



Medicinal Herbs for the Homestead Gardener

HEMGROWN SELF RELIANCE



By Shawna, of Homegrown Self Reliance

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12 herbs you MUST grow if you want to take care of your family's health



As a homestead gardener, you take care of your family's food. How would you like to take care of their health as well? It's just as easy! In this book, I am going to give you planting and usage help for 12 medicinal herbs that every homestead gardener should grow.

On my journey to self-reliance, I have picked up lots of herbal knowledge in the hopes of fully taking care of my family. I truly believe that this is a very valuable skill that has, for the most part, gone by the wayside. Herbal medicine has been around for millenia. Even up until the last 100 years, it was common practice for mothers to take care of their family's health needs. Since then, however, modern medicine has taken the place of herbal medicine. Doctors shun herbal practices. The FDA is even buckling down on herbal practitioners. Even Google has been "throttling" websites that share herbal remedies. Everywhere we look, herbalism is looked at as inferior.

I know it would take a huge army to make this change, but I would love to see herbal medicine become more mainstream again. With the government's prejudice against herbalism, the only way we might be able to achieve this is in our own backyards. Won't you join me in growing and using these 12 easy herbs for your family's health?

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Basic Herbal Preparations

First I'm going to share some basic herbal preparations. Most of these can be used for any of these herbs. Learn these basics and you'll be ready to use nearly any herb!

Herbal infusion - commonly known as a tea. There is a hot infusion and a cold infusion. As the name suggests, a hot infusion involves hot water, and a cold infusion involves cold water. For a hot infusion, boil water in a pot. Put your fresh or dried herbs, usually in a tea bag or tea strainer, into a jar with a tight fitting lid. Pour the hot water over the herbs, and screw on the lid. The amount of time you want to simmer your herbs is dependant on the herb. Typically a hot infusion will be steeped anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes.

Cold infusions are more ideal for more delicate herbs. Fill a jar with cold water. Put your fresh or dried herbs in cheesecloth or muslin. When the herbs are submerged, drape the cheesecloth over the top of the jar and secure loosely with the lid. Let this infusion sit overnight. Further research is advised on proper dosage for the particular herb you are infusing.

Herbal decoction - this is a longer-simmering type of infusion, usually used for harder roots, barks, dried berries, or seeds. Basically this method is better to use if an herb is tougher and needs a little more heat to release its medicinal properties. Because of the long simmer time, these are usually stronger than infusions. Simply pour cold water over your herbs in a pot (glass or porcelain are the best choices) and bring to a slow boil, then bring to a simmer for anywhere from 15 to 60 minutes of constant low heat. A decoction is best used immediately after preparation, or at least within the first 24 hours. Please research further on dosages for the particular herb you are decocting.

Herbal tincture - is a low-dosage internal herbal treatment. A tincture is very simple, but takes some time to make. In its most basic form, a tincture is simply herbs steeped in 90-proof alcohol for 4 weeks. This mixture should be shaken nearly every day to ensure proper saturation of all of the herbs. When it is complete, you only take a small dropperful of the tincture. Further research is advised on dosages for the particular herb you are tincturing.

Herbal fomentation - is a topical application. It is much like a hot compress. You just make a strong infusion and then soak cloth in the mixture. Then the cloth is placed on the body. Try to keep the fomentation hot, either by using 2 cloths to

alternate using as one cools off, or by placing a heat pad over it. You might even want to wrap the area with plastic wrap to hold in the heat. Most herbalists recommend using a hot compress followed by a cold compress for issues such as sprains, strains, cramps, or other inflamed areas of the body.

Herbal compress - conversely, is a cold topical application. Follow the same directions as with the fomentation, except use a cool mixture instead of the hot, and don't apply heat over it. This is great to alternate with a fomentation in combinations of 20 minutes hot, 3-5 minutes cold.

Herbal poultice - is another topical application, where you apply the herb either directly to the skin by itself, or spread it on a thin layer of muslin or cotton. Once you apply the poultice, you can cover it with gauze or fabric to keep it in place. After it is applied, it is helpful to add a heat pad or hot water bottle on top of the poultice to warm the area to further the medicinal benefits.

