



basic recipes

infused oils

Infused oils are easy to make and very useful. You can make them to be used as food or as topical medicine. Just fill a jar with the herb of your choice, and fill to the top with good quality olive oil. Put aside for 2-6 weeks, then strain the herbs out. If you use fresh herbs, make sure to let them wilt for a few hours or even a day before you use them, so that the water content that remains in the plants is lower: water can cause oil to mold.

The easiest way to strain the oil once it's done is to use a French press (available for \$10 at ikea). Pour the oil out, and compost the marc (leftover plant matter). If you prefer, you can strain your oil through a cheesecloth, wringing all of the oil out of the marc.

You might want to experiment with other oils. Olive oil is the standard starting point, but each oil has its own qualities. For example, coconut oil is anti-fungal and can be drying. Jojoba oil penetrates deep into muscle tissue. Rose hip oil and almond oil are lighter and nice to use as facial oils (though I've also been known to use olive oil!). Lard and bear fat are wonderfully healing for the skin. You can experiment with the oils you choose, but it's always fine to use olive oil as your standard.

Oils will last as long as the oil does not mold or go rancid.

tinctures

Tinctures can be used topically as well as internally. The alcohol content ensures that the medicine will penetrate deep into muscle tissue. Drop the tincture onto your skin and rub it in well with your hand. If the skin is broken, this will of course sting, though using tinctures as a wash will definitely clean a wound well.

Though there is some variation in tincture making, the simple method will suffice in most situations. Fill a jar with the herb you want to tincture, and then fill the jar with 100-proof vodka. Set aside for 4-8 weeks, strain using the same method as for oils above.

Some plants require more alcohol, some more water:

- when extracting resins, consider grain alcohol, though this is not absolutely necessary.
- when extracting mucilagins, use water with just enough alcohol to prevent molding (25%).
- the vast majority of plants are fine to tincture simply in vodka or brandy.
- 25% alcohol is the minimum for preservation.

Tinctures will last 5 years or more.



liniments

A liniment is a mixture of a tincture and an oil. These are great for muscle pain, sports injuries, etc.

Simply blend the tincture and oil together in one bottle. Make sure to shake well before each use.

A good one to have on hand for sports injuries:

- 2 parts solomon's seal tincture
- 2 parts st. john's wort oil
- 1 part meadowsweet tincture

A liniment will keep for several years.

salves

A salve is basically nothing more than an oil that is hardened with beeswax – which makes it stay on the skin longer, and even better, less likely to spill when traveling. Additionally, beeswax itself has quite a few beneficial qualities.

To make a salve, first grate your beeswax. Warm your oil(s), but do not allow them to boil. Add beeswax to the oil and allow it to melt, stirring occasionally. A suggested ratio is 2 ¼ cups oil to 2 ounces beeswax, though to be honest I “eyeball” it every time. Just make sure to reserve some oil in case you put in too much beeswax and need to thin it out. To test your salve, put a small amount into a shot glass, and put it into the freezer for a few minutes to allow it to harden.

Salves will keep indefinitely (again, as long as there is no mold).

sprays

A spray can be anything in a spray bottle. Just blend up your ingredients and presto – you're ready to go! You might use herbal vinegars, tinctures, water or tea, essential oils, even a little bit of aloe juice can go into a spray bottle. There will be more detailed recipes below.

vinegars

Vinegar is a great way to extract herbs, especially when you want high mineral content. Vinegars are naturally antiseptic and anti-fungal, and will be moreso when you add herbs to them. Use a high quality vinegar – we prefer Eden brand raw apple cider vinegar.

Vinegars will last 6 months (or several years).



Vinegars are very useful for acne, athlete's foot, nail fungus, and wounds that need cleaning (although in this latter case, it may sting).

The following recipe is wonderfully disinfecting:

Four Thieves' Vinegar

- sage
- lavender
- thyme
- rosemary
- garlic

Into one quart-sized mason jar, add:
equal parts of the herbs you're going to use, such that the jar is 2/3 full of herbs. Add at least 8 cloves of garlic, peeled and cut in half (chopping is not necessary)

optional:
cayenne, clove,
lemonbalm,
peppermint

Fill the jar with apple cider vinegar (raw unfiltered is best). I like to put a shotglass in the jar to keep the herbs down under the level of the liquid, but that's not strictly necessary.
Set the jar aside for 2-4 weeks. Strain if desired.

For acne, I like a blend of half vinegar and half rose water, with a bit of lavender essential oil.

lotions

Lotions are much easier to make than you think! A lotion is simply a mix of oil and water, as close to 50/50 as possible. It's possible to make a lotion with a hand wisk, but a blender makes the job much easier.

Choose the water that you want to use: you might choose rose water, elderflower blossom water, or a strong herbal infusion. It is important to make sure that whatever you use is good quality and clean; avoid using tap water. You can also use tinctures or vinegars as waters.

Choose the oil that you want to use: generally this will be an infused oil, or a blend of infused oils.

You may also want to add a few drops of essential oils, either for their medicinal actions, or their smell, or as a preservative.

