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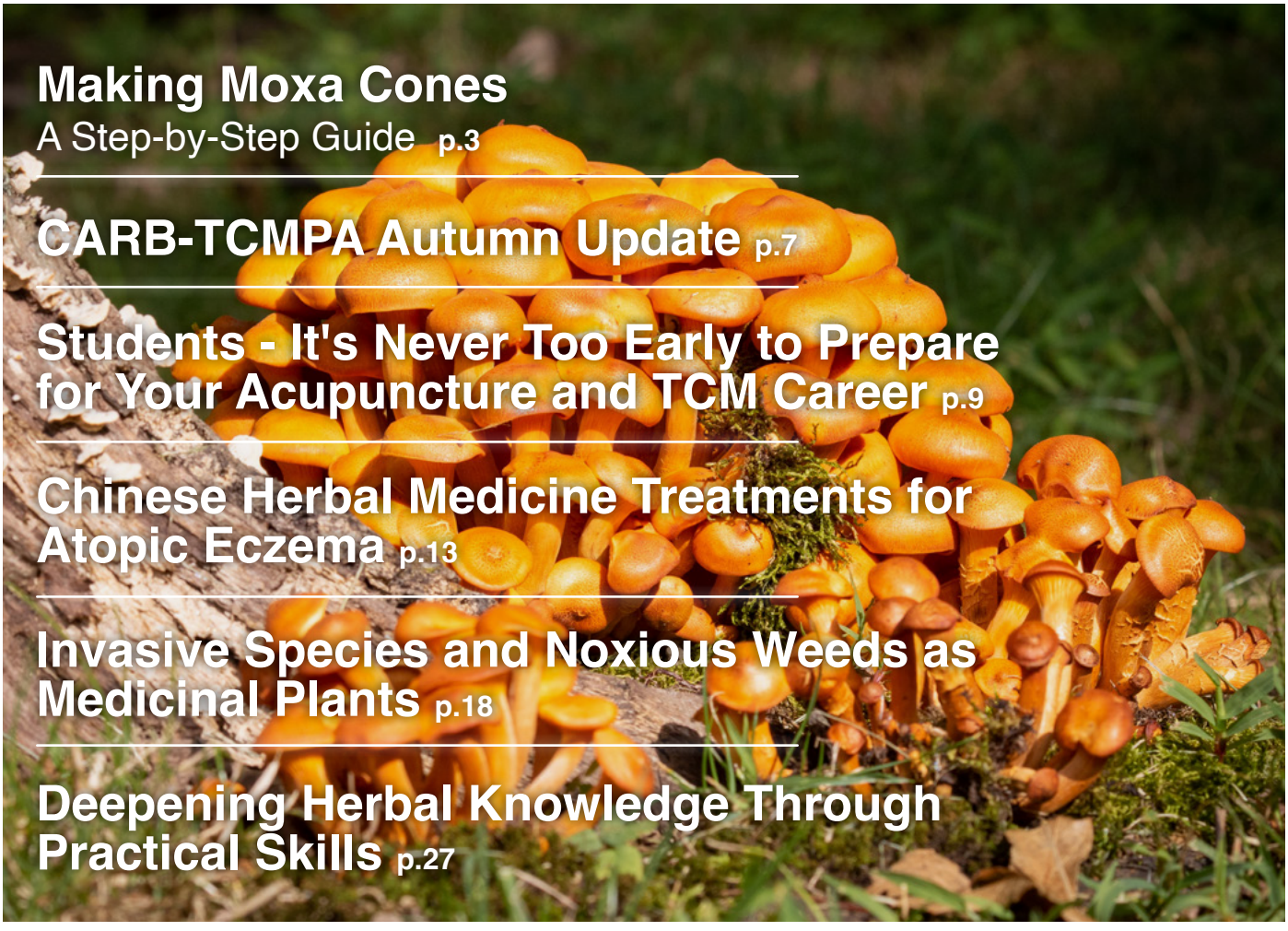
Ancient Wisdom - Modern Healthcare



