

## Pharmacist's First Experience in Making Natural Medicine: Calendula Salve

As I entered the American Botanical Council's Case Mill Homestead, I thought I knew what I would be doing for my elective rotation. Gayle Engels, ABC's education coordinator, had spoken to a group of University of Texas student pharmacists about the internship program available through ABC. I knew I would be doing research, compiling information for ABC's herbal database, learning all I could about herbs and medicinal plants, and I was looking forward to being out in the gardens, a requirement for all interns. But I didn't know I would be making medicine.

On my first day at ABC, Gayle said we would make calendula salve. I had no idea what calendula was or what it was used for, much less how to make a salve from it. So I looked up information on calendula.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis* L., Asteraceae), or pot marigold, is a bushy, aromatic annual with yellow to orange flowers native to Mediterranean countries.<sup>1,2</sup> The name comes from a Latin word for "first day of the month," referring to when the flower blooms most months of the year (i.e., in Mediterranean countries).<sup>1</sup> Calendula should not be confused

with true marigolds, from the genus *Tagetes*.

Calendula flower is approved by the German Commission E as a nonprescription medicine in Germany and has been evaluated by the European Scientific Cooperative on Phytotherapy (ESCOP) for topical (external) application in several forms: infusion, fluid extract, tincture, and semi-solid preparation (e.g., ointment or salve).<sup>2,3</sup> The Commission E approved calendula flower for poorly healing wounds and inflammation of the oral and pharyngeal mucosa.<sup>2</sup> The ESCOP monograph lists therapeutic indications for minor

inflammation of the skin and mucosa, and as an aid for healing minor wounds.<sup>3</sup> The ESCOP monograph lists known sensitivity to plants in the Compositae (Asteraceae) family as a contraindication to the external use of calendula.<sup>3</sup>

Gayle had already made the oil infusion. We used the recipe below to make the salve. It reminded me of pharmaceuticals compounding class, but without the sterile hood, gloves, gown, glasses, hat, and foot covers. Actually, it made me think of what it would be like to have compounded back before there were pharmaceutical companies. In a way, I was going back to my pharmacy roots.

A couple of tips for anyone who may try this recipe—be patient. It takes time, more than you might think, for the salve to cool down. Also, don't worry about being too exact. If you're off by a half ounce, the salve will still come out beautifully. Have fun. Why else would you be making your own calendula salve?

### Calendula Salve Recipe

- 1 part mango butter (*Mangifera indica* L., Anacardiaceae)
- 1 part cocoa butter (*Theobroma cacao* L., Sterculiaceae)
- 2 parts unrefined shea (*Vitellaria paradoxa* CF Gaertn, Sapotaceae) butter
- 4 parts calendula infusion (1:1 ratio apricot kernel oil and calendula petals)

Place calendula flowers in clean glass jar. Cover with apricot kernel and/or olive oil.

Cover jar with plastic wrap before putting lid on. Store in cool, dark place for 6 weeks, shaking jar every few days. Strain oil through cheese cloth. The quantity of oil determines how much added butters are needed. For example, 8 oz. infused oil will need a combination of butters totaling 8 oz., and enough jars to accommodate 16 oz. of product. (Shea butter is the least expensive; cocoa butter smells the best.)

Heat calendula infusion and mango butter over low heat to 120° F. Add cocoa butter and slowly heat to 170°. Remove from heat and cool to 120°. Add shea butter and heat again to 170°. Ladle mixture into clean jars, wipe rims of jars as needed, and allow it to cool.

Add label with ingredients and date prepared. Store in cool, dark place. It should last 6-12 months if not contaminated by dirty hands. Can be stored in the refrigerator. HG

—Joyce Juan,

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for May 2006

### References

1. Bown D. *The Herb Society of America New Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses*. London: Dorling Kindersley Ltd; 2001.
2. Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckmann J, eds. *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Austin, TX: American Botanical Council; Newton, MA: Integrative Medicine Communications; 2000.
3. European Scientific Cooperative on Phytotherapy. *ESCOP Monographs*. 2nd ed. New York: Thieme; 2003.

## ABC "Affinity" Credit Card Program with MBNA to Terminate

MBNA America Bank, N.A. (MBNA) has decided to terminate an "affinity" credit card program with the American Botanical Council (ABC), which has been in effect since October 1998.

In this program, ABC and MBNA jointly marketed credit cards and credit card programs. ABC received a royalty for accounts that were opened and a percentage of all purchases. Those royalties will be paid through December 31, 2005. Although holders of the credit cards will still be able to keep the accounts active and use them for purchases and balance transfers, ABC will no longer receive any royalty for those transactions after the termination date. ABC asks its members to inform others who may have this credit card

regarding the termination of royalties to ABC.

ABC would like to express its appreciation to MBNA for participating in this program and to those members and other supporters who established accounts through this program. During the past 7 years, revenue from the MBNA program averaged \$4,000 annually.

Those who have participated in the program to assist ABC may now consider other, more direct ways to contribute. See the article on page 10 for details. HG

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