

Recetarios:
Traditional Family
Knowledge



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Thanksgiving

We return thanks to our mother, the earth,
which sustains us.

We return thanks to the rivers and streams,
which supply us with water.

We return thanks to all herbs,
which furnish medicines for the cure of our diseases.

We return thanks to the moon and stars,
which have given to us their light when the sun was gone.

We return thanks to the sun,
that has looked upon the earth with a beneficent eye.

Lastly, we return thanks to the Great Spirit,
in Whom is embodied all goodness,
and Who directs all things for the good of Her children.

Iroquois

Table of Contents

Introduction (*Joel Ángel Saldaña*) p.5

What is Traditional Knowledge? (*Derek Knocke*) p.5

Description and Function of Traditional Medicine (*Joel Ángel Saldaña*) p.9

The Characteristics of Traditional Healers p.12

Section 1 (Why Curandero?): (*Joel Ángel Saldaña*) p.12

Section 2 (Differentiating): (*Derek G. Knocke*) p.13

Traditional Healing (*Connie Gross*) p.14

Proper Herb Handling Techniques (*Connie Gross*) p.15

The Multifaceted Effects of Medicine (*Connie Gross*) p.16

Conclusion (*Connie Gross*) P.18

Recetario

Common Sicknesses p.21

Throat Ailments p.29

Stomach Ailments p.37

Topical Ailments p.43

Miscellaneous Ailments p.51

Appendix 1: Glossary p.58

Appendix 2: Bibliography p.60

Introduction

What is traditional healing and how does it transcend the generations? Everyone with Indigenous roots can trace back their heritage to a region of the continent, each of which has their own special kind of traditional knowledge and healing practices. People use the resources around them, what the earth has provided them with, along with the years of knowledge passed down through the generations, sometimes adapting to the modern times or adopting that which compliments and makes the healing processes more effective. Furthermore, sometimes people with indigenous and/or mestizo origins (for the most part) carry some kind of knowledge that they are not even aware of. They might not know that they are consciously performing a healing such as the ones performed by those who have mastered this system of holistic, natural healthcare and medicine that has been around for centuries. Accepting this is only a matter of becoming aware of one's own knowledge and acknowledging that we are vessels by which teachings from our culture and ancestors manifests, whether it be through planting a garden or preparing homemade remedies for ailments and sickness.

What is Traditional Knowledge?

When most people think of medicinal knowledge, they envision the doctors of western medicine, surgical procedure, chemical remedies, all based in scientific and case studies. Traditional Knowledge, which can be supported by these methods, is based in a far more diverse, eclectic and time-honored methodology. Many of the sources of knowledge used by traditional Indigenous healers would be considered by-products of psychotic episodes, or just downright wrong; however, it is important to recognize the contribution that these methods can provide for the discourse of traditional healing and understanding, especially in the context of cultural competency when it come to treating patients with strong beliefs in the traditional healing systems they grew up with. Some of these many methods for acquiring knowledge that should be considered acceptable, above and beyond that expected from the western medical field, are follows:

Trance. "Some healers used hallucinogenic plants, such as peyote, to enter a trance in which they would establish contact with [supernatural beings]" (Sowell 2005, 18). Many Indigenous healers use information gleaned during these episodes as the basis for which healing practices, medicinal instructions for the ill, or as a

way to enrich their own relationships with their own healing energies. They did not see these cognitive events as psychotic episodes; those who entered into the trance felt they were actually discoursing with higher beings. These episodes, if they are not in fact tapping into some higher conscious, can be a way to access information stored in their long-term memory, like people do in dreams. It a technique that is practiced widely amongst these natural healers and it must be observed that whatever effect the trance has on them, it helps them find the cause of the ailment and proceed to giving a diagnosis and a treatment for the patient.

Divination. Something similar to the technique above is divination: “Curanderos used divination in determining the illness and its treatment” (Sowell 2005, 18). This refers to an act in which a person uses means outside of their five senses to gain information about an external event. Currently, the image that most often comes to mind (especially to a western-minded individual) is that of a card reader or psychic, which is not what a traditional healer or Curandero does. While its possible that an traditional healer would use similar techniques, what is important to note is that the result of these divinations would be used for the diagnoses if disease, their treatment, and the discovery of the causal root of said diseases. And again, in the event divination itself does not actually “acquire” new information, the act itself allows a person to manipulate information in new and creative ways that lead to better, new venues for people to consider.

Theology of Place. This is what Cajete called “spiritual ecology”, and something that many traditional healers integrate as part of their system of healing (Cajete 1999, 3). People can build a deep relationship with the land after years of living from and with it. This primarily expresses itself through people’s relationships with animals and plants. Currently, any person can take the currency of their sovereign nation, walk into a grocers, clinic or clothing store and trade that currency for any and all materials they need for survival. These transactions require little knowledge from the individuals in regards to where or how their food was prepared, their clothes assembled, or how their medicine is created and administered. In earlier times, that same knowledge would mean the difference whether a person survived or not. Those people and groups who did survived to the next generations made the exchange of this paramount. After so many generation, this knowledge—and the land along with it—became literally part of the people. Even in modern perspectives, it makes sense that the longer a group of people live in a specific region, the stronger their relationship they will have with the plants, animals and minerals

there; and the stronger the effect those plants, animals, and minerals will reciprocate on the people.

Plants. First of all, and a the most crucial point to any traditional healing system, is that people have used plants to treat wounds of the mind, body, and spirit for as long as humanity has a recorded history. Before the wide spread use of agriculture, the cycles of plants could signal great changes for the life of the group (for example, signaling early winter, which mean the would be a lack of food). The world has a natural cycle that can be seen in nature and that expresses itself in a plethora of ways. The changing color of leaves can signal the arrival of colder temperatures; the withering and death of some plants could suggest a drought whereas the unfurling of leaves could suggest the coming of rain. But aside from food and a barometer of seasonal changes, plants have been used to treat people's maladies. Indigenous people did not have access to antibiotics, antidepressants, perfumes or soap as people currently relate them. Indigenous people, through trial and error and the transcendence of knowledge across the generations, was how they learned and kept this knowledge alive. They did not have book encyclopedias; they were the encyclopedias. Certain members of the tribes needed to learn and memorize hundreds of ailments and symptoms and what plants could be used to treat them and relieve the afflicted. They had to know where the plants grew, when it would be most potent, what portions of the plant could be used, and how much could be safely taken before damaging the delicate balance. Beyond the nutritional/medicinal needs of plants, some Indigenous cultures incorporated the importance of plants in their mythologies of origin, like the Pueblo: "Pueblo people express this intimate understanding and relationship [first man and women as ears of corn] by dancing for the perpetuation of corn" (Cajete 1999, 10).

Animals. Any kinds of animal that is native to the region where a certain group of people lives is considered part of their survival in many different ways. First of all, Indigenous people had to learn the rhythms of the animals they used as food and shelter. A change in their migration paths or birth rates could schedule the end of a culture. For example, both wolves and people feed on deer that in turn feed on plants. If too many of the wolves were hunted, which given would makes the people safer and better clothed, the number of deer may increase which in turn could decrease the number of agricultural food sources available to eat. If the people overhunted the deer instead, the wolves would have to encroach on the people for food, since the deer that was their primary food source is diminishing, which would in turn lead to more dangerous lives for the people. Both of

these examples show the interdependence between people, prey, and predators; however, on a simpler level, if the deer left the region, the wolves would follow their primary food source. This change in animal rhythm would deprive people of a food and clothing sources, forcing them to adapt to something different to follow that migration pattern. Knowing the cycles of animals, migration patterns, and food hierarchy, therefore, was essential to survival.

