

# herbnews

HERB FEDERATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC

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PASSIONFLOWER



LEMON BALM



Valerian



CHAMOMILE



KAVA



MOTHERWORT

SUMMER 2020

*Herbs for Sleep*



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**Cover image:** Herbs for sleep.

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# President's letter

Greetings!

2019 is over! That went too fast and now I am wishing a Happy New Year to you all.



We had a wonderful time at the conference at Silverstream; on behalf of the HFNZ executive committee, I would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to the Hutt Valley Herb Society for hosting us and creating a successful and inspiring event.

Already, this summer, we have had some most unusual weather and as I sit here and type this, there are black clouds gathering, with heavy rain expected shortly – well, the garden will get a good watering.

Also included with this Herb News is the information for Herb Awareness Week, to assist you to prepare for activities in March 2020.

How is progress and productivity in your garden? Earlier today, I did my first picking of St John's wort flowers (*Hypericum perforatum*), which I will 'wilt' and then infuse in oil, to make a wonderful skin-healing balm. I referred to this wonderful healing herb in the January 2019 e-newsletter. Some don't want to grow it in case it becomes invasive, though if you regularly harvest the flowers the 'seed problem' will not eventuate. It is such a good herb to have on hand for healing wounds and burns (including from radiation treatments).

Wishing you a wonderful summer ahead. Remember to keep well hydrated and avoid excessive sun exposure (though hypericum and red clover flowers – *Trifolium pratense* – can assist with sunburn).

Warmest wishes

*Karina*

# NOTICEBOARD



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Don't forget:

**Deadline for the next issue:  
20 February 2020**

Do you have any **herb stories, news or recipes** you'd like to share? We welcome your submissions. Note: These must be **completely original** (your own work) to avoid copyright issues. Any photos **must** be your own too (or from someone who has given you **permission** to use them). Send your submissions to [essentialgardennz@gmail.com](mailto:essentialgardennz@gmail.com)

## GOODBYE AND WELCOME

Following the 17<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference last November, the following changes have been made to the Executive Committee and Friends of the Committee.

**Stepping down:** Herb News editor Jane Wigglesworth is stepping down after editing the magazine for seven years. Alasdair Scott will take over from the next issue. Alasdair has a background in both gardening and writing and, together with his wife, runs Essential Garden Herb Farm north of Auckland.

**Stepping down:** Seed Bank coordinator Ella Flack is also stepping down. In her place we welcome Anne Hurley. Secretariat Danielle Cipperly is stepping down too. Her role is to be split between incoming members.

**Current:** Executive committee members who will continue in their roles: Karina Hilterman (President), Shonagh Hopkirk (North Island Vice President), Heather Halliday (South Island Vice President and Secretary), Denise Peck (Treasurer) and Steve Hewitt (Webmaster). Chris Tuffnell also remains in her role as Herb Certificate Marker and Heather Craw as Librarian.

**Incoming:** We welcome several new members to the committee: Jan Smith (Membership Coordinator), Tracey Sunderland (PR Assistant), Liz Petrie (Assistant) and Linda Howson (Assistant). The Herb Federation greatly appreciates their time and commitment.

# *The Magic of Herbs*

**By Marilyn Wightman**

The 2019 Biennial Herb Conference of the Herb Federation of New Zealand had its usual mix of good speakers, all expounding the virtues and healing components of herbs. Which made me ponder on available medical help a few hundred years ago when a desperate person asked the local wise woman to help with a sick relative. It must have seemed like magic when the herbal cure did its work and healed. Hence the conferring of the title 'wise woman' to that clever person who had cultivated, studied, observed and perhaps been tutored in the way of herbs and their powerful healing properties.

It reminded me, too, of one conference speaker mentioning a consideration to regulate herbal medicines and practitioners. Back in the 'good old days' when New Zealand chemists did their training, they had to prepare a herbarium and know the botanical names and attributes of healing herbs as part of their course study. This occurred until the mid-1950s when it was phased out. A Feilding chemist in the 1980s, who had trained under this system, still made his own preparations and readily shared his knowledge with the Manawatu Herb Society as a regular speaker.

The Hutt Valley Herb Society and others involved are to be commended on their organisation of the recent herb conference. Just talking with people for several days with the whole focus entirely on herbs was 'magic'. And it was very encouraging to see so many younger people there, the upcoming generation of herb folk.



*Melia azedarach* specimen from herbarium at Auckland Museum.

Returning back to Feilding, all re-energised, it was inspiring to find the evening primrose setting its first few flowers. Pure magic it is to go out at dusk and stand and watch the flower slowly unfurl. Triggered by the failing light and the onset of night, the pale yellow flower goes from a bud to a flower over a few minutes. And the perfume is very alluring to humans, as well as the night pollinators who find it equally delightful. What is even more interesting is how the heck the herb got to be in the garden in the first place!

Here at the 'once was a big herb garden' site it is fun/frustrating/educational to go and find out the latest piece of 'magic' occurring. Like the evening primrose, there are many unplanned and unplanted herbs popping out.

We reduced the size of the garden by subdividing the land and now live on a smaller parcel of the original hectares – deliberately having just a few defined garden areas, too, now that we are getting to be senior citizens. It has been a painful exercise deciding which herbs to continue to nurture. This is, of course, without relying on those hardy herbs that have self-seeded, been wind blown or transferred in the compost. And being a softy, many of them are being allowed to grow.

So what has come up this past spring? Tobacco, the sticky, clingy *Nicotiana sp.* This one has large leaves suitable for smoking, though the process of drying and curing is complicated. Instead, it makes a good insect spray and has pale, fragrant pink flowers. Only an annual, it will be enjoyed and then destroyed.

