

What Did You Find on Your Herb Walk? Jo Francks, M.H.

A great way to learn more about herbs is to learn to identify those growing in your area. You don't have to go too far from home to find plants that are useful. One of Dr. Christopher's favorite things to say was to use what was growing under your own fig tree, meaning in your own backyard or the area where you live.

If you have an herb identification book then take it with you and start learning what you can about the plants you see. Try your own yard first, then a vacant lot where you will find many weeds. One person's weed is another person's medicine. Some you might find in your own yard are dandelion, plantain, red clover and alfalfa. You might find in a vacant lot burdock, yellow dock, wild carrot, wild lettuce or milk weed. If you make it a goal to learn an herb or two a week you will soon have a good knowledge of many herbs and what they are good for.

Other ways to identify plants are apps for your phone where you can take a picture and the app will try to identify the picture. You can do an internet search or use an extension agent or local botanist.

This week see if you can find a new plant that you haven't paid attention to before and identify it. Do some research to see if it has some medicinal value. Start a journal and include pictures of the plant, what it is used for and notes about your own experience with it.

A good herb to start with is dandelion. This is a plant familiar to most people who have a backyard. The yellow flowers turn into puff balls which are the seeds and they catch the wind and plant themselves wherever they land. Dandelion leaves are well known to be diuretic and very nutritive. They make a good addition to a salad or green smoothie. The flowers are edible and have similar properties to the leaves. The roots are a good herb to help the liver or to roast and use as a coffee substitute.

Take advantage of the summertime and get out and identify the wonderful plants around you. We hope you are enjoying your summer.

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