Lastly, it is also important to note that all Indigenous cultures personified energies and spiritual potentials as animals. The Aztecs had the Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent, while the “Native Americans” (Indigenous peoples from the U.S.) had others such as Spider Woman and the like. There are many stories in which animals are involved that teach the communities about values and morals, as well as life lessons. And, in connection to the aspect of divination already mentioned, certain animals signified certain omens, whether good or bad, which told the people who knew about them that they had to do something to achieve that or that they would achieve it or that they had to go to a healer to prevent something bad from occurring. So again, here we see that relationship with what each animal represented, but also something that should not be generalized as certain animals had different meanings for different peoples. Certain people in the tribes, groups, etc., could be trusted to understand and maintain these relationships, hence the evolution of the “Hunter of Good Heart” (Cajete 1999, 9).

Hunter of a Good Heart. These hunters, though, were not just hunters. They not only provided food for the group, but also served as educators and had spiritual leaders about the lives of the regional animals. “[The hunter] had to have a[n]...intimate knowledge of the animals he hunted, but also a deep and abiding respect for their nature, procreation, and continuance as species (Cajete 1999, 9). They needed to know where the animals, prey, and predators alike, lived and what their movement patterns were. The Hunter of Good Heart needed to know how much he could hunt from the environment without damaging the precarious balance. They were also responsible for education and teaching others, future hunters and the general populace alike. The Hunter of Good Heart, aside from telling stories from their experiences, also used animals as myths to maintain their relationship with culture. These myths could be easily passed down through the generations while maintaining the important relationship-based knowledge.

Descriptions and Function of Mexican Traditional Medicine

Now that a description has been established as to what constitutes a traditional healer, what then constitutes traditional medicine (in this case, *Curanderismo*)? There are many theories on the subject of where *Curanderismo* came from and how it came about. One is that it came about from the mixture of the many cultures present in México at the time of colonization. According to Avila, “[it’s] a medicine that developed, in large part, from the incredible healing that took place from that encounter between Europeans, Indians, Africans and their offspring” (Avila 1999, 28). Yet, how much of these is actually something that is indigenous to the peoples from this continent? De la Portilla gives a quote that will later help explain how something can be determined Indigenous rather than a mixture:

“...all around us is energy (power)—it has always been there and it always will be. We are drawn to this energy and it gives us meaning. We can learn to manipulate and make it purposeful, but always the connection to the energy outside of our bodies continues; it is this bond that makes us whole” (de la Portilla 2009, 115).

The Mixture of Traditional Medicines

First of all, let's explore the topic of how the mixture of these three cultures brought about the start of *curanderismo*. *Curanderismo* (and Traditional Medicine thereof) is viewed as complementary or alternative medicine rather than for what it is: an “authentic” system of holistic healing believed in by many people of the continent. However, many others, especially those immersed in western culture and in the medical field still believe that *curanderismo* is nothing but a hoax and that it does not work at all. Nonetheless, according to Walter Hollow, there is evidence that proves that more traditional people tend to in a better mental state (Hollow 31).

There are many things that are embedded in *curanderismo*; many different philosophies and ideologies that merge into one unique system of healing. It has roots, as mentioned earlier, in the combination of Indigenous, Spanish, and African heritages, but also adapts to the modern times as well. It took the different belief systems, including the Spanish which had already been previously blended: “the Hispano-Arabic medical system contributed two important theories to Mexican-American folk medicine [...] the idea that consists of a balanced condition...[and 2]) that medicinal remedies can be discovered in plants and animals (de la Portilla 2009, 63). Right before the Spanish arrived to the “New World”, they had just broken free from the control of the

Moors, but by that time there already was a heavy Arab influence in Spanish culture. The other two belief systems, Indigenous and African, were more similar in their beliefs, such as in their ancestors and a connection to the earth. It is basically the belief that *curanderos* will keep adapting to the current times and adopt that which they feel is necessary in order to provide the best service possible. However, this does not mean that they've lost touch with their Indigenous practices.

The Indigeneity of Traditional Medicine

Now: how do we identify that which is Indigenous? How do we find what parts and pieces from traditional healing (specifically *Curanderismo*) were part of the Indigenous culture of the continent before the arrival of foreigners? First of all, we must recognize that there are cultures that share similar traits with Amerindigenous/Mesoamerican cultures, but that they will have their own unique traits that distinguish them from each other. Following are examples of such traits to help us recognize what is indigenous and what isn't, or at least to know that even though it might look like something else, it is still indigenous.

Mayan Healing. García et al. (1999) write about the ancient healing systems the Mayas used for healing such as *talladas* and jet, massage and acupressure and acupuncture. If one were to look at this, one would probably think that the Mayas took these concepts from Chinese medicine; however, that is not the case. The Mayas were some of the most advanced civilizations of the Americas and it should not be surprising that their medicinal knowledge included concepts such as these to cure ailments. Massage, for example, was used for bone mending or bone setting, muscular problems, preparing women for birthing, and acupressure (García et al.). In *Curanderismo*, these same principles apply today: there are *sobaroderes*, or masseurs, who work with different aspects of healing such as bone setting, relaxation, and even for curing *empacho* (that is, when there is something stuck in the intestinal track) (Avila 1999); this, clearly, is not something that was taken from Chinese medicine, so anything that is used to heal things like this can definitely trace itself back to Indigenous cultures. Another example, perhaps not too well known, is how to cure swollen tonsils. This has to do with massage and acupressure; basically, a *sobador* or anyone who knows how to do this can massage different parts of the body (mainly the hands and arms) at different locations and "break" the tonsils ("*quebrar anginas*").

The Soul and Dualities. By far one of the most important concepts of Indigenous medicine the idea of the soul (the tonalli) and spiritual healing. It is an Indigenous belief that illnesses can have a direct effect on the tonalli, causing us to lose part of it during different types of experience either because we are not prepared to handle them or because they are traumatic (Furst 1995); such of these include having sexual relationships at a young age, aging and losing our fire, and the loss of it due to a change in body temperature. This in turn connects with the Indigenous concept of duality and balance. Just as Professor Patricia Gonzales pointed out in her class, a traditional healer must also be aware of these two concepts and the effects they have on the human body. A person might be hot or cold, depending on the situation, and a healer must know which plants and minerals and ceremonial objects will help bring equilibrium between the dualities; prescribing the wrong treatment or performing ceremonies that do not follow these ideas can result in the person getting worse. Maya Indians, for example, can “explain the properties of medicinal plants by no other means” (López Austin 1988, 274).

In Western Medicine, according to Hollow and as mentioned previously, they do not bother with finding out the spiritual cause of the trauma or the cause of the illness (and therefore do not deal with dualities in the sense described above); in fact, they believe that illness is all physical.

Syncretism. And finally, the most characteristic thing of Indigenous medicine is that even though syncretism suggests a mixture of religious ideologies, the Indigenous peoples used it as a way to practice their Indigenous ways without fear of persecution from the Church. The Church, in turn saw this as a way to start introducing Christianity to the Indigenous people, since it would allow them to connect more with this system; however, they did not count on how strong this would become and today it is widely used by those who know traditional medicine (though not all) (Gonzales). Today, the icons and ideologies of the mixture are used, like mentioned above, but the core of these beliefs is based on Indigenous culture and medicinal knowledge that has transcended through the centuries, from generation to generation, to the present day.

The Characteristics of Traditional Healers

Why Curanderos?

So then, why is it that more and more people are choosing to go see a *Curandero*? Simply put in Elena

Avila's words, "*curanderas* have insights into the way a patient perceives [his or] her own illness within the context of [his or] her personal values, family, and culture" (Avila 1999, 19). They are becoming dissatisfied with western medicine because it does not suit their needs, because it does not give the individual the personal attention he should be given. It is "a medical system that encourages people not to ask questions and to accept blindly the treatments and prescriptions of a doctor, and teaches nothing about preventive measures, nutrition, or how to maintain emotional health is lacking the most basic tenets of health *care*" (Avila 1999, 37). Basically, it doesn't always have the cultural competency necessary to comprehend a person's unique cultural beliefs and "people are beginning to realize that science and technology cannot provide all the answers in the healing profession" (Avila 1999, 22); and it also doesn't help that very "traditional" doctors look down on people who want a more holistic approach to curing their ailments, saying that it's because "it's cheaper" and people (referring specifically to Mexicans and Mexican Americans, along with other Latin-Americans) "cannot afford better care" (Avila 1999, 36). And what do these people say about western medicine: they are frustrated because "it lacks heart" (Avila 1999, 37). Finally, coming back to the cultural competency of a person, a medical doctor will not necessarily understand cultural terms such as *bilis*, *susto*, *empacho* and others; *curanderos* will. They know how to treat physical, emotional/mental, and spiritual illnesses.

