

**2016 ACORN Homesteader Symposium  
Marché de Dieppe Market, Dieppe, NB**

**Workshop Title:** Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants of the Maritimes

**Speaker:** Estelle Drisdelle

**Executive Summary:** Estelle Drisdelle shares her knowledge of harvesting and preserving local plants. Her presentation explores the variety of healing properties these maritime plants possess and how to reap the benefits.

**Detailed Notes:**

*Harvesting and drying*

- First learn to identify the local plants around you.
- Use books specific to your region and reach out to local resources such as a medical herbalist. Estelle gained much of her knowledge training medical herbalist Savayda Jarone. "Know what you don't know".
- The Herbal Medicine-Maker's Handbook by James Green is a great resource.
- Often edible plants can be confused with a similar toxic species. Bearberry for example is easily confused with cranberries, but their berries are not red at the same time of year. Knowing the plants cycle and traits can help properly identify them.
- Only harvest 10% of the plant if it is plenty and thriving. Consider whether many other people will be harvesting from the same plant as well, that counts towards the 10%.
- Even if the plant is thriving, also factor in if it is ecology sensitive.
- Be aware of nearby pollutants and avoid roadsides. Know the activity of where you are going to harvest.
- Harvest in the morning when the dew has dried and it's not yet too hot.
- Post harvest handling is very important, bring inside out of sunlight and lay flat to dry or hang depending on the plant. Good ventilation is mandatory.
- If you will be away from your home for an extended amount of time, store the plant in a brown paper bag.
- Look for plants that are healthy in appearance, and are not partly degrading or insect damaged.
- Recommends using dark glass jars that help to keep out light. Only store after the plant is fully dry. Always use sterilized jars and vessels.
- Store out of direct sunlight and discard/compost any unused product after 1 year.
- If creating decoctions, boil roots, berries and seeds for a minimum of 10-15 minutes in order to get the medicinal properties. Never prepare along side leaves and flowers.

*Plants that grow in abundance around us*

*Goldenrod*

- Harvest the flowers when they are just opening, when the plant goes to seed the plant energy is redirected.
- Often falsely confused for triggering ragweed allergies.

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- Used in either tea or tincture, it is beneficial for wounds and UTIs.

*Toadflax*

- Harvest the flower only.
- Supports the liver.
- Can be used for a fall detox, though always cleanse gently in the fall. She cautioned not to make yourself weaker before the winter months as you want to reserve your energy stores.

*Red clover*

- Harvest the nutrient dense flower only.
- It is a great cover crop.

*Dandelion*

- The entire plant can be harvested.
- Cautioned it may cause photosensitivity in certain individuals to the sun's UV rays.
- The leaves are used for disorders of the kidney and offers the needed potassium that is otherwise lost in urine.
- High in phytonutrients.
- The roots should be harvested right before winter, when the energy is being sent downwards.
- The roots are beneficial for the liver.
- Ground roots can be used as coffee substitute.

*Hawthorne*

- The leaves, berries and flowers can be harvested.
- Late summer is a good time to harvest.
- Used as a tonic for the heart, strengthening it both the physically and emotionally.

*Herbal first aid*

*Plantain*

- Leaves are edible, harvest before the plant flowers.
- Good for insect bites. Chew on leaves and use the spit poultice on the effected area (she noticed quick pain relief after using the poultice on a bee sting).
- The leaves are also beneficial for the skin; a slave can be made. Skin is our first line of defense.

*Jewelweed/touch-me-not*

- It is used to treat after coming in contact with poison ivy, which it often grows nearby.
- Crush the leaves and rub on the effected area.
- Can be used as a preventative.

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Q: Can jewelweed be used for treating hogweed burns?

A: Unsure.

*Valerian*

- Harvest the roots.
- Beneficial in tincture form.
- Used to combat anxiety.
- Cautioned many poisonous plants like poison hemlock look very similar.

*Ginger*

- Beneficial in tincture form that needs over 60% alcohol.
- Helps with nausea.
- Also good in tea and capsules as well.
- Only the root is harvestable.
- Boil for a minimum of 10-15 minutes.

*Elderberry*

- Harvest to berries or flowers
- Used for cold and flus, though preserves and wines are often made from the berries as well.
- Resembles red elderberry which is not edible.
- Shared an elderberry and thyme syrup made with honey that can be used as a preventive. Make sure everything is cool when adding the honey, too high of a heat will denature it. Try to use a raw local source.