Herbal infused oil - is the base to many different topical applications. Oil can be infused one of two ways. The more traditional way is to put your herbs in a jar, pour the oil (most commonly extra virgin olive oil) over the herbs until the oil is about an inch from the top. Place a tight-fitting lid on the jar and allow to sit for 4 weeks. The fast way is to use a double-boiler to heat the oil (not directly on the heat) slowly for 30-60 minutes. Once the oil is infused, it can be used to make massage oils, salves, and lotions.

Herbal salve - uses an herbal infused oil combined with beeswax to make a thick topical ointment for rashes, cuts, or burns. To make a salve, simply heat the infused oil over a double-boiler, add any additional herbs or essential oils you would like, then remove from heat. Immediately pour in your beeswax pastilles and stir until the beeswax is fully melted. Once everything is melted, strain the herbs from the mixture and pour into a small wide-mouth jar. Allow the salve to cool thoroughly until it is solidified before putting the lid on the jar.

Herbal infused honey - is as simple as letting an herb steep in honey for several weeks. It's best to use raw honey, as it has all of honey's medicinal properties as well. Macerate (crush) the herbs a little and fill a jar about halfway full of your chosen herb. Then pour the honey over the herbs and secure the lid, then place in a sunny windowsill. Turn the jar over every couple days to make sure all of the herbs are saturated in the honey. After about 3-4 weeks, strain out the herbs and return the honey to your vessel of choice.

Now, on to our herbs!

Lavender



Lavender is my absolute favorite herb. It's fairly easy to grow, the color is so beautiful, and the smell and medicinal benefits are amazing.

Lavender is a Mediterranean plant. The most common types grown in North America are English Lavender, Spanish Lavender, and French Lavender.

- English Lavender, or *Lavandula angustifolia* - referred to as true lavender, it grows best in cooler climates. It's perfect for Zones 5-8. As the alias tends to suggest, this is the most widely used type of lavender for cooking and tea.
- Spanish Lavender, or *Lavandula stoechas* - grows best in hot, humid climates, such as those found in Zones 8-10. This variety smells more like a cross between rosemary and lavender, and is not usually used for cooking or tea.
- French Lavender, or *Lavandula dentata* - also thrives in Zones 8-10. It grows more in a mounded shape and has a slight camphorous smell. It's the second-most commonly used variety for cooking.

Lavender is a tender perennial, and doesn't require a lot of fuss. It is evergreen except where it is very cold. If you are in a colder climate, I suggest growing it in a pot so it can be moved inside during the winter months.

Lavender really doesn't like water, and needs well-drained, sandy soil. If growing in a pot, you can put some gravel in the bottom of the pot to increase drainage. Stone mulch is even frequently used around the plants to further enhance drainage and add heat in cooler climates. The soil around your plants needs to dry out before you water again. If your soil retains water, or if you are in a very humid area, you should space your plants out more to ensure proper airflow.

There is a few different times and ways to plant lavender. Growing from seed, in the spring, usually proves to be most difficult. The most difficult way to grow lavender is direct seeding in the garden after your last spring frost. This produces pretty inconsistent results.

Another option is to start the seeds indoor in well-drained, quality potting soil, about 6-8 weeks prior to your last spring frost. You may even want to add a heat mat to keep the seeds warm during germination. Transplant into the garden after the soil is warmed. This gives more control over the growing conditions during the delicate germination period.

My favorite way to grow lavender is from cuttings. Simply take a 3-4 inch clipping off of a mature lavender plant. Snip off the bottom inch of leaves off of the clipping. Then you have two options. You can soak in a small glass of water for 2-3 weeks, until roots develop. Make sure you change the water every couple of days to make sure it's not stagnant. The other option is to dip the cut end of the clipping in rooting hormone, and place it gently into some potting soil in a small pot. Put the pot in a warm, sunny location. It's a good idea to put a small baggie over it to keep the moisture in so the cutting doesn't dry out too much. But still don't let it get waterlogged!

Many people have had good luck with cold stratification. I myself haven't tried this method, but it seems like a lazy way of growing lavender. And I am all about lazy gardening! This method needs to be started in late winter. Simply take a milk jug, cut it halfway up so you can put the soil and the seeds in the bottom, then replace the top portion of the jug like a mini-greenhouse. Leave the lid off of the milk jug to allow water to trickle in. This mini-greenhouse can be left out in the snow, doing nothing with it, until in the spring when the weather starts to warm up. At that

point, the seeds should be germinated and will start to grow. You'll need to transplant these seedlings into well-drained soil directly into the garden.

