

The Use of Nervines and Other Herbs in the Treatment of Mental and Nervous Disorders

Nervines as a group are an interesting study because more than any other herbs they address the mind/body interface. As such, they can be matched according to the personality of both the herb and the individual, or by looking at the constitutional type of the patient. While any number of relaxing nervines might be chosen to treat anxiety, truly amazing results can occur when one chooses exactly the right one. As a typical case in point, for problems involving an overly stimulated nervous system one might choose either *Passiflora incarnata* (Passionflower) or *Melissa officinalis* (Lemonbalm). If one were to base the choice on constitutional factors, I would be inclined to choose *Passiflora incarnata* for those who over stimulate easily and who *dislike* the sensation, whereas *Melissa officinalis* would be more appropriate for those who over stimulate, but who tend to seek out and enjoy high levels of stimulation. In this paper I hope to discuss this issue by looking at six commonly used nervine herbs in depth through the multiple lenses of Homeopathy, Aromatherapy, Energetic medicine (including Flower Essence Therapy and Traditional Chinese Medicine), as well as the conventional wisdom of our western ancestral herbalists such as Culpeper and Paracelsus. I hope to provide some additional insight into how a practitioner can make more effective choices in prescribing these herbs by knowing the many associations that can be gleaned from these diverse sources. I will then conclude with some quick comparisons and charts for a number of the other most commonly used nervines.

Personality and Herbs

In talking about the personality of an herb one has a number of sources upon which one can draw for illumination. The first would be the planetary attribution of the herb. Classical herbalists such as Galen, Dioscorides, and much later, Paracelsus and Culpeper, typed herbs as being ruled by planets and in some cases signs of the zodiac. These rulerships give the reader an idea what they were thinking as to the characteristics of the herb in terms of what emotional and physical traits they felt the herb impacted. Solar herbs were warming, balancing and had to do with ego strength; lunar herbs ruled the bodily fluids, moods, and imagination; Jupiter herbs were expansive in nature etc. The planetary rulerships were generally well established by the time of Paracelsus, and are of particular interest when considering the emotional aspects of health and disease.

Flower Essence Research and both modern and classical Homeopathy draw upon this earlier body of knowledge and expand upon it, providing detailed sketches of the kind of personality traits that a remedy can be expected to impact. While some portraits came completely out of the provings of classical homeopathy, modern homeopathy often employs remedies in ways that have more in common with modern herbalism, and they use less potentiated (diluted) doses. Examples of this would be Passionflower and Hops, which are included in many calming remedies.

Constitutional medicine recognizes that particular constitutional types tend to manifest common maladies in their own particular way, and matches the medicines accordingly. Below I have given a quick overview of Traditional Chinese Medicine's constitutional types as a starting point. Others may choose to use the old western system of humoral medicine. Both can provide a useful framework. I have chosen to use the TCM model because it is much more in current usage.

A Quick Overview of Constitutional Types

Wood Yang/ Wood Yin, Associated Organs: Liver and Gall Bladder

Wood Yang types correspond to the old humoral choleric type: enthusiastic, active, driven and quick thinking. They are good planners and decision makers, sometimes impulsive, and they need to remain physically active to remain healthy and balanced. Their tendency is to be high profile types; they like to be in charge and highly visible. Unbalanced they can be volatile indeed, irritable, impulsive and manic.

Wood Yin types are more nervous but also crave attention. They possess what is often considered the "artistic" temperament. They are excitable, emotional, creative, and may be, in some more introverted types, timid or indecisive.

Both Wood types tend to extremes of either loose-limbed flexibility or stiffness. Both are inclined to depression with anxiety or irritability as a feature. Relaxing nervines are often needed, especially those with anti-anxiety and antispasmodic features. In cases of constrained or stagnant energy, nervines with a stimulating edge may be needed.

Fire Yin/FireYang, Associated Organs: Heart and Small Intestine

Fire Yang types are idealistic and passionate in nature, often charismatic, and are willing to be leaders (or martyrs) to the cause of their choice. They need to feel that life has meaning and that they are doing important work. Often inspired, they can be fanatical in their beliefs and they are inclined to swings between joy and despair. The more intellectual types are disciplined, brilliant thinkers (when balanced); the more emotional types are those who fall suddenly and completely in love. Fire Yang types love a challenge in and of itself, rather than because others notice them. They climb the mountain because it is there – not because others are watching. Distortions incline them to cardiac problems. Mental extremes could lead to depression with joylessness and apathy, or extremes such as bi-polar disorder.

