

# Menstruum / Solvent

Water — "universal solvent" more extensive range as a solvent than any other known liquid.

Cold water — sugars, proteins, gums, mucilage, ~~tannins~~ acids, mineral salts, some alkaloids, alkaloidal salts, a hint of essential oils

Hot water — tannins, lactones, iridoids

~~Alcohol~~  
Alcohol — resins, balsams, camphores, essential oils, alkaloids, acid + bitter constituents, Shelf life

Vinegar — certain alkaloids + other water soluble constituents. Shelf-life one year. minerals, great everyday tonic.

Wine — Akin to alcohol/water menstruum  
White wine traditionally due to less tannins than red (would pull out alkaloidal compounds of solution). Often fortified with brandy.

Glycerin — sweet fraction of fixed oil. Animal or vegetable based. Most derived from coconut oil though some derived from a petroleum product so check sources. Alternative to alcohol

Oil — Olive, Almond, Sunflower, Sesame  
Resins, essential oils

→ Preparation How-to  
between each menstruum ←

## Chickweed

Calcium, Potassium, Magnesium, Vitamin C

Internally:

Aerial parts as a tea or tincture

- very nourishing plant
- heals, soothes, lubricates and cools
- helps alleviate conditions such as sore mouth and throats, bronchitis, coughs, colds, asthma, inflammation of the stomach and bowels, constipation, arthritis, and mastitis
- helps breakdown fat in the body, regulates water and decongests the lymphatic system

Externally:

- cools, cleanses and helps heal boils, burns, rashes, outbreaks, sore eyes, eczema, ulcers and cuts
- especially helps itching and irritation
- For itching: a strong infusion (tea) of fresh chickweed can be added to a bath. It can be used for drawing foreign bodies out of the body: plantain, yarrow, violet, jewelweed

Recipe ideas: Pesto! Salad! Sandwiches!

## Cleavers

Parts used: Aerial parts

Cold infusion, Tea, Warm infusion, Tincture, Juice

- cooling and cleansing action on the whole system
- especially valuable in the treatment of inflammatory urinary conditions and suppressed urine
- has a reputation to aid in weightloss and cellulite
- useful in the treatment of chronic skin disorders such as eczema, acne, and psoriasis

## Violet

Parts used: Flowers, leaves

Cooling, moistening

Organ Affinity: Central nervous and respiratory systems

Nourishing

- Mucilage, therefore helpful in lowering cholesterol levels, restoring healthy populations of intestinal flora
- Dry bronchitis conditions and intestinal dryness that leads to constipation or dry stool
- Dandruff and eczema
- Tea to calm the nerves “heartsease”
- Lovely when combined with nervines such as lemonbalm
- Johnny jump ups (*Viola tricolor*) is traditionally used to treat children’s allergies. Violet may help enhance an adults allergy reducing regimen as well by way of aiding the respiratory system internally and reducing rashes and restoring moisture to the skin.
- Violet is used as a poultice, compress, infused oil and salve in the treatment of dry or chaffed skin, abrasions, insect bites, eczema, varicose veins and hemorrhoids

Leaves can be sauteed or steamed

Stir into soups to make a nutrient dense thickener. Raw leaves and flowers can be put into salads, pesto, sandwiches and wraps. The flowers make a lovely garnish or sprinkled on cakes. Violet flowers are also good candied, made into a mineral rich vinegar, jelly, or frozen into ice cubes. It can also be taken as tea or syrup. Violet infused honey makes medicine a sweet treat for children

## Dandelion

Parts used: All parts

- Flowers, leaves roots
  - anemia, sluggish liver, skin issues such as acne and eczema, rheumatism, poor digestion, kidney ailments,

constipation, spleen or bowel inflammation and heartburn.

- Stimulates liver, pancreas, spleen, kidneys, gallbladder, increasing flow of bile
- Natural nutritive salts are useful as a blood and tissue cleanser
- Vitamins A and C, calcium and potassium

The leaves can be used in place of any recipe calling for spinach, lettuce or any other leafy green

## Plantain

Parts used: All parts

Leaves in tea and tincture

Chew on root for toothaches

Beta-carotene (vitamin A) and calcium, ascorbic acid (vitamin C), and vitamin K. Plantain contains allantoin, apigenin, aucubin, baicalein, linoleic acid, oleanolic acid, sorbitol, and tannin.

