

Notes on the COVID-19 VIRUS from an Herbalist's Perspective

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The COVID virus is something that no herbalist has worked with before. With that understanding, we can only know through our experiences in the past what herbs have been used effectively to support respiratory health, especially during cold and flu season, knowing that COVID is not a flu virus. Based on these experiences, I'm providing you with information to support your overall health. Please consult an expert medical doctor if you suspect you have COVID.

I am owner of Red Clover Herbal Apothecary Farm, a medicinal herb farmer, plant medicine maker and herbalist. We are certified organic and grow over 50 kinds of medicinal herbs as well as wildharvest over 20 other kinds on our land. We have an on-farm licensed commercial kitchen and drying room for herbs we use in our teas.

We have been taking our herbal wares to local twin cities farmers markets for the past 6 years as well as providing seasonal CSA herbal shares that support our health and well being. In light of the COVID virus, things are changing so very fast, we are not quite sure what those markets will look like. We know legally they must stay open as they provide essentials that people are needing. I feel I must focus in the direction of most need during this time and it's possible there may not be a 'Spring CSA Herbal Share' this year. We do have an online store that carries many of our herbal products.

The original pharmacopoeia's mostly consisted of plants that were used as medicines. Herbal plants need to be valued again for their intelligence and the gifts they offer us in supporting our health and well being, just as good whole foods are. All of us somewhere in our families ancestry had relatives who collected herbs, be it berries, flowers, barks, roots, etc. They knew how to bring down a fever, stop bleeding, stop diarrhea, etc, out of necessity. I wish there were more farmers growing herbs for medicine.

My hope is for more people to start their own medicinal herb gardens. I am busy now germinating seeds in the greenhouse. These herbs, mostly native, will be available to purchase in mid-May. You can check in with my website to find out when the plant sale will be happening.

WHERE TO START!

- Building your immune system has positive impacts for keeping you healthy and for reducing severity of symptoms during an illness.
- Having a baseline of nutrient-dense foods and minerals is key to supporting the body's natural defenses. If your diet is less than ideal, consider supplementing with vitamins C, D, A and zinc.
- cut down or cut out alcohol
- cut down or cut out sugars – viruses and bacteria thrive on sugar
- exercise
- get out in Nature
- breath deep
- take breaks from all the media and news, especially sensationalized media and news

Keeping the gut biome healthy

- Your gut microbiome is made up of trillions of bacteria, fungi and other microbes that live in and on your digestive tract. It acts like another organ crucial for your health and has been referred to as the 'true immune system'. The more robust our gut microbiome, the healthier we are and the stronger our immune system is
- Your gut microbiome regulates **immune balance, known as homeostasis**.. Disruption of this can cause **immune imbalances** leading to autoimmune disorders, diabetes, weight gain, and more.

So how to keep your gut microbiome healthy?

- Fertilize your gut with healthy whole foods, leafy greens, fermented foods such as Kim Chi, Miso, Sauerkraut, non sugary yogurt and Kefir, bone broths and a wide variety of fibrous vegetables and fruits. Add freshly cooked mushrooms to your foods, Shiitake, Lions Mane, Portobella

There are many ways we can use herbs during this time

- in our foods
- teas
- plant extracts (also called herbal tinctures by some)
What is a herbal extract? – An herbal extract is plant material that has been placed in a solvent, most commonly alcohol. The herbs soak in the alcohol for a minimum of 4 weeks. This alcohol pulls out the medicinal healing compounds of the herb. It is then pressed out and filtered. The spent plant material can then be composted and the alcohol which contains all the healing properties is stored in dark bottles away from heat and light. This extract is good for 5-7 years.
- steam inhalations
- gargles
- poultices
- baths
- essential oils
- neti pot

In our Foods

- Ingest fresh Garlic daily - Garlic is immune enhancing, and has both antiviral and antibacterial properties. Onions have many of the same benefits.
Side note – When I list an herb as having antiviral or antibacterial properties, it does not mean that it will necessarily prevent or cure a certain virus or bacteria from your body but certainly will add protection and may possibly help speed healing.
- add Garlic to pizza's, soups, eggs, salad dressing, sauces, mashed potatoes, roasts, all kinds of meats and vegetables. I like to add the garlic to my dish right before I eat it so all of the healing properties are still there and not cooked out. I add both Garlic and Ginger to bone broth,
- Ingest fresh Ginger daily - Ginger also has antiviral and antibacterial properties, it supports the respiratory system against unwanted invasions, is very warming and helps to disperse and break up stagnation from a cold. **Ginger is contraindicated with anti-coagulant medications.**
- Use Turmeric with black pepper - Turmeric supports a healthy response to inflammation throughout the body and helps to promote optimal immune system function. Used with Black pepper it increase the bio availability of the helpful compounds in turmeric.
- Use Fenugreek - in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), this spice is known as a “phlegm mover” and is said to break up stuck energies and cool inflammation within the body. Simply chew a tsp a day or use in foods.
- Thyme is has wonderful antiviral properties. Make a tea with it, add to all kinds of dishes
- Use Cayenne, Rosemary,
- Use Cinnamon to increase general circulation of the body in cases where there are chronically cold hands and feet. Or, it can be used in more acute situations like colds and the flu in which the person feels shivery and chilled.
- Make your own 'Fire Cider'. Onions, Garlic, Ginger, Hot peppers, Horseradish, Turmeric, Thyme and more. Chop all these up, place in big glass jar and cover with organic apple cider vinegar with 'the Mother'. Shake daily. Can be pressed out after 2 weeks. Take daily shots to boost your immune system.