Fire Yin types are more sentimental and more likely to be "the right hand wo/man" to the leader. Fiercely loyal and totally committed, they are capable of waiting for many years to achieve a goal. They are very sensitive and may feel persecuted by others or misunderstood. They are introverted and are susceptible to sudden mood changes and depressive episodes in which they feel hopeless.

Both types are restless and prone to difficulties with sleep. These are the dreamers of the world who live with their hearts quite literally on their sleeve. When nervous they may stammer, although the well balanced types are articulate and eloquent speakers. Nervines that calm and ground the system, especially those with a relaxing effect on the cardiac system, are often called for here. In some cases carefully modulated stimulants may be in order.

Earth yin/Earth Yang, Associated Organs: Stomach and Spleen

Earth yang types are optimistic by nature, sensual, (especially when it comes to food and drink), extroverted and sociable. They make great diplomats and practical jokers, and can often be the life of the party. Their love of the good life makes them prone to illnesses that may be caused by excess such as gout, digestive disorders and high cholesterol. By nature they are not terribly self-reflective, but prolonged stress can incline them to anxiety, and in some extreme cases either obsessive focus or an inability to focus. (OCD/ADD/ADHD)

Earth Yin types are worriers, the earth mother types who fret about the well being of others often to their own detriment. They are prone to digestive upsets, food sensitivities and the occasional eating disorder. Like their yang counterpart, they are often socially adept, making good listeners and a sympathetic audience. When anxious they are inclined to ruminate, being unable to let go of a concern or hurt. They can be stoic in their suffering and thus may suffer long term stress.

Mental problems in Earth types nearly always have a digestive component. They are generally not so much depressed as they are anxious or self-pitying. They often suffer from problems of focus, not from mood swings or erratic energy states (like the Fire/Wood types), but from either an inability to let go of an idea, to process an idea, or to settle on an idea. Nervines that also address the digestive functioning work well for these types; they also do well with nervines that help the consciousness to relax and let go, or that bring greater clarity of focus.

Metal yin/Metal Yang, Associated Organs: Lung and Large Intestine, skin

Metal Yang types are discriminating, careful thinkers. In love with purity, both metal yin and yang types are system thinkers who dislike excess of any kind. They prefer life to be rational and orderly. The yang type can seem overly rigid, fussy and/or unemotional. Certain of their opinions, they are unlikely to greatly care if others agree with them. But they are not so much unemotional as they are controlled (and in some cases, controlling). Both metal types are actually quite sensitive; of all the types they are most closely tied to their nervous systems. I think of them as being like violins – in tune they function beautifully; but they can go out of tune easily (just as the lung is the “tender organ” – our first defense against outside invasions.)

Metal Yin types are similar but embody the other end of the spectrum when it comes to opinions. They can be easily swayed by the ideas of others, and can't keep negativity of

any kind out of their own systems easily. Often empathic (rather than sympathetic, which is a characteristic of Earth types), they are also psychic, intuitive and easily exhausted by interactions with others.

Both types are prone to sadness and melancholy. Their depressive episodes often go unnoticed because they are quiet. They are often pessimistic. Their fastidiousness may lead them into very restrictive eating patterns and purging regimens. Of all the types they are the least likely to medicate, because they are inherently suspicious of any form of healing that doesn't involve suffering and patient compliance. Relaxing, restoring and calming nervines are often in order. Stimulants are almost never good, but antispasmodics are frequently needed.

Water Yin and Water Yang, Associated Organs, Kidney and Bladder, Reproductive Organs, Brain and Nervous System

Water Yin and Water Yang types are the most polarized of all the pairs. Water Yang types tend to be strong, extroverted people with enormous physical stamina, nerves of steel and an adrenal system to match. Water Yin types are physically challenged, suffer often from adrenal insufficiency and must conserve their energies carefully; their staying power (when they possess any) is all on the internal level, where they may be typified by great self-awareness and persistence. Mountain climbers, rescue workers and heroes who unthinkingly throw themselves into the breach are the yang types. Yogis, saints and hermits who are reclusive and perhaps fearful by nature, the yin type often shines in the spiritual realm. Capable of great discipline, the yin types may carefully nurture their delicate physique and live long, healthy lives.

The emotion associated with both is stamina/fear, which can manifest in the type of depression that involves a sense of overwhelm and interior paralysis, the inability to get out of bed. The issues involved nearly always involve the strength (or lack thereof) of the adrenal system. Nervines that are most important are those that target the adrenals, adaptogens, and also the actual physical structures of the nerves and brain.

