

Herbs for Easing Anxiety & Building Inner Resilience

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Rockport, Maine. Our biodynamic gardens & shop are open Mon-Friday, 12-5, year-round

In Chinese Medicine it is said that when the “emotional” heart is disquieted, unsettled, a person may experience physical symptoms such as anxiety, insomnia, heart palpitations, agitation, susceptibility to fright, and even bio-medically defined clinical depression. Because of the extreme stress, overwork and lack of nourishment (physical, emotional and spiritual), that people in the modern western world live with, plant medicines that calm the spirit and nourish the heart are important to include in our regular self-care practices. Creating a daily meditation and gratitude practice along with meaningful (and quiet) time in nature, and moving the body, deeply supports human’s overall health and well-being.

Herbal Teas with an affinity for nourishing the heart and nervous system:

Studying individual herbs helps us better understand each of their unique qualities. Daily herbal teas connect us with the four elements; earth, water, fire and air, and invite us to slow down, breathe in the aroma of the herbs, and truly taste the gifts herbal tea offer.

Herbs we can grow in the northeast: Sacred basil/Holy basil (Tulsi) leaf and flower, hawthorn flower, leaf and berry, heartsease pansy (fresh), lavender, lemon balm, linden flower and leaf, motherwort leaf and flower, Rosa rugosa, rosemary, violet leaf and flower

Aroma-the interface between Spirit & Matter. “The nose is the doorway to the brain and the entrance for prana-life force”. Herbalist and author Mindy Green

Breathe in the aroma of roses, lavender, lemon balm, Holy basil, or marjoram in the garden, in warm teas, as hydrosols or pure essential oils. These herbs especially calm, relax and open the mind and heart. **Infusion-Inhalation-Inspiration-Transformation-Serving Earth/Life**

www.heartmath.org: The Heart is 100,000 times stronger electrically and up to 5,000 times stronger magnetically than the brain.

Rumi says “Rose is sent to Earth by the gardeners of paradise for empowering the mind and the eye of the Spirit.”

ROSE *Rosa rugosa*

Part used: Flowers, fruit

Flavor & thermal nature: Flowers; sweet and slightly bitter, cool and moist
Fruit; sour and sweet, warm and dry. Vitamins C, B, E, and K.

Actions of flowers: Astringent, cooling, decongesting, diuretic, nervine-calming and uplifting to the nervous system, heart and mind.

Indications for flowers: Calming, relaxing and comforting to the nervous system. Eases emotions of shame, unworthiness, grief, worry, anger and supports feelings of love, compassion and ease in the heart. Soothing for anyone who feels sad, and for easing current or old feelings of loss. Rose calms and comforts an unsettled and grieving heart.

Balances “disturbed shen”: anxiety, fear, nervousness, depression, low self-esteem, insomnia.

Rose supports hot flashes and irritability. Rose petal elixir added to ashwagandha milk before bed helps calm the mind, relax the body and ease insomnia. Rose petal elixir is supportive during pre-

menstrual and menopausal stress and balances and supports sexual intimacy and heart opening.

Aromatherapy: smelling roses, rose hydrosol, pure essential rose oil, gently opens the heart, enhances feeling of compassion and awakens higher states of consciousness.

“Study shows that aromatherapy with rose oil and warm foot bath reduced anxiety in the active phase of labor.” Kheirkhah M, et al. Comparing the effects of aromatherapy with rose oils and warm foot bath on anxiety in the first stage of labor in nulliparous women. *Iran Red Crescent Med J.* 2014 Aug 17; 16(9):e14455.

SACRED BASIL, HOLY BASIL, TULSI *Ocimum tenuiflorum*

Part used: Leaf and flower

Flavor & Thermal nature: bitter, pungent, warming, drying

Actions: Adaptogen, aromatic, carminative, diaphoretic, expectorant, nervine

One of my favorite herbs to grow in pots near the entrance to my home, reminding me to slow down, to breath into my heart, and to offer gratitude for the many gifts our Earth so generously offers. Native and honey bees also seek out the flowers of Tulsi. Grow plenty for everyone. Considered to be the embodiment of Divine Feminine Energy-so needed in these times.

Mind: Tulsi heightens awareness, consciousness, and mental clarity. Enhances the quality of harmony and spiritual clarity. Opens the heart and mind, bestowing an energy of love and devotion.

Nerves: Reduces levels of stress hormones including cortisol. Clears the energy field and any negativity in the environment. Balances and tones the energetic chakra system. Builds inner resiliency.