Greater celandine (*Chelidonium majus*) probably came in with the potted kaffir lime as it used to grow prolifically under a large specimen tree. It is an attractive ground filler and children delight in breaking a stem to write on their arms with the orange juice that stains. It is probably there to stay, as the seed pods open and have a projectile way to distribute their progeny.

Wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) has popped up in the shade garden. It gets just a few hours of sunlight, so I am just leaving it there to see if it will grow or weaken. Being grey-foliaged, it is low in chlorophyll and needs much light. Nearby the mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) has been yanked out. Its common name alludes to it once being used in brewing ale. However, I tend to frown and consider it a pest as it can be a bully and 'mug' other nearby plants with its tall and prolific growth habits. It sets underground runners, too, so it can border on being a pest in a confined space.

Miner's lettuce (*Claytonia perfoliata*) is a welcome annual herb. It makes a good ground cover in spring and once the weather warms, like chervil, it quickly dries

up and disappears. Yummy leaves get added to salads when it is young and fresh.

Feverfew – this is the green variety – is tolerated as it covers bare ground, so it will be left until the deliberately planted, desired herbs mature and gain girth.

Others like all herb, nettle and various small-leaved violets have always been present in most of my gardens. They are left to grow and, when in the way, they get recycled to the compost heap.

As is commonly quoted, “a weed is a herb in the wrong place”.

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## *Getting A Good Night's Sleep*

*By Mary Allan – Medical Herbalist*

One of the most common complaints I see in clinic is insomnia. The degree of severity differs widely. With some people it might be an occasional thing that occurs when the mind is overactive; at the opposite end of the scale are those who haven't had a good night's sleep in years.

The causes are equally diverse and include stress, pain, muscle tension, anxiety, hormonal factors, caffeine sensitivity or overuse, sedentary lifestyles, discomfort in bed (too hot, too cold, uncomfortable mattress or pillow, too much light, etc.), depression, anxiety, attending to children, etc. Although in this article I am focussing on herbal treatments, I will mention that addressing these factors is a crucial part of an effective sound sleep strategy, and when these are dealt with as best as you can, herbs can most certainly guide you to have a restful sleep.



## **How much sleep do we need?**

Although this is a much-debated question, my observations have led me to believe that anywhere from 7.5–9 hours per night is (on average) the best amount of sleep for the average person.

According to research, the best quality sleep is found in the hours before midnight, so going to bed at 1am and getting up at 8.30am doesn't cut it! This means going to bed at about 9.30pm and getting up at 6am is ideal.

The amount of hours of sleep can vary somewhat depending on lifestyle factors. For example, I have noticed people who practise a lot of relaxing yoga or tai chi daily can get by on far less sleep. Conversely, someone who has a job in hard physical labour may need up to 10 hours to give their physical body a chance to restore itself properly.

## **How much sleep do we actually get?**

According to US stats, around the year 1900, people got an average of 9 hours' sleep a night – more in winter and less in summer because their life was more in sync with the seasons. By 1963, the average was about 8.5 hours, and by 2002 it was 5.9 hours on Sunday to Thursday and 8 hours on the weekends!

## **Herbs for sleep**

'Sleep debt' is the cumulative effect of not getting enough sleep. It's a serious health issue, and it can lead to fatigue, cognitive decline and poor immunity. Fortunately, there are many herbs that have a beneficial influence on our sleep patterns and they exert their effects in a variety of ways. Many of these herbs can easily be grown in your own garden and many of you will undoubtedly already have them growing.

A lot of herbs that have a generally calming, restorative and relaxing influence on us also contain volatile oils. Volatile means exactly that – they will evaporate into thin air given half a chance, so it's important when making your herbal infusions with hot water that you cover them while steeping, so these precious oils don't float away.

For more deep-seated cases of insomnia, using stronger extracts such as tinctures or capsules may be necessary to bring about effective and lasting relief. You can make your own or go to see a herbalist near you for help and keep using the teas described here as a more mild support option.

## LEMON BALM (*Melissa officinalis*)

**Parts used:** Leaves, flowers

I find it interesting that the plants that support a sound sleep are very often herbs that also support digestion, lemon balm being no exception. Lemon balm is a pleasant-tasting, delicately scented plant that is best used fresh or freshly dried and is a mild supportive remedy for insomnia. I usually pick it in bulk by the stalk so I can hang it in bunches upside down to dry and then infuse or tincture it as soon as possible. It grows throughout much of the year, so it is suitable to pick fresh as needed. For a year-round supply, you could make a tincture or glyceract while it is in its peak and store for use over winter.



LEMON BALM

## LAVENDER (*Lavandula angustifolia* spp. *angustifolia*)

**Parts used:** Flowers (fresh or dried)

I do hope that you have already harvested your lavender because by the time you read this it might be getting a bit late. The medicinal variety I use is the old-fashioned but gorgeously fragrant plain lavender, no bunny-ears or anything fancy, just simple understated plain old-fashioned lavender. I like to pick the flowers quite early, just as the first little buds are opening. To pick, I cut the spikes with scissors or secateurs down by the leaves and hang out of direct sunlight to dry. Once dry, the flowers are stripped off the stalk by hand and are ready for use.



Lavender in small amounts is a delightful addition to any tea blend. It has uplifting properties and also supports digestion as well as the nervous system. It has been used for headaches as well as depression and insomnia. A word of warning though: if you put too much in your mix it will taste like disinfectant, so be careful and taste-test as you go.

Lavender mixes beautifully with lemon balm, and just these two herbs together, picked straight out of your garden, makes a delicious and relaxing tea.

## CHAMOMILE (*Matricaria recutita*)

**Parts used:** Flowers (fresh or dried)

Chamomile is a fairly underestimated remedy for many ailments, including insomnia. It is helpful for children and adults alike and, again, is a herb that helps a person suffering from both digestive complaints as well as poor sleep.

