



LIVING AND LOVIN HERBS PODCAST

This document is meant to be a quick reference guide and is not intended to be a detailed glossary of terms. Further research is always necessary / recommended to understand the depth and scope of an herb and its effects.

Legal Disclaimer: *It's important to understand that herbs can interact with some medications. I am not a doctor and this information is for educational purposes only. If you have questions about your health, please consult a medical professional to verify if a specific herb is safe for you to take.*

Herbal Action Reference Guide

Herbalism has its own language and it's therefore important to understand the terminology when researching herbs. Every herb has an "action" or impact on the body - some will have multiple effects while others only slight. You may need to take additional herb(s) in another category to get the desired result.

Adaptogen/Adaptogenic: Helps the body through stressful situations. Adaptogens don't block the stress response but instead smooth out the highs and lows.

Herbalists may use adaptogens to improve the immune system, increase stamina, normalize sexual function and help deal with stress.

Alterative: Herbs that gradually restore proper function to the body and increase overall health and vitality. They facilitate the improvement of the tissue's ability to deal with a range of body functions from nutrition to elimination.

Herbalists may use alternatives for blood toxicity, arthritis, and skin problems.

Anticatarrhal: Helps the body move excess mucus related to upper airway issues.

Herbalists may use anticatarrhal herbs to help reduce mucus associated with cold and flu symptoms.

Anti-Inflammatory: Herbs that help reduce inflammation.

Herbalists may use anti-inflammatory herbs for pain relief in addition to using other remedies that address the underlying problem.

Antimicrobial: Herbs that help the body fight/resist pathogens that attack the body. This category is further broken down into antibacterial, antiviral, etc.

Herbalists understand that some herbs will not have a complete antimicrobial impact on the entire body but may use them nonetheless.



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Antirheumatic: Herbs that improve the quality of life for those with rheumatic problems.

Herbalists understand that herbs in this category are limited in scope than a mechanism for a cure. However, they can be effective in some cases.

Antispasmodic: Herbs that help reduce or prevent muscle spasms / cramps. Many herbs are both antispasmodic and nervine, which help with psychological tension.

Herbalists often like to use herbs containing these two herbal actions, with Lavender being a good example.

Astringent: Herbs or barks that are high in tannins such as green tea, rosemary, raspberry leaf or witch hazel. Witch hazel, for example, has a tightening effect on the skin.

Herbalists often use these types of herbs in skincare products, healing wounds, or aiding digestive issues.

Bitter: Herbs that stimulate and release digestive enzymes that stimulate digestion.

Herbalists use bitters to aid in issues related to the gut and to stimulate appetite.

Cardiac Remedies: This is a broad category and may have different meanings within western medicine. Great care must be taken and research done to understand herbs that affect the heart and blood circulation. Some could be deadly while others have the desired effect and are safe to use.

Herbalists use these herbs to increase blood flow. However, always consult a medical professional before taking any herb for cardiac or circulatory issues.

Carminative: Herbs that relieve discomfort from excess gas in the bowel.

Herbalists have found that many herbs, such as carminatives, have multiple actions.

Cholagogue: Herbs that act as a natural body tonic. These herbs aid the liver in fat digestion and work as a natural laxative cleansing the system.

Herbalists use these herbs as a gentle cleanse. Bitters are often also cholagogues and hepatics, which can be a bonus.



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Demulcent: Herbs that are high in mucilage and soothe / protect irritated and inflamed tissues.

Herbalists have used these herbs for sore throats, colitis, and urinary tract inflammations.

Diuretic: Herbs that aid the body in getting rid of excess fluids.

Herbalists often use these herbs to help with water retention, edema, kidney stones, or urinary tract infections.

Emmenagogue: Herbs that help treat conditions of a woman's reproductive system. Always consult a medical professional before taking these types of herbs and pregnant women should AVOID THESE HERBS!

Herbalists often use herbs to stimulate menstrual flow.

Expectorant: Herbs that help expel mucus in the respiratory system.

Herbalists often use these types of herbs to help with symptoms caused by colds, congestions or flu symptoms.

Hepatic: Herbs that help the liver in many ways, including helping to increase bile content. Bitters and cholagogues all act as hepatics.

Herbalists use these types of herbs for many reasons, including helping with liver diseases. However, please do additional research and consult a medical professional if you have liver disease.

Hypnotic: Herbs that are nervine remedies, which help to induce deep sleep.

Herbalists often use these types of herbs to aid in insomnia or stress-related symptoms.

Hypotensive: Herbs that aid in reducing elevated blood pressure.

Herbalists often use these types of herbs with other remedies. Please consult a medical professional before using these types of herbs for high blood pressure.

Nervine: Herbs that strengthen and nourish the nervous system.

Herbalists often use these herbs as well as others that treat the whole body, heart, and mind- not just the brain.



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Stimulant: Herbs that excite or enliven physiological activity.

Herbalists often use these herbs to stimulate circulation, which can have a warming effect on the body.

REFERENCES:

Herbal Academy Intro to Herbalism Unit 1 – Herbal Actions

Hoffmann, David, FNIMH, AHG (2003) Medical Herbalism: The Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine, Herbal Actions 483 - 519