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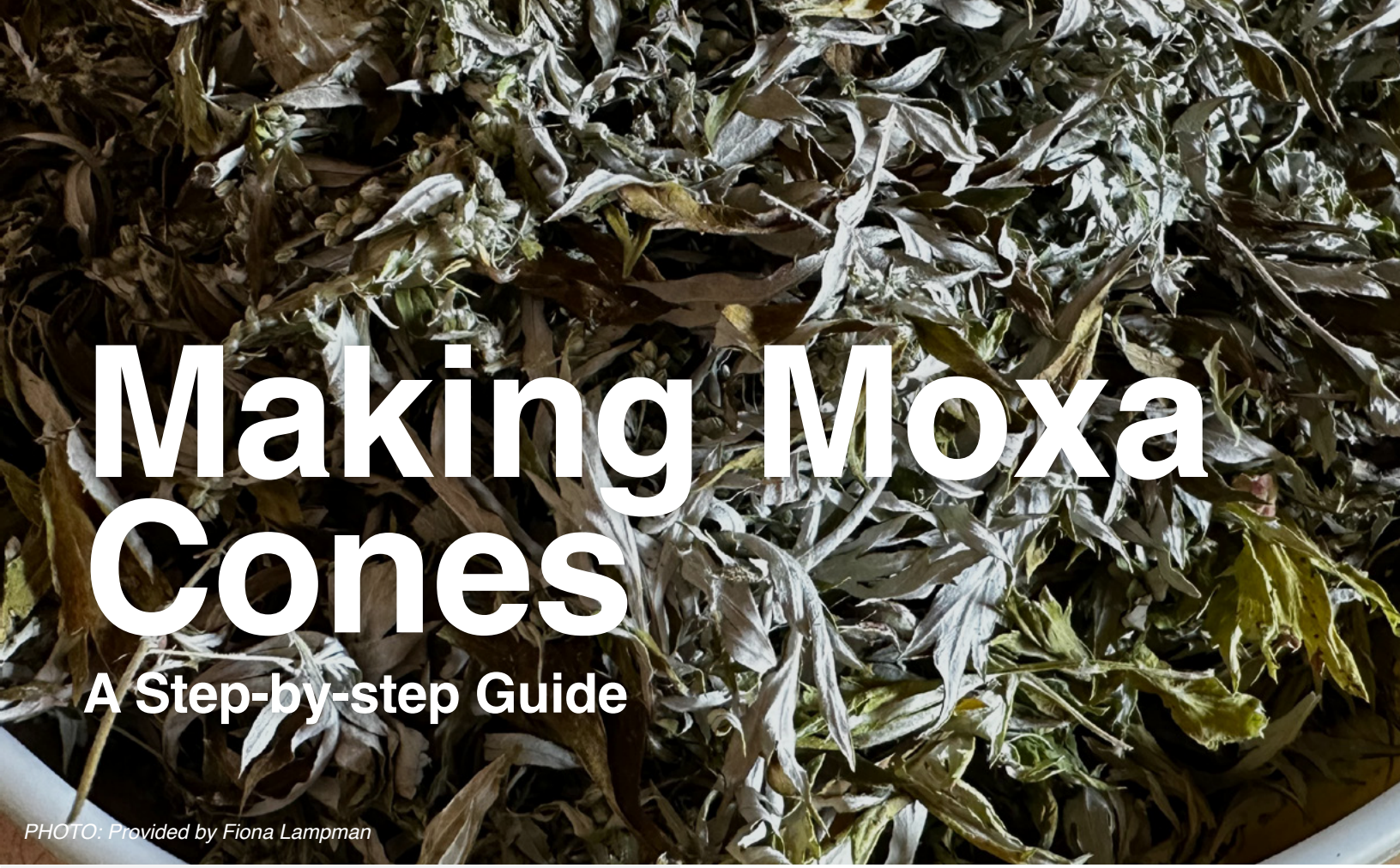

Making Moxa Cones

A Step-by-step Guide

PHOTO: Provided by Fiona Lampman

by Fiona Lampman, R.TCM.P

Moxibustion products such as the loose moxa, cones, rolls and sticks that we, as acupuncturists and Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners, use in everyday practice are manufactured using the leaves of the mugwort plant.