I think one of the reasons chamomile is largely underestimated today is that people are taking small subtherapeutic doses and therefore don't receive its full benefits. For example, in my opinion a typical supermarket teabag contains only enough herb for flavour not medicine. On top of that, it's usually steeped in an uncovered cup, so many of the healing volatiles are lost in the steam. Also, the quality of the herb may not be great to begin with, and the herb may have been sitting on a person's shelf for years and have lost some of its active ingredients.



**CHAMOMILE**

So, what to do? As a gardener, you can grow your own and be assured it is fresh and of high quality. Then give yourself a decent medicinal dose – for dried herb, anywhere from one heaped teaspoon to a tablespoon per cup should be used, or 5ml of a good tincture diluted in water. You can also make it up in advance, a strong infusion of 1–2 handfuls of herb to a 1 litre jar of hot water. Steep for 10–20 minutes. Fresh herb will use a similar amount, as the volume is similar.

Chamomile is comforting, nourishing and settles the mind as well as the tummy. Its calming effects helps a person to approach life in a more centred way. It can be used on its own or mixed with other herbs.

### **Sleep Fairy Flower Tea**

You could dry these herbs and make a dried tea mix as well, though lemon balm is much more potent fresh or freshly dried.

- Lemon balm, 2 parts
- Chamomile, 1 part
- Lavender, 1 part

Rub the fresh herbs lightly between your hands. Place in a suitable vessel. Pour hot water over, cover and steep for 10 minutes. Suitable for children and adults.

### Period Pain Tea

I give chamomile and ginger tea to women with mild to moderate menstrual discomfort. Abdominal discomfort and cramping can make it difficult to sleep. This is a good example of where pain can contribute to insomnia. Chamomile reduces the cramping, and ginger helps to allay feelings of nausea. As well as having an affinity with the uterus, it is also an antispasmodic.

- 2 heaped teaspoons chamomile
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, sliced

Pour hot water over herbs, cover and steep for 10 minutes. Drink freely and as often as needed during and just before menstruation. If pain persists, see your health care provider.

### Diving into the Darkness

The following plants will give you the courage to dive deeply into the darkness, to navigate the worries, anxieties and demons that come up as the sun goes down. These plants are truly my allies when it comes to helping people with serious sleep issues. They will offer calmness, grounding and support. If you can let go and trust, they will give you the most wonderful restorative sleep.

### VALERIAN (*Valeriana officinalis*)

**Parts used:** Roots and rhizomes

This plant is powerful. Valerian grows well here and is a beautiful plant to have in the garden. It can be grown from seed or by root division in spring or autumn. Our cat loves it, too. I have caught him several times on the bench licking any implement that has valerian remnants on it. Like most roots, it is harvested in autumn. You can dry the roots and use them to make a tea or a tincture.



Valerian

I recently had a case of a 55-year-old woman with severe insomnia related to menopause and anxiety. She had been prescribed Zopiclone – a pharmaceutical drug used to treat insomnia – and had

been taking it nightly for two years. She wanted to come off it, as she felt like it was not good for her long-term and she was not having quality sleep anyway. She had also been taking ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) milk drink each evening for a year or two.

Zopiclone withdrawal is notoriously difficult, yet with the help of valerian tincture, ashwagandha, relaxing yoga and pranayama (breathing techniques), she managed to come off the drugs 'cold turkey'. Not that I am recommending you do this (she decided to do this herself and admittedly I had some concerns), but her instincts proved her right, and with wholehearted commitment she took a week off work to give herself the space to do it. She is a practitioner herself and had three other health professionals looking after her – the withdrawal, according to her, was easier and less painful than expected.

Regarding dosage of valerian, I suggested she listen to her body and adjust her dosage as needed, noting that if someone takes too much it can cause drowsiness the next day. She never got any 'valerian hangover', yet she took around 7–10ml of valerian tincture about 90 minutes before bed, and then again at bedtime. This is indeed a hefty dose and it worked very well. She also kept it by her bedside and used it in the middle of the night if she woke and it would help her go straight back to sleep.

The next time I saw her she was transformed and feeling much better. Her overall health had improved dramatically. She felt much better in herself and she was very happy. Such is the power of valerian. She continued to take valerian tincture each night for another few months, gradually reducing the frequency of the dose. She also continued with her ashwagandha drink. Later, we switched to a herbal formula for a while, which she alternated with the valerian, as needed. This kept her anxiety at bay and provided sleep support.

Over time her need to take the herbs as well as the dosage has gradually reduced, indicating restoration and a return to balance. She continues to do well and is dedicated to daily yoga. It has been about 10 months now and she continues to take ashwagandha powder in warm milk each evening, and only takes the valerian or tincture if she's having a rough night, about once a month.

Here is the tincture blend I formulated for her:

- Valerian, 80ml
- Passionflower, 40ml
- Motherwort, 60ml
- Lavender, 20ml

**Dose:** 7.5ml, 1–2 x in the evening.

As she is a keen gardener, I have encouraged her to grow some of these plants in her garden because I believe having the plants around also supports the healing process whether one chooses to make medicine with them or not.

Traditionally, valerian is often part of a herbal formula. It may be mixed with other herbs such as hops. This helps to balance out the potentially warming effects of valerian, which in a small number of people can actually keep them awake! When valerian is mixed with a 'bitter' cooling herb such as hops, it balances the humours and is much less likely to cause overstimulation. Although I hardly ever see this problem in practice, it is more likely to occur in those who have a 'warmer', 'drier' constitution.

