

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Gathering and Harvesting Herbs

by Master Herbalist Jo Francks

August 6, 2008

Now is the time to go out and gather your own medicine. If you have been growing herbs or if you want to go out and wildcraft herbs for your own use it is a good time to do so.

I have noticed that in my area there seems to be a bumper crop of valuable herbs growing. I have been harvesting a lot of flowers lately. To harvest flowers, pick off the flower head and dry them in the shade. I've found that shallow boxes, the ones canned food comes in works very well. Line the box with a paper towel, spread the herb or flower in a single layer to dry. I stack the boxes and turn them opposite ways to save space. Just rotate the boxes every day and it will take about a week to dry if you're in the desert like I am.

Storing: After the herb is completely dry, it is ready to store or use as a tea, ointment, tincture, etc. There are a number of ways to store herbs. Remember to keep them in a cool dry place. Amber glass jars work well. If you have the equipment, Mylar bags are ideal and they seal in the freshness. I use re-sealable plastic bags in most cases, and put them in a sealed bucket in a cool room in the basement. Glass jars work well if they are kept out of the light.

These are some of the herbs I have been aggressively gathering so the plants will keep producing all summer.

Chamomile: is soothing to the nerves, aids in digestion, helps reduce swelling.

Calendula: is abundant in medicinal qualities. Increases immune function, is demulcent, and anodyne. It has anti-inflammatory, antiviral and antibacterial effects, and it helps heal wounds quickly. I use this herb in several formulas.

Red Clover Blossoms: Dr. Christopher referred to this herb as an antidote to cancer, and is a very important herb in his blood stream formula. It's used as a blood cleanser.

Mints: Spearmint, Lemon Balm

Comfrey Leaves: Cell proliferant. This is a most wonderful healing and soothing herb. I would never want to be without it. Take care in drying the leaves in a single layer. They contain so much moisture that they spoil if not spread out.

These are just a few of the herbs you will see laid out to dry at my place. In the fall I will be busy turning these efforts into wonderful medicine my family will use through the year to keep us well and healthy.