No matter which planting method you choose, it may be a good idea to mound up some of the desired soil on top of your existing soil, and plant the seedlings in there. That way you can keep the roots as dry as they need, without worrying about the quality or drainage of your existing soil.

Using lavender for medicine

Now that you've got a great patch of lavender growing, how do you use it? Lavender has so many uses, a lot of herbalists say that you only need lavender in your home apothecary.

Lavender is one of my greatest herbal allies. I keep a roller bottle of lavender essential oil in my purse at all times. As someone with depression and anxiety, this herb is so beneficial. While lavender essential oil is so great (and I suggest everyone have some in their apothecary!), I'm going to discuss using the herb directly. You can't properly make essential oils at home without expensive, specialized equipment. The purpose of this book is to teach ways that everyone can use lavender.

Lavender is antibacterial, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and analgesic. It is also mildly sedative and a great stress-reliever. It is amazing for anxiety and mental health. Lavender also has great benefits for skin, including rashes, acne, and insect bites.

The most simple way to use lavender is in a tea, or infusion. Simply put the fresh or dried herbs in a pot of boiling water, remove from heat, and allow to steep for 5 minutes. The flavor of lavender by itself in a tea is a little intense for some tastes, so it may be helpful to mix with other complimentary herbs. Chamomile or mint are great choices to pair with lavender in tea. This tea can, of course, be drunk, or applied to the skin as a wash, soak, or a poultice.

Lavender is so soothing for the skin that it is frequently used in infused oils, salves, washes, poultices, soaps, and lotions. It is so gently calming that it is a favorite ingredient in baby wash to help little ones get to sleep faster.

Chamomile



Chamomile is another favorite of mine, as it is for many tea lovers. Like lavender, chamomile is drought tolerant and pretty low maintenance. There are two main types of chamomile, Roman and German. Roman, or *Matricaria inodora*, grows lower to the ground, only reaching 3-6 inches in height. German, or *Matricaria chamomilla*, grows up to two feet tall.

Roman chamomile grows best in Zones 4-9. It is beautiful as a ground cover, flowing over rocks in the garden, but it is not as widely used in medicine. German chamomile does better in Zones 2-8. It is the most common chamomile to use for herbal medicine. Luckily for us, German chamomile easily self-seeds once you start it in your garden. You may even have to take measures to prevent it from becoming invasive!

Chamomile appreciates well-drained, nutrient rich soil. The seeds are delicate and need light to germinate, so when sowing, simply put them on top of the soil and water thoroughly. It's tempting to cover them up, but don't do it! Germination typically takes 2-3 weeks. You can either start your seeds indoors in a warm, sunny location 6-8 weeks prior to your last spring frost, or sow the seeds directly in the

garden after there is no danger of frost and the soil has warmed. Thin seedlings to 6 inches apart.

Chamomile needs approximately one inch of water per week, and will do best in full sun. Let the soil dry out a bit between waterings. Mulching is recommended to discourage weed growth and help the soil retain moisture.

The medicine in chamomile is in the flowers and the leaves. You can harvest chamomile pretty much any time during its vigorous growth stage. Typically you want to harvest in the mornings, when the flowers are fully open. Pinch the stalk right below the flower. After harvest, you can use immediately or dry. There are two main ways of drying chamomile. It can be put in a dehydrator for 12 hours, or placed on a screen in a warm, dry area for up to 2 weeks. Make sure it is completely dry before putting it in an airtight jar out of direct sunlight.

Using chamomile as medicine

Chamomile is another relaxing, stress-relieving herb. It is anti-inflammatory, astringent, anti-microbial, antioxidant, analgesic, antibacterial, sedative, antiseptic, and carminative. Chamomile is great for digestion issues, upset stomach, diarrhea, gas, bloating, and IBS. It can also be helpful for colds and fevers.

Chamomile is a wonderful, soothing skin treatment. It can be used as a hair rinse to combat dandruff, used as a compress to treat abscesses, or put in a salve for diaper rash. A chamomile wash has shown to be helpful for wounds, rosacea, psoriasis, skin allergies, and insect bites.

This wonderful herb even has pain-relieving (analgesic) properties! It can be made into a tea, soaked into a cotton cloth, and used for teething babies to chew and suck on. Chamomile is excellent for anxiety, insomnia, headaches, migraines, and menstrual cramps.