### **KAVA** (*Piper methysticum*)

**Parts used:** Roots and rhizome

This is another very powerful plant that is particularly helpful for treating anxiety and insomnia. It is in the same family as kawakawa and black pepper – Piperaceae. It is not grown in New Zealand, but you can purchase kava in various forms. In the shops it is usually sold as capsules or tablets and in its traditional form it is sold as a powder.



**KAVA**

In the South Pacific Islands it is used traditionally in social settings as well as culturally in a ceremonial manner. In traditional settings it is always taken as a powder mixed with cold water and then shared around, being drunk from a coconut shell. American author Dale Pendell (1947–2018) called it the 'prince of peace'. Indeed, it was, and still is, used traditionally in group settings to discuss the goings on of the community, helping to dissolve disputes because of its calming properties. Herbalists will often give it as part of a formula in a liquid extract form.

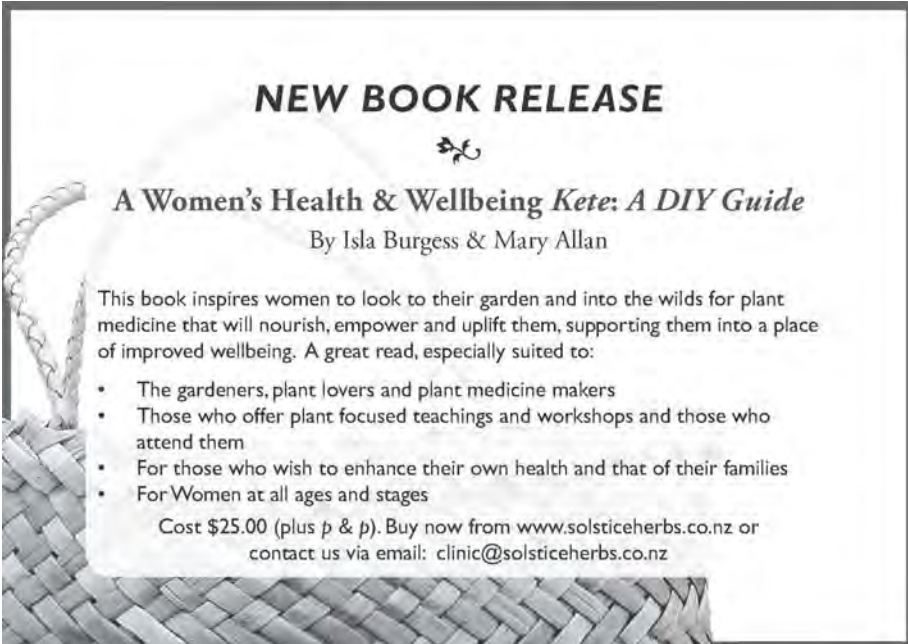
Kava is a powerful skeletal muscle relaxant. It is useful for insomnia that is associated with muscle tension, cramping and pain. I find it sometimes works better in combination with other herbs, otherwise the body becomes numb and relaxed from the kava but the mind is still going a million miles an hour. This is indeed often the problem with many insomniacs – people worrying about work,

relationships, the state of the planet, etc. Eco-anxiety is becoming a reality now for many people and this also contributes to anxiety and insomnia.


In these cases I like to mix kava with valerian to calm the 'monkey-mind' and deeply relax the body. Kava and valerian gift a person with the ability to take a deep breath, followed by a feeling of 'aaahhh' as they relax deeply into a peaceful sleep.

**Cautions:** Kava may slow down reaction time, so it is not recommended to take it before driving or operating machinery. It should be used cautiously or not at all in people with a history of, or current, liver disease. Long-term frequent use can lead to skin discolouration; this condition is reversible.

*Mary is a holistic health practitioner with diploma and degree qualifications in herbal medicine, naturopathy and yoga therapy. She sees patients from her home clinic in Browns Bay, Auckland. Mary has recently teamed up with Isla Burgess; together they have published a book called A Women's Health & Wellbeing Kete: A DIY Guide. It will be available for purchase from late January 2020. You can learn more at [www.solsticeherbs.co.nz](http://www.solsticeherbs.co.nz). Contact Mary at: [clinic@solsticeherbs.co.nz](mailto:clinic@solsticeherbs.co.nz)*



**NEW BOOK RELEASE**



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By Isla Burgess & Mary Allan

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## *My Experiences with Herbs*

**By Chee M Seow (Napier Herb Society)**

*(First published in Dittany, An Annual Journal of  
New Zealand Herb Societies, Volume 9, 1988)*

The roots of my herbal experience were partly based in New Zealand, where I spent my early adult years as a student, from high school to university. During those times I heard of koromiko, stinging nettle and foxglove, etc. I wasn't that interested in using them.

The practical part of my herbal experience was in Malaysia where herbal medicine stood side by side with Western drugs. In Malaysia, the herbal drug shops were as common as chemist shops in New Zealand. In these drug shops were rows and columns of drawers; each drawer might house more than one herb. There were hundreds of herbs in one shop. One could buy simple things, from dried plums and liquorice slices to pearls and deer velvet. In between you could think of rhino horns, ginseng as well as dried centipedes.

Guiding the purchase of the herbs and drugs were the Chinese doctors who were very conversant with the use of the drugs and the diseases, which were diagnosed and treated by methods that have been in existence for thousands of years.

As I was not well educated in Chinese, I was not competent to study those herbs and drugs and I left them to the experts. The interest in herbs was put on the back burner for many years until I joined a former colleague in starting a flavour and fragrance company from scratch. I was exposed to the herbal extracts and essential oils. In making a root beer, we used different extracts of herbs and research made us unearth many unusual herbs, such as pipsissewa, sassafras and sarsaparilla, and their extracts and essential oils. Within a short time I was well immersed in jasmine concentrate and geranium oil.

