

## Home Herbalist Series Homework – Class 1

### Basics ~ The Art of Tea ~ Nutritive Herbs

**Your Name: Zoe DeWitt**

**Date: 1/22/2022**

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### INTRODUCTION!

Hi! My name is Zoe DeWitt, I use she/they pronouns, and I am currently living in Olympia, WA, where I am a full-time student at the Evergreen State College. I've lived in Washington for my entire life, I grew up on Bainbridge Island (across from Seattle!) before moving 30 minutes away to Kingston so that my family could start a small farm, Barnswallow Meadows. This move happened halfway through high school for me and was a very positive transition as it is what ultimately led me to choosing the path of study I am now on. My family's farm features lots of veggies, strawberries (my favorite), flowers (another favorite), a new orchard, and a small flock of Shetland sheep (yet another favorite). We are currently going into our third lambing season and I am ecstatic for new lambs to come in the springtime!

I chose to attend the Evergreen State College because of my family's farm. Evergreen is unique in that it has no majors, so students choose classes based on their areas of interest and end their education with a capstone project to highlight and bring together all of their learning. Evergreen was also appealing because of its agricultural programs; it has a beautiful organic farm right on campus that is used as a learning tool for agriculture students. This farm also features the herb garden I am currently managing!

I actually had no plans of taking on this management position in the herb garden at the beginning of this school year. I was coming into this year with interests in agriculture and food studies, I had no experience with herbs other than a slight interest in their medicinal and spiritual qualities. But when my professor mentioned that the on-campus herb garden was in need of some care, and no one else showed any interest, I offered to help, thinking it would just be a small work position with other students. It wasn't. My professor basically threw me in to the management position with no knowledge at all. I felt like such an imposter, walking my classmates through the weeding process when I didn't even know what was a weed and what was an herb within the garden. Luckily, I had lots of support from other faculty (including the farm manager who has been a huge help), and the hands-on learning experience is actually really beneficial for me, something I've been missing since education has mostly been forced online. I'm continuing the position this quarter as well, with a deeper focus on learning about care and maintenance in an herb garden. I also wanted to expand on this knowledge and learn about using herbs outside of the garden too, hence why I am taking this series!

I am still really just a beginner. I still get some of the plants confused in the garden, I've never dried my own herbs, and I'm nervous to forage for plants because I'm pretty sure I'll misidentify them. But, I also know that I've never felt more at peace than when I am connected with nature, whether it be on a forest walk or when I'm sinking my fingers into the cool earth. Nature has been my rock throughout quarantine and online education. The woods on my college campus have provided a safe place for me to breathe, and now the herb garden has provided that as well. It only seems fitting that if I can find so much mental clarity from nature and plants, I should be able to find physical healing there as well.

And I already have been able to a little bit. My parents raised me on a lot of natural remedies, elderberry syrup and echinacea tea when I was sick, ginger for stomach aches (my all-time favorite tea is a mango ginger blend that instantly cures any tummy aches!). We also visit a naturopathic doctor who has prescribed me with natural supplements to help with anxiety and stress. I am excited to take the next step and start my own research and creation of natural remedies. What do I want to do with this knowledge in the

long-term? Hopefully, I can incorporate it into my daily life and find remedies that work for myself and are easy for me to make. Career-wise? No idea, but I am excited to see where this series and the rest of my education takes me!

Thank you for all of your wisdom and kindness so far!