Mugwort belongs to the genus Artemisia which includes more than 250 wild species worldwide. Chinese mugwort (Artemisia argyi) is most commonly used in China to make moxa while other countries have their preferred species of mugwort such as in Japan where Japanese mugwort *(Artemisia princeps)* is most widely used. So depending on which brands you prefer to use in clinical practice, you might be using a variety of mugwort species. This article sets out to show practitioners that making your own moxa floss is easy, and an enjoyable way to connect with plant medicine.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

To make your own moxa cones you will need a few things:

- Dried mugwort leaves
- Small blender
- Wire sifter
- Large bowls
- Storage containers

Continued...

SOURCING PLANT MATERIALS

The first task is sourcing mugwort leaves. For me, I like to grow common mugwort (Artemisia vulgarius) in my garden. Common mugwort will grow best in hardiness zones 3-8 which includes from the Coast, to the Interior, to the Rockies, and as far north as Prince Rupert. It prefers full to partial sun and well drained soils. Common mugwort grows up to two metres in height with dark green leaves that are deeply lobed with a silvery underside and is the species seen in the photos.

> *If you have a garden, I highly recommend growing your own.*

Seeds for common mugwort are easy to find. I purchased my seeds from a local seed company on Vancouver Island that specializes in medical plant seeds. This is my third year of my mugwort returning in the spring and every year it gets a bit bigger!

Another way to source mugwort is by wildcrafting. In British Columbia we have a native species of mugwort known as coastal mugwort, coastal wormwood, or Suksdorf sagewort *(Artemisia suksdorfii)*. True to its name, it is commonly found in the coastal regions of British Columbia. If you are keen on wildcrafting I recommend picking up a guide book about native plant species in your area to help with plant identification.

And of course, the easiest way to source mugwort is to purchase the dried mugwort leaf from a reputable herb company. If you source your mugwort this way you can skip right to the blending stage of the process.

HARVESTING

If you have grown your own mugwort, the first step would be to harvest the plant. It is best to harvest mugwort in the late summer just before the flowers are about to bloom, when the plant medicine is most potent, when the yang is utmost. Snip the stems a

PHOTO: Courtesy of Fiona Lampman

PHOTO: Courtesy of Fiona Lampman

few inches above the ground leaving the crown of the plant to regrow next year. Mugwort propagates mainly through its rhizomes, making this way of harvesting sustainable for future harvests both in the garden and if you are out wildcrafting coastal mugwort. Collect the stems and gather into bunches to be hung and dried in a cool, dark room with good airflow. Remember that mugwort is a tall plant and you will need ample space. It takes 1-2 weeks for the plant material to be fully dried.

STRIPPING

Once dried, the mugwort leaves will need to be separated from the stem of the plant. This may seem daunting but it is a very quick process. I like to use my index finger and thumb to pinch the stem, starting at the base, and then quickly run them up the stem, stripping the leaves off. Gardening gloves are recommended if your fingers are not used to this process. Collect all the leaves in a bowl and discard the stems.

BLENDING

Now the leaves are ready to be turned into floss! If you have purchased your mugwort leaves, this is going to be where you start your process. For this step you will need a blender with a sharp blade and a quick motor. I prefer to do small batches in a small blender, which makes it easier to give it a quick shake when the plant material gets stuck. I have tried using my larger food processor, but I find it does not make a fine enough material to create the floss.

> *Blending is probably the most arduous part of the process, but also the most rewarding.*

Add a handful of mugwort leaves at a time into the blender and blend on high for several minutes until you see the leaves begin to transform into beautiful moxa floss. You will know that the floss is ready when the leaves are pulverized into a soft, fluffy, cotton-like consistency. Transfer the floss into a sifter and get your next handful of leaves into the blender.

SIFTING

For sifting the moxa floss, I prefer a large wire sifter over a large mixing bowl. This part in the process creates a bit of plant material dust in the air which can be quite sneezy for some people. With a small amount of floss in the sifter, gently sift for about a minute, catching the fine mugwort powder in the bowl below. This is a good time to pick out any stem pieces that still might be in the floss. Transfer the floss from the sifter into a separate bowl. Continue

PHOTO: Courtesy of Fiona Lampman

this process of blending and sifting until all of the mugwort leaves have been used and you are left with a bowlful of beautiful moxa floss. The extra powder can be discarded.

MOULDING CONES

Now that you have made the moxa floss, it's time to make some cones. Making moxa cones is done easily by pinching a small amount of the floss with your fingers to shape into a cone of your desired size. I do have a moxa/incense cone mould that I purchased many moons ago that I prefer to use because I can pack the floss tightly in the mould. The more tightly it is packed, the less likely the cone will fall apart in use. I usually just make a few cones at a time and store the rest of the moxa floss.

