

Inspiring a Holistic Approach to Wellness with Nourishing Herbs  
Linda Diane Feldt, Holistic Health Practitioner

Herbal use is dominated by marketing influences, and they rarely include information on nourishment. Herbal preparations are often seen as safer drug substitutes. Little research has been done on the nourishing aspect of herbs. In general, nourishment as a path to wellness is downplayed and ignored. Herbs have traditionally been used for their nourishing qualities, as well as their potential for stronger medicinal type effects.

Using herbs for nourishment are usually safer, simpler, longer lasting, with fewer side effects. It is also usually less expensive.

The quality, content and value of herbal nourishment is affected by seasons, plant parts, where they are grown, and how they are prepared. Annuals, perennials and biennials also have different nutritional value at different times of their life cycles.

- in general (with many exceptions) leaves tend to have more nutritional value.
- In general (with many exceptions) roots and seeds will contain constituents to protect the plant and may be more toxic.
- Most biennials will be of greatest value for nutrition and medicine in the fall of their first year, and the spring of their second year.
- Herbal capsules are generally of low value for nutrition, and unless they contain actual extracts from the plants tend to deliver minimal therapeutic value.

Herbal Preparations that are nourishing include Infusions, tinctures, vinegars, decoctions, dried preparations, and food.

#### Quick Definitions –

an infusion is made with as much as an ounce of dried plant material per quart of water. The herb can be placed in a quart or half gallon canning jar, add hot water just off the boil (lower temperature than boiling), sealed with a lid, and left for 4-12 hours. The infusion is then strained, and what isn't used right away is refrigerated. Infusions can be reheated, have honey or other sweetener added, and sometimes enjoyed cold. Generally leaves and roots are used for infusions, and plants with volatile oils should be infused for far shorter time periods – 20 minutes is common. Oatstraw (*Avena sativa*), Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*), and Red Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) are four herbs commonly used as nourishing infusions.

A tincture is generally made from a high proof alcohol, 100 proof vodka is common. The plant (roots, seeds, leaves are common), is placed in a jar and then covered with the alcohol. This is left to infuse for 4-6 weeks. The part used, ratio to alcohol, and how long it takes depends on the herb. While nutrients are effectively extracted with alcohol, dosing size is limited and so the nutritional value is limited.

An herbal vinegar is useful especially for extracting minerals from a plant to create a mineral rich preparation. Generally a mineral rich plant part (leaves are most often used) is infused for about 6 weeks. Fill a jar with the plant, without compressing it. Add apple cider vinegar to fill the jar. Use a plastic lid, as

metal interacts with the vinegar. After six weeks strain, and use the vinegar for cooking, salad dressings, over vegetables or grains, or use a tablespoon or so in water to drink for a calcium rich addition. One tablespoon can contain as much as 300 mg of calcium.

A decoction is often used for roots, and sometimes berries. The herb is simmered for a period of time, the water level is reduced, and the result can be drunk or preserved. Ginger root is often prepared as a decoction. About two inches of the root is sliced or grated for 1 quart of water. The root and water are cooked at a low simmer for 20-30 minutes with a lid. Honey, lemon, or other sweetener can be added. What isn't used right away can be strained and refrigerated for 2-4 days. Elder berry would be another common decoction, usually with a lot of honey added and stored and used as a syrup.

Dried herbs can use most plant parts, and can be dried on screens, in a food dehydrator, in a very low (200 degrees or less) oven, in a bag to preserve small parts, or in some cases in the sun. In a sealed jar away from sunlight they can last a year or more, and freezing extends their usefulness even longer.