Together these constituents are thought to give plantain mild anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antihemorrhagic, and expectorant actions. Aucubin has been reported in the Journal Of Toxicology as a powerful anti-toxin. Allantoin has been proven to promote wound healing, speed up cell regeneration, and have skin-softening effects. Tannins are astringent and help to pull together tissue, aiding in the healing of minor wounds and bruises, and draws out splinters and venom from bug bites or bee stings. Plantain is cooling and helps to relieve itching and pain.

## Yarrow

Parts used: Aerial parts

The flowering tops are the most medicinally active as that is where we find the concentration of aromatic oils, though the leaves are higher in medicinal tannins. The root, dug in fall, is used for local pain such as toothaches.

- Wounds
- Fever

## Menstruation

### Kudzu

Kudzu can be eaten many ways. The young leaves can be consumed as a green, or juiced. They can be dried and made into a tea. Shoots can be eaten like asparagus. The blossom can be used to make pickles or a jelly — a taste between apple and peach — and the root is full of edible starch. Older leaves can be fried like potato chips, or used to wrap food for storage or cooking. With kudzu you can make a salad, stew the roots, batter-fry the flowers or pickled them or make a make syrup. Raw roots can be cooked in a fire, roots stripped of their outer bark can be roasted in an oven like any root vegetable; or grated and ground into a flour to make a thickener, a cream or tofu. Only part not edible is seed + seed pod.

Has been used for centuries as a treatment for alcoholism, allergies, migraine headaches, colds, intestinal problems.

Passionflower Aerial parts Nervine  
Sedative  
hypnotic, anti-spasmodic, anodyne  
Tea or tincture circular thinking  
does have contraindications w/ some pharmaceuticals

Soldenrod Parts used: Aerial  
warming, drying, aromatic affinity for  
upper respiratory tract + kidneys. Druppy  
mucous tissues

Making a commitment to deepen your connection to the natural landscape and take responsibility for its regeneration. It is learning about the plants around you, how they reproduce, where they live, and what they need to thrive. It's about stewardship, taking responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the plants, and only collecting them when you recognize that conditions are right. It is a joyful process that can unfold in beautifully rewarding and mysterious ways.

## Follow the abundance.

Look for the abundance in your local landscape. One of the best (and perhaps unexpected) options for wild crafting is weedy, invasive plants! Edible weeds tend to be high in nutritional value, and many weeds have strong medicinal properties as well. While they are thought of as "weeds", and many farmers will gladly have you harvest them out, you may consider "tending" these patches, as well, so they offer harvests year after year. Native plants can also grow in abundance and be suitable for wild crafting under the right conditions. Note that a plant's abundance is not constant: it can dramatically change from one place to the next, and over time year after year. Abundance always needs to be re-assessed before harvesting.

## Avoid and protect unusual, threatened and endangered plants.

No matter how appealing it may be to harvest just one unusual, rare, or threatened plant, it is your responsibility as a wildcrafter to leave it alone. Echinacea, goldenseal, American ginseng, arnica, and osha are just a few examples of highly desired wild plants that have been over harvested and threatened due to greed and lack of education. Do you know which are the less common, threatened or endangered plants in your bioregion? If there is any doubt in your mind about the plants' abundance, leave the plant alone. Helpful resources to learn more about threatened and endangered plants: United Plant Savers.

## Harvest in Small, Thoughtful Numbers.

When you choose to go wild crafting, be thoughtful of who you take and where you take it. We've heard many stories about decimated plant populations after too many people (without enough education or care) began to visit and collect plants.

## Don't Harvest, Don't Graze.

When harvesting plants, don't concentrate on one area of the plant or the stand

of plants (unless you have an ethical reason to do so, such as harvesting the leaves off a broken limb). Browse around and spread out your harvest.

## Know Where (and Where Not) to Harvest.

Wild plants grow nearly everywhere. Look in your backyard and in your garden – if you have plants growing there, you likely have wild edible and medicinal plants as well. Ask permission to glean weeds from a local organic farmer – that's a great place to find a bounty of wild edibles as well. Here in the foothills, where it is common for people to have several acres of land, ask permission to harvest some of the wild abundance from their property. Many landowners will be happy for you to clear invasive species, like St John's Wort, as well.