What I had learnt in university started to come alive. We had to be fast in our learning, as we were competing against large companies like Bush Boake Allen

for business. After seven years in the flavour business, the identification of herbs and their components became second nature. Yet I did very little toward the application of herbs as healing agents. My interest in healing began with accupressure, which I studied, and I used it to get rid of migraines. I spent some quiet hours in the medicinal library of the University of Malaya studying unorthodox healing methods, or alternative medicine.

The herbal side of alternative medicine began to become prominent. I have gone through a lot of books on the use of herbs for various ailments for humans as well as for elephants. Reading from books without exposure to the real situation would not gain much of an impression.

To gain more interest in the subjects, I had two good friends who were very knowledgeable in Chinese medicine and local herbs. We did a lot of talking on fresh herbs and their healing properties. Even though we were good friends, they did not impart any of their healing secrets to me. If they did, I was not smart enough to decipher their cryptic language. Through them I started to gain the conviction that the green herbs do have a lot of healing properties and I started my herbal garden in a piece of land I acquired.

In this herb garden I grew a lot of banana plants for shade and underneath I grew aloe vera, turmeric, galanga (a type of ginger plant), cardamom, mint and, in swampy parts, Vietnamese mint, which is a type of polygonum. I grew rows and rows of lemon grass for our curries. It took only four months to get a clump of lemon grass where in New Zealand it took two years.



### **Turmeric**

My first real test with using herbs was when I had a half-inch cut on my ankle made by a sickle. I was a mile from my car and had no first-aid kit handy. To stop the bleeding, I rested my leg above my heart. At the same time I picked some grass nearby, chewed and put it on my wound and bound it loosely with my sock. After resting for half an

hour I began to walk to the car. Luckily there was no further bleeding. When I reached home, I disinfected the wound thoroughly with diluted sodium hypochlorite and I cut a piece of aloe vera, slit the flat side and placed the exposed gel onto the wound and secured it with a bandage. After two days of aloe treatment I could see the wound closing and healing very nicely.

When I realised that I would be coming back to New Zealand, I intensified my study of herbs and alternative healing. I had acquired a library of useful literature on Malaysian, Chinese, Indian and occidental herbs. I have a dictionary that can translate all the Chinese herb names into Latin and their common English names.

I arrived in New Zealand in August 1986, after 15 years away. My first encounter with New Zealand herbs was in the market gardens of my relations. I wasted little time in joining the Napier Herb Society. In a short time I was exchanging knowledge with the members and I learned the efficacies of the local herbs, which have very good healing properties. Over the past year I have been actively utilising herbs for the following purposes:

**Colds** – garlic, horehound, mullein.

**Stopping of internal bleeding** – yarrow, shepherd's purse.

**Bruises and sporting injuries** – daisy, cayenne pepper, yarrow.

**Rheumatic, arthritic pain** – nettle, celery.

**Burns and cuts** – plantain, aloe vera.

Most of these herbs are readily found in wasteland and roadside or in shops. I believe in using herbs fresh from picking, and some of the above, like yarrow, shepherd's purse, daisy, nettle, plantain and mullein, are available all year round, even in the middle of winter.

I had a lot of joy propagating herbal knowledge with my friends and fellow workers in the food factory I am working in. Some came to me with a sore throat. I took them to the plantain patch by my office. I picked a few leaves and got them to chew one leaf every 3 hours. The next day the infection would disappear. For a colleague with a bleeding nose I made an infusion of fresh yarrow and advised her to take 3 cups daily. By the second day, her bleeding was stopped and she has not had a bleeding nose since.

Colds were the most tricky problem. I swear by garlic. But some people prefer to die than to take garlic. Horehound is a good remedy, too, but it is too bitter. Eventually, I settle for mullein, which has none of the two disadvantages.

With mullein, I had two happy “customers”. One friend was trying to shake off a cold so that she could attend her son’s 21st party in a week’s time. I obtained some mullein for her and showed her family my favourite spot for getting them. Come Saturday, I had never seen a more active hostess. She was the livewire of the party.

Another friend was worried she could not keep an important appointment. I learnt of her cold on a Saturday through her husband. In the afternoon I was teaching her husband how to brew up the tea for her. She had that cold for weeks and was in bed when I went to her house. After a week, I met her and she was so happy that it was over. She told me that she felt well after the first cup. By Tuesday, she was well enough to attend the appointment. She unabashedly told everyone about it as if a miracle had happened. We would have God to thank for it, wouldn’t we?



Herb research is like a hobby for me. I have painstakingly gone through weed books of New Zealand and found that there are more than 200 New Zealand weeds that are related to the Chinese medicinal plants. I would think another 200 could be unearthed if we check the houseplants. Ironically, one of the important sources of New Zealand herbal literature and “friend” of the herb lovers is the New Zealand Weed and Pest Control Society [*no longer in existence – Ed*]. This organisation put out very good monographs on New Zealand weeds with excellent illustrations, so that any budding herbalist could identify what they wanted. Compared to Malaysia, New Zealand is a paradise for the herbalist, as there are no snakes to contend with and no mosquitoes to carry you away.

The New Zealand farmer should have a sense of herb appreciation in the wider sense. After all, the humble clover, which brings in millions of dollars from meat and wool, is a herb – a good one at that.