Many herbs can be used as food. Leaves can be eaten in salads (dandelion, lambs quarters, yellow dock, violet, and more). Flowers are a beautiful and often tasty addition to a meal. Please note that the flowers and leaves most likely to be toxic are ornamental plants. I often use violet, mustard, dandelion, chicory, chive, onion, and many others to my food. Herbal leaves can also be used as pot greens, standing alone or mixed with other greens including kale, chard, collards and spinach. Nettle, dandelion, lambs quarters, plantago, yellow dock, are just a few of my favorites. Herbs can also be used as a substitute for spinach in many recipes. While cooking the greens is more likely to deliver more nutrients, I encourage people to start by enjoying them however they like and experimenting with what inspires them to eat more. Roots and seaweed benefit from a longer cooking time, so soups and stew are a good idea.

### Safety

Using a good resource book – or many – is essential for plant identification and verification that it is safe to use, and safe to use often. If you want to learn how to forage locally learn the few poisonous and toxic plants so that you can be certain to avoid them. A smart phone app can be helpful as well. Also be aware that a plant that is recently sprayed with poison may look fine for several hours. Plants are commonly sprayed with toxic chemicals near power lines, and by rail road tracks. Nothing substitutes for common sense, caution is advised until you know the plants well. Learning and using 2-3 plants a year rather than trying everything will also keep you safer.

### Nourishment Success

- add to rather than eliminate or deny
- upgrade choices and habits
- keep it simple
- find ways to reinforce good choices
- set priorities to avoid overwhelm

Nourishment takes many forms, and those that incorporate the body mind and spirit are especially valuable. Being in nature, combined with utilizing and appreciating the natural world has a profound healing effect – and that has always been a part of being human.

#### Local Resources:

- The People's Food Co-op Ann Arbor has an excellent selection of bulk herbs [www.peoplesfood.coop](http://www.peoplesfood.coop)
- Free monthly class on herbal topics sponsored by The Peoples Food Co-op [http://peoplesfood.coop/news\\_and\\_events/](http://peoplesfood.coop/news_and_events/) held at Crazy Wisdom Bookstore and Tearoom 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month, taught by Linda Diane Feldt
- Cookbook "Spinach and Beyond: Loving Life and Dark Green Leafy Vegetables" by Linda Diane Feldt available locally at Argus Farm Stop or buy from [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

#### Just a few other Resources out of the many thousands:

- Bulk Herbs can be ordered directly from Frontier Coop [www.frontiercoop.com](http://www.frontiercoop.com)
- Seaweed and herbal information [www.ryandrum.com](http://www.ryandrum.com)
- Extensive herbal website of [www.susunweed.com](http://www.susunweed.com)
- Samuel Thayer writes with first hand knowledge, and is an excellent way to learn about and become comfortable with foraging [www.foragersharvest.com/](http://www.foragersharvest.com/)
- "Wildman" Steve Brill has developed an app for Iphone and Android "Wildedibles" for in-the-field plant identification with a focus on food. Great photos, information, and bad jokes.

# Introduction to Local Plants for Medicine and Food A Weed Walk

Linda Diane Feldt  
ldf@lindadianefeldt.com www.holistic.lindadianefeldt.com  
www.twitter.com/wildcrafting  
734-662-4902

The common weeds are often the most beneficial. A plant need not be exotic, expensive, or foreign to be effective. Just look under your feet.

This information is best used in combination with a good field guide such as Peterson's Guide to Medicinal Plants. Make certain you know the plant before using. Harvest ethically – with permission, with respect for those who come after, and leave plenty for the plant to flourish as well as those who depend on it (the birds, bees, and wild animals).

**Bee Balm** also known as Bergamot, Latin name *Monarda*, includes over a dozen varieties. *Monarda fistulosa* is the wild local variety. I've been assured - erroneously it turns out - that this is the plant used in Earl Grey tea that gives it a special flavor. It is not. The Bergamot Oil added to Earl Grey is *Citrus bergamia*, an entirely different plant. Bee Balm is used as a tea, for both medicinal effects and for a pleasant flavor. The benefits include strong antiseptic value, as a stimulant for colds and sore throats (you can use it as a steam for sore throats as well) and gastric benefits for nausea and gas. It can be used externally for infections and when you have simple irritations of the skin that would be helped by a mild and gentle antiseptic. I especially like to use it by the handful in spaghetti sauces, chili, on pizza and other places where I might otherwise have used basil or oregano. Is it my imagination that my chili is less gas producing when bee balm has been added? It seems to help. I gather Bee Balm throughout the spring and summer, using the fresh leaves for the first few months. In August I like to gather enough to last the winter, flowers and all.