A PORTRAIT OF SIX NERVINES

MELISSA OFFICINALIS (Lemonbalm)

In many ways similar to *Passiflora incarnata* (Passionflower), Lemonbalm grounds ascendant liver yang energies and harmonizes the emotions and the nervous system. But the difference in planetary rulership gives an important clue to their differences in use. Lemonbalm is ruled by Jupiter in Cancer,⁽¹⁾ and is best used by highly social individuals who have an outward focus that gets them overextended or unfocused. Passionflower is for the self-absorbed; for those who are preoccupied by their overly stimulated *internal* world. Lemonbalm can function as an anti-depressant for those who possess great hearts and who have fallen into despondency; it is the herb of choice for those who are typically extraverted by nature but who have hit a bad patch and collapsed into withdrawn or melancholic behaviors.

Lemonbalm on the physiological level helps one to deal with pathogenic infections attacking the nerves such as herpes viruses, influenzas etc, another example of its ability to help the nervous system to adjust in the face of the outside world. Like many nervine herbs it is good for problems where the Liver Qi is disturbing the heart, but Lemonbalm is better for disturbances that include the head, much like Stachys (Wood Betony).

Constitution This is an herb for Wood Yang types, those who typically move fast, think quickly on their feet, are prone to risk-taking and who need to move a lot. Exercise benefits them greatly, and stress that involves stasis is the worst for them. Being in “limbo” is the bane of their existence. When overexcited their energy becomes erratic and functions in fits and starts. When depleted they may collapse into stagnation. Secondly it is useful for Earth types because of its digestive edge, especially when obsession is causing digestive spasms or eating disorders. It also may be used for problems of focus. While it could be used for Fire types, I generally prefer Passionflower in these instances.

Personality Like all Jupiterian herbs, Lemonbalm activates the system but by releasing energy that is held in, constrained or blocked. This is why it also functions as a relaxant to the nervous system. Its functioning in the sign of Cancer indicates its powerful effect on the emotional world of cardinal water; Lemonbalm unblocks and frees up the emotions in the interior, and as a result the overly activated individual relaxes. Its attractiveness to bees is legendary; it is also the herb of choice for the “busy bees” among humans. It has long been known to lift sagging spirits in the face of frustrations: “It causes the mind and heart to become merry, and revives the heart.” (2) Another aspect of its Jupiter rulership is in its impact on problems involving the head. (Which Jupiter rules.) Lemonbalm is excellent for ADD/ADHD because it refocuses the attention and calms disordered energies. It is also indicated for tinnitus, migraines and blurry vision when related to this personality type.

Aromatherapy As an essential oil Lemonbalm is justly famed for its antiviral/anti-inflammatory effects, especially when there are herpetic inflammations such as shingles. In general, it is good for nerve inflammations brought on by stress, especially related to overstriving. It is also an anti-depressant, relaxing oil.

PASSIFLORA INCARNATA (Passionflower)

Passionflower is for those who need to have their hearts calmed and grounded so that they can be connected to others. Too much “input” makes them feel stressed out, with the common complaint that they “feel like they want to jump out of their skin.” Ruled by the sun, balanced Passionflower types are oriented to service to others; and they are often idealistic. Unfortunately, Passionflower types are also very sensitive. When overly stimulated they are prone to severe anxiety, heart symptoms and hysteria. Where Lemonbalm types love stimulation, the solar Passionflower type loves harmony and beauty. When the Passionflower type goes into overload they become out of control

physically or mentally in a way that alienates them from connecting to others. They become focused inward on their own sensations and feelings. Anyone who has ever suffered from a seizure, extreme nerve pain or a bout of genuine hysteria will know what I mean. Passionflower is often used when there is nervous disease as a result of a systemic breakdown from long-term distress, such as Chorea, Parkinson's or intractable insomnia.

From the TCM perspective Passionflower is another of the nervines that are used to ground ascendant liver yang that is rushing upward and disturbing the heart. It is also said to be one of the best remedies for the neurological effects of internally generated wind illnesses. It is particularly indicated when the problem is caused by an overload induced Qi imbalance, rather than constrained Qi. Nervous symptoms that come and go suddenly with symptoms of tremors, tics and multiple locations are wind-like; these symptoms often indicate that Passionflower is a good pick.