The Middle Ground. Still, other individuals decide to use both systems and try to find culturally competent doctors that can help them without judging them because of their beliefs or use of *Curanderismo* (or use of any Indigenous or traditional practices). Some people are even urging using both since because the combination of trainings and ideologies can help treat different illnesses more efficiently. Elena Avila and de la Portilla were trained as *curanderas*, but they both have their university degrees, one in nursing and the other in anthropology respectively. They first got involved in *Curanderismo* through research, something that changed their lives:

"Human beings—along with animals, plants, minerals, water, earth, air, fire—are part of the living system...[and] that is not enough to heal the body. One must heal the wounded soul as well" (Avila 1999, 19).

Back on this topic of the middle ground, according to de la Portilla, *Curanderismo* is the middle ground, offering their services and helping patients as best as they can; however, Avila also points out that there are times when one does need to make referrals to medical doctors, not necessarily because a *curandera* doesn't

know what she's doing but because she knows who is the best person for the a specific kind of job if it doesn't necessarily require spiritual healing (ex. massage therapy). Hollow, on this same topic, also points out that "patients who use both systems are probably closer to the ideal of holistic care (Hollow 35). He points out the importance of medical doctors having the patience and the cultural competency (along with the language competency, for that matter) when dealing with people who believe in ailments such as *susto* or *bilis*: "Western Medicine should make a commitment to develop a cooperative spirit to create opportunities in which traditional healers can work side by side as peers in the care of...patients" (Hollow 37). Another source, Native American Nurse Roxanne Struthers, mentions the use of a model that she implements in her work, which yields better results in the patients: the Conceptual Model. It stresses the importance of relationships, traditions, and spirituality, to give a patient the care and proper attention that he or she requires (Struthers 266). And sometimes, as Dr. Arviso Alvard (the first Navajo woman surgeon to graduate from Harvard College of Medicine) experienced herself, it may sometime be necessary, if the medical healthcare provider is indigenous, to reconnect with those roots, those traditions, in order to become a better medical doctor for a community that is not comfortable with Western Medicine methods.

Differentiating between healers, doctors, and charlatans

Nowadays, when most people envision a healer they think of a person in a white coat with shiny sterile tools, or they think of a person covered in bones, face paint, incense and smoke swirling around them. Both visions are accurate, albeit extremes, of healers. Healers are people whose medical authority and medicinal knowledge exists on a continuum with equally diverse expressions of their healing arts.

Curanderismo. "An earthy, natural, grounded health-care system that seeks to keep all the elements of our being in balance" (Avila 1999, 19). Initially, the group of people who would later be called *curanderas* did not have governmentally authorized groups to mandate their status. They were men and women in the community whose healing talents, skills, and knowledge brought others to them. When the Spaniards came over in the early 16th century, they brought their medical review board, the *Protomédicato*, which "meant that [the traditional] healers would need official license in order to practice medicine" (Sowell 2005, 17). It was this review board that

entitled the traditional healers *Curanderismo*. *Curanderismo* was a blanket term used to refer to any person who, according to Sowell:

- Appealed to the support of higher, non-God “deities”
- Used hallucinogenic materials to enter trances and discourse with the “gods”
- Used pre-conquest statues and images during healings
- Used divination as a diagnostic tool

In addition, many *curanderos* maintained the belief that all beings of this earth are part of the living system and “it [was] not enough to heal the body...[but] the wounded soul as well” (Avila 1999, 19). *Curanderos* saw healing as a holistic process that actively included the patient; where as *medicos* (briefly discussed below), doctors authorized by Spain, saw healing as a heroic effort against an illness and the patient’s only participation was as “the battle field”.

Médicos. “Hispanic doctors authorized to practice medicine” (Sowell 2005, 16). Unlike the *curandero*, the *medicos* were people authorized by the *Protomédicato* to practice medicine in accordance to Spanish law. Some of the doctors authorized by the *Protomédicato* were sometimes reclassified as *amantecas*, a lesser status of a doctor.

Charlatans. These are “healers” who “were more likely familiar with scientific knowledge, but lacked the degree of formal authorization that would permit them to legally practice medicine” (Sowell 2005, 20). These are men and women who the *Protomédicato* would not approve and would end up practicing as *curanderos*. This was specially problematic for the actual *curanderos* as the charlatans came to be the face of the *curanderos* and diminished the effectiveness/legitimacy that the actual *curanderos* provided.

Traditional Healing

Curanderas, traditional healers, herbalists and cultural natives are among the many individuals who encompass the passion, love, calling, and connection to nature and the spiritual world required for the use of herbs. They have discovered various methods of handling plants/herbs and applying them medicinally and spiritually to others as a natural healing method. As the earth and plants evolve, so do the methods of proper plant handling

change from different cultures, beliefs and regions all around the world. Western medicine unlike MTM has many distinct guidelines of usage and dosage due to the harmful chemicals and do not usually require pre-treatment instructions, such as smudging or clipping. On the other hand, in preparation for ingesting or using herbal remedies there are many factors that involve paying respect to the plants/herbs and properly using them with positive energy and a healthy well-being, in contrast to western medicines that are already conveniently prepared, adapted to the Western lifestyle, yet at the same losing that spiritual connection required for the positive energy in traditional remedies to be at its utmost potential (Johnston 2006).

Proper Herb Handling Techniques

Permission/Acknowledgements. Before a traditional healer removes plants from nature's raw environment, the healer must ask permission from the plant prior to using it as an essential tool in order to cure the sick and broken hearted (Gonzalez, P). Traditional healing and herbal usage together have been strongly connected with ancestors and the unseen spiritual world. For this reason, a traditional healer must ask permission from the spirit before cutting the plant, taking the time to acknowledge the sacrificial meaning of taking one life to restore and strengthen another, as well as also taking in to consideration the commitment and trust the plant has in the individual that their intentions of surrendering its life are positive, truthful and only used for the better good.

Smudging. Depending on the Traditional healer and treatment type there are a variety of plants used for smudging prior to a treatment. An example of which plants could be used in smudging are sage, cedar and sweet grass. When sage is burned during the first part of a ceremony its treatment is used for the prevention of negative energy, influences, spirits and sickness (Gonzalez, P). Smudge smoke is considered a large and significant part of alternative treatments because the smoke is blessed and will trap negative energies, forces or entities. The purpose of smudge smoke is seen overall as a cleansing and purification mechanism (Coyote 2007). Depending on the Traditional healer or *curandera*, smudging can be performed annually, bi monthly, by the new moon cycle, seasonally, bi weekly etc. The most common places for smudging are on house blessings, prior to treatment on individuals, prior to the preparation of medicinal herbal salves, syrups and tincture remedies. There are various ways of preparing a smudge such as: burning in a clay bowl, dish or tying a bundle stick together and

burning one end.