Drink nutrient dense teas.

Note: Preferably drink your teas hot or warm, not cold at this time. COVID is considered a cold damp disease. You want to have warming foods and teas.

- Nettles
- Horsetail
- Oatstraw
- Alfalfa

Drink teas that lift the spirit.

- Tulsi
- Peppermint
- Spearmint
- Lemon balm

How to make your teas

- If loose leaf tea, place 1 tsp to 1 heaping TBL into a glass canning jar. Pour 1 cup boiling water over tea. Cover. Steep 10 minutes, (longer with nutrient dense teas), strain and drink. You can make a quart at a time and adjust tea amount accordingly.

Support and Strengthen you immune system with Adaptogen Plant Extracts

So what are adaptogens? They are a category of herbs that help the body restore balance and adapt to stress. They work by increasing the bodies resistance to multiple stressors including physical, emotional, chemical and environmental. They shield against acute and chronic stress. Their normalizing effects on the body, particularly regarding the endocrine and immune systems make them unique. They've existed for millennia though they've only in recent years became more widely used in the United states. You'll hear these words associated with adaptogens,

- antioxidant- Antioxidants helps reduces damage due to oxygen mostly by are unstable atoms that can damage cells, causing illness and aging
- immune tonic – Immune tonics help to restore, tone and invigorate systems within the body.

Adaptogens that are particularly beneficial to use at this time are;

- Reishi mushroom (*Ganoderma lucidum*), Reishi has anti-inflammatory, antioxidant and immune enhancing properties.

Use in extract form or as powder in smoothies or tea

- Astragalus root (*Astragalus membranaceus*) Astragalus has antiviral, antibacterial and antioxidant properties as well as being an immune tonic. In TCM, Astragalus is useful for those who are frequently coming down with colds and the flu, have difficulty breathing (such as asthma) .

You want to STOP TAKING Astragalus at the first sign of getting sick.

Use in extract form, in tea form or in soups and broths

- Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) Ashwagandha is a calming adaptogen and has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties as well as being an immune tonic.

Use in extract form, as a powder in smoothies or teas.

Support your immune system with these herbs as well

- Echinacea root – tea or extract form
- Elderberry syrup – research has shown it is very effective against the flu virus. It prevents the flu virus from getting into our cells, using our DNA and replicating and spreading. We do not know how it reacts with the COVID virus yet. I have been reading and listening to a host of webinars on this topic by reputable and respected herbalist from all over the country as well as holistic doctors. The census here is that it supports the immune system and can help to keep you well. **But**, is recommended to stop taking Elderberry if you feel like you may be coming down with something. There are also some thoughts if you have an autoimmune disorder this may not be the herb for you at this time. I myself am comfortable with taking Elderberry.
- For information regarding using Elderberry during this COVID outbreak here are two very informative articles.
- One from Paul Bergner, Director of North American Institute of Medical Herbalism SAFETY DISCUSSION: ELDERBERRY AND IMMUNE STIMULATION CONCERNS
- <https://theherbalacademy.com/safety-discussion-elderberry-immune-stimulation-concerns/>
- The other from Donald Yance, world renowned clinical herbalist and certified nutritionist THE TRUTH ABOUT ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus nigra*)
<https://www.donniyance.com/the-truth-about-elderberry-sambucus-nigra/>

Support your nervous system with calming nervines herbs.

Stress and anxiety weaken the immune system and make us more susceptible to illness.