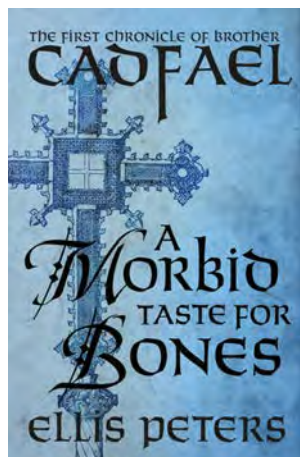


## *Medieval Herbs*

**By Hilary Thurston (Napier Herb Society)**

*(First published in Dittany, An Annual Journal of  
New Zealand Herb Societies, Volume 9, 1988)*

Readers of modern escapist literature may have come across the Medieval “whodunits” of Ellis Peters (the nom-de-plume of Edith Pargeter), which have become a cult in crime fiction overseas and promise to become the same here. The ‘hero’, Brother Cadfael, is a Welsh ex-Crusader turned monk who tends the herb garden at the Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul, in Shrewsbury, in the middle of the 12th century (circa 1140, on). Having experienced a fuller life than many of the Brothers, and having a wide knowledge of the hurts and wounds that come with warfare, he also doctors the injured – there are many of these from time to time as the country is torn with the strife between King Stephen and Matilda of Normandy for the English throne. The stories are interesting, well researched and written, and one soon feels at home in both the century and the locale.



The Abbey is still in existence after 900-plus years and if you are going overseas and visit Shrewsbury you will find a programme of walks around the ancient town that cover the actual locations, surviving from Medieval times, mentioned in the Cadfael books.

The reference to herbs and their uses makes the stories even more interesting for those of us who are “into” herbs. Most plants mentioned are well known and many are used for the same purposes today. General statements on the use of

herbs are numerous throughout the stories, but following are some of the more detailed uses. (See page 21 for botanical names.)

## **WOUNDS**

**Half-healed, inflamed and infected:** Ointment of centaury and yellow mild nettle.

**Open and infected:** A paste of fresh green herbs: water betony, wintergreen and woundwort.

**Old ulcerated wounds:** Sanicle, ragwort, moneywort, adder's tongue. These are all cleansing and astringent.

**Green wounds (stubborn to knit):** Goosegrass (cleavers). Pound the fresh herb to a smooth green salve. This may burn (sting?) but is the best salve for green wounds.

**Scraped, cut and bleeding wounds:** An ointment of cleavers and a draught of poppy syrup.

## **GENERAL TREATMENT OF WOUNDS**

Cleanse with a lotion of sanicle and woundwort then dress with a paste of these herbs with the addition of betony, chickweed and wintergreen. A draught for the pain – a syrup of woundwort and St John's wort in wine with a little poppy syrup added. Later dressings: a plaster of fresh herbs, as above, bruised and worked into a paste. This works strongly and draws out the evil.

## **ACHES AND PAINS**

Ground root of monkshood in mustard (black or white) and linseed oils.

## **RASHES**

Healing herbal oils in hog fat. Comment by woman who requested the cure for hands sore after handling raw wool: "It is strange that wool can bring up a rash but wool-fat (lanolin) can be used to doctor other skin diseases."

## **BRUISED AND BROKEN SKIN**

A lotion of betony, comfrey and daisy.

## **BURNS**

A paste of fresh mulberry leaves, an ointment of lady's mantle.

## **COLIC IN BABIES**

Dill, fennel, mint (peppermint). A little poppy juice and honey.

## COUGHS

A mix of some or all of these: bay, mint, coltsfoot, horehound, mullein, mustard (hedge) and poppy. An elixir of horehound. These are all for coughs and colds, sore throats and tight chests.

## COUGHS AND COLDS

Rosemary, horehound and saxifrage in red cherry wine. Also the same herbs mashed with linseed oil and used as a rub.

**Notes on herbs:** Aconite is poisonous and the yellow nettle is no relation to the stinging nettle. The botanical names have been taken from *Culpeper's Colour Herbal*, with the exception of the yellow nettle – Mrs Grieve provided this. Nearly all the herbs are in use today. If you wish to use any yourself, make sure your herbs are the ones specified. Read up on them before experimenting.

## A list of Botanical Names

Adder's Tongue	<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>
Bay	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>
Betony (wood)	<i>Stachys officinalis</i>
Betony (water)	<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>
Centaury	<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>
Coltsfoot	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>
Comfrey	<i>Symphytum officinale</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Dill	<i>Anethum graveolens</i>
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>
Horehound (white)	<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>
Linseed (flax)	<i>Linum usitatissimum</i>
Lady's mantle	<i>Alchemilla vulgaris</i>
Moneywort	<i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>
Monkshood (aconite)	<i>Aconitum anthora</i>
Mint (Peppermint)	<i>Mentha piperita</i>
Mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>
Mulberry	<i>Morus nigra</i>
Mustard (hedge)	<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i> (for coughs, etc)
Mustard (white)	<i>Sinapis alba</i> (for rubs, etc)
Mustard (black)	<i>Brassica nigra</i> (for rubs, etc)

Nettle (yellow, dead)	<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>
Poppy* (wild, red)	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i> (now <i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i> )
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>
St. John's wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>
Sanicle	<i>Sanicula europaea</i>
Saxifrage	<i>Pimpinella major</i>
Wintergreen**	<i>Pyrola minor</i>
Woundwort (goldenrod)	<i>Solidago virgaurea</i>

\* The poppy mentioned is not opium, as may be assumed. A syrup is made of the seed and flowers of the common wild red poppy, which is useful to give sleep and rest to individuals.

\*\* Wintergreen is now a rare plant and not the *Gaultheria procumbens* from which oil of wintergreen is produced.

If you are interested in making the acquaintance of Brother Cadfael, the books are in most libraries and also in paperback (Futura) and really do make an informative and pleasant read.

And in closing, a few wise words, of interest to all, from the good Brother.

"All the things of the wild have their properties and uses, and only mis-use makes them evil – and all medicines are most effective when used ONLY when needed."