Gathering. Along with the proper herb handling techniques, there are universal methods of clipping certain herbs and plants in a way where you conserve and use most of all the portion of the plant you are clipping. As the individual who is handling the plant, protecting as many of the functional and useful parts of the plant in order to ensure that the sacrifice the plant has made for the sake of the healing process is essential. The main objective of precisely cutting or clipping plants is so nothing is wasted or goes unused. According to Dr. Partisia Gonzales, when gathering and clipping plants she explains in her University of Arizona lectures to her students when they ask why she is saving the stems of the creosote bush she is taking the leaves off of in preparation of making a tincture. She replies in Spanish, “Tira nada” meaning “Do not throw anything away.” There are many uses for every part of a plant whether it’s leaves, stems or possibly seeds. For example, a Creosote bush (also commonly known as Chaparral) contains leaves, small flowers of a yellow hue, white fluffy seed capsules and stems (Mojave Desert 2001). It can be used externally on skin as a salve or part of a *limpia*. Alternatively, it can be used internally as a tea or tincture. Making a tincture requires the leaves of the Creosote bush mixed with highly potent drinking alcohol and water. After the leaves are used, the stems can be used for teas, tinctures or compounding parts of *limpias* depending on the healer. Another example is Savila (Aloe Vera) clippings; one must cut the sharp-ridged ends away from them in order to ensure safety and proper plant handling skills (Coyote 2007). After removing the outer edges of the Savila it is cut down the middle, exposing the slimy and gooey inside for multiple uses. According to the saying “Tira nada,” you can apply the left over Savila skins once you have extracted the inside and apply it to your face preventing acne, skin wrinkles and burned skin.

The Multifaceted Effects of Medicine

Herbs and plants have many alternative uses and methods of uses. A plant or herb can be ingested internally by creating jams, teas, tinctures or syrups; however, they can be used externally by applying to affected areas of the human body, for example in the form of salve applied to irritated skin or soap can be made and used in a bath. Effects vary by administration and in accordance to individual sicknesses and diseases. Plants have multi-faceted uses that by taking that plant and utilizing all the effective parts and not wasting any of it, can help

various pains, aches and in many cases spiritual guidance. "Herbal combinations are common based on the doctor's experience and knowledge of the plants. It is understood that there are plants which help each other, augmenting the affects of other plants in synergistic way, and that there are other plants which are incompatible." (Balam et al. 1999, 80).

Some traditional healers believe in mixing hot and cold plants while others view them as incompatible. On the other hand combining plants that are compatible, you would have an increase in the strengths of the multifaceted effects. The following list of herbs has many uses in traditional medicine and can be used in various forms internally and externally according to the curanderos in the states of the Yucatán and Campeche (Balam et al. 1999, 81).

Garlic aids in respiratory asthma and bronchitis, can be used externally on burns, and helps treat rheumatism. Sesame for the most part helps aid in women with irregular menstruation, absence of lactation, skin abscess and varicose veins. Anis is medicinally used for diabetes, diarrhea, dysentery, fever, bruising, flu, cough, scabies, skin abscess and the "supernatural" healing of evil eye. Corn silk aids with bladder infections (UTI) and painful urination. Boldo assists in gallbladder diseases, burns and pellagra. Horsetail medicinally helps with bladder infections, diarrhea, worms, dysentery and menstrual irregularities (Balam et al. 1999, 81)

Skullcap. Is commonly used as an anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, astringent, sedative and is said to be strongly tonic. In recent scientific studies show Skullcap to be helpful plant in many areas for mental disorders, nerve disorders and ADD. It has numerous treatments of nervous conditions including: epilepsy, insomnia, hysteria, anxiety, delirium tremens, and withdrawal from barbiturates. An infusion of Skullcap promotes menstruation and treats throat infections. Symptoms include: headaches, neuralgia and in headache arising from incessant coughing, pain, and inducing sleep when necessary (Bergeron 1997).

Yarrow. Antiseptic, astringent, carminative, diaphoretic, digestive, stimulant. Helps against colds, cramps, fevers, kidney disorders, toothaches, skin irritations, and hemorrhages, and to regulate menses, stimulate the flow of bile, and purification of blood. Yarrow teas aid in flu symptoms, stomach ulcers, amenorrhea, abdominal cramps, abscesses, trauma and bleeding, and reduce inflammation (Bergeron 1997).

There are also diseases that have multiple herbs for various treatment methods. In western medicine

there are highly addictive medications prescribed to patients with anxiety disorder. With alternative medicine, anxiety disorders can be treated with a multiple variety of herbs such as: sage, skull cap, willow bark, St. Johns Wart, verbena, rosemary, peppermint, mullen, lemon balm, lavender, ginseng, catnip, chamomile, california poppy, fennel, fever flow, passion flower (Bergeron 1997).

Conclusion

Curanderismo, or traditional healing, is a time-tested method of healing the body, providing many benefits such as individualized care that is culturally and spiritually adapted to the patient. It provides many benefits that western medicine does not, channeling energy that only specially gifted curanderos, or healers, can access, making traditional medicine an elaborate method of healing that is not given sufficient credit today in comparison to Western Medicine. To be effective, the healer must have a "don" culturally and spiritually and the ability of understanding the individual they are treating, and must have a strong connection to the natural and spiritual worlds that is required to ask permission to sacrifice the herb or to properly handle and prepare the herbs, whether in a tincture, balm, oil, capsules, infusions, salve, soap, syrup, or even smoked or ingested (Gonzalez, P). Curanderos pay special attention to each individual patient they have, only figuring out a natural cure after they have learned the patient and what is ailing them, whereas the more convenient and chemical prescription pills in western medicine provide a temporary remedy to treat the ailment itself, but not adapted to an individual and their needs. However, used effectively, and utilizing their maximum potential, both western and traditional medicine, can in some cases, provide a cure to some diseases that neither can cure alone, suggesting a call for a more integrated view of medicine, where more natural methods and individualized care are used and the patient can be satisfied and secure that they have all the answers. Only in this world, where care is given to the patient instead of the disease itself, can more people be healthy and balanced: physically, emotionally, and spiritually (Avila 1991, 19).





Immune System Booster



Wojapi

Ingredient List

- 4-5 cups fresh choke cherries
(red cherries are a cousin or red wild cherries preferably growing wild)
- 1/2 cup water
- Honey or agave syrup
- Cornstarch

Directions:

- Wash the fruit and place in bowl or molcajete and mash. In the old days, the seeds were ground into the fruit to make a gritty paste
- Add fruit and water to large saucepan and bring to boil—be careful not to scorch the fruit
- Lower heat to a simmer and cook for about an hour, constantly checking. If the fruit lacks sweetness you can add honey or agave—add a teaspoon at a time. If you want the mixture to be thicker, either continue to simmer and “reduce” the mix (that is, the liquid evaporates rendering the taste more intense and the mix thicker) or add a small amount of cornstarch.
- If you choose to do this, place 1 tablespoon of cornstarch into a cup and add cold water and Mix
- Stir until you have a desired consistency (add more water or starch if needed).
- Turn down the heat on your fruit, then slowly add to berries and stir constantly so that it does not lump. Serve hot or room temperature. You can add a little vanilla for taste.

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Contributed by: Lakota and U'monha Nations

Ear Pain (Ear Infection)

Diane Gillman's Ear Pain Remedy



Ingredient List

Warm water
1 wash cloth

Directions:

- Run washcloth under warm water and wring out
- Ask the ill person to lay on their side, afflicted ear up
- Place warm wash cloth over affected ear



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Coughs, Chest/Stomach Ailments

Cold Syrup

Ingredient List

Water
2 cinnamon sticks
1-2 avocado pits
2 apples
1 clove of garlic
Eucalyptus

Rosemary
3 fingers mullein
Creosote
Fresh Oregano
Yerba Mansa
Honey
Vodka (as a preservative)
*Bougainvillea, Ocotillo and Osha can
also be used in this recipe.

Directions:

- Cut avocado pit in quarters. Cut up the two apples except for the core
- Cut up eucalyptus and break up the rosemary, and yerba mansa (about a handful measure or less depending on how much you are making)
- In a medium sized pot put all the herbs, apples and diced avocado pit and cover with water. Bring to boil for about 45 minutes, stir occasionally.
- Strain, and press out herbs with muslin. Place strained herbs back in the pot.
- Add 2 to 4 cups of honey depending on the amount of syrup that is being made.
- Cook for another 20 minutes. Let it stand and cool
- Finally add 3 to five shots of vodka (about one shot per cup of water)
- Place in pre-washed glass container. Stores for approximately 3 months.