**Burdock** *Arctium lappa* is a biennial with a lovely purple flower that will soon turn into the sticky burr so many find annoying. The burdock root, considered a culinary treasure, is still good to eat in the first year (non-flowering) plants. But if you dig up the root of the second year plants, except for early spring, you'll find a woody and sometimes even hollow tough root that is worthless both as food and medicine. The root is high in inulin, helpful for balancing blood sugar levels as well as documented in helping to absorb calcium. The leaves can be used as a poultice for scrapes and cuts, and are effective when applied to both chemical and burns and mild burns from fire or scalds.

**Carrot** *Daucus carota* Be certain you smell the carrot smell before using. This plant can look like young poison hemlock. The top leaves of wild carrot can be eaten, and the root used in any way you would use carrot. It is a biennial, so the long narrow taproot is good in the first year and spring of the second year only. The flower (Queen Ann's Lace) is edible and is a beautiful addition to salads, and is especially lovely on cakes.

**Catnip** *Nepeta cataria* can be used as a natural insect repellent. Made into an oil or a tincture (an alcohol based preparation), it works really well to keep mosquitoes at bay. I tend to need to reapply it every half hour or so, but as a natural method it is very effective. As a last minute help, I have been known to go into the woods with catnip stems and leaves braided into my hair, or hanging from a hat. I just crush it a bit to keep it active. It works surprisingly well. The tea is calming and like all mints can help settle the stomach.

**Chicory**, *Cichorium intybus*, is commonly mistaken for dandelion until it produces the lovely pale blue flowers. While the leaves can be eaten (chicory has a hairy midrib, dandelion is smooth) the flowers are also edible, and the root can be dug up, roasted in a slow (200 degree) oven for a couple hours, and then ground to use like coffee.

**Cleavers** *Gallium aparine* is named for its ability to stick to clothing or fur. It is harvested when in flower, the tops are tintured. Once tintured, it is helpful for reducing swelling, and mild edema. It can help some people with reducing allergic reactions.

**Chickweed** *Stellaria media* is a tiny little plant that is sort of viney in the way it crawls around your yard. The flowers are also small and pretty. The whole plant can be eaten, and is tasty in salads or made into pesto. Used topically, the crushed leaves can help cool wounds, decrease swelling and of special note it seems to help many people with skin problems including eczema and psoriasis.

**Clover** *Trifolium pratense* This mineral rich plant can be added to salads (use the flowering tops) or dried for infusions. The red clover is especially valued for its high mineral content.

**Dandelion** *Taraxacum officinalis* A bitter green, the leaves can be used in salads, in stir-fries, as a pot green mixed with other vegetables, or as a garnish on sandwiches - yep, even on your hamburger in place of lettuce. I blend them into homemade salad dressing, in dips, and have even made spanakopita with dandelion greens in place of spinach. It's a delight simply cooked Greek style with olive oil and garlic. Like other bitter greens, dandelions help stimulate digestion when eaten a few minutes before or during a meal. They contain more beta-carotene, which the body converts to vitamin A, than carrots. The leaves are also high in calcium and other minerals, and antioxidants. They contain vitamin C and act as a mild diuretic. The leaves and roots also provide nourishment for the liver. And of course dandelion wine can be made from the flowers, which is also enjoyed as a digestive aid and a pleasant beverage.