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## *Farewell to Ashburton Herb Society*

It is with inevitability and sadness that the Ashburton Herb Society, which was founded in September 1979, folded September 2019 following its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. The first president was Grace Ackerley. We all have special memories of past and present members. We also have many wonderful recollections of trips, conferences, venues, activities and displays over the years. It has been a privilege to be the last president. **Wendy Hurst**



# HFNZ & Society News

## Auckland Herb Society – REPORT GIVEN AT CONFERENCE

Last October we had an interesting bus trip north of Auckland: Dee Pignéguay's permaculture garden, then on to the Essential Garden Herb Farm, where we stopped for lunch and had demos making simple herbal creams. It was then on to a herb nursery where we stocked up on herb plants.

After our AGM in March, Pam Wright demonstrated some pestos and I demonstrated pasta, which included herbs infused into pastry sheets, which made it very decorative.

At our winter seminar in June we first watched a distilling demonstration by Andrina Eyles from La Caravanna Sacred Plant Medicine, then heard Sandesh Heinicke from Mana Soulfod talk about her love of our native plants that she uses in her herbal products. Our spring seminar was in October. Several members of the executive each talked on a specific weed for 10 minutes each. There was a large live display of weeds for members to help identify. This was followed by Jocelyn Murray ([www.groweatheal.co.nz](http://www.groweatheal.co.nz)), a registered natural health practitioner, who lost 22 kilograms over 15 months after throwing sugar and white bread out of the pantry, growing and eating more vegetables, eating less meat and no packaged or dairy products, reducing wine and coffee intake, and exercising.

*Jane Carden*

## Katikati Herb Society – REPORT GIVEN AT CONFERENCE

### **Review of our year's subjects:**

**February** – Preserving, dehydrating, herbs – when to harvest, how to, etc. Plus additional field trip to a local garden.

**March** – Herb Awareness Week, Linda and Jim Carter presented the Herb Federation herb profiles.

**April** – White sage smudge stick making with a talk about why.

**May** – Motherwort and hawthorn (heart herbs).

**June** – AGM and making beeswax wraps.

**July** – Stevia and recipes – how to use.

**August** – Talk on hemp, history, CBD, THC

**September** – Talking circle on plants that attract bees, companion planting. Started the base of a wreath.

**October** – Our more public expo – fermenting, with Marea Verry presenting and a beeswax wraps demo. This is when we roll out all our herbs/plants.

**November** – Cinnamon, and finished making wreaths. Also, we revisited the garden from earlier in the year.

**December** – Xmas, shared kai with secret santa and a quiz.

Throughout the year once a month from autumn we meet at 10am to start our herb propagation for the expo, followed by shared lunch (SOOOOO much yummy food), then our committee meeting. Our committee has grown because not only are we learning stuff, we're having fun doing so.

*Jenny Ager-Pratt*

## **Southland Herb Society – REPORT GIVEN AT CONFERENCE**

Since our last conference in Invercargill in 2017 when we enjoyed hosting you, our society has continued to grow and we have had some special times with garden visits to Central Otago, Evandale Gardens, Adair and Geoff Genge's Marshwood, Taste of Tisbury, Bluff Gardens and members' gardens.

We have continued with our group organisation of meetings where one committee member has three others to help organise the meeting with a year's programme preset. This is a good way of people getting to know each other as well as sharing ideas and responsibilities. Meetings have included topics of Beatrice Potter and Peter Rabbit, seaside herbs, container gardening, history of tea and teapots, personal safety, a gardener's story, horticulture, herbs in the Chatham Islands and companion planting. A highlight of the time has been the granting of life membership to Christine Whitaker, who has done so much to help our society: president for 15 out of the last 18 years, conference coordinator, and being involved in all aspects of our group.

We have held workshops on chalk painting, tufa pots and embroidery where our embroidery group tutored us. Each meeting we have a herb of the night and in the last two years this has followed a medicinal theme, including juniper, echinacea, hawthorn, horseradish, coriander, sorrel and anise hyssop.

The fragrant garden has been looked after by Parks and Reserves and some working bees from us. The 40th anniversary of Southland Herb Society is

coming up in 2021 and we are planning an event to mark this occasion. You will hear more about it this year.

Thank you for the monthly President's Newsletter, which we all enjoy, and the work of the Herb Federation.

*Julianne Watson, President*

## HFNZ Biennial Conference 2019

*by Tracey Sunderland*

A few months ago, I was fortunate to discover the Herb Federation of NZ and their biennial conference held in Hutt Valley, Wellington. I was excited to attend the 'Heritage Day' out in the city and especially a visit to the Home of Compassion and the Medicinal Herb Garden (at the Wellington Botanic Garden). I jumped at the chance to book flights to Wellington for 15–17 November and to spend a few days learning a little more about Wellington.

The conference was held at Silverstream Retreat, which is about half an hour's (not rush hour) drive from the city centre towards Upper Hutt. Today it is set up as a conference venue and accommodation, but the setting tells another story or two. Originally built as a rehabilitation centre and hospital in 1941, it was taken over by the US Navy as a hospital base for the officers, nurses and marines during World War II.

Hutt Valley Herb Society member Michael, pictured, told me that as a young man he used to work in the kitchens of the hospital (the exact barracks where we dined for a very tasty and freshly prepared lunch on the Saturday) and that over the years it's been an elderly people's hospital too.

The first day of the conference was enlightening and interesting, plus just lovely to meet a whole lot of like-minded souls on their own herbal medicine journeys. Fascinating to hear New Zealand's sketchy history on herbal medicine and



that we don't have "any valid" legislation passed to give respect to our medical herbalists and natural healers. I guess, as a young country, we still have a way to catch up to the rest of the world.

Hutt Valley Herb Society hosted some great local medical herbalists and medicine makers. Thanks to the speakers, Maree Murphy, Jane Wrigglesworth and Sandra Clair, and many local herbal and artisan businesses who provided the workshops on Saturday afternoon.

