Calming Gifts from Local Plants

In our quest to hold herbalism up to the scientific eye, trying to mold it into a clinical science, we have lost touch with the very essence of herbal healing. It is not the clinically tested, standardized medicinal constituents of the plants we need for vitality and balance, but their more obscure, subtle properties. They have an innate ability to offer us the soothing relaxation, gladdening, quieting, emotional defrosting, and grounding our overstimulated minds and tired spirits.

We live in stressful times, far from the comfort and peace one experiences when immersed in an intimate relationship with nature. What is it exactly that is causing our modern ills? The question here is a bit like the saying, “What came first, the chicken or the egg?” Is it physiological disorders or disorders of our spirit and emotions? Luckily we do not have to ponder this question. In their molecular cell structures, medicinal plants hold all the keys necessary to unlock our physical, emotional, and spiritual vitality.

Through many hours of plant meditation, individually and in groups, I have been introduced to the subtler benefits the plants offer. Let me share some of my most profound plant meditation and clinical experiences with you. This is a difficult task, as picking out a few plants to highlight is like picking your favorite child. You love them all and they all offer so much individually.

MEADOWSWEET FILIPENDULA ULMARIA
Collect Meadowsweet while it is in flower. Use its beautiful leaves and sweet almond-scented flowers for your tea or to tincture. Your first experience with either the tea or tincture will be one of deep release and relaxation. Meadowsweet has a warming, relaxing and soothing effect on the digestive tract. It contains large amounts of salicin, one of the main ingredients in aspirin, without the harmful effects to the stomach lining. It is specific for gastric pain, abdominal cramps, colic, and irritable bowel. Its pain-relieving qualities are indicated for tension headache, muscular pain, and arthritic complaints.

Meadowsweet, a great facilitator for achieving a deep meditative state, also has the ability to quiet the mind and guide the body into a restful sleep. Considered the emotional “chill-pill,” it defuses congested thoughts while putting one at ease. It eliminates emotional pain that stems from living in a fast-paced overstimulating world. Meadowsweet is able to rebalance electrical body charges, making it an ally for opening up energy centers in the body. With daily use for a month or so, it expands the body’s energy field, creating a greater sense of self and a boost to self-expression. It is a favorite herb of the Druids, who believed it made the heart “merrier.” A must for mild depression.

Safe for children, elders and the overly-sensitive.

Dose: Make a tea using one to two teaspoons of the dried herb to one cup boiled water steep for 15 minutes. Drink three times a day. Tincture two or three mls (60-80 drops) three times a day.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Should be used with caution for folks who are allergic or sensitive to Salicylates (aspirin).

BETONY (WOOD BETONY) BETONICA OFFICINALIS
Collect the aerial parts (leaf, stem and budding flowers) of Wood Betony just before the flowers bloom. Prepare yourself for a little taste of heaven with a cup of tea or tincture.

Wood Betony is one of my favorite herbs for insomnia. It quiets our restless minds and caps our frayed nerves. Its medicinal actions are anti-spasmodic, nervine, and anodyne (pain relieving). Wood Betony is specifically indicated for tension headaches caused by stress, fibromyalgia pain, and sore, overworked muscles.

A tonic for the nervous system, it reduces fatigue and tension, the symptoms of nervous exhaustion, by inducing a restful sleep.

Wood Betony, with its anti-spasmodic action, relaxes our bowels, musculature, and our stifled sense of self-expression. Creating the sensation of being nurtured and held, it fosters a feeling of safety and protection. This opens up our emotional body and allows us to express our creativity and stimulates self-expression. Wood Betony has a stimulating opening effect on the solar plexus, considered the center of “gut-level” instincts, groundedness, and self-confidence.

A true anti-anxiety herb, it erases contracted life experiences. Wood Betony, considered a brain tonic, will increase arterial blood flow and cerebral circulation. Lose that frenzied burn-out feeling with a cup of Wood Betony today.

Dose: Two teaspoons of dried herb to one cup boiled water, steep twenty minutes, drink three to four times a day. Tincture 20-60 drops three to four times a day.

No contraindications.

You now have two new calming friends to take along on life’s journey. Do not forget the old stand-bys, Lavender, Chamomile and Lemon Balm. Cheers to your health and well-being.

Suki Roth is a Community Herbalist and Educator in the Piedmont of North Carolina. Growing, exploring, and communicating her love for plants is her life passion. Suki will be one of the main speakers at the Southeast Women’s Herbal Conference in September held in Black Mountain, NC. To contact Suki: 919-932-7240 or bruki@peoplepc.com