

Herbalism in Modern Times

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Reasons for Herbalism

- Herbalism creates jobs for farmers, indigenous peoples & wild crafters
- Herbal medicine is a cheaper form of medicine than pharmaceutical products
- Herbalism is the medicine of the people because many remedies can be produced at home
- Herbal medicine is a safer form of Medicine

Types of Herbal Medicine Traditions

- Folk & Ethnic Traditions
- Science based Herbalism
- Energetic Herbalists:
 - Tibb Unani
 - TCM
 - Ayurvedic
 - Greek Medicine
 - Anthroposophy

Who are modern Herbalists?

- Phytotherapists
- TCM Practitioners
- Naturopathic Physicians (non-MD)
- Nutritionists
- Integrative Doctors
- Traditional: Wise women herbalists, Folk herbalists, shamans, medicine men
- Anthroposophical Physicians (MD)
- Homeopaths

Differences between energetic/other herbalism

Energetic

- System based treatments
- Considers the energetics of disease
- Considers the energetic of the plant
- Considers the energetics (constitution) of the person
- Plants are chosen by action & energetic
- Employs more tonics
- Are often used as foods

Other

- Symptom based treatments
- Does not consider the energetics of a disease
- Does not consider the energetic of the plant
- Does not consider energetics but may do some system based constitutional tonics
- Plants are chosen by action
- Employs more activators
- Are mostly used as Medicines

Industry Issues

- Plant purity, organic growing methods & species identification
- Lab based medicines vs. traditional remedies
- Standardization of constituents
- Industry controls vs. FDA (American Herbal Product Association)
- Herbs restricted in commerce
- Licensure and Certification (American Herbalist Guild)

Types of Herbal Medicines & Their Uses

- Infusions & Decoctions – Water based extracts
- Vinegar & Glycerin based extracts
- Tinctures, ethanol based extracts
- Capsules
- Topicals: Salves, herbal oils, washes, plasters, poultices, sitz baths
- Steams
- Aromatherapy: Essential Oils
- Homeopathics
- Flower Essences

Infusions & Decoctions

- Infusions are steeped & are generally made from leaves, flowers, & soft roots
- Decoctions are boiled & are generally made with roots, barks, & woody stems
- Infusions & Decoctions are used when plant constituents extract well in water
- Infusions & Decoctions are particularly good for colds, flus, & GI difficulties
- Generally, infusions are steeped for 5 minutes to 20 minutes
- Decoctions are boiled for, usually, at least 20 minutes or until water is reduced by half

Tinctures

- There are three types of tinctures:
 - Ethanol based
 - Vinegar based
 - Glycerin based
- Tinctures made with ethanol extract constituents that are not soluble in water
- Vinegar and Glycerin tinctures can only be used with plants that can be extracted by water
- Reasons for tinctures:
 - Shelf life of up to 100 years
 - Rapid absorption
 - Patient compliance
- Most Tinctures are 1:5 (herb:menstrum)
- The solution used to extract the constituents from the herb is called the menstrum
- In the case of Ethanol tinctures the menstrum must be at least 20% ethanol for preservation & may be up to 90% ethanol

Capsules & Press pills

- Capsules consist of either powdered herb, freeze dried herb, or extracted herb
- Press pills consist of powdered herbs + a binding agent
- Shelf life on powdered herb capsules is about 3 months
- Extracted & Freeze dried herbs have a shelf life of up to 1 year
- Press pills have a shelf life of up to 1 year

The End