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# May 2016 Newsletter

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## Next Meet

Monday, 9 May, 7pm

Milford Primary  
Helen: 479 7344

**Herbs for Heart  
Health  
Bliss balls**

## Last meet

Our April meet-up was all about herbs for the immune system and everyone enjoyed the shared information. Helen sent out some good sheets beforehand, and members also shared bits they had found in books on keeping immunities in tip-top shape for the coming cold and flu season.

The demo on homemade healthy chocolate was very interesting, especially seeing all the unknown ingredients... but the cocoa didn't set properly and we couldn't do a taste test....

## In the Garden

May is officially the last month of autumn, and even though we had a record-breaking warm autumn so far, one can definitely feel the shift in seasons. Some beautiful autumn colours are showing in the deciduous trees and shrubs, and the mornings and evenings are getting cooler. Further down the country, there has already been frosts too.

I've had quite a few questions from people worried about their "confused" fruit trees in blossom again... Apparently this is quite common if fruit trees were stressed during summer, and when the weather moderates in autumn, come out of dormancy and blossom. No fruit will set from these blossoms, but the tree won't have put out all its blossoms, and you'll have plenty in spring again to set some delicious fruit.

Herbs to still sow and grow this season include: Celery, Chicory, Chives, Endive, Fennel, Garlic, Mustard greens, Oregano and Rocket. Besides all the brassicas (cauliflower, kohlrabi, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbages, kale etc.) you can also put in beetroot, broad beans, snow peas, silverbeet, radish, carrot and onion.

## Herbs for Immune Function

Herbs provide an ideal gentle healing and strengthening for all body systems. This month we will focus on herbs that are especially good for helping the immune system.

### What is the immune system?

The body's immune system is made up of special blood cells, proteins, tissues and organs that all work together to defend our body systems against attacks from organisms and substances that invade and cause illness.

Generally our immune systems do a great job of protecting us and defeating a host of pathogens that we get into touch with on a daily basis. Sometimes though, especially when our bodies are under stress, or when there is a greater number of infections going around, our immune systems may need some extra help, and herbs provide a good way to boost immune responses, and modulating immune functions.

Following are only a few of the herbs that can be commonly used to help your body navigate the cold and flu season.



## Herbs for Immune support

### Echinacea

**Echinacea (*Echinacea angustifolia*, *E. pallida*, *E. purpurea*)** Probably one of the most commonly known herbs for improving the function of the immune system, Echinacea has antiviral and antibacterial actions and contains various active compounds that are important for resistance against a wide range of micro-organisms, including viruses, bacteria and yeasts. To maximise efficacy, use it intermittently - one week on, one week off.

Echinacea tea, from the aerial parts is effective, but most potent is a tincture made from the roots.



### Garlic

**Garlic (*Allium sativum*)** This common culinary herb has been used to prevent infections for thousands of years and is often named 'nature's antibiotic'. Only one or two cloves a day can significantly reduce your susceptibility to colds and flu. Currently trending on social media is a soup made with over 50 cloves of garlic—apparently a super soup for fighting off disease.

### Cayenne

**Cayenne (*Capsicum frutescens*)** Cayenne is perhaps one of the most beneficial herbs in the entire herbal kingdom. As a tonic herb, it is said to be unequalled in warding off disease and in particular helps with the body's utilisation of other herbs when used in a herbal combination. As a general immune booster you can take 1/4 teaspoon with plenty of water at least

three times a day at mealtimes, or add to a lemon and ginger infusion for a warming tea.

### Liquorice

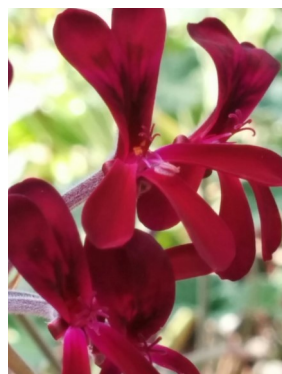
**Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*)** Various studies on this herb has shown that it has remarkable immuno-stimulant and immuno-modulating properties. Liquorice is one of the three most commonly cited herbs in America for building immunity (others are echinacea and goldenseal). Do use proper liquorice tea, confections in shops rarely have true liquorice in them.

### Siberian Ginseng

**Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)** Also considered as one of the most effective tonics and adaptogens in the herbal realm, it is often included in herbal formulas prescribed to support both the adrenal and immune systems. Add Siberian Ginseng powder to smoothies, or steep dried root as a decoction.

### Umckaloabo

**Pelargonium sidoides (*Pelargonium sidoides*)** This African indigenous herb is not only beneficial once infection has set in, but for the prevention of illness as well. The alcoholic extract of the root has been shown to have a three-way effect: it prevents bacteria from attaching to cells in the mucous membranes, it prevents viruses from attaching cells in a similar fashion and it stimulates the body's immune system in such



a way that both bacteria and viruses are prevented from multiplying. Commonly used in tincture form.