- Skullcap - It is indicated for stressed out people who, when nervous or agitated, develop muscle spasms, nervous tics, or tight, painful muscles. Use in extract form
- Lemon balm - It can be taken for stress headaches, to promote better sleep quality. When combined with Chamomile in a tea is excellent for folks who tend to hold their nervousness in their gut. Lemon balm can also be taken as an extract. It's uplifting and tastes fantastic.
- Chamomile – a relaxing tea for anxiety, upset stomach, irritability, nervous headaches, insomnia, and IBS symptoms. Chamomile can also be taken as an extract. Add Skullcap, Lemon balm and Milky Oatseed extracts for an excellent remedy for insomnia.
- Milky Oatseed - Fresh Milky Oatseed extract is a superb food for the nervous system. It is a slow acting tonic remedy that calms shattered nerves, relieves emotional instability and it helps to restore a sense of peace and tranquility to over-stressed, angry, and chronically upset people
- Passion flower - Of all of the nervines, it has the most defined sedating effect. The specific indications for Passion flower are circular thinking that causes insomnia. You lay down, your dog tired, you definitely need sleep, but BOING!, your mind is off and racing, jumping from one radio station to another. Passion flower is the off button on that radio station. Take as an extract.

Keep your lymph moving

Our lymphatic system is the garbage disposal of our body, transporting waste products out of our body. The cleaner our lymphatic system, the better able we are to ward off infections.

- Gentle exercise and gentle massage are two ways to move your lymph
 - Dry brush massage with a natural-bristle brush
 - Warm compresses to the back of the neck
 - There are also herbs that facilitate the movement of lymph
 - Cleavers
 - Red Clover
 - Echinacea
 - Mullein
 - Red Root
 - Baptisia (combine with equal parts Echinacea when using)
- Use in tea or plant extract form.

Support your liver to help move out toxins.

One of the liver's jobs is to take up toxic substances and convert them into harmless substances or makes sure they are released from the body. The following herbs are like good friends that show up and help the liver clean house. Your liver is most active when you are sleeping, so taking one of these herbs before bedtime can be beneficial.

- Spring is a wonderful time to support gentle detoxing of your liver by digging up roots. In the Spring the plants' beneficial compounds are still in the roots. As the plant emerges from the soil and reaches towards the sun, these compounds rise further up into the plant. This is the time to dig up;
 - Dandelion root
 - Burdock root
 - Yellow dock root
 - Turmeric root (does not grow here)
 - Milk Thistle Seed (gathered in the fall)

Use as plant extract, in fermentation

Use herbal steam inhalations for nasal invasions and to support your respiratory system

- Fill your basin with as hot as water as you can. Make a tent with a towel over your head and add 5 -10 drops of essential oil of Eucalyptus. Breathe deeply through your nose for 3-5 minutes. Eucalyptus steam can help to clear stuffy nasal passages, dilate the bronchioles in your lungs and help move some of that sticky mucus out of your system. Thyme, Oregano and Rosemary essential oils are also helpful here.
 - You can also bring a pot of herbs to simmer over the stove including any of the culinary herbs listed above and breathe in the steam from that.

Use a neti pot

- A neti pot thins mucus and helps flush it out of your nasal passages. Add approximately ½ -1 tsp of sea salt per neti.
- Be careful not to over-use as this could possibly make one more prone to sinusitis. The thought is that the salt gradually depletes the mucus that acts as a protective covering on the membranes of the nose.

Poultices to break up congestion and raise phlegm

A poultice is a direct way to apply herbs to the skin.

- Onion poultice – use white or yellow onions. Slice 2 peeled onions thinly. Steam for about 8 minutes, or until soft, in a steamer placed over a couple inches of water. Remove from pot, and pat dry in a clean kitchen towel, and then place in new clean kitchen towel. Wrap up like a flat burrito. You may also saute onion until just soft in a bit of olive oil. Do not overcook or steam. As soon as it is cool enough to be placed on skin, place on the chest. Place another towel over top to keep in heat. Leave until cool.
- Potato poultice - grate 2 medium size potatoes. Gently heat on stove for just a minute to warm. Place directly over congested area of chest. Put a towel on top and a hot water bottle or heating pad if desired on top of that. Leave on for at least 15 minutes.
- Cabbage poultice – place big cabbage leaves directly on chest where congested. Put a towel on top and a hot water bottle or heating pad if desired on top of that. Leave on for at least 15 minutes.

Herbal Baths

- For chills - make a strong tea of ginger and add to bath water and/or add 10 drops of Eucalyptus essential oil.
- To relax - add Chamomile flower tea to bath water or fresh/dried flowers in a small cloth bag and hang under hot running water while your fill tub. You can also add essential oil of Lavender.
 - Add Epsom salt and sea salt to both of these for additional benefits.

Ear pain and infections

- Add 1 clove of freshly minced garlic to 1 TBL of olive oil. Keep on very low heat for about 20 minutes to let the beneficial properties of the garlic infuse into the oil. At this point, strain the garlic and remove. Place about two drops of warmed oil in the ear lying down with your pained ear up.