If there is a piece of open land slated for development, that's a great opportunity to gather plants. Consider bringing pots to transplant desirable or unusual natives that will otherwise be destroyed in those situations.

If you want to harvest a specific plant in an identified area of US Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, call your regional district or office. Rules and regulations vary, and a permit may be necessary.

As a general rule, harvest away from trails and roadsides, and leave things looking as good or better than when you left them.

## Be Okay with an Empty Basket.

You can spend hours hiking, looking around for the plant you desire, but still not find suitable conditions for harvesting. If you are expecting to come home with some plants, your judgment for what is suitable to be harvest will surely be impaired! If you aren't okay with an empty basket at the end of the day, its best you don't go at all.

## Know your Plant ID.

Be absolutely sure you have positively identified the plant you plan to gather, and know about any look-alikes you may confuse it with. It's dangerous for you (or anyone your choose to share it with) to mistake a plant's identity and make it into food or medicine.

Mistaking plant identity can be harmful to the plants, as well. For example, Scouler's St Johns wort, native to the Sierra Nevada Foothills, looks very similar to the invasive St Johns Wort (*hypericum perforatum*). If the native is mistaken for its weedy cousin, one might decimate the population in a given area by harvesting it as if it were an invasive plant.

## Ask Permission, and Err on the Side of Less.

Asking permission is part of The Honorable Harvest that Robin Wall Kimmerer so beautifully promotes in her teachings about reclaiming our forgotten relationship with the plants. Express why you want to collect the plant and what you hope to do with it. While this may feel strange, try it out, and listen. The answer may come intuitively, or it may come pragmatically from observing the plant's conditions. You have to be okay with empty basket to listen truthfully!

If the answer is yes, then ask yourself how much you really need of the plant in question, and then err on the side of taking less than you think you need. It is very common for beginning harvesters to pick more plant material than they need or can even process into food or medicine, and the waste of wild harvested plants is an unsustainable practice that can leave you with a heavy heart. When possible, bring your processing or preserving equipment with you into the field so you can use the plant while its fresh and avoid coming home with a plant that is too wilted or damaged to use!

Several resources recommend harvesting only 10% or less of a plant that is suitable for wild crafting. However, 10% can often be too much, especially in an area that may be visited by multiple harvesters. The ideal situations for wild crafting are where there is great abundance, and where you can take 1-5% of the total plant population and still get a usable amount.

## Promote Abundance.

Another factor to consider when harvesting is how you can promote more of the plant in the future. Before harvesting, learn how the desired plant reproduces. Will the part you harvest prevent it from reproducing or growing back next season? Has it already gone to seed? Does it have roots or rhizomes that can be divided and replanted? Knowing how a plant reproduces can help you harvest more responsibly and promote more abundance in the future.

For example, be thoughtful when you are harvesting the precursors to seeds (flowers, berries, fruit) or the seeds themselves. If the plant is an annual it will be 100% dependent on those parts to reproduce the following year, such as chickweed and the common miner's lettuce found in the Sierra Foothills. If the plant is biannual or perennial, it will be dependent on seeds in the years to come (such as grindelia, yellow doc, or mullein). While there may be situations where it is good caretaking to take all the seeds away from a sensitive area, in general you want to make sure the plant has enough resources to reproduce and thrive when you leave the area.

Many leafy perennial plants die back in the winter, and sprout new growth in the



downstream from non-organic agriculture, parks or gardens where pesticides are used, or near any other potentially toxic exposures. If you are gathering water plants, be sure you know where the water is coming from. Be especially cautious when collecting plants like cattails or yellow dock that are considered 'bioaccumulators', and are more inclined to absorb both minerals and toxins from the environment.

## Share your Gratitude, Share the Plant.

Finally, before you harvest, take a deep breath and connect with your excitement, wonder and appreciation for what the plant can offer you. Take a moment to express your gratitude in words, thought, song, prayer, or whatever feels right. Many traditions offer a spiritual gift of tobacco or corn, but you can also give a material gift by improving the plant's living conditions. The plants are so generous in what they share with us – food, medicine, oxygen, beauty – and we can participate in that reciprocity by giving thanks and care.

Share your harvest with others! It's another way to celebrate and participate in the reciprocal nature of interdependence.