STORAGE

Always store moxa floss in an airtight container in a cool, dark space. This ensures it will be good for months, possibly years to come.

Hopefully this how-to has inspired some practitioners to give moxa making a try!

- Fiona Lampman

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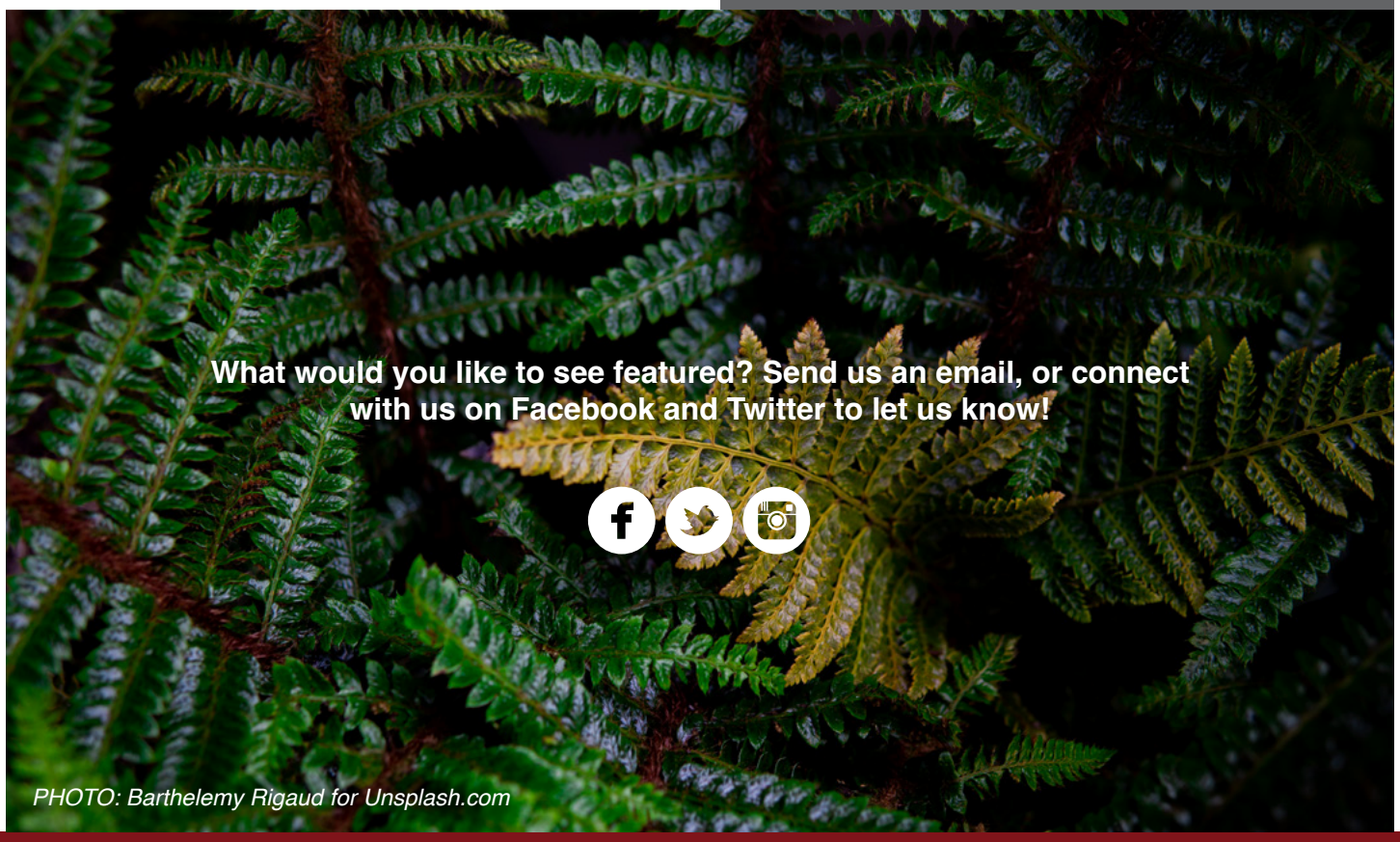
Fiona Lampman, R.TCM.P

Fiona is a licensed acupuncturist, TCM herbalist, and Community Herbalist practising out of her clinic Fine Feather Wellness in Tk'emlúps (Kamloops, British Columbia). When not in her clinic you can find Fiona in her herb garden or out hiking, wildcrafting, and taking photos in her beloved forests and mountains.