## HERB BASICS

**True or False** *Circle the correct answer.*

1. Herbalism was created during the 1960s. True/**False**  
Explain:  
The traditional systems of Chinese and Ayurveda are between 3,000 and 5,000 years old, although signs of earlier herbal medicine usage date as far back as 3300 BC.
2. Herbs have a better safety record than pharmaceuticals. **True**/False  
Explain:  
Most herbs have less frequent and less severe side effects when taken medicinally. It's important to remember this isn't every herb though!
3. Herbs have no side effects. True/**False**  
Explain:  
While herbs still have side effects, they are often less frequent and less severe than those of pharmaceutical drugs.
4. Some herbs can be deadly. **True**/False  
Explain:  
It is important to know which herbs might be deadly in your area and to not confuse these with other, non-deadly herbs.
5. Herbs may interact with pharmaceutical medications. **True**/False  
Explain:  
It is important to consult your doctor or pharmacist, or better yet an herbalist, to understand if the herb-drug combo you are considering might have a negative interaction.
6. Allergies are possible with any herb. **True**/False  
Explain:  
Allergies are possible with anything! If you are experiencing unusual side effects to a common herb, it may be due to an allergy.
7. What are Maria's four basic safety rules?
  - (1) Research an herb in at least three good sources before ingesting it.
  - (2) Listen to your body/intuition to determine if an herb resonates or doesn't resonate with you.
  - (3) Take proper steps to ensure that any wildcrafted or cultivated plant is what you think it is.
  - (4) Check with your pharmacist for herb-drug interactions if you take prescriptions.
8. What are some of the herbal books and websites that YOU plan to use for reference?

I am already working my way through *The Herbalist's Way* by Nancy and Michael Phillips, as well as *The Evergreen Herbal* by Tari Gunstone. I am also excited to check out Rosalee De La Foret's online sources for monographs and hopefully purchase a good herb identification book, either Michael Moore's *Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West* or *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast* by Jim Pojar and Andrew MacKinnon.

9. Give me three reasons why herbal medicine is used and may be helpful.
  - (1) Herbal medicine connects us with the earth and with our own history of medicine and healing.

(2) Herbs are usually very safe and have minimal side effects.

(3) A single herb can be helpful in treating a variety of issues instead of just focusing on one.

### **THE ART OF TEA: SIMPLES**

10. What is a general dose of herbal tea?

A general dose of herbal tea for an adult is one to three cups daily.

11. Give me at least one advantage of using teas for medicine.

Using teas as medicine is easy, affordable, and usually familiar to most people. The effects of herbal teas are gentler than other herbal remedies so it is a good place to start and experiment in creating small batches of a blend.

12. What is an infusion? How do you make it?

An infusion is when you bring water to a gentle boil and then pour the water over your herb to steep for 5 to 20 minutes or longer. In order to keep volatile oils contained if it is an aromatic tea, it is best to cover your tea as it steeps.

13. What types of herbs (such as parts of plants) get infused?

Herbs that get infused include leaves, flowers, any delicate plant parts, and aromatic plants, as well as any herbal powders.

14. How do you make a stronger medicinal super infusion tea?

To make a medicinal super infusion tea, you cover an ounce of herbs with boiling water in a 32-ounce container. Then, you leave this to steep for 4 or more hours. After the time is up, strain and squeeze all of the wonderful tea out to enjoy.

15. When would you opt for a super infusion? What kinds of herbs or situations call for it?

A super infusion is a good choice to make when using mineral-rich herbs or blends focused on gut health. Be wary of bacteria growth during the steeping process; it shouldn't be of much concern unless the herb quality is poor or you have a weak immune system.

16. What is a decoction? How do you make it?

A decoction is made when you simmer your herb in water for 20+ minutes. This method is used for tougher plant parts so the vital plant parts can better be brought out.

17. What types of herbs (such as parts of plants) get decocted?

Herbs that get decocted include roots, bark, seeds, any tough plant parts, and mushrooms.

### **TEA BLENDING**

18. Explain the different types of herbs in a blend – primary, supportive, mover & shaker – with examples of each type.

**Primary:** The primary herb in a tea blend is the herb that will address whatever health problem the tea is focusing on. If they are a gentle herb, they will most likely make up most of your blend but if they are a stronger herb, they may make up a smaller part.