Our heritage bus trip started with a giggle from the comical and very kind-natured driver. We left from Silverstream just after 9am and made our way to the Home of Compassion in Island Bay. We enjoyed a delicious baked Christmas mince tart with our morning cuppa in the well-appointed café at Suzanne Aubert Heritage Centre.

Back in 1860, Suzanne Aubert was a young 25-year-old woman who made her way out from Lyon, France to become a missionary for Bishop Pompallier's Auckland diocese. Suzanne's passion was to help the young and disadvantaged, which included helping the very unwell. Suzanne was drawn to work with the local communities, who needed help, support and healing. For this reason, she moved to Hawke's Bay and the Marist Maori mission station. Suzanne became very well known for working with local people; she learnt the Maori language and worked alongside them to learn how they used local plants for medicine and healing.

Suzanne's healing ministry began in France, where she worked as a nurse and studied botany, chemistry and medicine in Lyon. Her interest deepened further here in New Zealand as she studied local plant materials and herbal remedies then concocted her own rongoa.

Suzanne made her way to Wellington in the 1870s to revive the Maori mission. She became a treasured sister working alongside Maori, disadvantaged, the unwell and caring for children in central Wellington. Suzanne also developed the Maori mission in Whanganui, where her herbal remedies were sold, notably to the non-Maori community.

The Heritage Centre has made a dedicated library and gallery to display Suzanne's early herbal work and life. It is amazing to see the old boxes and bottles that once sold her special products. Sadly, her recipes for remedies

made with New Zealand wild herbs, trees and native plants were never discovered and seem to be lost in time. Who knew that New Zealand's first medical herbalist was this wonderful French missionary woman who dedicated her life to helping and healing through her love for all people and God?

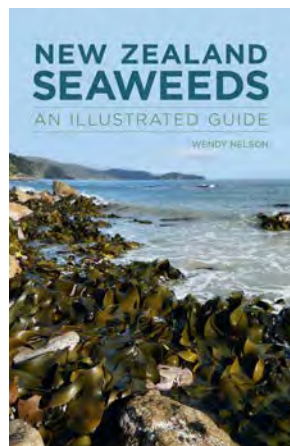


Our stop at the one remaining building of Suzanne Aubert's era (the Home of Compassion's first creche) in central Wellington city was made for lunch, a curried vegetable soup cooked by the Sisters of Compassion's soup kitchen, which has been running for 100 years!

Another highlight of the heritage tour was a visit to the Wellington Botanic Garden. I was most enchanted by the medicinal herb garden, which is perched high above the city on a terraced hill overlooking the cricket stadium and the moody harbour. Such a huge and beautiful spot in this heritage city, which leaves so much to see and do on another visit.

Bait House Aquarium in Island Bay really surprised us all with its hands-on sea creature display. I had never heard of a marshmallow anemone, let alone had the chance to hold this light-as-air water creature in the palm of my hand. A few of us were very privileged to hear the sex life of the octopus and see the hundreds of baby octopus eggs hanging onto their glass wall. The guide of the Bait House had us hanging on his every word. So much to see and learn here.

As we left, I made sure to photograph the book on the special types of edible sea vegetables and seaweeds that are only found in this part of the world (pictured). Four hundred species of edible sea vegetables are living on this south coast of Wellington (just next door). Local food at its best. Lucky locals, that's all I can say.



*Tracey Sunderland is a professional chef, food writer, food stylist and mother to two daughters. Visit her website: [www.thegalley.co.nz](http://www.thegalley.co.nz)*

## Photos from the HFNZ Biennial Conference 2019

*by Fiona Bowden*



Clockwise, from top left: Justine Rangihaeata from Kawakawa Spa Rongoa Clinic; Dagma with Baby Laundry Liquid by Littlefoot; speaker Sandra Clair, founder of Artemis; Jan Smith (right) presenting Cooking with Native Herbs; Essential oil-making demo by Hebe Botanicals; Soap by Hebe Botanicals; DIY name badge (for badge competition); Entertainment at dinner.

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# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

I/We wish to apply for membership to the **Herb Federation of New Zealand Inc**  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL \$35.00

FAMILY (For two members) \$40.00  
Add \$5.00 for each additional member.

OVERSEAS \$40.00

DONATION \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Payment by direct credit is available. Our bank is Westpac, Account No. 03-1549-0030463-00. Please make sure you name is identified with the payment.

- ☐ Please tick if you require a receipt.
- ☐ Please tick if you want your details kept confidential. (Your name will only appear on any membership list required for official **HFNZ** business.)

**Please send your application to:** The Treasurer,  
Herb Federation of New Zealand, PO Box 198, Inglewood 4347

For office use

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIPT: \_\_\_\_\_



# The Aims and Objectives of the Federation

- To promote greater interest in herbs and an appreciation of the value of herbs and their safe use.
- To increase knowledge through education.
- To assist in maintaining the diversity of herb collections.
- To protect and promote the use of herbs, now and for future generations.
- To encourage accurate identification of plants and the use of botanical names.

Activities we promote include Herb Awareness Week events, establishment and maintenance of herb gardens and plant collections, seed and plant exchange, workshops and booklets on specific topics, visits to interesting gardens, nurseries and garden centres, exchange of newsletters.

Long term aims include the possibilities of a national garden and support for recognized herbal qualifications.

## CONTRIBUTIONS FOR AUTUMN 2020

**Herb Society members are invited to submit  
contributions for the next edition of Herb News**

Deadline for next edition: FEBRUARY 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Editor:** Jane Wrigglesworth

email: [jane@plainjanemedia.co.nz](mailto:jane@plainjanemedia.co.nz)

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# herbnews

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