You can find her at **www.finefeather.ca**



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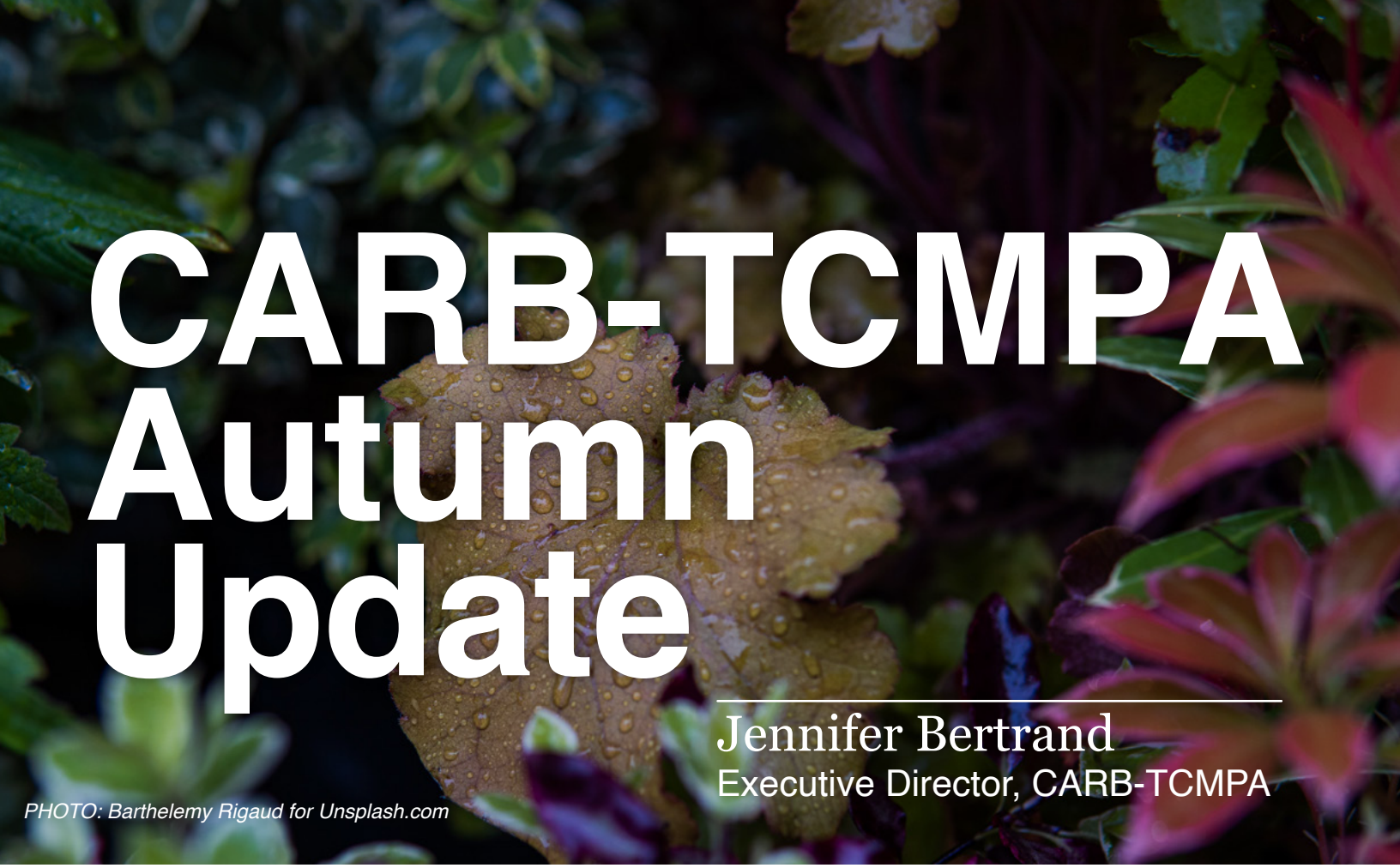

