BAY AREA CLINICAL HERBALISTS ASSOCIATION

BACHA news

We are a network of herbalists dedicated to promoting awareness of Western Herbalism through clinical practice, education, and community building.

A Quarterly Newsletter

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A Walk In the Woods: The Plants as Healers and Teachers

My drive home from work was the usual: too much traffic, people, and noise. The radio annoyed me and when I rolled down the window for some fresh air, I received a breath of exhaust while even more clambering noise threatened to throw me over the edge.

At the end of a long week, my first response was to head home for a nap and scrounge any food I could from the fridge. But the thought of my small apartment in the city felt claustrophobic and dark. I drove aimlessly, finally parking in the Presidio and began to walk. Behind some old military barracks was a narrow path leading into the woods. I walked briskly down the curving trail and soon the buildings and the road were out of view. The movement felt good as I deeply inhaled the scents of green growing things. To my delight I discovered many familiar beautiful and medicinal plants on my jaunt into the woods, so close to home. I forgot that nature is so close and accessible to the city.

The cedar forest, full with fresh bursts of soft, bright-green needles showing on the tips of every branch, was one of the first things I noticed. While taking in the rich smell of pine, laden with anti-microbial properties and Vitamin C, I knew these cedar needles would make a great tea for recovering from a cold.

The path curved up the hill and brought me out of the trees for a moment into a meadow of greens. The white yarrow umbels (Achillea millefolium) seemed to float above the grasses. These plants, normally so humble and shy, were singing in the breeze, showing off their joyful flower heads where their medicine is stored. With small feathery leaves and interconnected roots spreading underground, yarrow is a communal plant and only sends up a flower stock here and there, into which the entire connected colony puts its energy.

We as Americans without a strong communal model of support can learn a lot from this plant that puts its collective energy into a few precious beautiful flowers. Waste high scarlet-stalked figwort (Scrophularia nodosa) interspersed the yarrow through out the hillside, more abundant than I have seen it in many places. Its tiny orchid-like flowers made me stop and hold my breath. Figwort's arrow-shaped leaves and blood-red color reminded me of its affinity to the joints and blood, treating inflammatory arthritis, sharing both its beauty and medicinal actions with us.

Figwort

Poison oak, so lush and prolific after the heavy rains of this spring season, reminded me to keep a respectful distance as it healed the lands disturbed by human interference. Poison oak, keeper of the land, healer for its own plant communities.
(cont. next page)

Editor's Letter

With the long, rainy winter and spring seasons behind us, the sun has finally begun peaking out from behind the clouds. Scattered over the surrounding hills are many varieties of medicinal plants sprouting into new life and reaching up toward the sun's rays. Plants like yarrow and mugwort, which grow up tall in the warm summer sunlight, wave invitingly to passersby as the California Bay and Madrone trees stand magnificently overlooking the hillside–just as they have for a hundred years and more. Now is the perfect opportunity for Bay Area residents and visitors to learn about and enjoy our green neighbors. And what better way to do so than to sign up to walk with Atava or Jennifer as they offer themselves as guides through various local parks, teaching the value and abundance of plant life.

The Bay Area Clinical Herbalists Association was created in part to foster the herbal education of local residents on this lesser known alternative method of healing. This summer we offer several different classes including Atava's Introduction to Herbalism. This four-week class is for the beginner who wants to bring herbs into their everyday life. By exploring herbs, students will learn the theories of body systems as well as the actions of herbs and their application to life circumstances. Helen Piccolo and I will also be teaching the art and science of herbal medicine making and extraction methods. In this class we will be discussing the proper ways to pull out plant constituents for medicinal use. And don't miss Susan's invaluable class on using gentle and effective plants for common children's ailments. For more information about these and other classes, please visit www.bayareaherbalists.net.

Make sure to check in at our website regularly to keep yourself up to date on the latest news, local events, classes, and herb walks. For your convenience, the website also provides a listing of some of the best herbalists in the area. With experience in a wide variety of complementary healing methods, from dietary to flower essence support, you are sure to find a practitioner who meets your needs.

