

## Home Grown Herbs for Health

One of the great things about herbs is that they are for the most part hearty plants, which means that even if you don't have a 'green thumb', they're easy to grow. With that thought in mind, and with spring planting season just around the corner, we asked nationally recognized herbalist, Bev Maya, to suggest 10 healing herbs that will find a home in most gardens. And most medicine chests.

### **1. Skin & Digestive, Respiratory & Urinary tracts**

#### *Pot Marigold (Calendula)*

- Easily propagated from seed, flourished in most types of soil, harvest flowers in summer & dry in shade
- Use flower heads as an infusion take internally as a tea for inflammatory conditions of the digestive and urinary tracts such as ulcers, heartburn, colitis and urinary tract or respiratory infections
- Sun-infused oil: use for all cuts, scrapes, athlete's foot, thrush/yeast infections, ringworm, minor burns, diaper rash & cradle cap, sore nipples associated with breastfeeding

### **2. Digestive & Nervous System:**

Stress on the nervous system often leads to conditions of the digestive tract. Therefore, the herbs used for these body systems are considered together:

#### *Chamomile (Chamomilla recutita)*

- Sow seeds in spring or autumn and harvest flower heads when in full bloom
- Use flower heads as an infusion for all conditions affecting the digestive system including indigestion, stomach acidity, bloating, colic, ulcers, hiatus hernia, and irritable bowel syndrome. Relaxes tense, aching muscles, relieves menstrual pain. Relieves irritability and promotes sleep after a hectic day

#### *Lemon balm (Melissa officinalis)*

- Propagated from seed or cutting in spring, best to harvest just before flowers open.
- Use arial parts of plant fresh or dried as an infusion for anxiety especially when it causes digestive problems, mild depression, restlessness, irritability, palpitations associated with stress

#### *Peppermint (Mentha piperita)*

- Use the arial parts as an infusion for the digestive system, increasing the flow of digestive juices and relaxing the muscles of the gut. Reduces colic, cramps and gas, helps soothe irritable bowel – relieves diarrhea and spastic colon.

#### *Basil (Ocimum basilicum)*

- Use leaves and flowering tops as an infusion for the digestive and nervous systems to ease flatulence, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and intestinal worms
- Juice from the leaves can subdue an insect bite reaction on the skin

*Rosemary (Rosmarinus officinalis)*

- Propagated from seed or cuttings in spring and prefers a warm moderately dry climate and sheltered site.
- Use arial parts of the plant as an infusion to stimulate circulation of blood to the head, improve memory and concentration, ease headaches and migraines.

*Oregano (Origanum vulgare)*

- Thrives in chalky soil close to the sea, gather when in flower in summer.
- Use arial parts as an infusion for a digestive remedy that settles indigestion and wards off a cold.

*Dill (Anethum graveolens)*

- Harvest leaves in cooking or salads in spring and summer, use seeds as a decoction and leaves as an infusion
- Relieves digestive problems including gas, intestinal cramps and spasms. Chewing the seeds alleviates bad breath.

*St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum)*

- Grow from seed in spring or divide root stalk in autumn.
- Use arial parts as an infusion or sun-infused oil for nervous system balancer for anxiety, tension, insomnia and mild to moderate depression particularly associated with menopause.

**3. Musculoskeletal System:**

*Celery (Apium graveolens)*

- Widely grown as a vegetable, propagate from seed in spring and harvested in autumn.
- Use seeds as an infusion. Due to its cleansing action, celery can be used in all rheumatic conditions including gout to “cleanse” the joint capsule and improve the perfusion of nutrients.

**(SIDE BAR)**

**Infusions, decoctions and Sun-infused oil**

Infusion: place 1 teaspoon of dried or 2 teaspoons fresh herb in 1 cup of boiling water. Steep for 10-15 minutes. Drink 3-4 cups per day. Store in refrigerator for up to 24 hours

Decoction: place 20-40g of fresh herb into 750 mL of cold water, bring to a boil and reduce to approximately 500 mL after simmering. Drink throughout the day. Store in the refrigerator for up to 48 hours

Sun infused oil: fill clear jar with fresh flowers and cover with olive oil, let sit in sun for 2-4 weeks depending on exposure, shake daily and strain off solids, store in cool dark location