### Other

Other herbs and spices that are beneficial to the immune system include nettle, horseradish, cinnamon, ginger, African potato, cumin, fennel, coriander, turmeric, sage, thyme, oregano and marjoram. Honey and Lemon are also quoted top on the list of immune enhancing foods, as is beets, carrots, medicinal mushrooms, seaweeds and dark leafy greens. Drinking lots of water, getting enough exercise and fresh air as well as supplementing with vitamins and minerals are all also very beneficial to your general health.



### Recipes for Remedies

#### Sage and Sea Salt Gargle

At the first sign of a scratch in the throat, try this easy gargle. Sage is antibacterial and antifungal, and with the sea salt will help fight a throat infection.

Steep a handful of sage leaves\* with a heaped teaspoon of sea salt in warm (boiled) water. Gargle with this solution at least three times a day.

\*Thyme can be used in conjunction or instead of sage.

#### Ginger, Lemon & Honey Tea (or Tonic)

This tea is warming and comforting, perfect for when you feel under the weather. Not only does it taste good, the ginger, lemon and honey are all known as flu-fighters and can help you recover quicker.

## Home herbal cold/flu recipes

## Dittany

Bring a cup of water with 2cm of ginger root (chopped) and 1/2 a lemon (peel and all) to the boil in a saucepan, take off the heat, steep for a few minutes, strain, add a teaspoon of honey. Enjoy warm.

To make this into a bed-time tonic, add a shot of whiskey.

### Fever support

A fever is the body's way to respond to certain infections, raising the core temperature to an inhospitable environment for the pathogens. Sometimes though, when a fever gets too high, it can be dangerous to our own body systems. This old traditional tea is gentle way to induce perspiration to bring down a fever.

Steep 1 tsp each of peppermint, elderflower and yarrow in 2 cups of boiled water. Add a tsp of lemon juice and a pinch of mixed spice (optional).



### Throat lollies

Soothing a sore throat while helping to fight the infection is what these lollies are all about.

For expectorant **horehound** cough lozenges, add 100g fresh horehound leaves, 1/2 tsp of aniseed (crushed) and 3 cardamom seeds (crushed) to 550ml water and simmer for 20 minutes. Strain, and over a low heat dissolve 350g white sugar and 350g brown sugar and boil until the syrup hardens when a drop is put in cold water. Pour syrup into an oiled tray and score when partially set. Store in waxed paper.

**Thyme and honey** lozenges can be made similarly to above by steeping thyme herb in water and mixing one cup of the infused water with 1.5 cups of honey and boiling till setting point (300°F). Pour into greased silicon candy moulds. When cooled, wrap in wax paper and store in a cool, dry place.



### Tomato Tea

This is my personal ultimate go-to for its nutrient value, its immune support and infection fighting properties.

Bring 2 cups of pure tomato juice to the boil with 2 Tbsp. of freshly squeezed lemon juice, at least 3 big cloves of crushed garlic (more if you like garlic) and 1/4tsp (or up to a 1/2tsp) cayenne pepper. Drink a cup as warm as you can, at least twice a day.

### Golden Tea

Turmeric has received quite a bit of attention lately, and for good reason – studies are confirming its many health properties. This golden tea is not only good for times of colds and flu, but is a great boost to general well-being (and it is quite delicious too!)

Add 2 thumb-sized pieces of turmeric (sliced) with some freshly sliced ginger (about half the amount of the turmeric), and a good crack of black pepper and some cinnamon to 2 cups of milk (or coconut milk or almond milk). Bring to just before boiling point, steep for a bit, strain and enjoy with a tsp of added honey per cup.



Dittany: An Annual Journal of New Zealand Herb Societies, Volume 5, 1984

### The Dandelion

There is a flower that decks the plain,  
And fills our hearts with pleasure;  
The dandelion is its name.  
We hold it as a treasure.

This useful plant with jagged leaves  
And pretty yellow flower,  
Is famous as a medicine  
That gives the liver power;

To properly prepare the blood,  
And regulate the bile,  
Assist digestion, and induce  
The pleasant healthful smile.

The doctors maybe sceptical  
Of any virtue in it,  
Yet many who have tried it well  
Can praise it any minute.

Not only, as a medicine,  
But also as a food,  
The root made into coffee  
Most certainly is good;

And if you're ill and want a pill  
You surely can rely on;  
Don't take the old imported ones,  
But try the dandelion.

Extract from The New Zealand Family Herb Doctor pub. 1891 By James F. Neil M.D., U.S.A

