

## USING HERBS IN SKIN CARE

Handout

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**Quality matters.** Use only high quality organic herbs and ingredients. Never use herbs that have been sprayed or been grown with pesticides (e.g. commercial roses). Make sure that any other ingredients you use are pure, quality, and organic, too.

### Great Skin Care Herbs:

**Aloe Vera** (*Aloe barbadensis*): The gel, right from the leaves can be used directly on the skin. It is extremely soothing, cooling, and healing, and moisturizes, firms and tones skin. Bottled gel that is minimally processed is best for using in astringents/toners and creams, as it blends in better. **First Aid:** It is used to treat and soothe burns, rough/irritated skin, and wounds. Avoid use on staph, impetigo, or other staph like infections, as it encourages bacterial growth in those.

**Calendula Flowers** (*Calendula officinalis*): They have healing, antimicrobial, antifungal properties, and contain carotenoids that nourish the skin. An infused oil is great in balms, creams, salves, facial astringent/toners and lip balms. They are very easy to grow from seed and beautiful in the garden. **First Aid:** Calendula is great in first aid salves, and wound washes. It heals by promoting cell repair, and helps to prevent/treat skin infections. Use externally for bruises, burns, sores, and skin ulcers, and internally as a tincture or tea. **Harvest:** Pick freshly opened flowers at the base, and place them face down on a screen for drying.

**Comfrey Leaves and Roots** (*Symphytum officinale*): Cooling and soothing, it is a potent healer of skin. It can be infused in oil, used in salves, creams and astringents. **First Aid:** It helps repair damaged tissue and bones, and helps to prevent scar formation. Because it is a cell proliferant, don't use on puncture wounds/deep cuts until later stages of healing. It can cause the skin to close over too quickly. **Harvest:** Harvest leaves and flowering tops when they are at their freshest. **Caution:** Don't use white flowered Comfrey's leaves or the roots of any Comfrey, internally.

**Lavender Flower** (*Lavendula* spp): It has cleansing, healing, toning and skin-reparative properties. An infused oil, liquid infusion and the dried, ground, buds can be made and used to make scrubs, steams, astringent/toners, bath blends, body oils, masks, creams and balms. The scent soothes your nerves, is relaxing, calming and spirit lifting. **First Aid:** Lavender is sedative, antiseptic and antispasmodic. The essential oil mixed with honey is useful for insect bites/stings, and burns. **Harvest:** Harvest and dry flower buds when fully mature.

**Lemon Balm Leaves** (*Melissa officinalis*): It is toning, cleansing and gently invigorating to the skin, and can be used in steams, splashes, baths, scrubs, and an infused oil can go into salves and lip balms. Fresh leaf preparations are most potent because much volatile oil is lost during the drying process. **First Aid:** It is antidepressant, sedative, and a potent antiviral that is helpful for herpes. **Harvest:** Pick leaves at the peak of freshness.

**Marshmallow Root** (*Althaea officinalis*): The root is used for its soothing and drawing qualities. It contains mucilage and is good in masques, scrubs, and baths for irritated/inflamed skin. It can be added to a formula to balance out acidity. **First Aid:** It can be used in skin washes and soaks. A paste made with water can be applied topically to soothe irritated skin. **Harvest:** Roots are best harvested in the fall, but I suggest buying quality dried roots, instead.

**Rose Flowers** (*Rosa* spp.): The flowers and petals have skin toning/healing, and skin cell regenerative properties, and can be used to make infused oil, vinegar, or tincture. These can be used in astringent/toners, bath/body/massage oils, creams, and salves. Dry rose petals are great in face and body scrubs. **First Aid:** Rose is best known to be an emotional heart healer. Make a tea to drink, or inhale the mood elevating scent of the flowers to give relief from heartbreak and grief. Rub an infused oil on your heart and pulse points. **Harvest:** Pick flowers that are just about to fully open for drying, and using fresh.

**Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*): It is a powerful antimicrobial skin healer (great for acne and rashy skin), and a master blood mover (Matthew Wood). An infused oil can be used or made into a salve for spider and varicose veins. Infusions can be used to make astringent/toners, sprays, washes, baths and steams. **First Aid:** Yarrow stops bleeding quickly, and is analgesic. The fresh leaves can be chewed and put on a wound or insect bite/sting as a poultice. The dried leaves can be made into a styptic powder for your first aid kit. **Harvest:** Use the flowers and top leaves when the flowers are almost at full bloom.

#### **Other Great Ingredients For Use In Skin Care:**

**Oils:** Olive oil, jojoba oil, coconut oil, castor oil, avocado oil, and sesame oil, prepared lotions and creams, and vitamin E oil (It's an antioxidant oil that acts as a preservative).

**Liquids:** Witch hazel, vinegar, vodka, distilled water, castile soap, hydrosols, and honey.

**Dry Ingredients:** Dried herbs (ground, powdered, or whole), sugar, salt, epsom salt, clay, and oatmeal, beeswax.

#### **Simple Ideas for using Herbs to care for your skin:**

**1. Infusing oil with herbs** and using it as is, as a bath and body oil, or make it into a **scrub, balm/salve/ointment or lip balm**, by adding beeswax to it.. You can add some of your oil to existing products like lotions and creams, and castile soap (Use 1-2 tsp. oil per 16 oz, to make a **body/face/hand soap**). **2. Steeping herbs in witch hazel for an astringent/toner.** **3. Bath pouches:** Tie up some herbs in a bit of tulle to float in the tub. Or, make a strong herbal tea to add to your bath water. **4. Make a foot soak** with herbs, epsom salt and baking soda and add to hot water.

#### **Tips for making an Infused oil:**

1. Sterilize your jars and equipment. (hot water bath)
2. Never put your fingers in the jar. Always use a sterilized tool.

3. Make sure every bit of plant material is coated in oil, and that there are no air bubbles.
4. Fill your jar, stirring as you go, until the oil is to the very top, and slightly overflows when you close the lid. This ensures that there is no air in the jar. It is good to make your oil in 4 oz (or smaller) jars, in case one of them spoils.
5. Be sure to label and date your jars.
6. Let sit for 6-8 weeks, then strain. Keep your jar in a bowl while infusing, because it always oozes a little.
7. If using fresh herbs, let the strained oil sit overnight. Then carefully pour off the oil, and leave the water from the herbs in the bottom of the jar.
8. The oil can be kept in the refrigerator to extend its life. I most often use olive oil, and it keeps for a long time unrefrigerated, as long as bacteria isn't introduced.

**A simple recipe for making a salve/balm/ointment:** Use 1 ounce of infused oil and 1 grated tablespoon (15 ml.) of beeswax (lip balm will need a bit more). Put it in a small pan on the lowest heat. Stir constantly, until the wax is melted (1-2 minutes). Remove from heat right away. Pour into a small, clean jar, and allow it to cool before putting the lid on. Keep it away from heat, as it will melt.

**Good Sources for Buying Herbs:** Frontier Co-op, Mountain Rose Herbs, Starwest Botanicals.

**Resources:** Herbal Recipes for Vibrant Health by Rosemary Gladstar, Organic Body Care by Stephanie Tourles, Earthly Bodies and Heavenly Hair by Dina Falconi, My personal education and experience,

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