

K B A & C O



FREE GUIDE

The Guide to Herbal Tea

*Everything I Know About
Making Tea Worth Drinking
Infused. Intentional. Effective.*

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The Essentials

This guide exists because of a question I asked on a Thursday night and did not expect anyone to answer. I asked whether people would find it useful if I posted the actual recipes I use, with ratios, instead of the pretty photos everyone else posts. Three hundred people said yes. A lot of them told me what they were already growing, what they had struggled with, and what they had given up on. Several said they had been buying as supplements the same plants growing wild in their own yards.

So this is the answer, and it is organized the way you actually think about it: by what you want the cup to do.

I am a researcher by training, and that shapes how I write about plants. When there is human research behind something, I say so. When there is only long traditional use, I say that instead and do not dress it up as science. Some of the most reliable things in this guide fall into that second category and that is fine. What is not fine is blurring the two, which is most of what you will find online.

Nothing here is medical advice and nothing here treats a disease. If you are pregnant, nursing, taking medication, or managing a health condition, talk to your provider first and bring the actual ingredient list with you.

Steep or simmer

Nearly every disappointing cup comes from one confusion, so it is worth understanding before anything else.

Soft parts get steeped. Hard parts get simmered.

Leaves and flowers are delicate, and the compounds worth having in them are often volatile, meaning they evaporate readily with heat and time. Pour hot water over them, cover, wait ten minutes. That is an **infusion**.

Roots, barks, seeds and dried berries are dense and woody, and hot water barely touches them. They need sustained heat to break

down and release what is inside. That means actual simmering. That is a **decoction**.

Use the wrong one and the result is not dangerous, just disappointing. Steeped dandelion root gives you faintly brown water. Boiled peppermint gives you a bitter cup that has lost the exact thing you wanted. People try each once, decide herbal tea is weak and pointless, and stop. It was the method, not the plant.

A shortcut that works: if you could imagine eating the part raw in a salad, steep it. If you would have to cook it first, simmer it.

The numbers

Infusion, one cup. One to two teaspoons of dried leaf or flower per cup, about two hundred and fifty millilitres. Half again as much if the herb is fresh, since fresh material is mostly water. Water just off the boil, covered, ten to fifteen minutes.

Decoction, one cup. About one tablespoon of dried root, bark or berry per cup. Start it in cold water so the heat works through the material as it rises. Boil, drop to a simmer, keep it covered, fifteen to twenty minutes until reduced by roughly a third.

A day's supply. Around twenty five grams of dried herb to five hundred millilitres for an infusion, or thirty grams to seven hundred and fifty millilitres for a decoction. Strain, refrigerate, drink within a day or two.

Long infusion, for minerals. One ounce of dried herb in a quart jar, boiling water, capped, four to eight hours or overnight.

Cold infusion, for mucilage. One tablespoon in a cup of cool water, four to eight hours, no heat at any point.

Blending by parts. Three parts base, two parts supporting herb, one part accent. Parts scale to any jar, which is why every recipe here is written that way. A part can be a tablespoon for a test batch or a quarter cup for a month's supply.

Cover the cup

The smallest tip in the guide and the one that changes the most.

The aromatic compounds in mint, chamomile, lemon balm and every other fragrant herb are volatile. That word is doing real work: those molecules move into the air readily, especially with heat, which is exactly why you can smell them from across the room. An uncovered mug is an open escape route, and every bit of fragrant steam heading for your ceiling is a compound no longer in your cup.

A saucer, a small plate, or the pot's own lid for the full steep. Then you get the smell when you lift it, which is the good part anyway.

Telling good herb from old

Colour first. Dried herbs should still look like the plant. Chamomile creamy white and gold, not beige. Peppermint green, not grey. Calendula aggressively orange. Hibiscus deep wine red. Faded toward brown or grey means old, and the compounds faded on the same schedule the colour did.

Smell second, and it is the better test. Crush a pinch and warm it between your fingers. It should smell distinctly like itself, immediately. A faint whiff of hay, or nothing at all, means spent. This is the test I use in front of suppliers and it has never once been wrong.

Whole beats cut, cut beats powdered. Surface area is how volatile compounds escape. Buy the least processed form you can and break it up as you use it.

Buy small and often. Most dried leaf and flower is good for about a year, roots and barks closer to two. A pound of anything is nearly always a mistake for a home shelf.

Store it in sealed glass, in a cupboard, away from the stove. Light, heat, air and moisture are the four things that degrade herbs, and the pretty open shelf by the window is a slow bleaching machine. Label with the date you opened it, not the date on the bag. Never

refrigerate dried herbs, since every trip out of the fridge collects condensation and moisture is what invites mould.

Safety, honestly

Natural does not mean safe. Foxglove is natural. Dose and context are what matter.

Identify with certainty before using anything you picked yourself. Not reasonably sure, certain. Several useful wild plants have lookalikes in the same family that are genuinely dangerous.

Herbs interact with medications, and this is the risk people most underestimate. If you take a prescription, run new herbs past your pharmacist, who is the most accessible expert on interactions and will not be annoyed by the question.

Pregnancy and nursing get their own rules. Most herbs simply have not been studied in pregnancy, and absence of evidence gets misreported as evidence of safety constantly. Assume nothing is cleared until your midwife or OB clears it, including things marketed specifically for pregnancy.

Children are not small adults. Lower amounts, gentler herbs, a pediatrician's sign off, particularly under two. No honey under one year, ever.

One new herb at a time, so you know what caused a reaction if there is one. And stop if something feels wrong. Being ninety percent sure it was the tea is a good enough reason to quit the tea.

What a cup of tea can and cannot do

A cup of herbal tea is a dilute water extract of a plant. It is a real preparation with real compounds in it, and it is gentler by design than a tincture or a capsule, which is exactly why it is safe to drink daily.

That gentleness cuts both ways. Much of the clinical research on a given herb was run on a concentrated extract at a dose you could not reach with a teapot. Where that gap exists in this guide, I flag it,

because citing a capsule trial and letting you assume your evening cup does the same thing is not honest.

What tea reliably gives you is a warm drink, a pause, a consistent cue your body learns to read, and a modest amount of real plant compounds. The ritual is doing more of the work than most people writing about herbs will admit. That is not a knock on it. A dependable ten minute wind down is worth more to most people than nearly anything they could buy.

The Blends, By What They Do

Every recipe is written in parts, so you can scale it to whatever jar you have. A part can be a tablespoon for a test batch or a quarter cup for a month's supply.

Unless a blend says otherwise, brew one tablespoon of the finished mix per cup, water just off the boil, covered, ten minutes.