Rosemary



Rosemary is a great herb that is most commonly used in cooking, to enhance the flavor of meats. But it has wonderful healing benefits as well! Rosemary is an evergreen perennial in Zones 7-10. If you are growing in Zones lower than 7, you will probably need to plant in a pot.

Rosemary enjoys loamy soil, and is also quite drought-tolerant, so let the soil dry out between waterings. It is pretty low-maintenance and rarely needs fertilizer, but is slow to grow the first year. It needs at least 6-8 hours of sunlight each day.

Rosemary can be difficult to grow from seed. The best way to grow rosemary is from stem cuttings. To do this, simply snip off 2-3 inches of new (not woody) growth, and remove the lower leaves. Put in a small glass with about a ½ to 1 inch of water. Keep out of direct sunlight. Check every couple days to make sure the water hasn't evaporated, and add more water if needed. Roots will form within about 3 weeks. Transfer to a pot with well-drained potting soil and keep in a sunny

location. Or transplant into the garden when the soil has reached 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

Spring and summer is the best time to harvest rosemary. Try not to harvest much in the fall, as the plant needs time to recover for the long winter ahead. There is no perfect spot to clip the branches during harvest, as it will branch off wherever you cut it, however, don't cut it all the way down to the woody stem, to encourage more growth.

Rosemary can be used fresh or dry. To dry, put in a dehydrator for 4-6 hours until fully dry. Or if you want to air dry, tie the stems with twine. Put some holes in the side of a paper bag, and slip the bag under and around the stems to catch the leaves as they dry and fall off. Hang dry this way for a week or two. After the herb is fully dry, remove the leaves from the stems and store in an airtight container out of direct sunlight.

Using rosemary as medicine

Rosemary is analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, anti-fungal, anti-microbial, antibacterial, antiviral, antioxidant, diuretic, and anti-aging. The smell of rosemary has been shown to improve memory and increase brain function. It has even been shown to help with Alzheimer's patients.

Rosemary is good for stress, anxiety, memory, learning, and mental clarity. It helps with headaches, poor circulation, muscle pain, and joint pain. It has shown to be helpful for stomach issues, as it controls indigestion, gas, constipation, and bloating.

This aromatic herb is also good for colds and flus. It boosts the immune system, and can help with coughs, stuffy noses, and respiratory infections. Rosemary is even good for the skin. Topically it is used to treat acne, dandruff, bruises, and eczema.

Sage



Sage is a strong, aromatic herb that is traditionally used in cooking, especially to enhance the flavor of meats. But the medicinal benefits are not to be overlooked! Sage is part of the *Salvia* genus. There are over 900 varieties of *Salvia*, but they are not all edible or medicinal. The variety we are talking about is common sage, *Salvia officinalis*, also known as kitchen sage or garden sage. White sage, or *Salvia leucantha*, is also similar, and is very popular for medicinal uses.

Sage is an evergreen herb from Zones 5-8, but can be grown as an annual or in a pot in higher or lower Zones. It enjoys well-drained, sandy, loamy soil and medium to full sun. It also doesn't need much fertilizer. Like most of these Mediterranean herbs, it is pretty drought-tolerant. Allow the soil to dry between waterings.

Sage needs lots of space. Plants should be spaced 24-36 inches apart. This plant repels pests but attracts beneficial insects when it is in flower.

Sage is another plant that can be difficult to grow from seed. It is best to propagate from stem cuttings. Instead of the water method outlined above for rosemary, you should dip the stem cutting in rooting hormone and gently place in vermiculite or sterile sand. It can take up to 6 weeks for roots to form. Once the roots are formed,

transfer to a small pot with the desired sandy, loamy soil, and allow a good root ball to form before transferring into the garden.

This lovely herb can be used fresh or dry. It is easy to harvest as needed. Simply snip the plant right above the spot where two leaves meet. It's best to harvest sage in the morning, after the dew has dried.

To dry sage, you can hang in small bundles out of direct sunlight, or you can use a dehydrator.

Using sage as medicine

Sage is anti-inflammatory, antibiotic, antiviral, antioxidant, antihistaminic, antimicrobial, antiseptic, antispasmodic, diuretic, and astringent. It is also helpful for hormone irregularities and menopause symptoms. Night sweats and moodiness from menopause can be eased with the regular consumption of sage tea. Sage actually mimics estrogen and can help with menstrual issues. **Caution:** because of the drying nature and the estrogen-like effects of sage, it should NOT be used by pregnant or nursing mothers.