All parts of the dandelion are edible at all times of the year. The leaves of most (but not all) varieties are more bitter midsummer and around the time of flowering. They are the most palatable in the spring and fall. The roots are harvested in the spring and fall for their medicinal value and can be preserved in alcohol (I use 100 proof vodka) or in vinegar. The vodka makes a tincture, used a few drops at a time. The vinegar creates a sort of pickle, the root can still be eaten for the flavor but the resulting vinegar is a mineral rich potion enjoyed for its bioavailability. I pick the flowers and shred them into salads (an entire dandelion blossom can be a little overwhelming for most people).

<http://www.annarbor.com/entertainment/food-drink/wildcrafting-the-lowly-dandelion---let-it-live-until-you-eat-it/>

**Dog Bane** *Apocynum androsaemifolium* is not an edible weed, but considered of great value for the twine that can be made by twisting or braiding the stringy fiber found in its stems.

**Echinacea** *Echinacea purpurea* although there are a number of varieties of Echinacea the Purple Cone Flower is the most commonly found in fields and gardens. The fresh root is harvested in the third year or later, and then made into a tincture while still fresh. While small doses can be nourishing for the immune system and used long term (approximately ten drops in water a day), larger amounts can have a stimulating effect and are for shorter term use.

**Garlic Mustard** *Alliaria petiolata* This invasive has been in the news, and as it continues to occupy more territory and destroy more native plants more people are learning to identify it. It is a tasty plant, combining the hot of mustard and the spice of garlic. Great in salads, as a cooked green, in pesto, and in many other dishes. Pull it up by the roots, and eat the leaves flowers and stalks. As it gets older it is better cooked than raw, but can be found year round even under the snow. Garlic mustard produces glucosinolates which kill of soil fungus that most plants find beneficial. Research has found that in older populations of garlic mustard these toxins are less potent. This toxin is also more heavily concentrated in the plant roots, the leaves are safer but still contain some amount of cyanide.

**Ginger** *Asarum canadense* is the local wild variety. Like the same named *Zingiber officinale* you can make a decoction (boil the roots for about 20 minutes covered) and even turn that into ginger ale or ginger beer by adding other traditional ingredients (sassafras root, burdock root, etc.) Our local Ginger is considered mildly toxic, containing aristolochic acid and asarone so while it can be used as a seasoning long term or regular use is not advised.

Goldenrod *Solidago canadensis* and *S. odora* are two helpful varieties. The vivid flowering tops can be steeped & enjoyed. The lovely flowers steeped for 20-30 minutes can be soothing for coughs, colds, and some report it has helped pollen allergies. Goldenrod is often being mistaken for the allergies caused by Ragweed. How nice to know goldenrod can help allergies rather than cause them! You can dry the flowering tops and store for later use.

**Grape** *Vitis* The tendrils are a surprise citrusy tasting addition to salads. The leaves are eaten after being preserved in olive oil, or blanched. Mature leaves contain tannins, cooking or boiling

helps remove them. Be sure not to mistake wild grapes for Virginia creeper berries, which are toxic. Virginia creeper has 5 leaves.

**Groundsel** *Senecio vulgaris* and Ragwort *Senecio jacobea* is a slow acting plant for helping with PMS symptoms including severe cramping. It can take a few months to work, and the dose is low, about 10 drops of tincture a day. The flowering tops are used to make a tincture.

**Horsetail** *Equisetum arvense* is an ancient plant, and it looks very odd. The early plant is used for bone loss, urinary tract inflammation, and as a diuretic. It can be used as a fresh infusion (steeped a shorter time, 20-30 minutes). Because of the high silica content, it should be used with caution if there are kidney problems, and also not used for extensive periods of time. The silica increases as the plant matures, so only the spring plant should be used. The later plant was bundled to use for "scouring" dishes, hence the common name "scouring rush".