Under each recipe is a short note on what every herb in it is actually doing, and where the evidence for that sits. Each of these is a starting point. Taste it, then move it toward what you like. The best blend in your cupboard will be the one you adjusted three times.

Rest & Sleep



Valeriana officinalis, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

1. Evening Wind Down

For the mind that is done but will not stop replaying the day.

3 parts lemon balm · **1 part** chamomile · **1 part** oatstraw · **a pinch** dried rose

One tablespoon per cup, covered, eight to ten minutes.

In the cup. **Lemon balm** carries rosmarinic acid, the constituent behind most of its calming research, which is promising and still maturing. **Chamomile** contributes apigenin, a flavonoid that binds benzodiazepine receptor sites in laboratory work, alongside the bisabolol and chamazulene that turn its oil deep blue. **Oatstraw** adds minerals and makes the whole thing more drinkable. **Rose** is aroma, and aroma reaches the parts of the brain handling arousal faster than most people expect.

The evidence. Supportive, not sedating in the way a medication is. This works as the last step of a routine, not as the routine.

Pairs with our Restful Night salve at the pulse points, same calming direction in a form you can smell as you fall asleep.

kbaco.net/shop/restful-night

2. Deep Sleep

For when the wind down blend is not enough.

2 parts lemon balm · **2 parts** passionflower · **1 part** valerian root · **1 part** peppermint

Simmer the valerian gently ten minutes, pull it off the heat, add the rest, cover, steep eight more.

In the cup. **Valerian** is among the most studied sleep herbs and the results are genuinely mixed, with some trials finding real improvement and others finding nothing beyond placebo. Most used capsules rather than tea. **Passionflower** has a smaller but more consistent body of work on sleep quality and restlessness. **Lemon balm** is here because lemon balm with valerian is the specific pairing most of the research used. **Peppermint** is doing damage control on the taste.

What to know. Valerian smells like old socks and tastes roughly how it smells. I am not going to pretend otherwise. A meaningful number of people find it does nothing, and a small number find it stimulating rather than sedating, so try it on a night that does not matter. Never with alcohol or sedative medication, and not before driving.

3. The Three A.M. Cup

For waking at three and lying there.

2 parts chamomile · **1 part** linden · **1 part** lemon balm · **1 part** skullcap

Covered, ten minutes. Keep it small, since the goal is not to send yourself back to the bathroom in an hour.

In the cup. **Linden** brings flavonoids and a light mucilage that gives it a genuine softness you can feel, with long documented European use for restlessness. **Skullcap** is traditional for nervous tension with modest modern research. **Chamomile** and **lemon balm** are the familiar pair.

Researcher's note. The strongest thing here is not an herb. It is having a defined thing to do at three in the morning instead of lying in the dark doing arithmetic about how much sleep is left. The kettle is half the intervention.

Anxiety & Nervous Tension



Passiflora incarnata, from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen*

4. The Wound Up Afternoon

For the day that got to you at two o'clock, so it does not follow you to bed at ten.

2 parts tulsi · **2 parts** rooibos · **1 part** spearmint · **a few** crushed cardamom pods

Covered, ten minutes.

In the cup. **Tulsi**, or holy basil, is an adaptogen with a long and well documented Ayurvedic history, and human studies reviewed in the literature report effects on stress related symptoms and general wellbeing. Its eugenol content is the source of the clove note.

Rooibos is a naturally caffeine free base, low in tannin so it will not turn bitter however long you leave it. **Spearmint** and **cardamom** carry the flavour.

Where the research sits. Adaptogen research as a category is young and the trials tend to be small. Treat this as a good daily ritual rather than a fix. It is not sedating, which is precisely why it belongs in the afternoon and not at bedtime.

Pairs with our Stress Reset salve. kbaco.net/shop/stress-reset

5. Steady Nerves

For the low, humming anxiety that runs underneath a week.

2 parts lemon balm · **1 part** motherwort · **1 part** skullcap · **1 part** oatstraw · **a pinch** rose

Covered, ten minutes.

In the cup. **Motherwort** has a long traditional reputation for nervous tension, particularly where it shows up as a racing or fluttery feeling in the chest, and the name tells you how long women have been using it. **Skullcap** and **lemon balm** handle the general tension. **Oatstraw** is the nutritive base, traditionally used for exactly this kind of depletion.

Where the research sits. Motherwort is genuinely bitter and the rose does not fully rescue it. Modern clinical research on it is thin and the traditional record is long and consistent. Avoid motherwort in pregnancy, and discuss it if you take heart or thyroid medication.

6. Before Something Hard

The cup for an hour before the conversation, the appointment, or the thing you have been dreading.

2 parts tulsi · **1 part** lemon balm · **1 part** chamomile · **1 part** rose · **a small piece** of cinnamon

Covered, eight minutes. Drink it slowly and on purpose.

In the cup. Everything here is gentle by design, because the last thing a nervous stomach needs is a strong bitter or a heavy root. **Cinnamon** reads as sweet without sugar. **Rose** is aroma again.

Researcher's note. Nothing in this cup will meaningfully change your physiology in an hour. What it will do is give you a warm drink

Cough, Chest & Expectorants



7. The Expectorant

2 parts elecampane root · **1 part** horehound · **1 part** thyme · **1 part** hyssop · honey to finish

In the cup. **Elecampane** is the classic expectorant root in European herbal practice, rich in inulin and the sesquiterpene lactone alantolactone, with a long documented use for wet coughs.

Thyme brings thymol and carvacrol, both with well documented antimicrobial activity in laboratory settings, and thyme preparations

have real human research behind them for cough. **Hyssop** is traditional and aromatic.

The evidence. The human research on thyme used standardised syrups and combination products, not tea. The laboratory antimicrobial work is solid and does not mean a cup of tea clears an infection. Horehound and elecampane rest largely on long traditional use. What this cup genuinely delivers is warmth, steam, bitterness and aromatics, which is a reasonable thing to want. Avoid hyssop in pregnancy and with a seizure disorder.

8. Dry Cough Demulcent

The opposite problem. For a dry, scraping cough with nothing to bring up.

2 parts marshmallow root · **1 part** mullein · **1 part** licorice root · **1 part** linden

Two stage method, and it matters. Cold infuse the marshmallow root separately in cool water four hours. Simmer the licorice ten minutes, steep the mullein and linden covered ten, then combine. Add honey.

Strain the mullein through a coffee filter. Its fine leaf hairs are genuinely irritating to an already raw throat and a mesh strainer will not catch them. This is the single most common complaint about mullein and it is entirely a straining problem.