Respiratory: Enhances prana-life force.

May Tulsi's gifts be truly revered.

Safety considerations: Avoid during pregnancy.

LAVENDER *Lavandula officinalis*

Flavor & Thermal nature: bitter, cool, dry

Actions: antiseptic, carminative, expectorant, nervine

Digestive: Relaxes the digestive tract. Supports healthy gum and mouth tissue and overall digestion.

Gynecology: Supports premenstrual, menopausal and post-menopausal stress, anxiety and agitation.

Avena's Into the Flow tincture with lavender supports PMS, menopause and post-menopausal shifts.

Mind and Nerves: Relaxes and calms the mind and nervous system and restores vitality to the nervous system. Lavender and Lemon balm glycerite uplift the Spirit, shift inner disharmony and soothe the emotional heart. **Aromatherapy:** Smelling, pure lavender essential oil several times a day helps ease anxiety and uplifts the Spirit.

LEMON BALM *Melissa officinalis*

Flavor & Thermal nature: sour, mildly bitter, cool, moist

Actions: carminative, memory aid, nervine, thyroxine inhibitor

Heart and nerves: Supports occasional anxiety, stress and insomnia. Helps to calm and quiet the emotional heart and reduce feelings of overwhelm and low self-esteem in children and adults.

Lemon balm uplifts the Spirit and during winter I like to take lemon balm glycerite with rose petal elixir, lavender glycerite and St Johnswort tincture. (Avena's Mood Support)

Mind: Supports healthy memory and circulation to the brain.

Safety considerations: Avoid large doses for people with hypothyroidism.

HAWTHORN *Crataegus.phaenopyrum*

Thermal nature: slightly warm **Flavor of berries:** sour. **Flavor of flowers:** sweet, bitter

Actions: cardiovascular tonic, circulatory tonic, hypotensive, relaxant

Hawthorn is one of my favorite herbs for helping calm and settle a person who feels anxious or agitated and unable to sleep peacefully. (Disturbed *shen*) Use 1-2 times daily as a tonic tincture (Hawthorn Plus) or tea. Hawthorn and lemon balm glycerite in combination help support restless, unfocused and agitated children and adults. Hawthorn increases the uptake of oxygen to the heart, supports the cardiovascular system and overall circulation. This thorny shrub/tree's offers energetic protection to children and adults who are especially "tender-hearted" and easily feel vulnerable.

Safety considerations: Consult health care provider if taking pharmaceutical cardiac medications.

SCHISANDRA *Schisandra chinensis*

Part used: red berries

Flavor & Thermal nature: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, astringent. The Chinese name, Wu wei zi, means "five flavors fruit." Warm, dry.

Actions: Adaptogen, astringent, hepato-protective, memory tonic, nervine

Schisandra is used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to calm *shen*. *Shen* (spirit, consciousness) is said to be stored in the heart. It is believed that disturbed *shen* can cause symptoms such as agitation, anxiety, insomnia and impaired memory.

Schisandra is respected by many western herbalists as an overall tonic and rejuvenative herb for the kidneys, liver, lungs, mind and emotional heart. The berries enhance energy, calm the mind, and ease stress and anxiety. When taken over several weeks or months, Schisandra enhances energy levels and strengthens the immune system, making it a valuable adaptogenic tonic (adaptogens help the body adapt instead of react to stress). Schisandra helps build our inner capacity to be less emotionally reactive, to feel grounded, and to be more resilient-my favorite herb for building inner and outer Resiliency.

Traditional Chinese Medicine says Schisandra helps us hold on to what is eternally valuable in life. When taken over time (I put a dropperful of Avena's Schisandra berry tincture in my quart water bottle daily), the berries help the Kidney "grasp" the Lung qi/chi, making it possible to breathe more deeply and fully, which in turn supports overall energy and mental clarity.

Schisandra holds your Heart steady so your inner Light can shine.

Safety considerations: The berries are not recommended for women during pregnancy as they may stimulate uterine contractions. Berries are considered safe for nursing women and need to be avoided during acute fevers and flus, and any acute condition with excess heat such as skin rashes. Schisandra is contra-indicated for people or animals with epilepsy and must be used carefully for anyone who is on a phenobarbital or barbitol as the berries may potentiate the action of those drugs. (Kuhn and Winston, 2001, p. 298)

TEASEL *Dipsacus sylvestris* (European species which grows easily in North America)

Parts used: Root, gathered in fall of first year or early spring of the second year

Flavor & Thermal nature: bitter, pungent, warm

Teasel is a supportive kidney jing medicine. In Traditional Chinese Medicine a person's essence, jing, is said to be stored in the kidneys. We are born with a certain amount of jing, energy, from our parents and ancestors, and we support our jing throughout our live with vitally alive, non-toxic food, healthy lifestyle choices and spiritual nourishment. Jing is a blueprint from which the form of the body develops. It creates and maintains all sexual and hormonal functions through life, and generates the marrow and bones. Developmental problems with the bones are associated with jing.