*Echinacea*

- Immune supporter that only works in a tincture form. The alcohol is needed to draw out constituents.
- Tincture is not to be taken daily, but within 30 minutes at the first signs of a cold.
- Pay attention to the different types of flower. Echinacea purpurea both leaf flower and root are harvestable, whereas with Echinacea angustifolia only the root should be harvested.

*Tincture*

- An infusion of plants in alcohol.
- Certain plants need a higher alcohol content in order to draw out the medicinal properties. Calendula needs a percentage of 70% alcohol, whereas Hawthorn only needs 25%.
- A scale will give a precise measurements; 1gr of herb is equal to 1ml of alcohol. She also recommends simply using the jar it will be infusing in as a visual aid for ratios. Ensure everything is sterile.
- The ratio/strength of the end product will change the dosage amount.
- Plant matter that is heavier such as berries will give a different ratio than lighter plant matter like leaves of the same volume.

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- There should be no air pockets and the plant matter completely submerged in alcohol otherwise it will desiccate.
- After a few days the tincture level will change, continue to top up with alcohol as needed.
- Shake the infusion every day. After 2 weeks strain the alcohol with cheese cloth (discarding the herb), not forgetting to label and date the freshly made tincture.
- Store out of direct sunlight.

Q: Does it matter if the herbs are dry or fresh?

A: You can use both though fresh will dilute more due to its higher water content.

Q: Can you use rose hips?

A: Rosehip syrup is often used for its vitamin C content.

Q: How long is a tincture good for?

A: They have an indefinite shelf life, since they are preserved in alcohol.

Q: If you store it in with a metal lid, does it react?

A: Use parchment as barrier if you notice it reacting.

Q: What kind of alcohol do you use?

A: Brandy and vodka.

Q: How much do you take?

A: This depends on the tincture; hawthorn is typically 1tsp every day and valerian is taken 10 drops at a time.

Q: Do you take the tinctures straight?

A: No. She adds a little water, so the straight alcohol doesn't upset your system. If adding sugar, make sure you can still taste the herbs.

### *Salve*

- A fresher product that does not preserve as well as tinctures due to the oil.
- After harvesting the herb, let it sit to evaporate some of the water content which will help prolong the salve's shelf life.
- She recommends cutting the plant matter so that there is more surface area exposed increasing absorption. Ensure everything is sterile.
- When packing the herbs into the jars, but sure not to do it too hard. Otherwise it will be harder to release all the air pockets. She uses chopsticks to help get any remaining air pockets once the oil has be poured.
- Be sure to completely submerge the herbs under the oil. Lighter oils like sunflower are best if you plan to use the salve on your face. Olive oil is much heavier.
- Can use a slow cooker on low temp overnight to infuse the oil. This method is great for oils that are otherwise solid at room temperature like coconut.

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- After 2 weeks of infusing out of direct sunlight, strain with cheese cloth and smell to ensure the oil has not gone rancid.
- Like a tincture, be sure to label right away, but unlike tinctures the oil does not need to be shaken every day while infusing.
- Add 100grams of beeswax at a time testing consistency by pacing some in the fridge. Do not use high heat which will degrade the product.
- Essential oils can be added.

Q: Can you squish them?

A: Yes, it is helpful for smaller berries that hard to cut

Q: Can you make different varieties together?

A: Make them separately and then mix once prepared.

Q: Does the beeswax preserve it?

A: While the beeswax does help to preserve, all salves should be used within a year. She recommends sourcing a pesticide free source of beeswax to avoid pesticides.

Q: What do you take and when?

A: Estelle mixes it up depending on the season and how she is feeling. Echinacea should only be taken when needed, whereas tonic herbs can be taken preventatively. She takes the tinctures typically with breakfast, has fresh herb teas in the summer and elderberries in the winter.

Q: Are there interactions, such as herbs cancelling each other out?

A: Listen to your body. Try touching and smelling to see if/how you react. Talk to medical herbalist if taking medication or are pregnant.

Books for Herbs:

*The Yoga of Herbs by Dr, David Frawley and Dr. Vasant Lad*

*The Herbal Medicine Makers Handbook by James Green*

*Principles and Practice of Phytotherapy by Simon Mills and Kerry Bone*

Courses

*Mayflower Herbs by Savayda Jarone [www.mayflowerherbs.ca](http://www.mayflowerherbs.ca)*

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