In the cup. Marshmallow root is almost pure mucilage, which physically coats irritated tissue. That is a mechanical effect rather than a claimed one, and it is why it appears in throat preparations across many traditions. **Mullein** adds mucilage and saponins. **Licorice** is soothing and sweet. **Linden** contributes its own light mucilage.

What to know. Mucilage degrades with heat, so boiling the marshmallow root together with everything else destroys the entire reason it is in the blend. Go easy on the licorice and skip it altogether with high blood pressure, kidney or heart conditions, diuretics, or pregnancy.

9. Chest & Steam

For the rattling stretch of a cold, and for breathing over.

2 parts mullein · **1 part** thyme · **1 part** marshmallow root · **a slice** of fresh ginger · honey

Steep covered fifteen minutes, strain through cloth, add honey.
Breathe the steam while it cools.

In the cup. Same demulcent and aromatic pairing as above, with **ginger** for warmth. The steam is doing real work independently of any herb in the cup, and it is worth leaning on that deliberately.

The evidence. Honey has genuine research behind it for cough soothing, and it is one of the better supported things in this whole section. No honey for any child under one year old, without exception.

Pairs with our Cough Rub on the chest at night.

kbaco.net/shop/cough-rub

Throat & Cold



Sambucus nigra, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

10. Sore Throat Soother

The one I actually make when it hurts to swallow.

2 parts marshmallow root · **1 part** licorice root · **1 part** thyme · **1 part** sage · honey

Cold infuse the marshmallow four hours. Simmer the licorice ten minutes. Steep the thyme and sage covered ten. Combine, add honey.

In the cup. **Sage** has supportive human work behind it for throat pain and a very long traditional use as a gargle. **Thyme** for its aromatics. **Marshmallow** and **licorice** for coating and sweetness.

What to know. Make it stronger and use it as a gargle rather than drinking a great deal of it, because sage contains thujone and is not meant for large amounts or daily long term use. Traditionally avoided in pregnancy and nursing.

II. First Sign of a Cold

Made at the moment you think “oh no,” not three days later.

2 parts elderberry · **1 part** elderflower · **1 part** ginger · **1 part** rose hip · a **small piece** of cinnamon stick

Simmer, do not steep. Berries and root need fifteen to twenty minutes at a simmer. Add the elderflower in the last three minutes only, since its aroma is fragile.

In the cup. **Elderberry** carries anthocyanins in quantity and has several small positive human trials on cold duration, many of them industry funded, which is worth stating rather than hiding.

Elderflower is traditional in European practice for feverish colds.

Rose hip is notably high in vitamin C, though a portion degrades with heat. **Ginger** and **cinnamon** for warmth.

What to know. **Elderberries must be cooked.** Raw elderberries contain compounds that release cyanide and cause real illness. The leaves, bark, stems and roots of elder are never food at any stage. None of this prevents a cold. The realistic hope is a slightly shorter, slightly gentler one.

Digestion & Bloating



Foeniculum vulgare, from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen*

12. After Dinner

The oldest use of herbal tea there is, and one of the most reliable.

2 parts peppermint · **1 part** fennel seed, crushed · **1 part** chamomile · **a small piece** of ginger

Covered, ten minutes.

In the cup. **Peppermint** brings menthol, which produces its cooling sensation by activating cold receptors directly rather than by changing temperature. **Fennel** contributes anethole, and its digestive use is traditional, long and geographically widespread. **Chamomile** and **ginger** round it.

The evidence. Peppermint's strong digestive research used enteric coated oil capsules designed to release past the stomach, which is a very different thing from tea, and I will not pretend the cup does the same job. Peppermint can also loosen the valve at the top of the stomach, so if peppermint and heartburn go together for you, swap in spearmint.

Crush the fennel seeds. Whole seeds give you a fraction of the cup, because crushing is what exposes the oil.

13. Bloat & Gas

Specifically for the tight, uncomfortable hour after eating.

2 parts fennel seed, crushed · **1 part** caraway seed, crushed · **1 part** peppermint · **1 part** chamomile

Crush the seeds, simmer gently five minutes, add the leaves, cover, steep five more.

In the cup. Fennel and caraway are both carminatives, an old category for plants that ease gas and bloating, and the fennel and caraway pairing specifically appears in supportive human research on functional digestive discomfort, usually as a combined oil preparation.

What to know. Discuss fennel if you have a hormone sensitive condition, since anethole shows some estrogenic activity in laboratory work.

14. The Bitter Before

Drunk before a meal, not after, which is the entire point.

2 parts dandelion root, roasted · **1 part** burdock root · **1 part** globe artichoke leaf · a **pinch** of fennel

Simmer the roots fifteen minutes. Small cup, fifteen minutes before eating.

In the cup. Bitter compounds stimulate digestive secretions through taste receptors, which is a well characterised and thoroughly unglamorous mechanism behind the whole traditional category of digestive bitters. **Dandelion root** carries bitter sesquiterpene lactones plus inulin and a good potassium content. **Burdock** is gentler and sweeter. **Artichoke leaf** has some of the better human research in this group, on digestive discomfort.

Researcher's note. It has to taste bitter to work as a bitter, so do not sweeten it. That is not me being austere, it is the mechanism. All three of these are aster family, so the rare ragweed caution applies, and the inulin causes gas in a lot of people at first. Start with half a cup.

Nausea



Zingiber officinale, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

15. Nausea Settle

The blend with the best evidence in this entire guide.

3 parts ginger · **1 part** spearmint · **1 part** chamomile

Simmer the ginger ten minutes, pull it off the heat, add the leaves, cover, steep five more.

In the cup. **Ginger** contains gingerols when fresh, which convert to the more pungent shogaols when dried or heated, and that is why dried ginger tastes hotter than fresh. **Spearmint** is here rather than peppermint because it is gentler on a stomach that is already unhappy.

The evidence. Ginger for nausea is one of the very few places in this guide where I will say the human evidence is genuinely good rather than promising. Pregnancy related nausea, motion sickness and post operative nausea all have supportive trials behind them. In pregnancy it is among the better studied options and it still goes past your provider first. Ginger has mild blood thinning activity, so mention it before surgery.

Sip it slowly and lukewarm. Gulping anything hot when you are already nauseated tends to backfire.

Energy & Focus



Cichorium intybus, from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen*

16. The Morning Alternative

For anyone getting off coffee who still wants something dark and bitter at seven in the morning.

2 parts roasted chicory root · **2 parts** roasted dandelion root · **1 part** cinnamon · **a few** crushed cardamom pods

Simmer fifteen minutes, or run it through a drip coffee maker, which genuinely works. Excellent with milk.