Personal Notes



Cold Ginger Cold Remedy



Ingredient List

Fresh ginger
Hot water
Honey

Directions:

- Cut ginger into 10 thick slices
- Place into water and bring to a boil
- If the resulting tea is not palatable, add honey to taste
- Tea should be drank hot



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Nasal Discharge



Runny Nose Tea

Ingredient List

Fresh manzanilla
Fresh lime
Honey
Hot water

Directions:

- Boil the water
- Pour over Manzanilla
- Squeeze in fresh lime
- Stir in honey
- Let steep
- Remove plant matter and drink

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Contributed by: Zamudio Family







Cough Té de Oregano

Ingredient List

1 tsp dried oregano
Hot water

Directions:

- Pour boiling water over dried oregano
- Let steep for 3min
- Strain out the plant matter
- Drink the tea

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Contributed by: Loustaunau Family

Sore Throat /Cold

Limón Con Miel



Ingredient List

1 fresh lemon
1 large spoonful of honey

Directions:

- Squeeze the lemon juice into a glass
- Strain seeds from glass
- Drink down the juice
- Take the spoonful of honey



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Coughs, Chest/Stomach Ailments

Cold Syrup

Ingredient List

Water
2 cinnamon sticks
1-2 avocado pits
2 apples
1 clove of garlic
Eucalyptus

Rosemary
3 fingers mullein
Creosote
Fresh Oregano
Yerba Mansa
Honey
Vodka (as a preservative)
*Bougainvillea, Ocotillo and Osha can
also be used in this recipe.

Directions:

- Cut avocado pit in quarters. Cut up the two apples except for the core
- Cut up eucalyptus and break up the rosemary, and yerba mansa (about a handful measure or less depending on how much you are making)
- In a medium sized pot put all the herbs, apples and diced avocado pit and cover with water. Bring to boil for about 45 minutes, stir occasionally.
- Strain, and press out herbs with muslin. Place strained herbs back in the pot.
- Add 2 to 4 cups of honey depending on the amount of syrup that is being made.
- Cook for another 20 minutes. Let it stand and cool
- Finally add 3 to five shots of vodka (about one shot per cup of water)
- Place in pre-washed glass container. Stores for approximately 3 months.



Personal Notes



Contributed by: Syrups, Pomades, Plaster AIS/MAS 435/535 Spring 2011 Group

Throat Pain Sore Throat Cure



Ingredient List

A handkerchief
Some rubbing alcohol
A Match

Directions:

- Take the handkerchief and soak the middle portion with rubbing alcohol
- Light the soaked portion with the match
- Quickly smother the flames with the dry portions of the handkerchief
- Immediately place the handkerchief over the mouth and inhale



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Contributed by: Laura Sofia Monte Sujo's Grandmother



Sore Throat



Milly Gillman's Sore Throat Remedy

Ingredient List

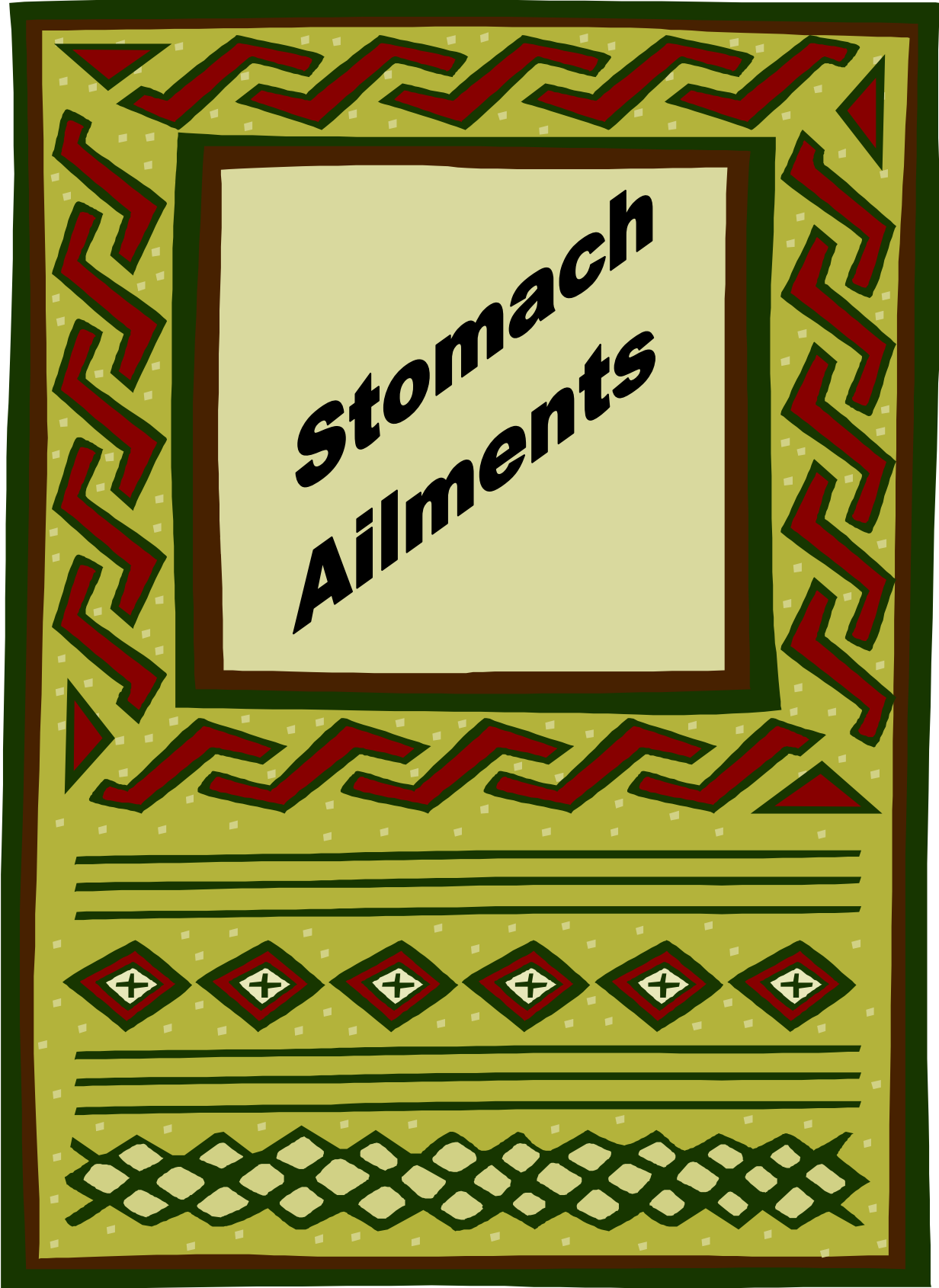
- 1 whole lemon
- 1 tbs honey

Directions:

- Squeeze and heat the juice of one lemon
- Add one tablespoon of honey
- Swallow to relieve sore throat

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Contributed by: Milly Gillman





Intestinal Gas

Empacho Message

Ingredient List



Hands
Baby oil / baby lotion

Directions:

- Place one hand on top of the other
- Find the portion of the stomach where the intestine are gurgling
- Focus message there

Additional Notes

- Seek a professional with experience using this procedure rather than performing it your self

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Contributed by: Zamudio Family

Nausea/Gas

Mint Tea



Ingredient List

2 spoonfuls dried spearmint leaves
1 spoonful dried wintergreen leaves

Directions:

- Heat water in kettle until just before boiling
- Place the strainer into the large opening of the teapot (when filled, a portion of the strainer needs to be submerged in the water)
- Fill the strainer with the plant material
- Pour water over the plant material
- Let this steep for about 5min (the color of the water should change from clear to dark amber or brown)
- Remove the strainer and plant material
- Pour into the tea into a cup and drink hot



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Coughs, Chest/Stomach Ailments