Sore Throats

- We have a 'doorway to infection' in our throats. You want to address the invading bacteria/virus before it drops into the lower parts of the respiratory system.
 - Use the Herbal Sore Throat Sprays. All of the following herbal extracts are beneficial to knock out a sore throat, Echinacea, Propolis, Thyme, Hyssop and Sage. I especially like Echinacea and Propolis. You can place drops of Echinacea directly on the back of you throat where it hurts with a glass pipette. Spray as much as 3X per hour until throat is clear.
 - Gargle with salt water and just a tiny pinch of cayenne in warm water. Cayenne is a circulatory stimulant and picks up blood flow in the throat tissue while salt helps to pull out nasty microbes. Gargle often - up to 3X per hour while sore.
 - Make and drink Sage and Honey Tea.

Fevers

There is evidence that fever helps the immune system fight infection and that artificially lowering it can give invading germs an edge. If under 102 degrees try the following instead.

- Stay hydrated
- Take a warm bath to open up pores and release heat.
- Use diaphoretic herbs. They also open up your pores and release heat.
 - Elderflower, Peppermint and Yarrow tea are excellent.
 - Boneset if you have chills and are achy. Very bitter, extract is easier to take.
 - Catnip, tea or extract.

Coughs

There are many types of coughs, coming from higher up in the chest to lower down in the lungs. There are dry and unproductive coughs, wet coughs, hacking coughs etc. There are different categories of herbs to use here.

- **Demulcents** – herbs rich in mucilage that soothe and protect irritated or inflamed internal tissue. Here we consider
 - Marshmallow root – very effective in soothing a sore throat. Use in tea form or powdered. Mix with a little water or honey to coat the throat and reducing inflammation.
 - Slippery Elm bark – In lozenge form or powder. Mix 1 part powder to 8 parts water, Simmer gently 10-15 minutes.
 - Licorice root - it can be used to loosen painful coughs, soothe sore throats. Use in tea, chew on the dried root or use in extract form. One dropperful, every few hours, can turn a cough around very quickly.

Licorice root is contraindicated with medications that lower potassium, blood pressure and are blood thinners such as warfarin.
- **Expectorants** – herbs that help the body remove excess mucous from the lungs
 - Mullein leaves - reduces intense dry coughing while also encouraging elimination from the lungs. Tea or extract form
 - Hyssop – Helps to loosen and bring mucous up and out. Use in tea or extract form
 - Elecampane – Invaluable here, Elecampane is strong expectorant, indicated for wet coughs as well as helping to loosen old catarrh. Use in syrups, tea or extracts.

Contraindicated for Pregnant and breast feeding women.

 - Pleurisy root - Originally named after a condition of inflammation involving the lining of the lungs. This root is a combination demulcent /expectorant, especially indicated if coughing produces pain in the rib cage. Use in extract form.

Contraindicated in pregnancy and with people taking medications that contain cardiac glycosides.

- Plantain leaves – for a dry hacking cough that seems endless. Use in a tea or extract.

Herbs you can use when you feel the invader is moving deeper into your lungs.

- Osha (*Ligusticum porteri*) Osha has a primary influence in the treatment of respiratory infections and supports the health of the respiratory system, throat, sinuses, and lungs.

Contraindicated during pregnancy

- Elecampane - **Contraindicated for Pregnant and breast feeding women.**
- Lomatium (*Ligusticum dissectum*) The plant is native to the Western US and is traditionally used in the Native American culture to treat influenza. During the 1918 flu epidemic, it was reported that Native American tribes recovering from the Spanish flu effectively used *Lomatium dissectum*.

Contraindications; Can cause a hive-like rash in apparently sensitive individuals.

AVOID if pregnant

Secondary bacterial infection from a virus

- Usnea – tea or extract form

A word about dosing

- ***Pay attention to what you already know about your own body.*** If you are on the more sensitive side and prone to over-stimulation you do not need to be hit over the head with larger doses of herbs. Smaller doses would suit you better. If you are more of a lumber jack type, then perhaps hard hitting at the beginning of an illness may suit you better as it does me. For most people, following the suggested dose on the back of the label is suggested. That being said, ***always listen to your body.***

Information on Dosing for Babies and Children

- When adult dose is 1 dropperful (30 drops), the following is recommended for children:
- Younger than 3 months - 1 drops
- 3 to 6 months - 1+ drops
- 6 to 9 months - 2 drops
- 9 to 12 months - 3 drops
- 12 to 18 months - 4 drops
- 2-3 years - 5 drops
- 3-4 years - 6 drops
- 4-6 years - 7drops
- 6 to 9 years - 12 drops
- 9-12 years - 15 drops