The basic rules of applied herbology

"The study of plants is, for those who indulge in it, an indefatigable source of joy that carries with it something delicate, pure and sacred."
Abbé Louis-Ferdinand Jehan

1) What is herbology?
It is a millennium-old art of healing, accessible, passed on and used on the front line throughout the world, and still used today by four out of five people. "The more you need nature, the better you know it," goes a popular saying. The herbalist is linked to all vital fields of human existence: agriculture, biology, botany, dietetics, ecology, education, ethics, history, medicine, philosophy, politics and spirituality.
2) What is a professional herbalist?
It is a person who has intimate knowledge of medicinal plants, which know how to recognize them, recommend them, transform them and use them. A qualified therapeutic herbalist must have at least three years of studies in the field and two years of clinical internship supervised by an experienced instructor.
The Guilde des herboristes du Québec is a non-partisan Quebec association made up of 400 herbalists from all backgrounds, mainly women, who can provide information on the training tools available and direct interested individuals to a competent herbalist in their region.
3) How and when to gather plants?
Plants are always gathered on a sunny day, after the dew has dried, around 10 or 11 a.m. Each part of the plant must be picked at the right time. The buds, barks, gums and resins are gathered in early spring, each at its own time, after the sap has risen. Leaves are picked as soon as they appear, starting with the upper extremities. Flowers are picked on dry days, just before they are in full bloom. Most roots are picked in early spring, or in the fall when most of the aerial parts have disappeared.
4) What is the best way to use medicinal plants?
Raw: in juices, salads, dips or mashed.
In **decoction**: take the freshly picked raw plant, submerge it in cold water and boil it for three to four minutes, infuse it for five minutes and filter.
In mother tincture: carefully pick the active parts of the plant. Trim them as needed and cover them with double the selected solvent. Chop coarsely (30 seconds in a good food chopper or processor). Let macerate for one month (or one moon) in a Mason jar with a plastic food cover. It is important to label the jar and add the name of the plant, the date and place where it was picked. Stir every two days especially at the beginning to make sure the plants do not float too much and oxidize. Using a fine plastic strainer or cheesecloth, filter the plants carefully without pressing them too much. Rinse the jar in boiling water and pour the filtered liquid back into the same jar and keep it in a very dry place, away from light, in a

cupboard. Consume it periodically during a cure, either at the rate of 10 drops three times per day mixed in a half a glass of water before meals, or acutely using three to five drops an hour, depending on the age and affliction to be treated.

Apple cider vinegar best extracts the tannins and minerals. Dry white wine is good for extracting the vitamins, enzymes, flavonoids, mucilage and water-soluble vitamins.
Clear alcohol (gin, vodka, 40-60%) best solubilizes lipid soluble vitamins, essential oils and tannins.
Vinegar and wine mother tinctures remain active for two to three years, and up to five years in alcohol.

Infusion is done with the well-dried plant (one to three weeks away from light, well spread out, turned regularly). The dried plant must be conserved in a labelled glass jar, away from light. An herbal tea is made with the equivalent of one teaspoon of the dried plant, except for alkaloids and bitters, half or only a quarter of it!
The flowers and leaves of dried plants last for one year; the gums, barks, seeds and roots remain active for up to five years.

Medicinal oils are made like mother tinctures, except that the solvent is oil (Canola, olive, organic sesame) and barely dried plants are used. Once filtered after a month, the oils can be solidified in the form of an ointment by diluting them in a fifth of the volume of beeswax heated in a double boiler. You can extend the conservation with a few drops of adequate essential oils, added during emulsion, which are poured into small tinted glass jars.
Medicinal plants can also be used as seasonings, in the bath, as psychotherapeutic floral elixirs, as incenses, extracts, capsules, syrups and even enemas! Used properly, they have magical effects!

Publications by Anny Schneider

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1999: Plantes sauvages médicinales, and republished and corrected in March 2011 Je me soigne avec les Plantes sauvages Éditions de l'Homme,
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Questions, requests?

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Common Medicinal wild plants, trees and shrubs

By Anny Schneider, author and herbalist

***"The Lord has the earth produce his remedies and sensible man does not scorn them."* – Solomon in Ecclesiastes XXXVIII, 4).**

The flora of Canada is made up of a knowledgeable blend of cultivated perennial plants brought by early and recent colons, who survived because of their resistance and ruggedness, and a few naturalized or indigenous wild species, particularly in hardy wooded areas and swamps. Those of course , where knows best by First nations , living for century only from and in wild nature. They even saved the first equipage of Jacques Cartier from scurvy, with fir balsam decoctions.