Pour the water(s) into the blender and turn it on. I like to get it going for a few minutes before adding the oils. Then, slowly pour the oils into the blender until you hear it start to "glurp". This is your sign that it's almost done – pour just a bit more and you're all set. Transfer to a clean jar. If you are concerned about mold, keep your lotion in the refrigerator.

A lotion will keep for a few months, as long as it does not mold. If your lotion falls out of suspension, just shake it well prior to using. This is particularly likely if you used any alcohol.



where to get supplies

locally

- Cambridge Naturals (Porter Square)
- Harvest Coop (Central Square and Jamaica Plain)
- Whole Foods – they don't carry many bulk herbs, but they do have good quality oils and vinegar, as well as local honey
- Follow the Honey (1132 Mass Ave, Cambridge – between Harvard and Central) – great local and artisanal honey

online

mountainroseherbs.com - Mountain Rose is your one-stop shop for herbal supplies, and their products are very high quality. There are other suppliers, but Mountain Rose will never steer you wrong, and you can be sure you're getting good quality, unadulterated supplies.

let's make our kit!

scrapes, cuts, & abrasions

stop the bleeding

Applying pressure is the best, fastest way to stop bleeding. It's true that yarrow and shepherd's purse are both great for staunching bloodflow. It's ideal to use the fresh plant, although an alcohol preparation will work – but it will sting. In a pinch, a pinch of cayenne powder will also do the trick! But there's no substitute for direct pressure!

For a nosebleed, you can take yarrow tincture orally.

wash

To clean dirt out of the wound, and to get healing herbs into the action before the skin is dry enough to use salve.

You can carry dry herbs with you to boil up a fresh wash in the moment, if you're going for a long trek. If you're on a short jaunt, you can make up your wash ahead of time and store it in a small scrap bottle! Here are some suggestions:

- Calendula and plantain tea – good for clearing out crud and stimulating the wound to heal. Tea will only keep for a day or so. Double use – for sore throat, acid reflux.
- Chamomile tea will also do the trick. Double use – intestinal cramping, antsy nerves, eye problems.



- Rose water with lavender and rosemary essential oil – disinfectant, mildly astringent. This will keep indefinitely in a spray bottle.

salve

Use a salve when the wound is no longer weepy. A deep wound would do better with a soak or a compress until it is starting to dry out and heal up to the top – then a salve is great.

Start with an herb-infused oil:

- skin healing: calendula and plantain
- nerve healing: st. john's wort, damiana
- germ-fighting: garlic, sage

Melt in some beeswax, and if you like, add a bit of essential oil, such as lavender or rosemary, for a nice scent, as well as disinfectant action.

This is also great for sunburns, though I prefer to leave the garlic and sage out for that purpose.

burns

Honey is my absolute favorite thing for a burn. Wash is well – I like rosewater here, as it's cooling and antiseptic – and then apply a good layer of honey. You can add a drop of lavender essential oil to the honey if you like. Don't use any oil preparation until the burn is cool (which may be a couple days), dry, and starting to heal. Once it starts to itch, it's usually time for a nice healing salve.

fungal infections

A spray is handy here, you can spray it on frequently.

You can use any combination of the following ingredients:

- apple cider vinegar infused with oregano, sage, and thyme, garlic optional
- pau d'arco tincture, usnea tincture, loosestrife tincture
- propolis
- a few drops of oregano essential oil
- water to dilute, if needed

This will keep indefinitely in a spray bottle.

sprains and strains

Super sports liniment – rub it on frequently!

- st. john's wort – for nerve tissue
- solomon's seal – for connective tissue
- prickly ash – to get blood and lymph moving
- yarrow – for circulation



- meadowsweet – for pain, if desired

I usually prefer the st. john's wort to be oil, and the rest to be tinctures, but whatever you have on hand will be fine. The key is, use it a lot, and be kind to your injury!

This is also a good time to remember: don't ice! It slows your body's ability to heal.

digestive distress

Diarrhea – blackberry root tinctured in red wine, slippery elm powder taken dry, cinnamon powder taken dry, chamomile tea.

Constipation – yellow dock tincture, slippery elm powder taken in water, coffee.

bites

Plantain is great for mosquito bites, as will be any astringents – even black tea!

For a bite that is inflamed, astringents such as witch hazel, blackberry root, or oak bark mixed in with your plantain will be very good. If the inflammation spreads, make sure to take appropriate medical action!

For tick bites, remove the tick, and a drop of oregano essential oil directly in the bite is good preventative medicine while you're on the trail.

muscle ache

In general, if your muscles ache, you should rest. Here are various things good for muscle ache, but be kind to your body if the situation permits!

- st. john's wort – for nerve tissue
- goldenrod oil – for muscle pain
- lobelia tincture, kava kava tincture, cramp bark tincture – for muscle spasm
- mullein leaf, fresh or tincture – structural pain
- skullcap tincture – neck tension
- lavender essential oil – muscle relaxant
- ginger tincture – warming, brings blood flow

You can apply these directly to the painful area, and do apply regularly! If you find the alcohol irritating, you can use an oil preparation, or combine your tincture with a nice oil like goldenrod or st. john's wort, to buffer the alcohol.