-irradiated, carefully dried in smaller

batches, and generally handled in ways that ensure they retain a strong potency. At most herb and health food stores the most commonly available medicinal herbs come from growers/importers whose methods range from "good" to "terrible." (See Herb Buyers Guide, Appendix D.)

You can begin to become an educated buyer simply by drying small amounts of fresh herbs, or any plants for that matter, in a dry and "darkish" place (a dim room, cupboard, well-shaded patio). You will see first-hand what carefully dried plant material should look like. Ideally it should keep much of its color, be free of mold, have the fresh smell of the plant and plant oils especially when rubbed or ground up, and be free of obvious contaminations such as insects and dirt. As a consumer you should know what to look for. If you see, for instance, dried Comfrey leaves that are brownish instead of a good green color, or Clove powder that looks pale and has no aroma, don't buy it. Grocery stores are usually the last choice as a source of dried herbs for medicinal purposes except in an emergency. Grocery stores usually offer spices (many used medicinally) which are often irradiated or fumigated by the large importers to kill insects and ensure indefinite shelf life. These herbs tend to be on the shelf longer than the higher turnover products of an herb store. However, I have handled many an emergency with what I could find at a grocery store, so consider these a possible source for getting what you need on short notice.

When you go to shop for herbs you will quickly see that they come in many bulk forms and commercial preparations, each having its practical uses. For our purposes throughout this book I am going to be referring to the commonly available bulk forms from which everything else is prepared. Dried bulk herbs generally come whole, chopped, shredded, or powdered. Fresh herbs can come from the live plant, a grower, or often, the grocery store.

Throughout the book I will be suggesting the use of many different forms of each herb for particular applications. For example, I might suggest using the dried leaves of Peppermint for making a tea, the Peppermint oil for a quick digestion tonic, a powdered form of an herb for a poultice, or a fresh form for eating as a food. Each herb chapter contains some short instructions on the use of the various forms of that herb. Lesson #2 in Chapter I provides a comprehensive, alphabetical listing of application methods with instructions and definitions. It should be easy, therefore, to determine the best application method for the varied forms of herbs.

LESSON #5: HOW TO STORE YOUR HERBS

In storing herbs, we want to keep them cool (but not frozen), dry, out of direct light, and free of insects and other contaminations. Airtight glass containers are best for prolonging potency with dried herbs, yet brown paper bags or plastic baggies can be satisfactory and are often used for practical reasons even though herbal potency is less protected. Empty 35mm film containers are a great size for storing small amounts of herbs in glove compartments, backpacks, cupboards, workshops, etc. The lids seem airtight and waterproof and these containers are made of a hard and opaque plastic that does not deteriorate into the herbs very easily, even in heat. I have found an endless and free supply of these containers from my local camera shop. I often use them to send herbs home with friends, or to school and job sites for myself and others. There are some herbs among the Ten Essentials that can be used in their “fresh food” state, such as Garlic, Ginger and Onions. These are stored in such a way as to keep them fresh and potent, perhaps in a cool, dry cabinet.

Dried herbs can keep their potency quite well if they start off potent, and are dried and stored properly. For instance, I have kept Comfrey leaves, which I gathered and dried myself, for a year and more. At the end of a year they were still very active in medicinal properties as evidenced by the results I was getting. However, for the average quality of herbs bought in an herb, health, or grocery store, it is best to buy one month's supply at a time. If this is not practical for your circumstance, renew your herbal supplies every three to four months if you are unsure of their source or potency.

An herbal brew can be kept in the refrigerator for a day or two and will still be of medicinal strength. By the end of the second day of storage, even if kept in a refrigerator, in most cases a water-based potion will not be of the best medicinal strength. I say “medicinal strength” because if you made a tea only for drinking pleasure, in that case it would be good as long as the flavor was pleasing. If you make a decoction or infusion and want it to last a week or two, simply add 1/4 part (by volume) of fresh wine to the brew and store in the refrigerator.

Always keep herbs labeled clearly with ink or marker that doesn't rub off or smear easily. It won't do any good to have the Ten Essentials on hand if you forget what's what and find them unlabeled!

LESSON #6: USE THE TEN ESSENTIALS SEPARATELY OR IN COMBINATIONS

The Ten Essential Herbs are often profitably mixed together for their mutual enhancement. As soon as you feel familiar with two herbs that can be used for the same application (for example, Cayenne and Comfrey for ulcers), you will be able to consider the question of what herbs to mix together and when to mix them. In many cases throughout the chapters I give specific suggestions for the mixing of the Ten Essentials, but this is only the beginning of the creative possibilities.

For example, let's say you have a particular interest in learning about self-help for bleeding ulcers. You look up "Ulcers" in the Index. Several references will be listed. Consult these. You will be referred to the Cayenne chapter, for instance, and will learn that Cayenne stops or slows internal bleeding of ulcers while increasing circulation. In the Comfrey reference you will find that Comfrey rebuilds damaged tissues. Peppermint, you will see, breaks up gas in the stomach while assuaging acidity, and Slippery Elm will soothe mucous membranes in the digestive tract while relieving diarrhea. You would choose the herbal actions you want to emphasize (which might be one or all of the ones I have mentioned) and begin by mixing your chosen herbs together as I will explain.

Start your experimentation in combining herbs by simply mixing the desired herbs together in equal parts. As you gain experience you will learn to refine your "mixings" making one or two herbs the predominant parts of a formula with one or two others in a minor role. For instance, in the present example you might decide to have Comfrey and Cayenne predominate in the formula as equal parts while adding Peppermint and Slippery Elm in half parts, thereby having them play a more minor role. The *general* formula would be written like this:

1 part Comfrey
1 part Cayenne
1/2 part Peppermint
1/2 part Slippery Elm

For the purposes of these Ten Essentials, a "part" is measured by volume and is whatever you decide it is before mixing the formula. This depends upon how much of the formula you want to make. For instance, a "part" could be 1 tsp. or 1 Tbsp. or 1/4 cup, etc. If you decide to make 1 part equal to 1/4 cup (in the example above) the *specific* formula would look like this:

1/4 cup Comfrey
1/4 cup Cayenne
1/8 cup Peppermint
1/8 cup Slippery Elm

If you want to put this formula into capsules, you would use the herbs in their powdered form. If you want to make a tea, you would mix the herbs in their crumbled or chopped form. Choose a form that is convenient to your purpose.

Two “carrier” herbs in the Ten Essentials are Cayenne and Ginger. Each of these herbs has potent qualities of its own that might call for it to be used as a major part of a formula. These herbs also play the role of carrying, binding, and enhancing the overall actions of any formula in which they are present. Therefore, in any formula in which they are not already present as a major action, they are often added in a small amount. In herbistry we call this a “carrier.” In general, in my own formulas, I always add 1/8 to 1/4 parts of Cayenne and/or Ginger as carriers, if they are not already present in a formula in a more prominent capacity.

The purpose of **Ten Essential Herbs** is to give you a strong foundation in using herbs for your own health. When you have progressed to the point of wanting additional specifics about making formulas, tinctures, etc., you will want to investigate detailed references on this information such as are found in *Natural Healing With Herbs*, by Humbart Santillo. However, the information I have outlined in this book, and in these six lessons, provides a fine basis and may be all you will want to pursue.