I hope you enjoy our summer edition of the BACHA newsletter as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Watch for the Fall issue, available to the public on September 21st–and have a great summer.

Lanie C. Baker, Clinical Herbalist

(cont. from front page)

I sat down alongside a creek where a thick patch of weedy green plants grew, relishing in the water. Chickweed, cleavers, minor's lettuce, hedge nettle, and yellow dock all greeted me in their joyful spring abundance. These tonic medicinals are the earth's spring bounty, feeding and nourishing us as well as healing and cleansing us from the winter's stagnant cold.

Chickweed (Stellaria media) is a cooling anti-inflammatory, great topically for healing wounds as well as bug bites, bee stings and other itchy skin conditions such as psoriasis. It is high in vitamins and tastes great in salads, or blended into green drinks.

Cleavers (Gallium aparine) is also highly nutritious and can be juiced and drunk fresh or frozen into ice cubes for those hot summer months. Cleavers is a lymphatic, helping to stimulate the immune system and cleansing the body of dead white blood cells. I love it for those swollen lymph nodes under my armpits that are so painful the week before my menstrual period.

Yellow dock (Rumex crispus) is a great bitter for helping digestion of fats and proteins, a mild laxative in large doses. It is also specific for absorption, in situations such as iron deficiencies. The root is used as medicine and the young leaves have a sour lemony flavor great for spicing up salads.

Hedge nettle (Stachys betonica) is actually of the mint family, not the nettle family. It smells slightly rancid for a mint but in bloom produces beautiful purple flower whorls. It is a sweet nervine for the head and great for migraines if caught early enough.

With all this green abundance around me I felt the week's tension drain away. My frustration melted into the moist earth and a quiet calm took the place of the city hum in my head. I listened to the plants' serene song living and dancing in the water of the bubbling brook. I took my shoes off and planted my feet on the firm Mother Earth, making solid contact. I sat that way for some time, smiling faintly, nibbling on the wild greens at my feet. I felt replenished and whole, a feeling I had forgotten, which the forest reminded of. The feeling stayed with me throughout the weekend and on into the next week, back to busy life in the city.

Kara Sigler, Clinical herbalist

Flower Essence Healing

Flower essences help stimulate our own innate healing abilities and also help to shift our consciousness.

California Wild Rose

Bleeding Heart

Mariposa Lily

Here in the Bay Area, after a very wet winter, we are blessed with an abundance of spring and summer wildflowers. This is a good time of year to learn about the healing power of flower essences.

Flower essences contain energetic imprints of plants. Each remedy, made from flower blossoms, carries the essence, spirit, or intelligence of the plant. Each essence contains the unique life force and healing properties of each particular flower from which it is made.

Flower essences help stimulate our own innate healing abilities and also help to shift our consciousness. They help awaken our awareness to our patterns of imbalance and provide us with the energetic support to make positive changes. Dr. Edward Bach, the pioneer of flower essence therapy writes:

"They cure, not by attacking the disease but by flooding our bodies with the beautiful vibrations of our Higher Nature, in the presence of which, disease melts away as snow in the sunshine."

Flower essences are a subtle yet profound system of healing. As a form of vibrational healing, flower essences do not work directly on the physical body or issues of physical disharmony. Instead, they work on our energetic or etheric bodies. As the flower essences help shift our energy fields, they reach the emotional and spiritual roots of physical illness. In this way, flower essences can be a catalyst for deep healing within our mind, body, and spirit.

Here are the healing properties of a few flowers you will find blooming now in Northern California:

Indian Paintbrush helps to stimulate the fire of creative energy. This remedy is useful when one's creative energy is blocked or when people wish bring more vitality and creativity to any given situation or project.

Buttercup helps one to glow with radiant self-worth. This remedy is useful for feelings of low self-esteem and for people who are unable to acknowledge their own unique gifts.

Mariposa Lily addresses all issues surrounding mothering and motherhood. This remedy is good for new mothers, for women struggling with motherhood, and for people healing their relationship to their own mother.

Bleeding Heart helps to mend a broken heart. This remedy is helpful for people when they are suffering the loss of a loved one through death, separation, or divorce.