In the cup. **Chicory** and **dandelion** roots are both high in inulin, a genuine prebiotic fibre, and both roast to something honestly coffee adjacent. New Orleans has been blending chicory into coffee for two centuries for good reason. **Cinnamon** and **cardamom** cover the bitterness.

What to know. Start with half a cup. Inulin in quantity causes gas and bloating in a lot of people who jump straight to a full mug, and that is the most common reason people abandon this one.

17. Gentle Focus

For working, without the jitter and the two o'clock crash.

2 parts tulsi · **2 parts** spearmint · **1 part** rosemary · **a pinch** of lemon balm

Covered, ten minutes.

In the cup. Rosemary and cognitive performance is a genuinely interesting small research area, though much of it studied aroma rather than drinking it, which does not make it useless given how directly smell connects to attention and memory. **Tulsi** for steadiness, **spearmint** for brightness.

What to know. There is no caffeine here and this is not a substitute for sleep. It is a pleasant, aromatic cup that gives you a reason to stop staring at the screen for two minutes.

Adaptogens & Resilience



Withania somnifera, from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen*

18. The Long Haul

For a stretch that is going to be demanding for longer than a week.

2 parts astragalus root · **1 part** ashwagandha root · **1 part** schisandra berry · **1 part** cinnamon · **a slice** of ginger

Simmer twenty minutes, which is longer than most things here and exactly what these roots want.

In the cup. Astragalus is a foundational tonic root in Traditional Chinese Medicine with very long documented use as a daily strengthening herb rather than an acute one, and substantial laboratory work around immune signalling and inflammatory pathways. That work is what led me to put it in my psoriasis salve.

Ashwagandha has the better human research of the three, with trials on stress and sleep measures, generally using standardised extracts. **Schisandra** is traditionally described as having all five tastes and it genuinely does taste like several things at once.

Where the research sits. Adaptogen research is young and the preclinical work runs well ahead of the human trials for all three. Astragalus is traditionally avoided during acute fever or infection. Ashwagandha is nightshade family, is generally avoided in pregnancy, and deserves a conversation if you have a thyroid condition or take sedatives. Discuss all of these if you take immunosuppressants or have an autoimmune condition.

19. Building Back

For the week after being ill, which is the week everyone skips.

3 parts oatstraw · **2 parts** nettle · **1 part** rose hip · **1 part** astragalus
· **1 part** spearmint

Simmer the astragalus fifteen minutes, then pour it over the rest and let it long infuse four hours. Strain, refrigerate, drink across the day.

In the cup. Nettle has a genuinely notable mineral content, including iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium, and this is one of the few herbs whose main value is nutritional rather than pharmacological. **Oatstraw** is the traditional restorative for depletion. **Rose hip** adds vitamin C, which also improves absorption of the iron from the nettle, and that pairing is not an accident.

What to know. Nettle is high in vitamin K, which matters if you take warfarin. The long infusion is not optional here; a ten minute steep

gives you a fraction of the mineral content and the minerals are the whole point.

Aphrodisiac & Intimacy



Theobroma cacao, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

A word before the recipes, because this is the category where herbal writing gets least honest.

The traditional aphrodisiac record is long, cross cultural and genuinely interesting. The modern clinical evidence is thin, small, and mostly not about tea. Where a plant here has real human research, I say so and tell you what form was tested. Where it is tradition and sensory pleasure, I say that too. Warmth, scent, sweetness and a shared unhurried twenty minutes are not a lesser mechanism than a constituent, and I would rather name that than dress it up.

20. Rose & Cacao

Rich, warm and genuinely lovely. The one to make for someone.

2 parts cacao nibs · **2 parts** rose petals · **1 part** cinnamon · **1 part** cardamom, crushed · **a pinch** of vanilla

Simmer the nibs and cinnamon fifteen minutes, add the rest, cover, steep eight. Strain, and a splash of milk suits it.

In the cup. **Cacao** contains theobromine, a mild stimulant related to caffeine but gentler and longer acting, plus phenylethylamine and a large flavanol content, and cacao flavanols have reasonable human research behind them for blood flow and vascular function. That vascular point is the most defensible thing in this category. **Rose** and **cardamom** are aroma. **Cinnamon** reads as sweet without sugar.

The evidence. The blood flow research used cocoa flavanol preparations at doses above a cup of nibs, and the leap from vascular function to desire is one the studies did not make. What this cup does reliably is taste extraordinary and require you to sit down with someone.

21. Warm Invitation

Warming, spiced, and built on circulation rather than sedation.

2 parts ginger · **1 part** cinnamon · **1 part** cardamom, crushed · **1 part** jasmine flowers · **a pinch** of clove

Simmer the ginger, cinnamon and clove ten minutes, take it off the heat, add the cardamom and jasmine, cover, steep five.

In the cup. **Ginger** is a circulatory stimulant in traditional practice across several systems, and the warming sensation is real and immediate. **Jasmine** has a small body of research on aroma and arousal measures, mostly inhalation studies. **Cardamom** and **clove** are traditional warming aromatics throughout South Asian and Middle Eastern practice.

What to know. Add the jasmine off the heat. Its aroma is the entire contribution and boiling it drives that off. Go light on the clove, which turns medicinal fast.

22. Saffron Evening

The one with the most actual human research behind it, and the most expensive by a distance.

a generous pinch of saffron threads · **2 parts** rose · **1 part** cardamom, crushed · **1 part** honeybush

Steep everything covered ten minutes. A pinch of saffron is genuinely enough, and more is not better.

In the cup. Saffron has a real and reasonably encouraging body of randomised human research, primarily on mood, and a smaller set of trials specifically on sexual function, including in people whose difficulty was an antidepressant side effect. It is one of the few plants in this whole category with trials rather than tradition behind it. **Honeybush** is a soft, honeyed, caffeine free base. **Rose** and **cardamom** for aroma.

The evidence. Those trials used standardised saffron extracts at measured daily doses, not a pinch in a teapot, so the honest position is that the plant has evidence and this cup is not the studied preparation. Saffron is also the most adulterated spice on earth, so buy threads rather than powder from somewhere that will tell you the origin. High doses are genuinely unsafe and it is avoided in pregnancy.

Cycle & Hormones



Rubus idaeus, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

23. Cycle Comfort

2 parts red raspberry leaf · **1 part** ginger · **1 part** fennel seed, crushed · **1 part** chamomile · **1 part** rose

Simmer the ginger and fennel five minutes, add the rest, cover, steep ten.