Cold Syrup



Ingredient List

Water
2 cinnamon sticks
1-2 avocado pits
2 apples
1 clove of garlic
Eucalyptus

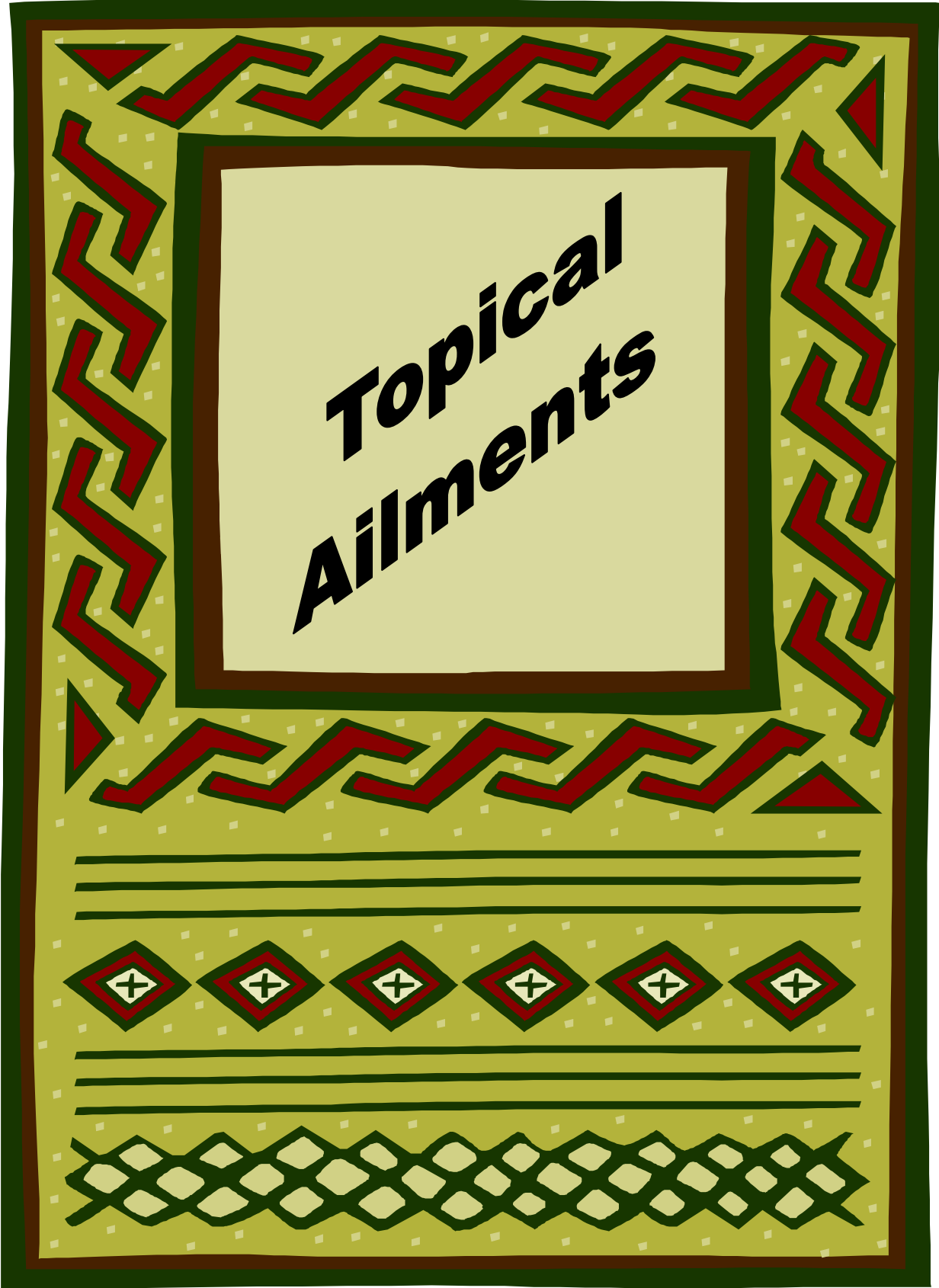
Rosemary
3 fingers mullein
Creosote
Fresh Oregano
Yerba Mansa
Honey
Vodka (as a preservative)
*Bougainvillea, Ocotillo and Osha can
also be used in this recipe.

Directions:

- Cut avocado pit in quarters. Cut up the two apples except for the core
- Cut up eucalyptus and break up the rosemary, and yerba mansa (about a handful measure or less depending on how much you are making)
- In a medium sized pot put all the herbs, apples and diced avocado pit and cover with water. Bring to boil for about 45 minutes, stir occasionally.
- Strain, and press out herbs with muslin. Place strained herbs back in the pot.
- Add 2 to 4 cups of honey depending on the amount of syrup that is being made.
- Cook for another 20 minutes. Let it stand and cool
- Finally add 3 to five shots of vodka (about one shot per cup of water)
- Place in pre-washed glass container. Stores for approximately 3 months.

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Contributed by: Syrups, Pomades, Plaster AIS/MAS 435/535 Spring 2011 Group





Swelling (Minor Injury)

Gillman Swelling



Recipe

Ingredient List

- 1 Bag frozen vegetables (peas or corn)
- 1 Towel

Directions:

- Apply bag to site of injury to reduce swelling
- If the cold causes discomfort the bag can be wrapped in a towel

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Contributed by: Gillman Family

Skin Ailments

Comfrey Salve

Ingredient List



- 2 cups good quality olive oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh comfrey leaves (or 1 tbs dried comfrey)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lavender flowers (or 1 tbs dried lavender flowers)
- 2 tablespoons fresh calendula flowers (or 1 tbs dried calendula flowers)
- 1/2 cup beeswax or Vaseline

Directions:

- Gently warm the olive oil and the herbs in a pot. Warm it altogether for about 30 minutes.
- Stir frequently. It should bubble a bit at the edges, but not throughout the mixture. Do not let it boil though!
- Strain out the oil by pouring through a strainer.
- Discard herbs and reserve oil.
- In another pot melt your beeswax or vaseline. Once melted, add the strained oil and stir until completely blended.
- Pour the mixture into jars or salve tins.

This comfrey salve is good for just about any skin ailment; bruises, cuts, burns and bites. Comfrey is one of the most famed healing plants. It promotes the growth of connective tissue and is easily absorbed through the skin. Calendula is an astringent as well as lavender, which also have antibacterial properties.



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Muscle Pain



Aloe Strips

Ingredient List

- 1 Freshly cut aloe leaf
- Olive Oil
- Small Paring Knife
- Small to Medium Pan

Directions:

- Pare the spines off the sides of the aloe leaf using a sharp knife
- Use the knife to divide the aloe, lengthwise, through the inner gel substance
- Place the two pieces, gel side up, aside for the moment
- Place the pan on top the oven burner and set to low
- Add enough oil to the pan to cover the bottom with a thin layer of oil
- Once the oil is warm-hot, but not popping, place the aloe gel-side down onto the oil
- When the back of the aloe is warm to the touch, remove the leaf from the heat; the goal is to warm the gel portion NOT to cook it
- Test aloe's temperature by holding it in your hand; if it is too cool, place it back in the pan; if it is too hot set it aside to cool, DON'T blow on the leaf to cool it
- Place the leaf over the area of the sore muscle until the leaf is cool to the touch

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Contributed by: Doctor Patrisia Gonzales

Pain/Burns

Creosote Aloe Vera

Salve



Ingredient List

Aloe Vera
Creosote/Gobenadora
Vaseline
Vitamin E (Capsule or 1 tsp)

Directions:

- Cut up gobenadora. Deleaf and put leaves in blender to chop up. Place in a mason jar with water and set in the sun for a few hours.
- Cut open leaf and scrape out pulp of the aloe. Blend pulp in blender and add to pot on stove.
- Cook savila in petroleum jelly on low heat.
- Take the sun tea and strain and add to melted savila. Cool and bottle. Add vitamin E to preserve. Stores for 3 months.