Constitution Passionflower is particularly good for Fire types, those who are prone to disorders involving the heart both in the physical sense, and in the emotional sense (shen). Fire types are idealistic, and need to have a sense of contact with their own personal meaning in order to be happy and healthy. They are also prone to "burn out", are vulnerable to inflammation on both the physical and emotional level and are in need of regular cycles in order to function well. In extremes they can sink into apathy or soar into mania. Secondly it can be used for Wood Yang types suffering from excess. In homeopathic usage it is often used to treat Water Yang/Yin types when they are depleted of vital force leaving the adrenal system over stimulated and in fight or flight mode.

Personality Passionflower's profile in both Homeopathy and Flower Essence Therapy indicate that it is a plant that helps us to soften and open up to love, especially when the cause of withdrawal is from hypersensitivity. As a flower essence it is the remedy of choice for autistic individuals or for children who are too tense to relax into the embrace of their caretakers. It frees individuals from their overwrought internal world so that they can receive warmth (and give it). It is also said to open one up to the principle of service. The Jesuits named this plant for Christ because the conformation of the flower reminded them of the crown of thorns. On the metaphysical level this name is peculiarly appropriate, since passionflower serves very well as a remedy for those who suffer physical or mental anguish, often from being overly sensitive to others and often manifesting in the head (3). In Homeopathy its main indication is for nervous troubles that are the result of over exhaustion and depletion of vital force.

SAINT JOHN'S WORT

Saint John's Wort is perhaps one of today's most well known depression remedies, but herbalists of the past were more interested in its abilities to heal damage to the spine and sensory nerves. In my opinion its anti-depressant effects are best reserved for the type of depression that is primarily endogenous in nature, or those depressions that have their basis in hormonal/circadian rhythms. It is the first herb I choose for the depression that goes with the depletion syndromes of Chronic Fatigue Syndromes, menopause, hereditary

depressive disorders and Seasonal Affective Disorder. Combined with adrenal tonics and adaptogens, St. John's Wort is a superb long term restorative to the nervous system as a whole, addressing depressions that are caused by long term exhaustion and stress or poor organic function due to illness, injury, nutritional deficits or heredity. It is also an amazing nervine for the nerve pain of viral conditions (herpetic and otherwise) as well as that caused by injuries.

Constitution

Water yin types and Wood Yang/Yin types are most strongly benefited by St. John's Wort. The element of Water in Chinese Medicine is associated with the deep levels of energy in the body, the spine, brain and nervous system as a whole. St. John's Wort is a specific for weaknesses of the nervous system such as damage to the spine, brain, or impaired neurotransmitter movement etc. Hormonal regulation and the smooth movement of Qi are functions of the element of Wood.

Personality

St. John's Wort is an herb associated with the ability to drive out demons and darkness. In our more modern world it is also known for helping those who are environmentally sensitive, or highly allergic types. 5. As a flower essence it has a truly remarkable ability to banish SADS, something which I have found to be nearly impossible with any other herb or pharmaceutical. It is interesting in light of the fact that high dosages of the herb can (rarely) cause photosensitivity. Ruled by the sun in the sign of Leo, it harmonizes the energies, making it particularly good for irritable type depressions, and for those who in the face of their crankiness tend to withdraw. Patricia Kaminski comments that as an essence it is particularly for those persons who have disturbed sleep because they "have a very active psychic life – the astral body expands greatly during sleep, often distorting its connection with the physical and etheric bodies...(this) results in a propensity for invasion or attack from negative elemental forces." In other words, St. John's Wort is for those whose emotional imbalance makes them disembodied and out of touch with themselves. Such types often lack emotional boundaries and are poor judges of their own limits. Their ego life becomes unbalanced and they manifest either poor self-esteem or a kind of stoical grandiosity in which they ignore their own needs. (Which is why it is so needed in our current times). Its homeopathic portrait states it is "for nervous depression following wounds or surgical operations; removes bad effects of shock, of fright, of mesmerism." 5 This seems to indicate its role in recovery from injuries that have shocked and or traumatized the patient, or from long term physical illnesses. Once again, the main emphasis seems to be on biologically based problems.

VALERIAN

Valerian shares with St. John's Wort the ability to aid in the repair of damaged nerves and to alleviate pain, but here the similarity ends. Where St. John's Wort can help to ground individuals back into their body, Valerian tends to do the reverse. It frees the mind from states of bodily induced tension and stress, allowing it to float free. Valerian

functions in different ways depending on its dose. Low doses are restoring and supporting of the rhythmic energy of the chest (Qi of the chest) including both the heart and lungs. Moderate doses relax and stimulate; high doses are hypnotic. In all cases Valerian is good for those who are depleted and exhausted.