CARB-TCMPA Autumn Update

Jennifer Bertrand
Executive Director, CARB-TCMPA

PHOTO: Barthelemy Rigaud for Unsplash.com

The Canadian Alliance of Regulatory Bodies of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists (CARB-TCMPA) is gearing up for a busy fall season starting with the upcoming October 2023 administration of the Pan-Canadian Examinations for Acupuncturists, TCM Practitioners, and TCM Herbalists.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online proctoring was introduced as the delivery method for the examinations to ensure continuity of service for candidates. As of the October 2023 administration, we will be returning to an in-person format at computer-based testing centres. This change is expected to reinforce the integrity and security of the examinations, reduce technical issues experienced by candidates, minimize test taker anxiety, and ensure the timely launch of examinations at each testing centre. Testing centres are available across Canada and CARB-TCMPA is working with its test administrator to explore international testing centres for overseas candidates.

The results of the **April 2023 examinations** are now available on the CARB-TCMPA website. A total of 319 candidates wrote the examinations. The TCM Practitioners and TCM Herbalists exams were administered the week of April 3, 2023, and the Acupuncturists exam was administered the week of April 24, 2023.

Examination	Candidates	Pass Rate
Acupuncturists	237	87%
TCM Practitioners	69	71%
TCM Herbalists	13	69%

In addition to managing the Pan-Canadian Examinations, CARB-TCMPA is moving forward with key organizational initiatives. Over the summer months, the Executive Director had an opportunity to meet with a variety of stakeholders and learn from their perspectives on the profession and organization.

Continued...

The findings from these meetings supported preparation of a comprehensive evaluation of CARB-TCMPA's examinations program, which the Pan-Canadian Examinations Steering Committee and Board of Directors will be reviewing in September.

CARB-TCMPA will be issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for psychometric services starting with the April 2024 administration of the examinations and an RFP for a wide-scale validation study to ensure the Competency Profile for the profession continues to reflect current theory and practice.

CARB-TCMPA is also conducting an organizational assessment to review governance, operations, and strategic priorities with the aim of addressing any identified gaps, applying best practices, and considering opportunities for innovation.

CARB-TCMPA also had the opportunity to submit a letter to the Federal Minister of Health on proposed changes to the regulatory fee schedule for Natural Health Products in Canada. The fee proposal as presented has raised concerns regarding product affordability, patient access to care, and additional burdens on the health care system. CARB-TCMPA's letter to the Minister encourages additional, broad consultation on the changes prior to implementation and we are hopeful this additional consultation will occur before any changes are implemented.

- Jennifer Bertrand

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Bertrand,
MA, CAE, ACC

Jennifer is the Executive Director of The Canadian Alliance of Regulatory Bodies of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists (CARB-TCMPA).

CARB-TCMPA is the national forum and voice of provincial regulatory authorities that are established by their respective provincial legislation. Through collaborative activities, CARB-TCMPA promotes quality practice and labour mobility across Canada. For more information about CARB-TCMPA, visit: **carb-tcmpa.org**

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Students - It's Never Too Early to Prepare for your Acupuncture and TCM Career

by Suzanne Williams,
Executive Director, ATCMA

Fall is in the air, and for many, this time of year represents a fresh start. One might say it's akin to a new year!

This is especially true for students who have begun or resumed their studies in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) or acupuncture. If this is YOU, congratulations! You are on the path to a very fulfilling and rewarding life as a health care practitioner. However, you don't need to wait until graduation to start thinking about what's involved in "real-life" practice. There's a lot you can do now to get a head start for what will be your future career, and it goes far beyond treating patients.

Did you know that there is a 99% chance that you will become a business owner as well and that you will need to continually update your skills and knowledge to remain current?

That you will become a stronger practitioner if you connect with your community of fellow practitioners than if you practice in isolation? Or that the acupuncture and TCM industry faces considerable

challenges that impact your daily practice? Luckily, there are professional membership organizations across Canada dedicated to supporting acupuncturists and TCM practitioners. In British Columbia, the ATCMA is one of these organizations and we want students to know that just as it's never too early to prepare for life after school and board exams, it's never too early to join your provincial professional association.

Why should you, a student, join your local professional association NOW and become a part of the practitioner community?

