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UNIT 4: Materia Medica 1

Introduction

This is the first of three Materia Medica units, the first of which contains a detailed consideration of five common medicinal plants:

- German chamomile, *Matricaria recutita* L.
- Fennel, *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill.
- Elder tree, *Sambucus nigra* L.
- Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis* L.
- Meadowsweet, *Filipendula ulmaria* (L.) Maxim.

Overview

- Get to know 5 important medicinal plants (particularly how and why they are used), and develop a strong affinity with each plant so that you can use them wisely and appropriately
- Understand research into medicinal plants compounds and into the effects of whole plant extracts
- Use key texts and modern sources to conduct your own research into the historical use of key plants within Phytotherapy, and compare these uses with modern approaches confirmed by research
- Learn to use your senses to identify and know more deeply the subtleties of medicinal plants, thus building up a more complex and nuanced understanding and relationship to them
- Explore the making of simple home recipes and practical pharmacy, learning how to transform a plant into something pleasant and remedial to use (e.g., tisanes, infused oils and electuaries).

Learning Outcomes

By the end of Section 1, you will have an understanding of:

- The structure of this Unit, and some central concepts underpinning Western herbal medicine.

By the end of Section 2, you will have:

- Undertaken a Plant Tasting with the 5 herbs using the Goethean method
- Defined 5 keywords for each tasting

By the end of Section 3, you will have an understanding of:

- The basic botany of German chamomile
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant

- The central role and importance of the digestive system and mucus membranes in herbal medicine
- How to use tisanes/herbal teas.

By the end of Section 4, you will have an understanding of:

- The basic botany of fennel
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant.
- Links between the digestive system and other systems in the body, including the nervous system and the hormonal system
- How to make an aromatic digestive electuary.

By the end of Section 5, you will have an understanding of:

- The basic botany of the elder tree
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- The effectiveness of herbal medicine in the treatment of children
- The uses of elderberry, and how to make an elderflower infused oil.

By the end of Section 6, you will have an understanding of:

- The basic botany of lemon balm
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and and research relating to the plant
- Making a lemon balm infused oil
- How the nervous system interacts with other body systems, including the digestive system and the immune system.

By the end of Section 7, you will have an understanding of:

- The basic botany of meadowsweet
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- Case histories demonstrating how the herbalists' approach is uniquely tailored to each individual.

By the end of Section 8, you will have taken part in an activity about herbal history and folklore and have an understanding of:

- Have gained a good understanding of some of the history and folklore surrounding the herb you have selected.
- Know where traditional uses of your chosen plant have been carried forward into present day use and reflected in research.

- Explored how to take information from one referenced source and show you have understood its meaning by putting it in to your own words.

Additional Information

This Unit contains **Reference and Resources** lists as well as the tutor's own tasting notes.

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