**Jewelweed** *Impatiens capensis*, Jewelweed is best known as an antidote and treatment for poison ivy. Applied just after exposure it can prevent the skin reaction from the poison ivy's urushiol. If you do have an outbreak of poison ivy, the juice from the stems and leaves will ease the irritation, and in my experience will also make the rash heal more quickly. Jewelweed juice also eases bee stings, wasp stings, mosquito bites, and minor skin irritations. Just by rubbing the plant between your fingers or against your skin you'll get a lot of juice. You can put it in the blender with a small amount of water or use a juicer. The juice can't be saved by freezing - it does mold easily - but can be added to salves or even homemade soap. I've had friends make and drink a mild infusion (leaves and stems steeped 20 minutes in a closed container) as another way to prevent poison ivy. Anecdotal information says this can help. This is one of the only plants that also explodes. The seeds are edible, but to harvest these edible seeds you have to capture them in your hand as the seed pod explodes. That's unique! Most wild foods don't explode and will stay still so you can pick them or dig them up. Not jewelweed.  
<http://www.annarbor.com/entertainment/food-drink/capturing-wild-food---a-fun-and-silly-plant-to-play-with/>

**Lamb's quarters**, *Chenopodium*, grows in disturbed ground, commonly a flower or vegetable bed. It has a nice rich, mild, slightly chalky taste, is great as a base for salads (I use it in place of lettuce), as a spinach-like topping for sandwiches or can also be lightly steamed. If you blanch it (a few seconds in boiling water) it can be frozen for adding to soups, casseroles, or other dishes all winter long. It's almost certain that if you are removing this from your vegetable beds to plant something else, the lamb's quarters is likely more nutritious and easier to grow than whatever you are planting.

**Mallows** (*Malva neglecta*, *M. parviflora*, *M. sylvestres*) The fruit, leaves, and roots of the mallow are soothing both inside and out. The little "cheeses" which are the fruit formed after flowering are a fun addition to a salad. The texture is solid, and the inside pleasantly slippery. Which is a better word to use than slimy. The starch extracted by soaking or making an herbal vinegar is soothing to the entire digestive tract and can be taken internally. Topically, it helps with bites, burns and sprains.

**Mint** *Mentha* is everywhere and there are so many different kinds. Some start off tame, some appear wild. *Mentha piperita* is chocolate mint, one of my favorites. I've found many wild patches along the Huron River. *Nepeta cataria* is common catnip. These can all be used as tisanes or to cook with. Catnip and other mints are known for soothing the stomach; I've used peppermint for post-surgical nausea. It can be very effective. For that purpose, use essential oil of peppermint and place a few drops on a piece of gauze. Every time you feel a little nausea come on simply sniffing the peppermint can stop the reaction. Catnip is a very effective mosquito repellent. Crushed leaves can be worn, or make an oil or tincture from the leaves. You do need to reapply it often, an unpublished study claims catnip preparations are more effective than DEET.

**Milkweed** *Asclepias syriaca*. The stalk is a thick succulent looking shoot, with the leaves starting off tight to the stem. A part of a definitive identification is the milky white sap that bleeds from a broken or cut leaf or stem. Later, these plants are easily spotted with the ball of light purple fragrant flower clusters, and then the pods bursting with seeds that fly away to spread. Once introduced to your garden, this plant spreads widely and easily so you will soon have plenty. Early milk weed shoots can be mistaken for Dogbane, which is not edible. First off, consider leaving it to grow. The monarch butterfly relies on milkweed for survival, laying eggs on the plant that will eventually hatch. Milkweed, as well as dogbane, has also been