In the cup. Ginger has supportive human work for menstrual pain, with a few small trials putting it in the neighbourhood of common over the counter options, which is a genuinely notable result.

Fennel has small supportive trials as well. **Red raspberry leaf** is a pleasant, mildly astringent base whose reputation runs well ahead of its evidence.

What to know. If pain is severe, or has changed, that is a conversation with a provider rather than a tea. Endometriosis and fibroids do not respond to chamomile and the delay in getting them looked at is the actual harm.

24. Spearmint & Balance

One of the few blends where tea specifically, rather than an extract, is what was studied.

3 parts spearmint · **1 part** nettle · **1 part** rose · **1 part** lemon balm

Covered, ten minutes. The research used roughly two cups daily.

In the cup. Spearmint has a modest but interesting body of work on androgen levels, mostly in the context of hormonal acne and PCOS, and unusually for this guide the trials used spearmint tea rather than a concentrated extract. The studies are small. **Nettle** adds minerals, **rose** and **lemon balm** the flavour.

Where the research sits. Small trials, and PCOS is a condition that genuinely warrants medical management rather than a tea alone. If you are managing a hormonal condition, the same activity that makes spearmint interesting makes it worth mentioning to your provider.

Pregnancy, Postpartum & Little Ones



Matricaria chamomilla, from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen*

This is the section where caution matters most, so it is the shortest and the most hedged. Pregnancy, nursing and a child's body are exactly the situations where natural does not automatically mean safe, and where the honest answer is often “ask first.”

25. Pregnancy, With Your Provider

2 parts ginger · **1 part** rooibos · **1 part** lemon balm · **1 part** spearmint

Simmer the ginger five minutes, add the rest, cover, steep eight.

In the cup. **Ginger** is among the better studied options for pregnancy nausea, with supportive trials. **Rooibos** is a caffeine free base. **Lemon balm** and **spearmint** are gentle and pleasant.

Researcher's note. Built deliberately from the shortest possible list of well studied, gentle plants. It still goes to your midwife or OB before you drink it, and take the ingredient list to the appointment. Notably absent: red raspberry leaf, which is the herb most marketed for pregnancy and where practitioners genuinely disagree about timing. That decision belongs with the person managing your care, not with a guide.

26. Postpartum Nourish

3 parts oatstraw · **2 parts** nettle · **1 part** rose · **1 part** lemon balm

Long infuse four to eight hours, strain, refrigerate, drink warm or cool across the day.

In the cup. Minerals from **nettle** and **oatstraw**, and very little else on purpose.

Researcher's note. This blend contains nothing traditionally used to alter milk supply in either direction, which is deliberate. Anything you drink while nursing deserves a conversation with your provider or a lactation consultant, including gentle things and especially anything marketed for postpartum. The early weeks want rest and hydration far more than a cabinet of products.

27. A Cup For Little Ones

2 parts chamomile · **1 part** lemon balm · **a very small pinch** of spearmint

Weak. Half the usual herb, steeped covered five minutes, served properly cool.

What to know. Pediatrician's sign off, particularly under two. No honey under one year, ever. Skip peppermint for infants. One new herb at a time so you know what caused a reaction if there is one. Children are not small adults and the amounts should reflect that.

Skin



Calendula officinalis, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

28. Skin From The Inside

Named carefully, because I will not tell you a tea clears skin.

2 parts nettle · **1 part** burdock root · **1 part** calendula · **1 part** rose ·
1 part spearmint

Simmer the burdock fifteen minutes, pull it off, add the rest, cover, steep ten.

In the cup. **Calendula** carries triterpenoids and flavonoids, with the faradiol esters being the fraction researchers keep returning to, though most of the good calendula research is topical rather than internal, which is exactly why it leads my salves rather than my teas. **Nettle** and **burdock** are traditional skin herbs with long documented use and thin modern clinical evidence.

Researcher's note. What this blend genuinely provides is minerals, hydration and a daily habit, and those help skin in a boring, real, indirect way. Anyone selling you a tea that treats a skin condition is overselling. The direct route is topical, and for psoriasis specifically that is where my own work went. kbaco.net/shop/psoriasis-soothing

29. Clear & Calm

2 parts spearmint · **1 part** red clover · **1 part** nettle · **1 part** calendula · **1 part** rose

Covered, ten minutes.

In the cup. Red clover contains isoflavones and has a long traditional use as a gentle skin and lymphatic herb. **Spearmint** is here for the androgen research described in blend 24, which is the most plausible mechanism in this cup for hormonal breakouts specifically.

What to know. Red clover's isoflavones are phytoestrogens, so it warrants a conversation if you have a hormone sensitive condition or take blood thinners, and it is generally avoided in pregnancy.

Minerals & Nourishment



Urtica dioica, from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen*

30. Deep Mineral Infusion

Not a flavour blend. A nutritional one, and the reason to keep nettle in the house.

2 parts nettle · **2 parts** oatstraw · **1 part** rose hip · **1 part** spearmint

Different method. One generous ounce of the blend in a quart jar, filled with boiling water, capped, left four to eight hours or overnight. Strain, refrigerate, drink within two days.

In the cup. The extended contact is the entire point. **Nettle** and **oatstraw** are both mineral dense and both give those minerals up slowly, so a ten minute steep delivers a fraction of what four hours does.

What to know. The dried plant does not sting. High vitamin K content matters on warfarin, and nettle's diuretic reputation is worth knowing if you already take a diuretic.

31. Iron Minded

Built around a pairing that actually works.

3 parts nettle · **1 part** rose hip · **1 part** hibiscus · **1 part** spearmint

Long infuse four hours, or brew hot and strong for ten minutes if you are in a hurry.

In the cup. **Nettle** supplies non heme iron. **Rose hip** and **hibiscus** supply vitamin C, and vitamin C meaningfully improves absorption of non heme iron taken alongside it. That interaction is well established nutritional science, not an herbal claim, which is why this blend is put together this way.

What to know. This is a supportive food level contribution, not a treatment for anemia. If you are actually iron deficient, that needs bloodwork and a provider, and tea is not the answer. Drinking it away from your morning coffee helps too, since the tannins in coffee and black tea work against iron absorption.

Immune Support



Echinacea purpurea, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

32. Daily Defense

2 parts astragalus root · **1 part** elderberry · **1 part** rose hip · **1 part** ginger · **1 part** cinnamon

Simmer twenty minutes. Elderberries must be cooked.

In the cup. **Astragalus** is a daily tonic root rather than an acute one, which is why it leads here. **Elderberry** and **rose hip** bring anthocyanins and vitamin C.

