

11-12: Donna d'Terra: "Growing Medicinal Herbs: The Hows and Whys, With A Focus on Echinacea"

Welcome

Getting started~ defining medicine

~deciding what herbs to grow

Considerations for cultivation: Native Habitat

~exposure: sun, shade, sun/shade

~water needs

~type of soil: pH, well-drained, boggy, etc.

~size and spacing

~annual, biannual, perennial

~years to maturity and harvest

Featured herb: Echinacea

~Native Habitat: prairies of plains states in central U.S.

~full sun, some shade

~most well draining soils

~3-4' tall and 2-3' wide, spacing 12 to 18 inches apart

~perennial

~roots harvested in late Fall of third year

History: Native Americans of plains states, white settlers, Eclectic Doctors, exported to Europe, reintroduced into U.S.

Medicinal uses: immune booster, infections, healing from wounds, poisonous snakes and insect bites and stings, and much more.

Species used in medicine:

~angustifolia, root can be used fresh or dried; difficult to germinate

~purpurea, root must be used fresh; easy to germinate

Propagation: sowing seeds in Spring, divisions, transplanting plant starts.

Harvesting and using: all parts of Echinacea are medicinal (stem and leaf, least;

flowers and fresh, ripe seed, next; root most medicinal)

~fresh leaves and flowers, infuse in ACV

~eat one fresh leaf daily

~dry flower buds and flowers in their prime for teas

~roots dug in late Fall of third year, wash well and tincture

fresh roots

~whole plant tincture: late Spring/early Summer, tincture fresh leaves, young buds and flowers in their prime of second and third years; add fresh seeds in Fall; add freshly dug, dormant purpurea roots of third year

~harvesting seeds for propagation: when stem under seeded is black and seeds can be shaken loose from dried conehead

A few of the many reasons to grow medicinal herbs:

1. Helping to prevent the loss of wild populations
2. The economics of making your own Medicine
3. The quality of hand-made Medicine
4. The pleasure of being in the garden

Closing

RESOURCES

Recommended books and seed companies (with my comments),

"Medicinal Herbs, A Beginner's Guild", by Rosemary Gladstar, how to grow and use two dozen herbs. (This is an excellent book to get started if you are new to all of this.)

"The Organic Medicinal Herb Farmer", by Jeff and Melanie Carpenter. (This book is a wealth of information on market scale herb cultivation and on specific herbs. A good book for people who are already farmers or gardeners. The authors' farm is on the East Coast and they have a sizable financial investment in infrastructure. Even so, right now this is the most comprehensive book I know of on growing medicinal herbs.)

"The Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm", by Peg Schafer. (This covers small scale organic herb production and Peg's farm is located in Sonoma County, where she is growing many herbs that we might use even if we aren't practicing Chinese medicine, such as Ashwagandha, Sweet Annie, Burdock, Tulsi, and Prunella.)

Strictly Medicinal Seeds, strictlymedicalseeds.com, 541-846-6704, (The most comprehensive medicinal seed source I know of, and includes condensed information on each plant that is based on decades of experience.)

"Quail Seeds, At Home in the Western Garden", quailseeds.com (Owner Jamie Chevalier is a master seed-saver and is based in Mendocino County~ support your local seed companies whenever possible!)

"The Mendocino county Herb Guild", mendocinoherbguild.com (This organization has offered herb festivals, educational outreach, Vitality Tonic (a product using locally sourced ingredients), film nights, class, study groups, a Harvest Dinner (featuring local chefs using locally sourced ingredients), film nights, tables at Farmer's Markets~ all within three short years since being formed. Membership is open to all. Check out the website for more information.)

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