used for making natural cord or rope, after the butterflies are done with it. I have a couple of friends who gather and twist the fibers from the stalk with very sturdy and beautiful results. If you really don't want this plant around or can find an area where they are crowded, the stalk is edible. The buds are also edible, and the very early pods. Almost like asparagus, you can just snap off the stalk if it is shorter than six to eight inches (a hand span) and then cook it in a few changes of water. Now I've recently been told that it can be eaten just lightly steamed, but I'm going to direct you to use the change of water method just to be extra safe. The milky sap in milkweed contains toxic glycosides that are removed with water. To be safe, boil the shoots in a bit of water for two to three minutes, rinse, add new boiling water and boil another two to three minutes, rinse again, more new boiling water, boil again for two to three minutes, and then rinse and eat. The shoot will turn a very pretty bright green. The new milkweed shoots taste fresh, a little like broccoli, and I think they have a light asparagus-like taste as well. A few cautions: once the shoots are over six to eight inches, do not eat them. This is also true once the leaves begin to pull away from the stem. Some people may have localized dermatological reactions (irritation) from the milky sap: avoid contact with it.  
[http://www.wildflowers-andweeds.com/The\\_Forager/milkweed.htm](http://www.wildflowers-andweeds.com/The_Forager/milkweed.htm)

**Mullein** *Verbascum thapsus* is a biennial known for its tall flowering stalk in the second year of growth. The stalk has small yellow flowers that can be used in olive oil as an ointment for earaches. The soft hairy leaves support the lungs and colon. It was often smoked, but is probably better used in an infusion. The leaves are easily dried for later use.

**Nettle** *Urtica dioica*, does sting. There are tiny hairs located along the stem and the underside of the leaves that can inject a tiny bit of formic acid into your skin. It only happens when you brush against the hairs, but the result ranges from a mild tingly sensation to an itching rash that can last hours. With so much invested in defense, you should suspect that there is something wonderful to protect. There is. Stinging nettle is a plant rich in nutrition and medicinal value. In 1989 Susan Weed, the herbalist I apprenticed with, devoted an entire chapter of her book "Healing Wise" to nettles. Since that time, studies using *Urtica* have affirmed its traditional use for kidney and urinary support, asthma relief, and help with benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH). It is also an excellent burn remedy when used topically in a salve or oil. As a nourishing food or infusion, nettle is a significant source of protein, calcium and iron. That is why midwives and pregnant women prize it. It contains the nutrients needed during pregnancy. The nourishing benefits are of course best delivered by eating the nettles. Once they are steamed for 10-15 minutes they give up their defense and can no longer sting. The same is true when dried. Steamed nettles are great on their own or can be added to recipes wherever greens and especially spinach would be used. But the flavor is so lovely, rich, satisfying and whole, I would advise keeping it simple and just enjoying the plant as is. Nettles grow where there are high levels of nitrogen in the soil as well as rich moist environments. So look for them around old barns, by a river or a lake. Harvest until they are about two feet tall. The top 1/3 of the plant can be used.

**Oak** trees *Quercus* includes many varieties and locally we have white (*Quercus alba*) oak that is the easiest to use if you'd like to eat acorns. Valued for their carbohydrate and healthy fat content, acorns are bitter from their tannin content which must be leached to be enjoyed. White oaks have less tannins than the also common black and red trees. The acorn meal once it has been processed with water rinses can be made into flour, combined with other ingredients for candy, and more. Use it right away or freeze for later use. Samuel Thayer gives a great deal of information on how to process acorns in his books on foraging. I especially like to make acorn pancakes, combined with buckwheat flour, and also an acorn bread substituting acorn flour for cornmeal.

**Plantain**, *Plantago major* with wide leaves, or narrow leaf plantain *Plantago lanceolata* grows near paths, driveways and especially in areas between the sidewalk and the street. Low to the ground, in a rosette, it is there when you need it. Not only is it a salad green, it is an excellent first aid ally. Crushed or chewed you can use it on insect bites, rashes, scrapes and especially on cold sores and a sore throat. It can help with mild pain relief and is soothing and healing. Because the taste is mild, it's ideal for mouth sores because you can just place some of the chewed up leaf against the injury and leave it there. I've also used it for throat pain associated with radiation and chemotherapy, either chewed or juiced and made into ice cubes. Made into an oil or salve, it can be used externally year round.