Researcher's note. Echinacea is deliberately not in this one. Its research is genuinely inconsistent, meta analyses have landed in different places, and it is traditionally used short term at the onset of symptoms rather than continuously. If you want it, use it at the first sign rather than daily. Discuss any of these if you have an autoimmune condition or take immunosuppressants, and astragalus is traditionally avoided during an active fever.

Joints & Inflammation



Curcuma longa, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

33. Golden Simmer

2 parts turmeric · **2 parts** ginger · **1 part** cinnamon · **a few** crushed cardamom pods · **a good pinch** of black pepper · **a splash** of coconut or whole milk

Simmer fifteen minutes with the pepper and the fat included from the start.

In the cup. Turmeric carries curcuminoids, principally curcumin. **Black pepper** genuinely improves curcumin absorption by a meaningful multiple, and curcumin is fat soluble, which is why the milk is not just for texture.

The evidence, and it is the important part. The large research literature on curcumin for inflammation and joint pain used concentrated extracts formulated specifically because curcumin absorbs poorly on its own. Pepper and fat help. They do not get a mug of tea anywhere near a studied dose. This is a genuinely lovely warming drink and it is not the thing the trials tested. Turmeric also has blood thinning activity and gallbladder considerations.

If joints are the actual problem, topical is the more honest route.

kbaco.net/shop/joint-comfort

Heart & Circulation



Crataegus species, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

34. Hawthorn Heart

2 parts hawthorn berries · **1 part** hawthorn leaf and flower · **1 part** hibiscus · **1 part** rose · **a small piece** of cinnamon

Simmer the berries fifteen minutes, add leaf, flower and the rest, cover, steep ten.

In the cup. **Hawthorn** is the classic European heart tonic with a very long documented use, and it has a real body of human research, mostly on standardised extracts in the context of heart failure, with meta analyses reporting modest benefit. **Hibiscus** has decent human research on blood pressure, with several trials and meta analyses reporting modest reductions.

What to know. Read this one carefully. Hawthorn interacts with cardiac and blood pressure medication, and hibiscus can stack with blood pressure medication too. Heart conditions are not something to self manage with tea, and this blend belongs in a conversation with your doctor rather than instead of one. Hibiscus is generally avoided in pregnancy and is hard on tooth enamel with daily use.

Liver & Bitters



Taraxacum officinale, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

35. The Bitter Cup

2 parts dandelion root, roasted · **1 part** burdock root · **1 part** milk thistle seed, crushed · **1 part** cinnamon

Simmer twenty minutes.

In the cup. Milk thistle seed carries silymarin, which has a genuinely substantial research literature around liver protection, though largely using standardised silymarin preparations, and silymarin is poorly water soluble so a tea extracts it inefficiently.

Dandelion and **burdock** roots bring bitters and inulin.

Researcher's note. I want to be blunt here because this is the category with the most nonsense attached to it. Your liver is not clogged and it does not need detoxing. It is an organ that works continuously and does not require herbal assistance to do its job. What bitter herbs genuinely do is stimulate digestive secretions, which is useful and unglamorous. If you have an actual liver condition, silymarin is worth discussing with your doctor as a supplement, and this tea is not that.

Allergy Season



Solidago virgaurea, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

36. Allergy Season

2 parts nettle · **1 part** goldenrod · **1 part** elderflower · **1 part** peppermint · **1 part** rose hip

Long infuse four hours or overnight.

In the cup. Nettle has a traditional allergy reputation with some preliminary human work behind it, not enough to promise anything.

Goldenrod is traditional for upper respiratory and sinus comfort, and is unfairly blamed for hay fever, which is almost always ragweed flowering at the same time. **Elderflower** and **peppermint** for the aromatics.

Where the research sits. Preliminary and traditional throughout. This is a use I am comfortable sharing and would not build a season around.

Iced & Summer



Hibiscus sabdariffa, from Köhler's Medizinal-Pflanzen

37. Hibiscus Cooler

The blend that makes people ask what it is. It is the colour.

3 parts hibiscus · **1 part** rose hip · **1 part** spearmint · **a slice** of fresh ginger

Brew double strength hot, ten minutes covered, then pour over a full pitcher of ice. Or cold brew overnight for a softer cup.

In the cup. **Hibiscus** carries anthocyanins, which are both the colour and much of the interest, plus the organic acids behind the tartness.

What to know about iced tea generally: do not make true sun tea. Water sitting in the sun spends hours in the temperature range where bacteria multiply readily, and this has made people genuinely ill. Brew hot and pour over ice, or cold brew in the refrigerator, which never leaves a safe temperature. Refrigerate finished tea and drink it within two days, since herbal tea has no preservatives and is essentially a growth medium.

38. The Everyday Cup

The one to build the habit on. No agenda beyond being good.

3 parts rooibos · **2 parts** lemon balm · **1 part** spearmint · **a small pinch** of rose

Covered, ten minutes. Excellent hot, excellent iced.

Researcher's note. Start here if you are new. The single biggest predictor of whether herbal tea does anything for you is whether you keep drinking it, and a blend you actually enjoy beats a more impressive one you abandon in March.

Comfort



Lavandula angustifolia, from Köhler's Medicinal-Pflanzen

39. Something For A Hard Week

This one is not functional and I am not going to pretend it is.

3 parts honeybush · **1 part** rose · **1 part** chamomile · **a very small pinch** of lavender · **a small piece** of cinnamon stick · honey

Covered, ten minutes.

In the cup. Honeybush is soft and naturally sweet. Lavender brings linalool, and lavender's best human evidence is in inhaled aromatherapy rather than anything you drink, which is a legitimate route given how directly scent connects to arousal and memory.

Researcher's note. Use half the lavender you think you need. It goes soapy immediately and it is always, without exception, too much lavender.

There is no claim here. It is warm, it smells like something someone made on purpose, and it requires you to sit down for ten minutes. Sometimes the ritual is the entire active ingredient, and I would rather say that out loud than dress it up as medicine.

In Practice

Growing and drying your own

You do not need land. **Peppermint, spearmint, lemon balm and chamomile** all grow happily in pots on a step, and all four are hard to kill.

Contain the mint family. Peppermint, spearmint and lemon balm spread by underground runners and they are relentless. Pot them, and if you want them in a bed, sink the whole pot with the rim standing an inch proud. People who skip this spend years regretting it. **Chamomile** self seeds enthusiastically once settled, so let a few heads go to seed and you will not plant it again. **Calendula** flowers heavily if you keep picking and stops if you do not.