Sticky Monkeyflower addresses issues surrounding intimacy and sexuality. It is helpful for people who have blocked sexual energy or for people who are afraid of emotional intimacy in sexual relationships.

California Wild Rose helps to open and revitalize the heart. This is a good remedy for apathy, indifference, and resignation.

Atava Garcia Swiecicki, MA, Clinical Herbalist & Flower Essence Practitioner

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Good Ol' Oats

The first notable thing about this plant is just how peaceful it is. It's gracefully stance just speaks to me. No wonder Wild oat (Avena sativa) is a beneficial herb for our bodies as well as for our soil. All parts of this plant are nourishing, restorative, and rejuvenating. Its constituents tone the nervous system and more. With busy lives and tight schedules, pregnant mothers, nursing mothers, babies, grown men, and growing children can benefit by incorporating this tasty and calming plant into their daily diets. Everyone--especially--children can enjoy a bowl of oats or a cup of oat straw tea to promote healthy bones and muscles.

Oats are also beneficial for the skin. They can gently help slough away dead skin cells and help relieve irritated skin conditions. I always recommend adding them to a bath for that extra relaxation.

This plant is full of magnesium. It also contains chromium, sodium, silicon, calcium, iron, niacin, phosphorus, riboflavin, and selenium. Oats are a source of vitamin B complex, plus vitamins E, K, A, C, potassium and protein. Oats are good allies for those that want to lower cholesterol levels too.

Oats are abundant in this area and very easy to grow. Next time you're taking a stroll near the oat straw, stop and listen to the gentle rattle of the earth's oat flowers.

Helen Piccolo, Certified Herbalist

Oat, Coyote Brush, and Teasel. Montebello Open Space Preserve

Bay Area Clinical Herbalists Association

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Gathered Together To Build a Healthy Community

Sign Me Up!

To send comments or questions or to be added to our quarterly mailing list please fill out the form below and mail it to the address on the left. You can also email or call the herbalists listed on this page.

Name: _____

Address:
Phone:

Email: _____

Stevia: The Sensational Sugar Substitute

Stevia rebaudiana is a plant native to South America. Since pre-Columbian times indigenous people have used the leaf to sweeten bitter teas and medicines. The plant is filled with stevioside and other constituents that make it 10-15 times sweeter than white sugar. It's easy to grow, wonderful as a sweetener, contains medicinal properties, is non-caloric and safe to cook with.

If you live in the United States chances are excellent you have never heard of stevia but are familiar with artificial sweeteners like NutraSweet. In Japan where many artificial sweeteners are illegal, stevia is used commercially in diet soft drinks, food products and at the table. Stevia accounts for 40% of their sweetener market. It is used in other Asian countries including China and continues to be used in Latin America. Europe, Canada, Australia and the U.S. depend on white sugar, high fructose corn syrup and artificial sweeteners while regulations block stevia from commercial use.

The FDA has taken extreme measures to guard U.S. citizens from using stevia. The decades old battle is worthy of its own T.V. series at least. In 1991 an "Import Alert" prevented all forms of stevia from entering the country. The Import Alert was revised in 1995, due to the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act. Current regulation status make stevia "officially" safe for use as a nutritional supplement but unsafe as a food additive. It seems the Boston Tea Party has come full circle. It is an act of revolution to use the leaves of this plant to sweeten our tea. For more on the politics of stevia look on our web site or just type stevia into your web browser.

The unrefined leaf has some anti-viral and anti-cavity properties. It is also good for people who are trying to stay away from sugar for health reasons, including diabetes and Candida.

Commercially it is sold as ground leaves or as a concentrated extract. Both products can be added directly to food or tea. Be careful though; a little goes a long way. The leaves are ten to fifteen times sweeter than sugar and the extract is over one hundred times sweeter. The equivalence of stevia extract is about: ½ teaspoon per 1 cup of sugar. When cooking with stevia, it is better to start with less, then add more in small increments.