**Purslane**, *Portulaca olearacea*, is so common I've found it growing next to many of the parking meters downtown. Given how popular these areas are with dogs, I wouldn't suggest harvesting

from that area, but I have taken home a few pieces to plant in my garden for later eating. Many people are unaware that this common garden weed is one of the richest sources of omega 3 precursors in the plant kingdom. It has a benign taste, and the fat, succulent-like leaves are easy to add to salads or as a garnish to other foods. With lots of garlic it makes a great pesto and can be frozen to enjoy later. Not available in stores, it is enjoyed in season fresh from the garden as long as it is actively growing. One hundred grams of fresh purslane leaves (one serving) contain about 300-400 mg of 18:3w3; 12.2 mg of alpha-tocopherol; 26.6 mg of ascorbic acid; 1.9 mg of beta-carotene; and 14.8 mg of glutathione. Yes, this simple weed is packed with nutritional benefits.

**St. John's Wort** *Hypericum perforatum* is now well known for its help with Seasonal Affective Disorder and mild depression, but it has many other uses. The flowering tops are used for tincture, or made into an oil for external use. The oil can help with nerve pain and regeneration, protect against radiation burns, and sooth aching muscles strains and bruises. The plant is anti viral and perfect for cold sores and shingles, both topically and internally. Internal use can interfere with the liver processing some drugs, and in rare cases sun sensitivity may develop, although its normal action used externally is as a sunscreen.

**Self Heal** *Prunella vulgaris* is a mint high in antioxidants, minerals, calcium, and other nutrients. You can gain that value by eating it in salad or as a pot green, or making a vinegar. The leaves and flowers are used.

**Shepherds's Purse** *Capsella bursa pastoris* has tiny heart shaped fruits, once they appear the top part of the plant is tinctured and is used to stop bleeding and menstrual flooding.

**Slippery Elm** *Ulmus fulva* is an amazing plant for its ability to sooth ulcerative colitis, crones disease, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, and to restore appetite for people in late stages of AIDS or cancer. The bark is harvested in strips, then powdered and eaten or used in cooking. It can also be useful for constipation or temporarily irritated bowel, and hemorrhoids. It is a difficult process to harvest and powder the bark, I usually buy this one already in powder form. It has a pleasant malty taste.

**Willow** *Salix* bark is used for headaches, as an anti-inflammatory, for joint pain, and other aches and soreness. The bark contains salicylic acid, as does aspirin.

**Witch Hazel** *Hamamelis* bark is tinctured to make an astringent tincture useful for wound healing, hemorrhoids, and swollen and bruised skin. The plant grows in clumps and is unusual in that it flowers in the late fall, but produces its fruit before the flower.

**Violet** *Viola*, has edible leaves and flowers, is a pretty plant in the early spring, and the leaves are used in herbal medicine for reducing some types of tumors.

**Yarrow** *Achellia millefolium* The white flowering yarrow is used medicinally. The flowering tops can be tinctured to prevent colds and flu, but the tincture can also be used externally to repel ticks, mosquitoes, and sand flies. It has to be reapplied often, about every half hour. Yarrow is anti-bacterial, can stop bleeding when applied externally, but taken internally has a relaxing effect on the veins and so can also promote bleeding. It is a great pain reliever when applied topically, you can use the leaves or flowering tops as a poultice.

**Yellow Dock**, *Rumex crispus*, remains one of my all-time favorites. The leaves come up early in the spring and I can make pesto from the long curly leaves in April and sometimes earlier and then throughout the summer. The leaves are great in salads, or cooked with other greens. I've made an herbal oil from the root that has helped remarkably with tissue healing, especially with trauma. It hastens healing, decreases pain and minimizes bruising. There are no studies or reports on the herb used this way, but it has a growing following based on anecdotal experience. The leaves are high in iron content, the root is tinctured and used to increase iron absorption in addition to many other uses.

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Parts of this handout were based on a handout from Susun S. Weed, Spring Weed Walk

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