

Fennel

Jo Francks, M.H.

This is probably my favorite time of year as an herbalist. There are so many herbs ready to harvest. One in particular I have been watching and tending all summer is fennel. I have enjoyed the fragrance of the fennel plant each time I enter the garden. I nibbled on the feathery leaves, and when the flower buds came out, they were a very tasty treat.

I especially like the ideas I get about what I can do with the plants when I can spend time with them. I took the flower buds of the fennel and made a tincture that I will be using as a flavoring and for medicinal purposes. Fennel has a flavor similar to licorice and anise. It has carminative and antispasmodic properties so it can help expel gas and ease cramping in the digestive tract.

Fennel is often used for colic in babies and is part of Dr. Christopher's Catnip and Fennel tincture. Fennel is also good for the eyes. Once while watching my daughter's soccer game she got scratched in the eye and the coach called out, "Does anyone have some Visine?" I went to my car to get my herbal eyewash and eyecup but remembered I had given my eyewash formula away. I had some catnip and fennel tincture in my bag and decided to use it in the eyecup. The fennel helps with eye problems and the catnip is soothing. I put a few drops of the tincture in the eyecup with some water. When my daughter washed her eye with this it helped take the pain away and soothed the eye. She was grateful I had given my eyewash formula away with the cayenne in it and said she liked the catnip and fennel better.

The bulb and stem of fennel are often sold as a vegetable and can be juiced and used for headaches. Fennel is easy to grow and there are many varieties. It's such a great time of year to harvest so many plants and flowers. Don't forget to save some of the seeds to plant next year.

Jo Francks is a Master Herbalist working at The School of Natural Healing.