Consuming sage internally is wonderful for aiding digestion, controlling diarrhea, lowering cholesterol, boosting immune system, and treating sore throats and mouth ulcers. It is also a great tonic and detoxifying herb. Sage makes a wonderful tea or herb-infused honey.

In clinical trials, sage has been shown to improve cognitive ability and memory, and is also being studied for use on Alzheimer's patients. Topical application of sage can help with acne, because of its astringent, or drying, properties. Because it is also antiseptic and antibacterial, it is good for wounds and rashes.

Sage is also often burned as a smudge stick, and is considered by some to be able to remove negative energy from a room. It is also used as a gentle cleansing agent in homemade cleaners.

Thyme



Thyme is another traditional culinary herb that has great medicinal properties. As a Mediterranean plant (see the trend here?), it likes well-drained soil. It enjoys full to moderate sun, and will benefit from a little fertilizer at planting. As with the others, it is fairly drought-tolerant, and will only need about an inch of water per week. Allow the soil to dry out between waterings.

In this chapter, we will be focusing on common thyme (¥ ~ |). Thyme is a perennial in most gardening zones, but especially enjoys the conditions in Zones 4-8. Outside of those Zones, thyme is easily grown in a pot and moved inside when it is too cold or too hot.

Again, this is another herb that can be difficult to grow from seed. The best way to grow thyme is to propagate from stem cuttings. You can start rooting these cuttings in water, or in well-draining, sandy potting soil.

Using thyme as medicine

Many centuries ago, the ancient Egyptians used thyme as an embalming agent. That should let you know how powerful thyme's medicinal properties are.

Thyme is antibacterial, antimicrobial, antiseptic, anti-fungal, antispasmodic, and antirheumatic. It is a wonderful expectorant, and works extremely well for treating sore throat, whooping cough, pneumonia, and bronchitis. Although it doesn't taste the best, my favorite way to use thyme is in a infusion or tea for cough. It is also great as an herb infused honey, which actually tastes good, and is used to alleviate sore throats and soothe coughs.

One of the medicinal constituents of thyme, thymol, is the main ingredient in antibacterial mouthwashes. Thymol is also what makes thyme a natural antibiotic. Thyme is even known to kill mold and is excellent in homemade cleaners.

Thyme is amazing infused in oil and used in a salve, because of its antibacterial and antiseptic qualities. It can even be used to treat pinkeye! Thyme is even helpful against internal worms and external parasites such as fleas and lice. You can also combine thyme with other pest-repelling herbs in a tincture for a non-toxic mosquito repellent.

Thyme has been shown to be helpful for PMS and menstrual cramps. It is also carminative, and is beneficial for stomach complaints, indigestion, gas, and bloating.

Oregano



Oregano is a medicinal powerhouse, that is most often used in Italian cooking. It, of course, is another Mediterranean herb. As such, it prefers well-drained, sandy soil, and it is drought-tolerant. Oregano doesn't like to have soggy roots. Again, it only needs about 1 inch of water per week, and allow the soil to dry out between waterings. It doesn't need fertilizer, and it loves full sun.

You can propagate oregano from stem cuttings if you prefer, in water or soil, but oregano is one of the easier herbs to grow from seed. Seeds should be sown indoors 6-8 weeks before the last spring frost. The seeds need light to germinate, so you don't even have to cover them with soil. Simply place the seeds on the well-drained potting soil, mist with water, then cover with plastic or the seed tray lid. Germination should happen within about a week. Transplant seedlings out in the garden after the risk of frost has passed.

Although it is a perennial, oregano doesn't winter too well, so it needs to be cut back to the ground and covered with a layer of mulch if you are keeping it outside. If you plant it outside, of course, bring inside for the winter.

Using oregano as medicine

Oregano is antibacterial, antifungal, antispasmodic, expectorant, carminative, and analgesic. It's even shown promise as a powerful anti-tumor and anti-cancer herb!

Oregano is another good herb for the respiratory system. It is helpful for colds, flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia. It is even touted as a natural, herbal antibiotic. Oregano is another herb that is excellent to use as an ingredient in homemade antibacterial cleansers. Steeping the herb in vinegar for a few days is a great base to start making your own cleansers with herbs.

