

Dandelion: We all have dandelions sprouting somewhere in our gardens. Instead of cursing these tough weeds, embrace them as a nutritious addition to your diet to enhance the elimination of toxins. Dandelions may be used as a diuretic to help with PMS symptoms. Chop the leaves and add them to salads ramping up the intake of vitamin C and beta carotene.

Elderberry: Hippocrates named his elderberry tree a “medicine chest” in 400 BC. The blue/black berries made into jams, syrups, and wines are high in antioxidants, vitamin C, and iron.

Grape: Grind ripe grapes into a juice and drink without adding any other liquid to relieve migraines.

Winter savory: You use it to flavor stews, meat, and soups, but did you know that the leaves are effective antiseptics and also an ointment for insect bites and stings?

Lady fern: Roll some leaves in the palm of your hand and mash them to sooth minor burns, stings, and cuts.

Lavender: What is a garden without the soothing smell of lavender? Besides being a bee magnet, rubbing the flowers or leaves between your fingers then inhaling the fragrance is a sure stress reliever and tension liberator. If you are feeling depressed or anxious, lavender soothes the soul. Make a tea of lavender to induce sleep or use the petals in the bath as aromatherapy to bring on the calm.

Sunflower: It's not just the seeds that are nutritious, but a tea made from the leaves works as an astringent, expectorant, and fever reducer. Use sunflower tea to treat colds and coughs.

Aloe Vera: This is a plant that everyone must have around the house. For burns and minor abrasions, pop open a leaf and rub the jelly on the wound to keep it from getting infected. Aloe is a great mild laxative when added to water and alleviates heartburn and sunburn.

Cabbage: Crush a handful of leaves, wrap in a cloth, and apply to the forehead as a compress to help with headaches. When the compressed leaves dry out, replace them with fresh leaves.

Lemon: I use every part of the lemon for a variety of health treatments. Before any speaking engagement, radio or TV appearance, I drink a hot concoction of Meyer lemon rinds, juice, and pulp mixed with mint, water, and honey to clear my throat and enhance my vocal chords. Feel a cold coming on? Drink this brew with added torn lemon leaves, shredded ginger root, and Echinacea flowers. To clean my hands after gardening, I cut a lemon and rub them over my dirt stained digits. Want lighter, brighter locks? Squeeze the juice of any lemon on your hair and enjoy the sunshine. Migraine? Grind the peel and apply as a paste to the forehead.

Chamomile: Use fresh or dried florets and leaves to making a tummy calming tea. Chamomile helps steady jittery nerves and anxiety.

Rose: The fruit of the rose is the rose hip, one of the richest plant sources of vitamin C, high in vitamin A, B, and the antioxidant lycopene. Eat raw, cooked, or brewed to prevent colds and flu as well as an anti-inflammatory to relieve the pain of arthritis. Use the rose petals to make a lovely scented rose water for an astringent, skin toner, and body bath.

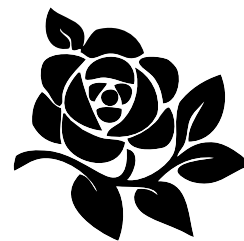
Apple: Filled with antioxidants, pectin, and fiber, apples fight tooth decay, decrease risk of diabetes, lower cholesterol, protect against Parkinsons, cancers, and perhaps Alzheimer's diseases, prevent cataracts, gallstones, and boost the immune system. An apple a day will keep the doctor away.



Feeling tense or have an upset stomach? Pick chamomile flowers and feel the tranquility.

These are just a smattering of the plant based healing that you will find in nature's drug store, also known as your backyard garden. If the year was 1692 and I lived in Puritanical Salem, I'd be hung as a witch for prescribing these “devilish” herbal remedies. Since it's 2013 in Lamorinda, I'll keep stirring the cauldron of healthy natural choices and caution you to use these powerful potions wisely.

... Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for October on page D10



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