Even though we find ourselves in the midst of at least twice as many ornamental plant species, this abstract will only mention those recognized as medicinal, based on the millennium-old tradition that herbology represents. But now a fact is that half of wild plants where brought and spreaded by europeans colons (ex: clover, dandelion, plantain etc.)

For over a thousand years, the Churches in the West played a major role in the promulgation and preservation of herbology throughout the world, both in the identification of species and dissemination of species recognized as curative, as well as the spreading of often vital knowledge, particularly for destitute and far-off populations.

The Catholic Church and herbology

In the city of Paris, in 805, the "Capitulars" – formal edicts of King Charlemagne – requested that all friars produce their own medicinal plants, in support of a list of 1000 species, in order to care for the poor and their own communities. Around 1100, the abbess Hildegarde in Bingen, Germany became known for her therapeutic gifts and wrote several herbology texts that are still recognized today.
In New France as well, at the beginning of the colony in around 1650, the clergy built several hospitals and medicinal gardens nearby, in order to care for their patients with good quality remedies that were always accessible.

The parish priest Gabriel Souart, who was also a doctor as well as a friend of Maisonneuve and Marguerite Bourgeois, was mandated by the pope and the king of France himself, to run the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital in Montréal. The

historian Faillon said that this highly skilled missionary was both a doctor of the body and the soul, like many of his heirs and predecessors.
For at least three centuries throughout various regions of Quebec, the nuns treated the sick on the front line in their hospitals, when they didn't go into their homes. Plants always made up their first medical raw material, including those that they discovered through the natives, with whom they made regular trades. According to several treatises that bear witness, the nuns used plants to treat all sorts of illnesses, even very serious ones, such as typhoid fever with Boneset, tuberculosis with Herb Robert or even Labrador tea, used against leprosy or ringworm.

We also owe the prettiest herbariums in Quebec (Montreals botanical garden and in Quebec, Laval and Sherbrooke Universities) to the clergy, along with a few good botanical treatises, including the most famous and certainly the most complete work on the subject in the country: Flore Laurentienne by the marvellous brother Marie-Victorin, also founder of the largest botanical garden in North America.

Wild medicinal shrubs and tree

Ash (Fraxinus americana)
Its sweet sap is very nutritious and its wood is very hard. Its leaves are fortifying and purifying for the blood, useful against inflammatory diseases and skin diseases. Its ripe seeds, very bitter, are rich in essential fatty acids.

Barberry (Berberis vulgaris variegata purpurea)
After two centuries of carrying wheat leaf rust, this precious shrub, in trimmed clusters, has been exculpated and is finally accessible on the market once again. A powerful general purgative, its boiled sap and twigs treat liver and kidney congestion and its small, red, egg-shaped fruit are rich in organic acids and anthocyanic immunostimulants.

Black elder (Sambucus nigra variegata aurea)
Black elder – also called "White Syrup" because of its flowers in full bloom at the beginning of July – is a good diuretic and anti-cellulite that is drank as a herbal tea and a purging cure when it is flowering. Its fruit have anti-inflammatory and anti-viral effects when stewed or used as a wine or syrup. Planted near the house or even barns, the shrub wards off evil spirits. Planted near elms, the shrub saves them from Dutch elm disease.

Birch Grey or white (Betula papyrifera. and populifolia)

The birch is the mythical tree of American Indians who used it for fire and to build canoes and wigwams. Its nectar, gathered like that of the maple, is used to clean the blood and skin. Its tar fights cellulite and hair loss. Its leaves have a powerful diuretic and anti-inflammatory effect. Its bark helps in the cicatrization of wounds and even helps fractures to heal faster.

Buckthorn (Rhamnus cathartica)
This very prolific shrub was brought from the south by Loyalists and used for its powerful purgative effects (They called it "Shittingbark!"). Its berries without the seeds – too drastic for the intestines – are very rich in absorbable sugars, iron and antioxidant anthocyanins.

Crampbark (Viburnum trilobum, etc.)
Also called "pimbina" for its red acidulous fruit, it is used to make jellies rich in organic acids which birds are wild about.
Herbalists also use the twigs as a decoction or mother tincture against all types of cramps, but mainly menstrual.