**Supportive:** Supportive herbs are the herbs that will support overall health in the blend or will soften the effects of the primary herb. They may also have effects that are similar to but gentler than the primary herbs. Finally, the supportive herb may help with the flavoring of the overall blend by softening or sweetening the harsh flavors of the primary herb. An example of a primary/supportive herb combo is that peppermint can soften the bitterness of chamomile.

**Mover/Shaker:** The synergist herb (aka the mover or the shaker) is the herb within the blend that jump starts the entire formula within the body. They commonly have warming qualities that help with circulation and absorption of the herbs through the body. Ginger is a common synergist that helps with warming, digestion, and anti-inflammatory actions.

19. Create a tea blend and explain the position of it and other herbs in the blend using the above categories as a guide. You have quite a bit of flexibility here.

**Primary:** The primary herb in my tea blend will be peppermint to help calm a nervous stomach.

**Supportive:** The supportive herb in my tea blend will be nettle to soften the stronger, peppery flavors of the peppermint.

**Synergist:** The synergist herb will be ginger to aid in warming and in calming the stomach.

## NUTRITIVES & TEA HERBS

### Guess the Herb!

20. This green nutritive herb is rich in minerals and delicious to eat like spinach. But, the fresh herb stings!  
Nettle

21. This bright orange or yellow flower has more carotenoids per weight than a sweet potato and is also used topically for its soothing, anti-itch properties.  
Calendula

22. These small fruits can be harvested from a common garden flower and are rich in vitamin C and bioflavonoids.  
Rose hips

23. This red flower is called “Rosa de Jamaica” in Mexico and Central America. It produces a tart, cranberry juice-like tea that is rich in bioflavonoids and antioxidant pigments that act as a heart tonic.  
Hibiscus

24. This common, aromatic garden herb is popular as a digestive tea as well as an essential oil to clear sinuses and brighten/energize the spirit.  
Peppermint

25. What types of solvents/methods are useful for extracting minerals from plants? What, if any, are not useful for extracting minerals?

The best ways to extract minerals from plants are to create a super infusion or a decoction, to simmer them in broth, or to add them directly to foods. A less potent option is also to extract them with vinegar. An alcohol tincture and a tea will extract almost no minerals so it is best to avoid these methods if you are hoping to extract the minerals, specifically.

## DO THIS/REMEDY REPORT:

Try three new tea herbs, preferably from the class notes, and create your own blend.

1. What did you try?

The three new tea herbs that I tried were nettle, rose hips, and oat straw. The blend I created was a peppermint, nettle, rose hip combination.

2. How did you make it? Specific ingredient(s)? Where sourced? Quantities/percentages?

All the herbs used were provided in the Home Herbalism kit by Maria. I eye-balled a teaspoon for each herb.

3. Process for making it? How much herb material per how much water? Infused or decocted? How long?

For the nettle and oat straw, I infused around 1 teaspoon of herb in around 8 ounces of just-boiled water. I let this rest for 15 minutes before tasting. For the rose hips, I decocted around 1 tablespoon of dried rose hip in around 12 ounces of water, letting it simmer for 20 minutes before tasting.

For my tea blend, I used the warm decocted rose hip tea to infuse the peppermint and nettle, plus a little extra just-boiled water. I let this steep for 10 minutes before tasting and ended up with around 12 ounces of tea.

4. Your experience tasting and trying it - Did you like it? Did you notice anything while or after drinking it?

I really enjoyed all of these new herbs. I especially enjoyed the oat straw as it had a much sweeter flavor than I was expecting. Drinking herbal teas always soothes my body and helps me feel healthier, so especially trying these after a heavy dinner was nice.

As for my blend, I did enjoy it, but I would definitely make alterations to it in the future. The nettle taste was way too present, I would prefer it to be more subtle. But I enjoy the peppermint and rose hip combination.

5. Photo(s) of your process welcome and encouraged!



My infusing and decocting teas!