Personality

While many authors consider Valerian to be ruled by the Moon, because it is an herb that possesses a powerful ability to release the mind into the imaginative realms of sleep and dreams; others such as Dioscorides attribute it to Mercury because of its ability to heal nerves and to release pent-up energies from tightened musculature. In either case, it is an herb that releases the mind from the mundane, and the body from the spasms and tensions of pain, constrained Qi and disordered rhythm. This is why it works so well for those who can't sleep because they can't let their day go, and why it equally is *not* the best herb for those who have overly active imaginations and an *excess* of energy. The latter may be paradoxically hyperstimulated by the peculiar brand of sedation typical of Valerian, or at the very least they will complain of feeling hungover and disoriented the next day; such types would do better with the more calming and grounding Skullcap or Chamomile. In its homeopathic profile it is assigned interestingly enough, to those who are prone to "excessive nervous excitability; hysterical nervous temperament; persons in whom the intellectual faculties predominate." It is good for those who think too much and create an unbalanced, overly stressed temperament.

Constitution

Valerian works well for Fire types with their very tense musculature and disruptions of the heart's rhythm: sedating hypertension, hysteria and anxiety alike. It also is useful for the erratic tensions and irritability of both Water and Wood types. In all cases there will be a strong component of overheating, restlessness and spastic tensions due to constrained energies and the febrile restlessness that goes with weakness, not excess. For these types Valerian can offer a kind of recalibration of their nervous systems, relaxing and freeing them up to contact their inner visionary capabilities and restoring normal tone. In the past it was frequently used for spasms of the genitourinary system.

MATRICARIA CHAMOMILLA

Chamomile is so well known a nervine relaxant that it seems appropriate for any type (or circumstance) that requires soothing, but it particularly is called for in cases of fretful, irritable hypersensitivity. It's for the inner baby in all of us. Its homeopathic portrait portrays its well: (it is for those) "peevish, irritable, oversensitive to pain, driven to despair; snappish, cannot return a civil answer...child exceedingly irritable, fretful; quiet only when carried; wants this or that and becomes angry when refused, or when offered, petulantly rejects it...piteous moaning; whining restlessness. Patient cannot endure anyone near him; is cross, cannot bear to be spoken to; complaints from anger, especially chill and fever."⁷

Personality

Ruled by the sun, Chamomile restores the sunny disposition and drives out the darkness of despair. It opposes the moodiness of those overtaken by lunar mood swings. As an herb with a strong digestive edge it is particularly good for those who manifest stress in their digestive region, especially in colicky children. It is used to restore inner equilibrium both as a flower essence and as a calming essential oil. Chamomile is not so much for the intractable mood problems that respond to more long term herbs such as St. John's Wort, as it is good for the ever shifting landscape of inner emotions that are temporarily upset. In other words, it is for those who normally are cheerful but who are having a bad moment.

Constitution

Chamomile has a particular affinity for Wood types because of its affinity for calming the irritated spirits of the world, and also for the worries that typify the Earth types. It grounds wandering liver energy, calms the stomach and deals with disharmonies between the liver and the spleen which result in spasmodic digestive processes and tension in the head and upper body. It also calms the oversensitivity of the Metal types to aid in conditions such as irritable bowel, and inflammatory skin conditions.

CIMICIFUGA RACEMOSA (Black Cohosh)

One of the native American "squaw vines, Black Cohosh has been used for regulating nearly every reproductive complaint of women. This plant has a tangled, thickly interwoven root structure that resembles a Gordian knot, while above ground it is graceful, airy and is graced with delicate, long stems bearing many blossoms in a wand-like raceme. This seems to me to typify the dual nature of this plant as it relates to people. The Homeopaths use it for those who suffer deeply but hide their pain from the outside world, those who appear graceful and attractive in the outside world but are rooted in dark moods and tangled emotions under the surface. It is excellent for the kind of emotional mood swings and moodiness that accompany hormonal imbalances or the stress of hormonal transitions. I often think of Black Cohosh as a plant for those who need to let go on a very deep level, for those who are knotted up by their own internal conflicts and who fear that they will go crazy. It is for those who live in states of darkness masked by control, or those who find their inner upset suddenly erupting up and out.