Indications: Supportive herb for lower back, knees and other joints. Supports bone strength and health as we age. (use in combination with solomon's seal root) Teasel root strengthens and tones "kidney essence" and nourishes "liver blood" which in Traditional Chinese Medicine is responsible for the strength of the joints and tendons.

The Chinese name for *Dipsacus japonica* (Chinese species) is "**Restore what is broken.**" I believe teasel root (and teasel flower essence) strengthens our inner capacity to build emotional and spiritual resilience. Adaptogenic herbs, alongside the herbs mentioned above, support us in better adapting to life's various changes, stressors, traumas and surprises. Herbs reconnect us with Earth, our Mother, and with solar, lunar and seasonal rhythms. Living in balance with Nature's rhythms helps us feel alive, consciously awake, balanced, and inwardly harmonious and aligned with the Cosmos.

Adaptogenic Herbs

ASHWAGANDHA *Withania somnifera*

Part used: Root. In New England, ashwagandha can be grown as an annual.

Flavor & Thermal nature: Sweet, bitter, astringent, warming

Actions: Adaptogen, nervine, sedative, reproductive/regenerative tonic.

Ashwagandha powder, stirred into a cup of warm, organic dairy or non-dairy milk, with a touch of rose petal elixir, a pinch of caradamom and honey to sweeten, is a delicious, relaxing and restorative evening drink. Ashwagandha is highly revered in the ancient Ayurvedic tradition from India as a nourishing and restorative herb, especially when blended in warm milk and taken regularly over several months. **Shatavari powder** mixed with ashwagandha increases resilience to stress, calms anxiety, balances hormonal shifts and supports clear mind and memory.

Nerves: Relaxes and strengthens the nervous system without over stimulating. Calms the mind and promotes a deep, restful sleep. Eases occasional stress, agitation & anxiety. Energizing while calming.

Tissues: Strengthens muscles, ligaments, and bones.

Reproductive/Regenerative: Female and male regenerative tonic. Increases sperm motility.

Gynaecology: Less than 3 grams/day can be used to strengthen a pregnant person (can use after first trimester) and to help stabilize the baby in utero. Excellent post-partum energy tonic and as a stimulant for milk production. Tones uterine muscles. Supportive for PMS, menopause, Elders and "disturbed shen" conditions: insomnia, anxiety, agitation, restlessness and fatigue.

Safety considerations: Not recommended during acute infections. May potentiate action of barbituates and benzodiazepines. More than 3 grams/day not recommended during pregnancy. (Merrily Kuhn and David Winston, *Herbal Therapy and Supplements*) People with hyperthyroidism or allergies to plants in the Nightshade Family need to avoid taking ashwagandha.

ASTRAGALUS *Astragalus membranaceus*

Parts used: three or four-year old roots

Flavor & Thermal nature: sweet, slightly warm

Actions: tonify qi/chi, adaptogen, antioxidant, diuretic, hepato-protective, immune tonic, lung tonic

Digestion: Strengthens digestion. "It's upright nature gives you the strength to digest all aspects of life, be informed by inspiration, and stand up and be who you are in the world." -Amy Jenner, L. Ac.

Immunity: Deep immune tonic. Revives energy. Protects “wei chi”, immune system just under the skin, discerning what is beneficial to let in and what is not. Use regularly for folks living in tick areas.

Lungs: Strengthens lungs.

Safety considerations: Not recommended during acute infections, chi stagnation, damp stagnation, food stagnation, skin lesions

ELEUTHERO *Eleutherococcus senticosus*

Part used: root bark **Flavor & Thermal nature:** sweet, neutral to warm, dry

Adaptogen: When taken consistently over several months, Eleuthero supports adrenal health and enhances overall energy. Encourages relaxation of the body and clarity of mind. Evens out the peaks and valleys associated with stress. Excellent support (with Schisandra) for caregivers, farmers, parents, teachers, leaders and activists. Builds inner resilience. **Avoid use during acute infections.**