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UNIT 8: Materia Medica 3

Introduction

This is the third of three Materia Medica Units where we consider the importance and significance of five more medicinal plants, focusing on how and why they are in common use. We also look at some straightforward but effective home remedies including juices, powders, decoctions and syrups.

- Thyme, *Thymus vulgaris* L.
- Marshmallow, *Althaea officinalis* L.
- Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium* L.
- Cleavers, *Galium aparine* L.
- Dandelion, *Taraxacum officinale* L.

Overview

For each of the five plants, we review research into the compounds they contain and consider how knowledge of the effects of whole plant extracts informs and confirms traditional use in Western herbal medicine.

We also:

- Describe why the lymphatic system is given greater emphasis in traditional Western herbal medicine than other medical systems
- Consider the treatment of infection in a holistic and dynamic way
- Describe the concept of expectorant, and discuss traditional systems of medicine that value increased elimination of waste products
- Describe the 'heroic' approach to treatment
- Describe herbs that have a capacity for action at specific organ sites.

There will be opportunities for you to expand your sensory exploration of the subtleties of each of these medicinal plants, and thus build a more complex and nuanced understanding and relationship with each plant.

You will also continue to explore simple home recipes and practical pharmacy techniques, and learn how to transform a plant into something pleasant and remedial to use.

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 an understanding of

- The Lamiaceae family and thyme
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- The function of the immune system
- The use of this well-known culinary herb as an heroic medicine.
- How to prepare a herb vinegar and oxymel.

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

- The basic botany of yarrow
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- Research relating to yarrow - 'the herbalist's herb' - an ancient 'cure-all' used in the management of both acute and chronic conditions
- Drying herbs for later use.

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

- The basic botany of dandelion
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- Cleansing the blood using alteratives and depuratives
- How to prepare a decoction
- The medicinal use of dandelion – three remedies in one.

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

- The malvaceae family including marshmallow
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- How to make a marshmallow syrup
- Mucilaginous herbs and their uses
- The treatment of infection with herbs.

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

- The basic botany of cleavers
- The parts used, main constituents, main therapeutic actions, methods of preparation and use, cautions and care, and research relating to the plant
- The importance of lymph and the lymphatic system in herbal medicine.

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

Conducting your own mini-research project in to the medicinal properties of a spice using research skills, writing skills and use of scientific naming of plants.

Additional Information

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

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