As a carminative, it is good for stomach issues such as indigestion, gas, bloating, and stomach aches. It aids in relief from painful menstrual cramps and urinary tract infections. It can help fight intestinal parasites, and is another good insect repellent.

Oregano is great to use in any of the basic herbal preparations highlighted above. Experiment a little and find one that's your favorite!

Lemon Balm



Lemon balm (*Mentha × piperita*) is a member of the mint family, and as such, tends to be invasive in the garden. But that's not entirely a bad thing if you know how to use it and appreciate it!

Lemon balm is a very hardy, perennial plant that thrives in zones 4-9. It likes full sun, unless it's in a very hot climate, then it appreciates some shade. Unlike the other herbs we have studied, this plant likes moist, well-drained soil. But it is such a low-fuss plant that it pretty much happily grows anywhere. Since most of your herb garden plants want dry soil and lemon balm enjoys moist soil, adding compost at planting time where you are putting the lemon balm will help hold in moisture and give it a boost.

Lemon balm is actually pretty easy to grow from seed, and after the first year will vigorously reseed itself. For your first sowing, simply sow seeds directly in the garden in spring after the danger of frost.

Using lemon balm as medicine

Lemon balm is antibacterial, antiviral, sedative, antioxidant, tonic, antispasmodic, antiallergenic, and carminative. It is another calming, soothing herb. As such, it is an excellent remedy for stress and insomnia. It is mildly sedative, and promotes a calm, relaxed feeling. It is also wonderful for anxiety, tension, headaches, and depression.

Lemon balm is diaphoretic, which means it will help break fevers. It also has strong anti-viral properties, so it is very beneficial to take while you have a cold or flu. It boosts your immune system, and even helps heal cold sores!

As a member of the mint family, lemon balm is carminative, which means it's helpful for upset stomach, nausea, gas, heartburn, and bloating. The best, most effective (and most tasty!) way to use lemon balm is in a tea. It is wonderful as a cold iced tea on a hot day! It is gentle enough to even use on babies (try it for colic!).

Calendula



Calendula (-l̩ i̩ ɛ̩ l̩ ˘ ɑ̩ l̩), also known as pot marigold, is one of the best herbs for skin health. It is similar to regular marigold, so it has lots of benefits when planted near the

vegetable garden as well. You may already know that marigold repels pests and attracts pollinators. The same is true of calendula!

Calendula is a perennial if it doesn't get hit with a hard frost. So in Zones 7 and below, it is considered a self-seeding annual.

Calendula is easily started from seed, either indoors or out. Sow your seeds inside 8 weeks before your last frost, or direct in the garden just after your last spring frost. If sowing inside, let them sit in the dark for a week or two to enhance germination rate. Seeds should be planted $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, and about 20 inches apart. Calendula seeds actually germinate best if kept between 60-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Germination typically occurs between 6 and 15 days.

Calendula loves lots of sunlight but can't tolerate extreme heat, so consider planting where they can get some shade during the hottest parts of the day. It also thrives on neglect, as long as the soil is somewhat moist. Calendula likes fertile, well-drained soil. Adding compost to your planting area will help to improve soil condition.

This lovely flower will produce bright yellow to orange blooms from May all the way through the first frost, if you help it. All you need to do is regularly deadhead spent flowers and harvest prime flowers.

Using calendula as medicine

Calendula is anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, antimicrobial, antiviral, astringent, antifungal, antiparasitic, disinfectant, antibiotic, diaphoretic, and even anti-tumor.

Calendula is an edible flower that has been used for centuries to improve digestion. Calendula tea is traditionally drunk to calm an upset stomach and help with menstrual pain. It calms the digestive system and promotes bile production. It is also beneficial to the liver, and helps promote lymph drainage. Calendula even helps with urinary tract infections.

This herb is extremely beneficial and gentle for the skin, as it promotes healing and prevents scarring. Because of this, it is a very common ingredient in skin-soothing salves and creams. Burns, diaper rash, and insect bites or stings are treated with a cool calendula tea wash via a cotton ball or soft cotton cloth. Using a calendula infusion as a compress in deeper wounds or worse burns prevents infections and promotes healing.