Dogwood (Cornus stolonifera variegata X)
Its name comes from the fact that its wood is hard like the horn of a cow. Also known as *Hart rouge*, its bark was part of the blend of sacred tobacco of the American Indians. Its twigs, drank in a decoction, relieved fever and saved many people from the ravages of the Spanish flu. The dogwood is also a blood purifier and a vermifuge.

Elm (Ulmus americana)
For its great benefit, it is planted not far from the elder. The young leaves of the elm are edible, emollient and cicatrizant. It is primarily its internal bark, pulverized, which is recognized for its mucosal regenerating effects, from the mouth to the colon. For a long time, professional singers used elm bark lozenges against laryngitis.

Ginkgo biloba
The Asian tree of wisdom and longevity has adapted very well to our lands. It prospers even in the city where it contributes to depolluting the air and ground. The yellowing leaves at the end of summer are used as a cerebral stimulant and an antioxidant vasodilator, particularly by intellectuals and old people subject to memory loss. They are however incompatible with anticoagulant medications.

Larch (Larix laricina)
The only deciduous needle conifer, its boiled needles and twigs contain powerful immune stimulants. One of its extracts, arabinogalactan, is marketed in capsules against immune system diseases. Canadians of

bygone years treated arthritis in horses using the boiled bark of what they called “red spruce”. They also used it to treat chronic influenza and the skin diseases of their fellow men.

Linden (Tilia americana)
Of this large leaf variety, it is mainly the flowered bracts, gathered toward the beginning of July, that are used for their calming, antipyretic and diuretic effects. The inner bark or sapwood, as a decoction, has effects similar to the European linden, hence a powerful cholagogue, choleretic (cleanses the liver and bile) but also anti-uric.

Maple (Acer sacharum)
Early in the spring, maple sap is highly purifying and purgative. The young leaves can also be eaten as a salad. The twigs in decoction remineralize, and the ripe seeds are rich in good fats. Lying under a maple tree helps one to recover from an emotional shock.

Red oak (Quercus rubra)
The oak is a symbol of strength, endurance and longevity. Taken internally the buds can be consumed as a tonic, particularly useful for men as it increases their fertility. Its leaves regenerate the mucous membranes. Astringent, the bark of the twigs is used to cicatrize wounds and relieve vaginal discharges. The glands, roasted and ground, are often used as a survival food during crises and wars.

Roses (Rosa cinnamomum, rubiginosa and spp)
Roses are mainly recognized for the properties of their flowers, symbols of love and beauty. Through their virtues as softeners and emollients, in lotions they treat greasy skin, rosacea and dilated pores. They are eaten in salads and drank as herbal teas to counter all types of digestive disorders. Their essential oils are among the most costly and subtle; they are highly valued in perfumery. Their boiled leaves and stems treat diarrhea and its fruit is very rich in vitamin C and bioflavonoids.

Spirea (Spirea alba, tomentosa, etc.)
The leaves of this shrub typical of North America have antipyretic, as well as anti-diarrheal effects. In the countryside, it was a longtime substitute for tea, as it has a similar taste, without the stimulating effect.

Spruce (Picea glauca)
The best way to consume spruce is to gather its young shoots in the spring, drink them as a decoction or make a mother tincture or syrup. It can also be chewed as a gum to treat digestive ulcers of all types or the broth of its branches can be added to bath water, as with all conifers. The

essential oils of its cousin, the black spruce, more typical of Northern peat bogs, effectively combats seasonal allergies and back and vertebral pain.

Pine (Pinus resinosa)
All pines are valued for construction purposes, but also for their resin, which is often used as paint solvent (turpentine). Most of their needles and their gum contain bactericidal, calming and pectoral essential oils. The trunk resin can be chewed to protect against infections of the mouth or lungs, to make a salve to cover wounds and warts, or when added to boiled branches counters joint pains.

Trembling aspen (Populus tremuloides)
This tree of the people, which grows very quickly, is the most widespread tree in the world. It is also called "quiver-leaf" simply because of its numerous leaves that quiver in the wind. The decoction of its internal bark is a laxative, vermifuge, anti–inflammatory and blood purifier.

Velvet sumac (Rhus typhina)
The seeds of this tropical tree came centuries ago provided by natives with a precious trading commodity. It was long used by industries to tan leathers. The colonists made a syrup of it that was reputed to be effective against flu and sore throat. An eminent American botanist confirms its hypnotic powers by provoking very significant dreams.