## *Materia Medica*

Name: Zoe DeWitt Date: 2/6/2022

### **Common Name: Peppermint**

Latin Name: *Mentha x piperita* (1, 2, 3, 4)

Plant Family: Lamiaceae, the Mint family (2, 4)

Photo/drawing/pressing:



Kohler, Franz Eugen. *Kohler's Medizinal-Pflanzen*. 1887.

Part(s) Used: leaves, flowers (2)

Flavor: aromatic, bright, spicy (1)

Energetics: cooling, drying (5)

Key Actions: aromatic (1,2), carminative (2), anodyne (2), stimulating nervine (2), anti-spasmodic (1,2), stimulating diaphoretic (1,2), anti-emetic (2), invigorating (1)

#### Identification/Growth/Habitat:

Since peppermint is a member of the mint family, it is easy to identify it by its square-shaped stem and opposite leaves. The flowers of the peppermint plant range anywhere from white to pink to purple in color and appear in whorls around the stem. The plants can grow to be 12-35 inches tall and will most likely not produce viable seeds. This means that root cuttings are the best way to propagate peppermint. Peppermint spreads rapidly, so lots of people prefer to plant it in a pot rather than directly in the soil. Peppermint prefers moist soil but can grow practically anywhere (2). It is native to Europe and Asia, but is naturalized in North America (3).

#### Harvesting/Preparation/Dose:

To harvest peppermint, gather the leaves through mid-summer until the plant begins to flower (4). Peppermint is most commonly consumed in the form of a tea; use 1 tsp or more of dried leaves in 8 ounces of boiled water and let steep for 5 minutes with a cover to avoid the loss of volatile oils (2). Peppermint can

also be used as an essential oil (2) or turned into a tincture; add 1 parts peppermint to 9 parts grain alcohol to create a tincture (3). Finally, peppermint can be infused with oil or used in a cream for external usage on sore muscles (2).

#### Medicinal Uses:

Peppermint has a wide variety of medicinal uses. Because of its cooling and diaphoretic (sweat inducing) properties, peppermint is commonly used for colds and flu, as it opens the body's pores to allow excess heat to escape. Herbal steams of peppermint can also be used to help break up lung congestion from a cold as well, due to its aromatic qualities (2). Peppermint, when applied topically in the form of cream, is wonderful in soothing inflammation caused by hives, poison ivy/oak, and sunburn, and when applied to the temples as an essential oil, can relieve pain caused by headaches (2,3). Peppermint also helps the flow of digestion through the body which can ease nausea and indigestion, or calm a nervous stomach (1,2,3). Certain studies have even shown that taking peppermint capsules can help with symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (2,3,4). Finally, peppermint is invigorating, meaning it helps to boost alertness and focus and could be a helpful switch if trying to cut down on caffeine (1,2).

#### Other Uses:

Peppermint is probably one of the most commonly known herbs due to its use as a flavoring in candies (like candy canes or gum), certain liqueurs, and toothpaste (2,3).

#### Personal Experience:

For years now, I have had peppermint tea in the rotation of bedtime teas that I drink every night. Recently, I have also started drinking it for tummy aches, although I have found that the flavor can be a bit too overpowering for me if I have a particularly bad tummy ache; I much prefer ginger for those. Finally, I also use a peppermint and lavender essential oil on my temples when I have a headache. This usually helps to lessen the headache almost instantly, although I have noticed that the oil does cause a slight tingling or burning sensation on my skin. After checking the ingredient listings, it does appear that the oils have not been diluted in the mixture.

#### Cautions:

Peppermint is not recommended in large amounts if a person is pregnant or has gallstones or any bowel obstruction. It can make heart burn, acid reflux, and ulcers worse, so those with stomach issues should use with caution or not at all. Finally, essential oils of peppermint can burn easily and should never be used undiluted externally or without caution internally. Do not use the essential oil undiluted with children and infants on a regular basis as it can be very harmful (1,3).