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Skin Ailments

Basic Clay Plaster

Ingredient List

Clay
Water

Directions:

- Mix equal parts clay with equal parts water in a bowl
- Stir until it becomes a smooth paste consistency (add more clay or water if needed). Apply to affected area.

This clay paste can be applied directly to skin for acne, ulcers, burns, athlete's foot, shingles and cold sores; insect bites and stings, poison oak, poison ivy and rashes. When using hot water to make warm clay, it can also be applied to sore or inflamed areas and covered with a warm cloth to retain the heat. Cold clay can be used alternating with warm poultices for chronic pain.

Alternatives

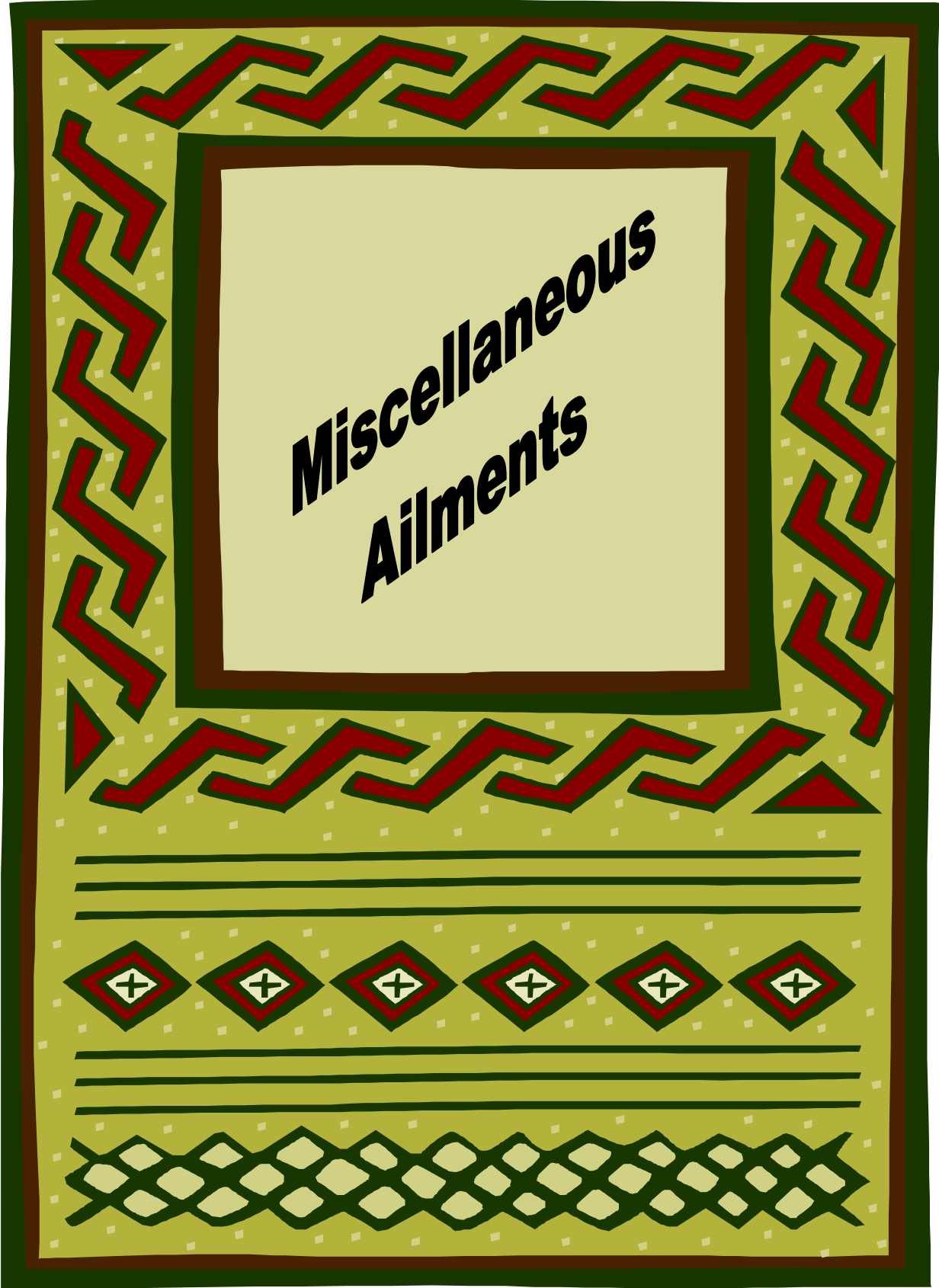
- Use an herbal tea instead of water to mix with the clay
- Use the clay as a medium for applying a plaster of herbs. Mix the desired herbs into the clay, spread on a cloth and put on the affected area. Cover the cloth to keep it warm and hold it in place
- Oil can be put on the skin before applying the clay to make it easier to remove later



Personal Notes



Contributed by: Syrups, Pomades, Plaster AIS/MAS 435/535 Spring 2011 Group





Multi-Use Aloe Vera Syrup



Ingredient List

Aloe Vera
1 cup honey
3 tablespoons vodka or whisky

Directions:

- Scrape the interior of one aloe stem
- Mix all the ingredients in blender or with a hand blender
- Store in refrigerator in a sealed glass container

The syrup, taken orally is good for curing ulcers is an anesthetic, may help lower cholesterol and it also helps with constipation. By putting it on the skin it helps heal scars, burns and acne. Take 2 to 3 three times daily, 15 minutes before each meal, for 10 days.

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Mal Ojo

Mal Ojo Ward



Ingredient List

Red Thread

Directions:

- Weave the thread into a bracelet
- Tie the bracelet around the wrist of the child



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Stress Relief Stress Relief Tea

Ingredient List



- 1 spoonful dried lavender flowers
- 1 spoonful dried chamomile flower
- 3-5 pinches dried, ground valerian root
- Honey/Agave Nectar
- Hot water
- Kettle, Teapot & Strainer

Directions:

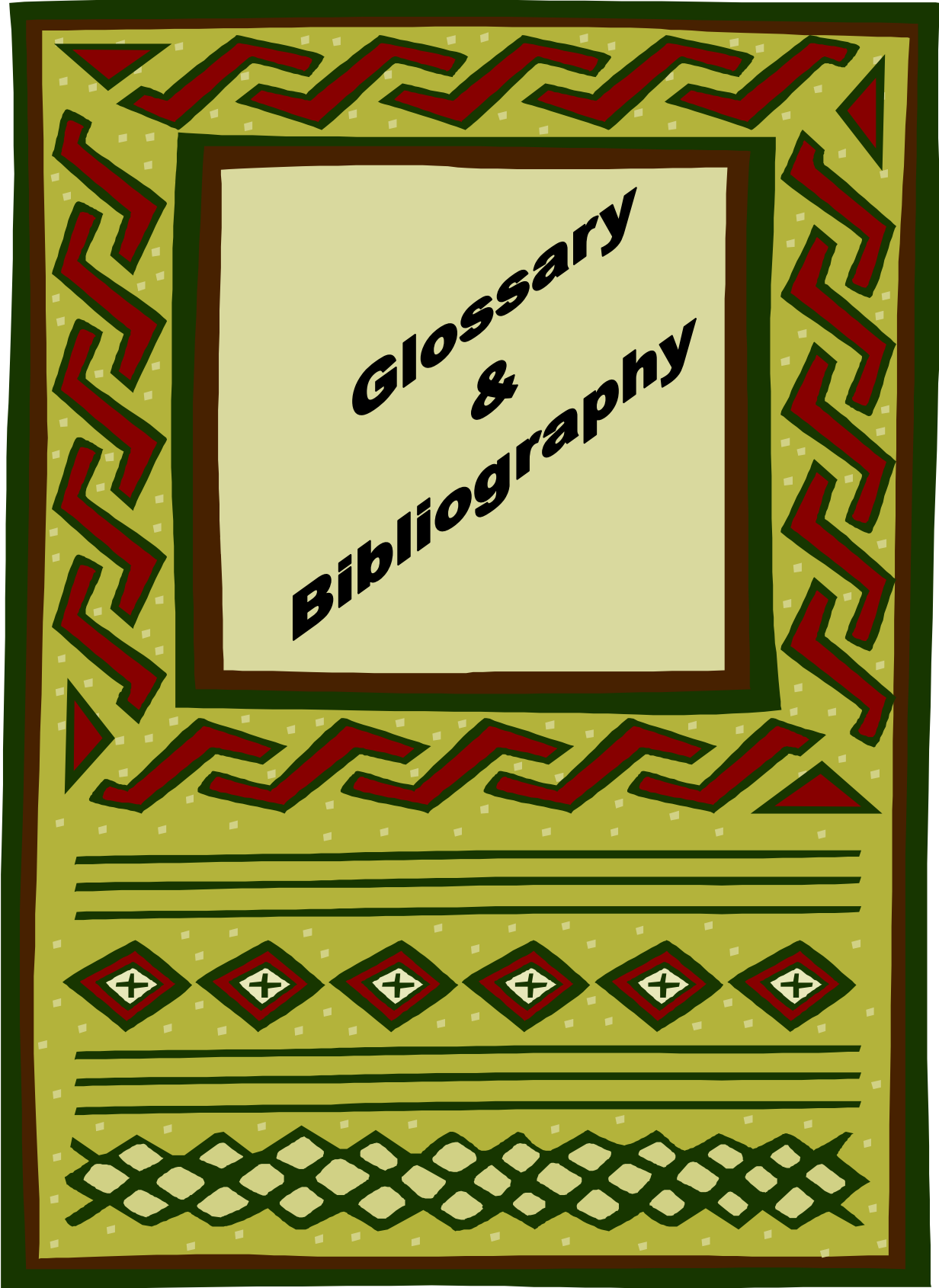
- Heat water in kettle until just before boiling
- Place the strainer into the large opening of the teapot (when filled, a portion of the strainer needs to be submerged in the water)
- Fill the strainer with the plant material
- Pour water over the plant material
- Let this steep for about 5min (the color of the water should change from clear to amber)
- Remove the strainer and plant material
- Pour into the tea into a cup and sweeten with honey to taste

Additional Notes

- Not for continuous, daily use

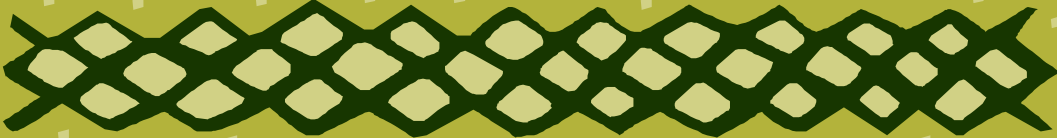
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Contributed by: Derek Knocke



**Glossary
&
Bibliography**







Glossary



Agave - any of numerous American plants belonging to the genus *Agave*, of the *agave family*, species of which are cultivated for economic or ornamental purposes: *A. arizonica*, of central Arizona, is an endangered species.

Agave Syrup - a thick sticky liquid consisting of a concentrated solution of sugar and water with or without the addition of a flavoring agent or medicinal substance made of any of numerous American plants belonging to the genus *Agave*, of the *agave family*, species of which are cultivated for economic or ornamental purposes: *A. arizonica*, of central Arizona, is an endangered species.

Aloe - any chiefly African shrub belonging to the genus *Aloe*, of the *lily family*, certain species of which yield a fiber.

Apples - the usually round, red, yellow or green edible fruit of a small tree

Avocado Pits - the seed that is inside the avocado, a large, usually pear-shaped fruit having green to black skin, a single large seed (the pit), and soft, light green pulp

Bougainvillea - native to S. America, having small flowers with showy, variously colored leaves, and often cultivated in warm regions.

Calendula Flowers - Also called pot marigold. a composite plant, *Calendula officinalis*, widely cultivated for its showy, many-rayed orange or yellow flower heads.

Chamomile - a composite plant, *Chamaemelum nobile* (or *Anthemis nobilis*), native to the Old world, having strongly scented foliage and white ray flowers with yellow centers used medicinally and as a tea.

Choke Cherries - any of several cherries, especially *Prunus virginiana*, of North America, that bear an astringent fruit.

Cinnamon Sticks - a rolled stick from the aromatic bark of the tropical East Indian cinnamon tree, especially used to flavor hot beverages.

Clay - a natural earthy material that is plastic when wet, consisting essentially of hydrated silicates of aluminum: used for making bricks, pottery, etc.

Clove of Garlic - one of the small bublets that can be split off of the axis of a large garlic bulb.

Comfrey Leaves - any coarse Eurasian plant belonging to the genus *Symphytum*, of the borage family, as the widely cultivated *S. officinale*, having hairy, lance-shaped leaves and drooping clusters of small, white, rose-colored, or purplish flowers.

Cornstarch - a starch or a starchy flour made from corn and used for thickening gravies and sauces, making puddings, etc.

Creosote (Bush) - a shrub of arid regions of the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico, having yellow flowers and resinous foliage with a strong odor.

Eucalyptus - any of numerous, often tall trees belonging to the genus *Eucalyptus*, of the *myrtle family*, native to Australia and adjacent islands, having aromatic evergreen leaves that are the source of medicinal oils and heavy wood used as timber.



Glossary



Ginger - a reed-like plant native to the East Indies but now cultivated in most tropical countries; used as a spice.

Honey - a sweet, viscid fluid produced from by bees from the nectar collected from flowers, and stored in nests or hives as food.

Lavender flowers - any Old world plant or shrub belonging to the genus *Lavandula*, of the mint family, especially *L. angustifolia*, having spikes of fragrant, pale purple flowers.

Lemon- A ripened, edible and usually sour and tasting fruit that is highly acidic.

Lime - he small, greenish-yellow, acid fruit of a citrus tree, *Citrus aurantifolia*, allied to the lemon.

Manzanilla - a composite plant, *Chamaemelum nobile* (or *Anthemis nobilis*), native to the Old world, having strongly scented foliage and white ray flowers with yellow centers used medicinally and as a tea.

Mullein - any of various plants, native to the Eurasia; a tall plant with woolly leaves and a dense spike of yellow flowers.

Nectar - the saccharine secretion of a plant, which attracts the insects or birds that pollinate the flower.

Ocotillo - a spiny, woody shrub of arid regions of the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico, having a tight cluster of red flowers at the tip of each branch.

Olive Oil - an oil expressed from the olive fruit, used in cooking, in salad dressings, in medicine, etc.

Oregano - any of various aromatic mints; the dried leaves are used for seasoning.

Osha- A small plant with white flowers and a brown stem that derived from Europe. A common name for this plant is "bear-root," and is fragrantly spicy.

Rosemary - an evergreen shrub of the mint family, native to the Mediterranean (Europe and Asian Minor) region, having leathery, narrow leaves and pale-blue, bell-shaped flowers, used as seasoning and in perfumery and the source of rosemary oil, formerly used medicinally as a stimulant and carminative.

Spearmint Leaves- Clipped and dried leaves from a fragrant perennial plant (*Mentha spicata*) which characteristics include: green spear-shaped leaves and thin stem structure.

Valerian Root - any plant of the genus *Valeriana*, as the common Valerian *V. officinalis*, having small, fragrant flowers of white, lavender, or pink and a root that is used medicinally.

Vodka - an unaged, colorless, distilled spirit, originally made in Russia; alcoholic beverage; used as a preservative and extractor for leaves.

Wintergreen leaves- Clipped and dried leaves from a shrub/bush type of plant that has small red flowers with green leaves. Leaves are cut, set out to dry and have a crisp fragrance.

YerbaMansa - herb of the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico having a pungent rootstock and small flowers with white leaves suggesting an anemone.

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