Harvest leaves just before the plant flowers, when volatile oil peaks. After flowering the plant redirects its energy and leaf quality drops off, which is why lemon balm cut in June is a different ingredient from lemon balm cut in August. Flowers get picked as they open fully. Roots get dug in autumn after the top growth dies back. Mid morning, after the dew dries and before the heat, is the window. Cut leafy herbs back by about a third and most give you two or three more harvests a season.

Dry below about ninety five degrees, always. Heat is what removes the volatile oils you are trying to keep. If your dried lemon balm smells like hay instead of lemon, that is what happened and it

cannot be undone. Airflow beats temperature: a single layer on a screen in a dim, dry, moving air room outperforms any warm oven. Keep it out of direct sun, which bleaches colour and degrades compounds on the same schedule.

Test properly. Leaves should crumble rather than fold, stems snap rather than bend. Then jar it, wait a few days, and look for condensation inside the glass. If you see any, it was not dry. That one check has saved me more batches than anything else.

The equipment you actually need

Genuinely almost none, which is the point of starting with tea.

Necessary: something to hold hot water, something to strain with, and a lid. A mug and a saucer qualify. **Worth owning:** a quart mason jar for long infusions, a fine mesh strainer, and a small lidded saucepan for decoctions. **Nice:** a coffee filter or muslin for straining mullein and anything else hairy.

Skip single serve infuser balls. They are too small to let herbs expand, and cramped herb extracts badly. If you use one, fill it half full at most.

When a cup comes out wrong

Bitter. Usually oversteeped, especially anything with tannins like rose or raspberry leaf. Cut the time. If it is a root blend, you may have boiled it hard instead of simmering.

Weak and watery. Not enough herb, or the wrong method for the plant part. If you steeped roots or bark, that is your answer.

Smells like hay. Old herb, or herb dried too warm. Nothing to do but replace it. This is the most common problem with anything off a grocery shelf.

Tastes soapy. Too much lavender. It is always too much lavender.

Throat tickle after drinking. Unstrained mullein hairs. Filter through cloth or a coffee filter.

Cloudy or slightly thick. If marshmallow root or a long nettle infusion is in it, that is mucilage and minerals, and it is correct.

Fuzzy growth in stored tea. Throw it out. Do not salvage it. That is a moisture problem, meaning either the herb was not fully dry or the jar gets opened in a humid kitchen too often.

Making it stick

The honest truth of this whole guide is that consistency does more than any individual plant in it. Put the jar where you will see it.

Attach it to something you already do, because a habit riding on an existing habit survives and one floating on its own does not. Kettle on when the laptop closes. Cup while the bath runs.

And let it be a cup of tea. Ten minutes of sitting down, on purpose, is a real thing that does real work, and the plant is a good excuse.

Reference

Method by plant part

Plant part	Method	Ratio per cup	Time
Leaves, flowers, aerial parts	Infusion, steep covered	1 to 2 tsp dried	10 to 15 min
Delicate aromatics (mint, chamomile, lemon balm)	Infusion, steep covered	1 to 2 tsp dried	8 to 10 min
Roots, barks, dried berries	Decoction, simmer covered	1 tbsp dried	15 to 20 min
Aromatic seeds and spices	Crush, then short simmer or long steep	1 tsp crushed	5 to 10 min
Mucilaginous roots (marshmallow)	Cold infusion, no heat at all	1 tbsp dried	4 to 8 hrs
Mineral herbs (nettle, oatstraw)	Long infusion	1 oz per quart	4 to 8 hrs
Fresh herb, any of the above	As above	1.5 to 2× the dried amount	Same

Batch quantities

Preparation	Herb	Water	Keeps refrigerated
Daily infusion	about 25 g	500 ml	24 to 48 hrs
Daily decoction	about 30 g	750 ml	48 hrs
Long mineral infusion	about 28 g	1 quart	48 hrs

Blends by what you want

You want	Go to blend
To fall asleep	1, 2, 3
To stop feeling wound up	4, 5, 6
To move a chesty cough	7, 9
To soothe a dry, scraping cough	8, 10
To catch a cold early	11
To settle after eating	12, 13
To prepare for eating	14, 35
To stop feeling sick	15
To replace coffee	16
To concentrate	17
To get through a demanding stretch	18, 19
Something for two people	20, 21, 22
Cycle comfort	23, 24
Pregnancy, postpartum, children	25, 26, 27
Skin, from the inside	28, 29
Minerals and depletion	30, 31
Daily immune support	32
Joints	33
Heart and circulation	34
Allergy season	36
Something cold in July	37, 38
A hard week	39

The cautions worth rereading

Herb	The short version
Licorice root	Potassium loss and raised blood pressure with sustained use. Occasional, small amounts only. Avoid with hypertension, kidney or heart conditions, diuretics, pregnancy.
Elder	Berries must be cooked. Leaves, bark, stems, roots and raw berries are not food at any stage.
Sage	Thujone content. Not in large amounts or daily long term. Traditionally avoided in pregnancy and nursing.
Valerian	Not with alcohol or sedatives. Do not drive until you know how it affects you.
Hibiscus	Stacks with blood pressure medication. Generally avoided in pregnancy. Hard on tooth enamel.
Hawthorn	Interacts with cardiac and blood pressure medication. Belongs in a conversation with your doctor.
Red raspberry leaf	Reputation exceeds evidence. Do not start in pregnancy without your midwife or OB.
Ashwagandha	Nightshade family. Avoided in pregnancy. Discuss with thyroid conditions or sedatives.
Astragalus	Traditionally avoided during active fever or infection.
Saffron	High doses are genuinely unsafe. Avoided in pregnancy. Heavily adulterated, so buy threads.
Motherwort, red clover	Avoided in pregnancy. Red clover is a phytoestrogen and interacts with blood thinners.
Cassia cinnamon	Coumarin content at sustained high intake. Buy Ceylon for daily use.

Herb	The short version
Marshmallow root	Coats, so it can slow absorption of medication taken alongside. Separate by a couple of hours.
Mullein	Strain through cloth or a coffee filter. The leaf hairs irritate the throat.
Aster family (chamomile, calendula, echinacea, dandelion, burdock, chicory)	Occasional reactions in people with serious ragweed allergy.
Nettle	High in vitamin K, which matters on warfarin.
Anything at all	Interacts with medication more often than people assume. Ask your pharmacist.

Glossary

Adaptogen a modern category for plants proposed to help the body handle stress broadly. Useful shorthand, young and uneven research base.

Anthocyanins the pigments behind red, purple and blue plant colour, and a frequent subject of antioxidant research.

Carminative a plant that eases gas and bloating. Fennel, caraway and cardamom are the classics.