There is a slightly bitter aftertaste with this plant that can be masked by many flavors used in baking, such as cocoa, vanilla, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg. I often use stevia as the dominant sweetener, but add a little maple syrup or molasses (1-2 tablespoons) to add flavor. Unsweetened carob chips also work wonders. When baking, I dissolve the stevia separately in an alcohol-based vanilla and then mix it into the batter. The extract has a less bitter aftertaste than the unrefined leaf. Stevia will not brown like sugar, so use a toothpick to test. It is important not to overcook

Susan Godes, Clinical Herbalist

Stevia Recipes

The recipes call for stevia extract, which is a concentrated extract in a white powder form.

Ginger Spice Cake

(modified from Kristen Younger's Stevia Dessert Cookbook . Call 1-707-829-6978 to order the cookbook.)

Dissolve ½ teaspoon of stevia extract in 1 teaspoon of vanilla. Then mix into 1 quart of plain yogurt.

1 ½ cups barley flour
1 Tbl. and ¾ tsp. Ground cinnamon
2 tsp. Ground ginger
1 1/8 tsp. Baking powder
¼ tsp. Salt
¼ tsp. Ground black pepper
¼ tsp. Ground allspice
¼ tsp. Baking soda
1 cup unsweetened soy milk
1 tsp. Vanilla
¼ cup butter and ¼ cup apple butter
½ tsp. Stevia extract
1 large egg
1 Tbl. Molasses

Mix all the wet ingredients together. Dissolve the stevia extract in the vanilla and mix into the wet ingredients. Mix together the dry ingredients. Then blend together.

Add chopped walnuts and unsweetened carob chips. Put into buttered cake pan. Bake in pre-heated oven at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean.

Pumpkin Bread

1 cup canned pumpkin
1 egg
2 Tbl. Oil
1 tsp. Vanilla
2 cups whole wheat pastry flour
1 Tbl. Baking powder
1 tsp. Cinnamon
1 tsp. Allspice
½ tsp. Nutmeg and ½ tsp. Dried ginger
2 Tbl. Sucanat
¾ cup and 2 Tbl. Soymilk
¾ tsp. Stevia extract
½ cup walnuts and ½ cup unsweetened carob chips

Mix wet ingredients, including the stevia dissolved in vanilla, together in one bowl. Mix the dry ingredients together in a separate bowl. Then mix the two contents together. Put into buttered loaf pan and place in a pre-heated oven to 350 degrees. Cook for 45 minutes or until the toothpick comes out clean.

Herb Walks

Join us and learn about your local medicinal plants. We will talk about the various herbs and plants we encounter and the medicinal uses for each. All herbs walks: $20 per person. For exact meeting locations, please contact the walk leader.

July

Sausal Creek, Oakland
Friday, July 14th -
5:00-7:00 pm
Jennifer Adams
(415) 505-3115
info@
communityherbalist.com

Joaquin Miller Park, Oakland
Saturday, July 22nd
10:00 am -12:30 pm
Atava Garcia Swiecicki
(510) 541-2715
atava@
ancestralapothecary.com

August

Huckleberry Botanic Regional Preserve
Friday, August 11th/
5-7:00 pm
Jennifer Adams
(415) 505-3115
info@
communityherbalist.co

Point Reyes
Saturday, August 19th
10am-12:30 pm
Atava Garcia Swiecicki
(510) 541-2715
atava@
ancestralapothecary.com

Classes

Herbal Medicine Making
Thursdays, August 3rd through 24th
7:00 pm to 9:30 pm
Ohlone Herbal Center, 1654 University Ave., Berkeley
Lainie C. Baker, Clinical Herbalist
(510) 540-8010
$150

Introduction to Herbal Medicine
Mondays, August 7th through 28th
7:00 pm to 10:00 pm
Ohlone Herbal Center, 1654 University Ave., Berkeley
Atava Garcia Swiecicki, MA, Clinical Herbalist
(510) 541-2715
$250

Flower Essence Intensive
Saturday June 17th
10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Atava Garcia Swiecicki, MA, Clinical Herbalist
(510) 541-2715
$90 (material fee included)

Children's herb class for prevention and treatment of common children's ailments
August (date to be set)
Elephant Pharmacy, 1607 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley
Susan Godes, Clinical Herbalist
(510) 913-5083 or call the Elephant Pharmacy
Free

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