Since calendula is so soothing and anti-inflammatory, a calendula tea is very helpful for soothing sore throats and mouth sores. You can use it in a sitz bath to help heal yeast infections or hemorrhoids. Athlete's foot and ringworm can be relieved by using calendula

infusion in a frequent wash. And calendula is another herb that can be used in the treatment of pink eye when used as an eye rinse.

Calendula has also shown to be effective in calming eczema, treating ear aches, reducing the appearance of scars, soothing sunburned skin, treating varicose veins, and healing chapped skin. It truly is a soothing medicinal powerhouse!

Peppermint



Peppermint (*Mentha × piperita*) is a long-treasured herb that has soothing and cooling properties. It is a vigorous grower, and has a tendency to take over an area. It is typically found in the wild in wet, dark places, but in the garden it enjoys a moderately rich, well-draining soil and at least partial shade. It does best with morning sun and partial afternoon shade. Mint is a perennial plant that spreads easily through underground runners. Applying mulch around the plant can help contain the spreading. Most gardeners prefer to grow this in a pot, or even in a pot sunk into the ground.

Peppermint can be challenging to grow from seed, but it is very easily propagated from cuttings, as I have mentioned before with most of these herbs. You can propagate in soil or in water, just make sure the soil around the clippings doesn't dry out. The cuttings need adequate water or they will not build new roots. One

way to keep the soil moist is to put a bag, or a seed tray lid, over the pot and the cutting.

Using peppermint as medicine

Peppermint is antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antiviral, antioxidant, analgesic, and expectorant. It is calming, helps reduce stress and anxiety, and can help you get a good night's sleep.

Peppermint is very useful for stomach upset, motion sickness, nausea, gas, and bloating. As a carminative, it aids in digestion, and it also helps with IBS. Peppermint also helps with the pain of menstrual cramps.

Since it has such powerful cooling properties, it is excellent for reducing fever and cooling sunburns. It is excellent for reducing stress and anxiety, and actually improves memory and alertness. Peppermint is also helpful for easing the pain of headaches.

Peppermint is good for colds, flu, bronchitis, throat infections, and sinus problems. Since it is an expectorant, it will keep mucus out of the lungs and clear out the sinuses. A warm cup of peppermint tea is also good for soothing a sore throat.

Garlic



Even though garlic (*Allium sativum*) is more often referred to as a vegetable, it is still a medicinal herb and totally worth putting on this list. There are two major types of garlic, hardneck and softneck. This herb is different in that, since it has such a long growing season, it is most often planted in the fall, 3-4 weeks before the ground freezes. After that, you don't have to do much with it until the harvest, which is in mid-summer.

Garlic needs moderately fertile, well-draining soil. Since it prefers lighter soil, you should add in plenty of compost and manure. Simply take a garlic bulb, and break it apart into the individual cloves, leaving the papery covering on. Then place each clove into a hole 3-4 inches deep, leaving the pointy side up. Space your cloves 3-4 inches apart. After planting, you should mulch your garlic bed thoroughly with straw. This helps hold in moisture and protect it from the harsh winter weather.

After harvest in mid-summer, you need to dry the garlic bulbs in a dry, well-ventilated area for about 2 weeks to cure. When garlic is fully cured, it will store very nicely in a dry, dark location for 6 months to a year.

Using garlic as medicine

Garlic is a powerful herb. It is antifungal, antioxidant, antibiotic, antiviral, and antimicrobial.

For decades, garlic has been recommended by natural practitioners to be consumed on a daily basis due to its many powerful effects of garlic. It is important to mention that cooking garlic destroys the medicinal properties, so when at all possible, use raw garlic. Fermented garlic is also very beneficial for the digestive system, as it provides a good source of probiotics.

Garlic stabilizes blood pressure, lowers LDL cholesterol, prevents cardiovascular disease, regulates blood sugar, helps prevent diabetes, and can even fight and/or prevent cancer and Alzheimer's Disease.

Garlic has also been shown to be helpful for yeast infections, UTI and urinary infections, candida, and killing cold sores. It is also used to treat athlete's foot and ringworm.

Since it is such a powerful antiviral herb, it is great aid in the treatment of colds and flu. It is a great immune booster. My family has always used garlic-infused olive oil for earaches and ear infections. This remedy is time-tested and really works!