#### Sources:

1. Groves, Maria Noel. "Introduction to Herbalism, Herbal Nutrition, The Art of Tea." Home Herbalism Series Class 1. 2022
2. de la Foret, Rosalee. "Peppermint Health Benefits." Web <https://www.herbalremediesadvice.org/peppermint-health-benefits.html>
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## **Common Name: Rose Flowers and Rose Hips**

Latin Name: *Rosa spp.* (1,2)

Plant Family: Rosaceae (2)

Photo/drawing/pressing:



(PC: Zoe DeWitt)

Part(s) Used: petals, hips (1,2,3), leaves (2)

Flavor: sour (2)

Energetics: cooling (2)

Key Actions: aromatic (1), astringent (1,2), analgesic (2), nervine (2), aphrodisiac (2), anti-inflammatory (2), antioxidant (2)

Identification/Growth/Habitat:

Since there are so many species of wild roses around North America, the following will be a general description of the appearance of wild roses. Roses usually grow as a shrub-like plant that can grow to almost ten feet in height and many more feet wide. Wild rose flowers always have five petals with many stamens, and are most commonly found in shades of pink or occasionally white. The leaves of wild rose bushes are pinnately-compound, with anywhere from three to seven leaflets that grow alternately up the stem. They also have thorns growing along the stem and occasionally along the ribs of the leaves. Once a rose flower is pollinated, a green fruit, the rose hip, will begin to develop. The fruit will gradually turn from green to either yellow, orange, or red when it is ripe. (2)

Harvesting/Preparation/Dose:

Rose hips are best harvested in autumn but can be harvested at any point once the fruit has ripened from a green to a yellow, orange, or red color. Harvesting rose hips at different points throughout the season will result in different flavors, from bitter to sour to sweet. It is important to remove the seeds from the rose hip before use, as the seeds are covered in tiny hairs that can cause irritation when consumed. A suggested dosage for rose hip tea or powder is anywhere from 5 to 45 grams per day. (3) The petals of roses, on the other hand, have a suggested dosage of 5 to 28 grams of tea per day, or ratios of 1:5 (dried petals) or 1:2 (fresh petals) in a tincture taken three times daily. (2)



### Medicinal Uses:

Roses are a heart herb. It's no coincidence that they are given in bouquets as a symbol of love, but they are also wonderful in supporting heartache, anxiety, and depression through the simple act of smelling the aromatics. Because of the rose's astringent properties, roses are also useful for healing wounds as they can pull tissues back together. They can also be used to soothe tissues, like with a canker sore. (2) As for the rose hips specifically, rose hips are high in vitamin C. They are helpful in decreasing and modulating inflammation, and have also been seen to improve blood pressure when taken in food-like amounts. (3,4)

### Other Uses:

Outside of medicinal purposes, rose petals can be used fresh or dry for culinary reasons or infusions in oil and honey. They are also commonly given as bouquets to show love and appreciation for the recipient (2).

### Personal Experience:

One of my personal favorite herbal teas for every day is a tea blend of rose hips, hibiscus, orange peel, and a hint of cinnamon. Its powerful flavor and color always seems to wake me up and help me focus (or maybe I just think that because it's usually my go-to tea for studying!). I also finally tried rose hip on its own for this week's remedy report. I really enjoyed tasting the rose hips on their own, they were fruity yet tart and delicious. I was especially interested by the aromatics they gave off as they were decocting, it smelled like a nice pot of apple cider with a hint of cinnamon!

### Cautions:

When sourcing roses, it is important to ensure the plants have not been sprayed with pesticides, which is the case with most florist roses (2,3). Also, be cautious when purchasing rose essential oils. It takes many flowers to create even a small amount of oil, meaning the price will be pretty steep. If you find a rose essential oil that is cheap, it has most likely been diluted or adulterated in some way (2).

### Bibliography:

1. Groves, Maria Noel. "Introduction to Herbalism, Herbal Nutrition, The Art of Tea." Home Herbalism Series Class 1. 2022
2. de la Foret, Rosalee. "Rose Benefits." Web <https://www.herbalremediesadvice.org/rose-benefits.html>
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