Personality

The planetary rulership has not been established by classical sources, but it seems to me to be a quintessentially lunar herb. It regulates the tides of the hormones, helps energies to flow and release, and its general energy is to adjust the tides of life as individuals go through the maturation and aging process. As a flower essence it is known for giving individuals the ability to confront the shadow pieces of the psyche in both the self and

others. It is particularly called for in those who are abused, addicted or prone to deep brooding. The homeopathic profile adds its importance for those who have sharp, shooting pains and spasms or convulsions.

Constitutional types

Wood types benefit from the ability of Black Cohosh to ground liver yang and to release constrained Qi. The effect is similar to that of Chamomile, but more for those who are either chronically angry and tense, or cyclically so, rather than for the occasional bad moment. Fire types are secondarily involved, as the flaring upward of liver fire can cause heart problems of both a physical and emotional nature.

1. Culpeper N 1995. *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*. Ware, Hertfordshire, Great Britain: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.
2. *ibid*
3. Kenner D, and Y Requena 1996. *Botanical Medicine: A European Professional Perspective*. Brookline, Massachusetts: Paradigm Publications
4. Kaminski P, and R Katz 1994. *Flower Essence Repertory*. Nevada City: The Flower Essence Society
5. *ibid*
6. www.hpathy.com/materiamedica/allenkeynotes/allen-hypericum-perforatum
7. *ibid*
8. *ibid*

Herb	Constitutional Types Most Affected	Planetary Attributions	Related Modalities	Snapshot
Mugwort	Wood Earth	Moon also Culpeper Venus	Flower Essence	The nervine of choice for those who are having a hard time with change, establishing a rhythm or hormonal stresses. I think of it more for younger women than menopausal ones, although it has its uses there. If Motherwort soothes, Mugwort could be said to stir up and spice up one's attitude. It helps us have new visions, accept the bizarre or unusual, and in general be more flexible.
California Poppy / Red Poppy	Fire Metal	Moon	Flower Essence	Similar to Lemon Balm and Passionflower, helps Gall Bladder pain, colic, heart palpitations, PMS, menopause, tachycardia. While mild, both poppies are hypnotics that are useful when one needs to dial down pain and shut out the world for a while.
Hops	Wood Earth Fire / Water Deficiency	Mars and Pluto	Flower Essence Homeopathy	Sedative. Good for those who really need to shut down, but not if depression is an issue as it may make it worse. Also good for those who are angry and combative, overly libidinous, anxious or hysterical with aggressive (Martian) features. While good for over-stimulation, I think this herb is best on a more occasional basis. For those that are frequently over stimulated one might consider Lemon Balm.
Lavender	All 5 yin types	Mercury	Aromatherapy Flower Essence Homeopathy	Lavender is good for almost anything having to do with the nerves, but is especially indicated for those who faint, withdraw or in other ways go away from consciousness in the face of stress.
Wood Betony	Wood yang	Jupiter in Aries		Like many other nerviness Wood Betony is good for nervous afflictions involving constraining Qi. But its effects are not so much that it grounds the Liver Yang (like Passionflower or Lemon Balm) or hormonally related (like Vervain and Motherwort); rather its basic strength is as a Qi stimulant. It unsticks things, throughout the body, but especially in the head.

			Wood Betony can be thought of as a “reset” button for problems of stagnant Qi such as excessive rumination, stagnant type headaches and neurasthenia. It is restorative to the nerves like Vervain, and it is gently stimulating like Mugwort. I think of it as the perfect herb for the obsessed. Where Skullcap is good for free-floating anxiety and general overwhelm, Wood Betony is for when you just can’t let go of something.
Catnip	Earth Metal	Venus	Mild. Has a definite affinity for stomach stuff. Great for nervous stomach types, and for people who need to relax and play more.
Motherwort	Fire Wood	Venus in Leo	Another hormonal nervine great for those liver related mood problems. Motherwort is especially good for those who don’t or can’t nurture themselves. While it grounds Liver Yang, this is more related to hormonal events such as hot flashes than the hysteria/wind symptoms of Passionflower and Lemon Balm.
Skullcap	Fire Wood Water	Saturn	Skullcap is both an in-the-moment aid to the nervous system and a long-term Tonic. It is particularly good for those who tend to allow their worries to overtake them, or who are overwhelmed and become irritable as a result. I think of it as being a little like Motherwort in that it is a “there, there” herb, one that comforts as well as calms. Over time it increases ones ability to handle stress.