Yarrow



Yarrow is a beautiful, heavily aromatic flower that is at home in many a flower garden, but it is truly an herb that deserves a place in your medicinal garden! Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) is a hardy perennial and a very potent medicinal herb. Some people consider it a weed, while others plant yarrow in their flower beds. Yarrow can become invasive if you don't take care of it by dividing.

Yarrow is very easy to grow, and thrives in Zones 3-9. It will tolerate nearly any type of soil, but it does seem to prefer well-drained, rich soil. Yarrow is frost hardy and drought-tolerant. It will full sun to partial shade, but it does need sunlight to produce its showy flowers.

You can grow yarrow from seed, but it does best if you do a cold stratification for a month, then sow the seeds in pots indoors. Transplant outdoors 6-8 weeks later, or

when the plant is healthy and danger of frost has passed. Yarrow can also be sown directly in the garden after your last spring frost date.

I have had the best luck in planting yarrow from cuttings. I actually find lots of wild yarrow in the mountains, and take some with me to plant at home.

Using yarrow as medicine

Yarrow is anti-inflammatory, diaphoretic, antibacterial, antispasmodic, antipyretic, and antimicrobial. The part of yarrow that is used medicinally is the aerial parts: the stems, leaves, and flowers.

Yarrow is excellent at stopping bleeding. This includes bleeding wounds, heavy menstrual bleeding, and even internal bleeding. To stop external bleeding from cuts, clean the wound, then apply a yarrow compress or poultice to the affected area. Another way to use it to stop external bleeding is to dry the yarrow and grind it into a powder, then use it as a styptic powder. For heavy menstrual or internal bleeding, drink warm yarrow tea.

Yarrow helps reduce fevers by reducing body temperature and encouraging perspiration. It is also helpful for colds and flu and various infections, as it helps remove heat and toxins from the system by stimulating sweat.

Yarrow tea is bitter and therefore, is helpful as a digestive aid. It helps with indigestion, colic, and aids in bile production and liver function.

This lovely herb is also good for the heart. It improves blood circulation and dilates the peripheral blood vessels, thereby reducing blood pressure.

Yarrow is also beneficial for the skin. It has moisturizing properties that, when added to lotions, oils, or salves, help with eczema or dry skin. It is also good in salves that are acceptable to use on broken skin.

Don't use yarrow if you are allergic to the *ī lāli*, or daisy, family. Caution should be taken if used during pregnancy.

Comfrey



Comfrey (Š ~ ā l ĩ) is a beautiful, beneficial plant for the permaculture or herb garden. It is a nitrogen miner, meaning it brings nitrogen up to the top layers of soil, and also stores it in its leaves. It is often planted around fruit trees to block weeds. When the plant dies back, it provides both mulch and nutrients to the trees. Mature comfrey can be cut several times in a growing season and used to feed livestock, or to use as mulch. Comfrey tea made from the leaves is wonderful to water plants with, as it gives a extra boost of nitrogen.

Comfrey is a perennial in both very cold and very hot areas, in zones 3-9. It can be grown from seed, or from root cuttings. Comfrey is extremely hardy, but appreciates fertile soil. Acceptable soil types include sandy, loamy, or even clay, and it tolerates both wet and dry soil. Comfrey has a tendency to spread and will readily reseed. Keep in mind that comfrey can get very big, sometimes 24-48" wide, and the roots can reach down 10 feet into the soil.

Using comfrey as medicine

Comfrey is a very powerful plant. I do want to mention that most practitioners warn against using comfrey internally, or on broken skin, as it is believed to cause

liver damage. Please research the side effects thoroughly before making that decision for your family.

Comfrey has long been known as “knit bone”, due to its amazing ability to heal broken bones. It is also helpful in treating bruises, abrasions, and torn ligaments and tendons. It helps new cells develop more quickly. Because of this, it’s not good to use on large open wounds, as it can cause the outside to heal faster than the inside.

The easiest and most common way to use comfrey is in a poultice. Take fresh or dried herbs, combine with warm water, and macerate slightly. Place it on the wound and cover with a bandage or gauze.

Comfrey oil is great to apply to the skin for inflamed areas or bruises, or it can be made into a salve. A comfrey salve is good for insect bites, sunburn, bruises, or scrapes.

As homesteaders, we wear many hats. It’s a natural addition for us to take care of our family’s health needs. Since we have the garden space, we might as well use it to further our independence and sovereignty. Be part of the self-reliance movement. Grow your own, make your own, be your own!