White cedar (Thuya occidentalis)
Our cedar contains high quality essential oils, widely distilled in Canada and exported throughout the world. They act as insect repellents, immunostimulants, as an anti-viral agent and protects against warts. Its young spring sprouts, recommended as a quick cure and decoction, are also antiscorbutic and act as a cholagogue (which cleanses the liver).

Yew (Taxus canadensis)
This tall conifer, well-pruned here, but originating from Northern Europe, has a Canadian variety, the Canada yew or box tree, which relieves high fevers and inflammatory pain in a full or partial bath. Its famous for taxol, an alkaloid used against hormone-dependent cancers, is extracted. Important notice: Its leaves and seeds are highly toxic!

Some current major medicinal wild plants

Burdock (Arctium lappa)
Burdock, also known as “Gracchia” in Quebec, has large leaves with antiseptic properties to treat skin problems, used externally only as it is very bitter. Its first year autumn root is very flavoursome and is eaten whole, steamed, it helps to stabilize the blood sugar levels. Its boiled fruit combats enuresis and treats illnesses of the kidneys and bladder. Its hooked seeds inspired the inventor of “Velcro.”

Clover red (Trifolium pratense) Leaves feed cattle because they are rich in proteins and minerals. The flower is a blood purifier, diuretic and an immuno-stimulant. They even have pro-oestrogenic properties and are helpfull around menopause. Gives excellent honey too.

Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale) Leaves as salads in early spring , flowers later in teas, jelly or even making wine. Great liver , and blood purifier. The roots picked in autumn drain and clean kidneys.

Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris)
Named in honor of Diana the Huntress, it is an excellent plant for women’s illnesses. Emmenagogue and even oxytocic, it also treats post-natal anemia and pre-menopause. It contains blood purifying elements and other anti-parasiticals.

Plantain (Plantago majus or lanceolata)
This naturalized tenacious plant, named “White man’s step” by the American Indian, efficiently treats insect bites, wounds and other skin afflictions, simply crushed raw and applied to the skin. As a herbal tea, it relieves pulmonary inflammations and its seeds are a gentle laxative.

Hop (Humulus lupulus)
This other plant imported from Europe via the United States is used to make beer, but has also been used as a sedative for thousands of years. Its flowers or strobiles are also very rich in estrogens and are therefore emmenagogues, but also galactagogues and antispasmodics, and are even efficient as localized compresses against neuralgia.

Deadly nightshade (Solanum dulcamara)
This climber of ditches, embankments and other barrows has been part of the traditional pharmacopoeia for a very long time. Its leaves and stems were used as an analgesic, narcotic and anti-spastic. Its bright red berries can be either purgative or emetic, depending on the dose.

Solomon’s seal (Polygonatum multiflorum)

Impressive plant indigenous of the woods, the rhizome was mainly used as a poultice (boiled or in vinegar) against furuncles, panaris and other scrofula, illnesses that are much rarer today thanks to hygiene. Avoid ingesting as it is very purgative and oxytocic. A plant rich in diosgenin, but difficult to dose without a specialist's opinion.

Male-shield fern (Dryopteris filix-mas)
Its leaves are a good ground covering which wards off insects and parasites. It can also be used to make an anti-inflammatory oil. Its rhizome used as a decoction and in small quantities (max. 1 gr.) gets rid of worms and especially tapeworms (lone worm) if the rhizome is used properly and combined with a purgative.

Sorrel field or wood (Oxalis acetollosa and or montana)
Also called "Alleluia" since it flowers at Eastertime in Europe, the wood sorrel is consumed raw in salads for its high concentration of vitamin C. Apothecaries would extract the citric acid and use it as a preservative. Marinated in vinegar and filtered, it combats brown spots on the skin and disinfects wounds.

Wood mustard (Alliaria officinalis)
During its spring blossoming, this plant from the mustard family emits an alliaceous smell. It was long used as a diuretic cure against arthritis and gout, but also against asthma. Raw or in a mother tincture, it is also antiscorbutic, fortifying and counterirritant in a poultice.

Yarrow (Achillea Millefollium)
Used for millenaries against hemorrages and abnormal bleeding in wounds or women's diseases. Excellent against diarrhea and colitis. Cold tea cures fever.

Thanks to herbal medecine, let's become and stay : autonomous, happy and healthy!

To keep it true : through and with plants, the Great Spirit and Mother Nature help us , providing their gifts for most of living beings since beginning of life on earth, and it will do so forever, we hope, depending of us , now more then ever !

Anny Schneider, autumn 2015

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