Cold infusion steeping in cool water over hours rather than hot water over minutes. Used for mucilage.

Decoction simmering hard plant material to extract it.

Demulcent something that coats and soothes irritated tissue. Mucilage does this.

Expectorant a plant traditionally used to loosen and move mucus.

Infusion steeping soft plant material in hot water.

Inulin a prebiotic fibre in chicory, dandelion and burdock root. Causes gas in many people at first.

Mucilage the slippery polysaccharide that gives marshmallow root its texture and its purpose.

Non heme iron the plant form of dietary iron, absorbed less readily than the animal form, and meaningfully better absorbed alongside vitamin C.

Rhizome an underground stem rather than a root, though prepared like one. Ginger and turmeric are rhizomes.

Standardised extract a concentrated preparation adjusted to a fixed amount of a marker compound. Most clinical research uses these, which is why study doses often do not transfer to tea.

Tannins astringent compounds behind the drying mouthfeel and bitterness of an oversteeped cup.

Volatile oil the aromatic fraction. Volatile means it evaporates readily, which is the entire reason you cover the cup.

On the sources behind this guide

I have tried throughout to separate three different things: findings from human clinical research, findings from laboratory and animal work, and long documented traditional use. All three are worth knowing about, and only the first supports the kind of claim most herbal marketing makes.

Every study linked below was read and verified. Where I have described something as traditional rather than linking a study, that is exactly what it is, and I have not tried to make it sound like more. These are peer-reviewed human sources, indexed on PubMed, grouped by where they come up in the guide.

Rest, sleep and calm

- Chamomile for generalised anxiety, a randomised placebo-controlled trial: Amsterdam et al., 2009, *J Clin Psychopharmacol*.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/JCP.0b013e3181ac935c>
- Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) for anxiety and sleep, review:
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11510126/>

- Valerian for sleep, a systematic review and meta-analysis, and the source of my “genuinely mixed” caveat, including its note on publication bias: Bent et al., 2006, *Am J Med*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjmed.2006.02.026>

Stress and adaptogens

- Tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*), review of clinical effects:
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4296439/>
- Ashwagandha for stress, a randomised placebo-controlled trial using a standardised extract: Lopresti et al., 2019, *Medicine (Baltimore)*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000017186>

Nausea and digestion

- Ginger for nausea and vomiting in pregnancy, a systematic review and meta-analysis: Tan et al., 2023, *Front Public Health*.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1108756>
- Ginger among treatments for pregnancy nausea, systematic review: McParlin et al., 2016, *JAMA*.
<https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.14337>
- Enteric-coated peppermint oil for irritable bowel syndrome, a systematic review and meta-analysis. Note it is the capsule, not tea: Khanna et al., 2014, *J Clin Gastroenterol*.
<https://doi.org/10.1097/MCG.0b013e3182a88357>
- Dietary supplements for period pain, a Cochrane review. Ginger showed low-quality benefit, which is exactly the hedge I used: Pattanittum et al., 2016, *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD002124.pub2>

Cold, cough and throat

- Black elderberry for upper respiratory symptoms, a meta-analysis of randomised trials: Hawkins et al., 2019, *Complement Ther Med*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ctim.2018.12.004>
- Echinacea for preventing and treating the common cold, a Cochrane review, and the source of my “inconsistent” reading:

Karsch-Völk et al., 2014, *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD000530.pub3>

- Honey and other over-the-counter options for acute cough, a Cochrane review: Smith et al., 2014, *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD001831.pub5>
- Thyme and ivy combination for productive cough, a randomised placebo-controlled trial. Note it is a standardised syrup, not tea: Kemmerich et al., 2006, *Arzneimittelforschung*. <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0031-1296767>

Heart and circulation

- Hibiscus for mild-to-moderate hypertension, a systematic review and meta-analysis of 13 trials, and the source of “modest reductions”: Abdelmonem et al., 2022, *J Cardiovasc Pharmacol*. <https://doi.org/10.1097/FJC.0000000000001161>
- Hawthorn for chronic heart failure, a Cochrane review of standardised extracts: Pittler et al., 2008, *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD005312.pub2>
- Cocoa flavanols and endothelial function, a dose-response meta-analysis showing benefit at doses above a cup of nibs: Sun et al., 2019, *Food Funct*. <https://doi.org/10.1039/c9fo01747j>

Hormones

- Spearmint tea and androgen levels in PCOS, a randomised controlled trial, one of the few that studied the tea itself: Grant, 2010, *Phytother Res*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ptr.2900>

Intimacy

- Saffron for antidepressant-induced sexual dysfunction in women, a randomised double-blind trial: Kashani et al., 2013, *Hum Psychopharmacol*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hup.2282>

Joints and skin

- Curcumin bioavailability with piperine, the study behind the black-pepper point, a 2000 percent increase in humans: Shoba et al., 1998, *Planta Med*. <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-2006-957450>

- Rosehip powder for osteoarthritis pain, a meta-analysis of randomised trials: Christensen et al., 2008, *Osteoarthritis Cartilage*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joca.2008.03.001>
- Calendula, review of therapeutic potential, the basis for its use in my salves: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10142266/>

Where to read further. *Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine* by Andrew Chevallier is the reference I recommend most often and the one I started with. For primary literature, PubMed and PubMed Central are free and searchable by anyone. Reading the methods section of a study before its abstract will change how you read health claims permanently. Look for what form of the plant was used and at what dose. That single habit sorts most of the internet.

Botanical plates throughout this guide are public domain engravings from Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen* and comparable nineteenth century botanical works, via Wikimedia Commons.

Safety

This guide is educational and is not medical advice. Nothing in it is intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

Identify any plant with certainty before using it. Talk with your healthcare provider before using herbs, particularly if you are pregnant, nursing, giving herbs to a child, taking any medication, or managing a health condition. Introduce one new herb at a time, start with small amounts, and stop if anything feels wrong.

Thank you for being here

This guide exists because three hundred people answered a question I almost did not ask.

If it was useful, the rest of what I make lives at kbaco.net. The salves and teas are small batch and handmade in Kansas City, built on the same approach as this guide, which is to say the research

where there is research, the tradition where there is tradition, and no miracle claims in either direction.

If you would rather keep making your own, that is genuinely a good outcome too. The printable **Recipe & Remedy Cards** and the full **Field Guide to Common Medicinal Herbs** at kbaco.net/downloads go considerably deeper into salves, tinctures and the plants themselves than this one does.

Either way, welcome to the garden.

Kaylynn KBA & Co, Kansas City

The research, not the folklore.