1. ACCESS TO EXPERT KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES:

By joining a professional association, you gain access to a wealth of resources that can aid in your academic and professional journey. For example, the BC ATCMA provides exclusive access to professional management resources, industry insights, and educational resources. Our members have access to seminars, workshops, and webinars led by experienced practitioners and experts in the field. This invaluable knowledge can greatly enhance your education and expand your mind beyond the classroom walls.

2. NETWORKING WITH CURRENT AND FUTURE COLLEAGUES

> *In any profession, networking is essential, and the field of acupuncture and TCM is no exception.*

An industry association can provide you with a unique platform for you to connect with fellow students, established practitioners, and industry leaders. Building relationships with experienced professionals can open doors to mentorship opportunities, and potential future jobs or collaborations. Regular events held by associations are excellent places to begin developing your professional network.

3. ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION:

As an aspiring acupuncturist or TCM practitioner, it's crucial to have a voice in the regulatory and legislative matters that affect our profession. Trust me when I say that there is a lot going on in the regulatory world, and it affects your day-to-day life as a practitioner. Associations like the ATCMA are dedicated to advocating for the rights and interests of

PHOTO: Hans Veth for Unsplash.com

our members. In fact, the ATCMA is the association in BC that actively engage with government bodies and regulatory authorities to ensure that the profession remains respected and protected. When BC government or regulatory bodies have a question about the acupuncture and TCM industry, they come to the ATCMA. By joining your provincial association, you become part of a collective voice that can influence the future of acupuncture and TCM in your area, and across Canada. Some of the recent advocacy work the ATCMA and other provincial associations has been related to the federal government's changes to Natural Health Product policy that has unprecedented ramifications for the practice of Chinese herbal medicine. We are on the side of the thousands of practitioners who rely on this critical medicine for their hundreds of thousands of patients.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Becoming a member is not just about supporting your future career but also about your personal growth and development. Associations offer opportunities for skill development, leadership training, and career advancement. Whether you're a student or a seasoned practitioner, our organization is committed to helping you reach your full potential in the field of acupuncture and TCM. In BC, our professional development requirements are changing. Formal accumulation of continuing education hours is being replaced by self-reported course work and activities to support your individual growth as a practitioner.

5. COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT:

Studying acupuncture and TCM can be challenging, and we understand the importance of a supportive community. Industry associations foster a sense of belonging, where you can share experiences, seek advice, and find support from your peers. ATCMA members often say we are their first stop for support when they need professional guidance, help navigating the regulatory landscape, and a source of connection with other practitioners. We are proud that our members are united by their

shared passion for promoting holistic health and well-being, regardless of their training, language, or style of practice.

6. PROMOTING TRADITIONAL MEDICINE:

By joining a professional association, you're contributing to the preservation and promotion of Chinese medicine and acupuncture. Both have a rich history and a unique approach to healthcare that deserves recognition and respect. As a member, you become an ambassador for this time-tested healing art, helping to educate the public and healthcare community about its benefits.

> *Simply put, you ARE the future of acupuncture and Chinese medicine in Canada. Don't you want a say in what that might look like?*

Joining an association like BC's ATCMA, that advocates for and supports acupuncturists and Chinese medicine practitioners is an investment in your future. It provides you with the tools, knowledge, and support that you can leverage in your studies and future career. By becoming a member, you play a vital role in shaping the future of acupuncture and TCM in your province, ensuring that this invaluable form of healthcare continues to thrive. Join your provincial association today and embark on a journey that will elevate your career and make a positive impact on your future!

- Suzanne Williams

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Suzanne Williams,
R.TCM.P, BA, APMCP, MBA

Suzanne is the Executive Director of the BC Association of TCM and Acupuncture Practitioners (ATCMA). She is an active practising Acupuncturist and TCM Practitioner in Vancouver, B.C. Suzanne graduated from TCICTCM and was in the first Cohort of Balance System Acupuncture students at Langara College. Suzanne shares her love of Balance System Acupuncture with practitioners as a certified Instructor with the Tan Academy of Balance. Having studied and worked in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China for over 12 years, Suzanne speaks and reads Mandarin Chinese. She draws on her career in business market research and consulting in China and Canada to advocate for the TCM and Acupuncture profession in British Columbia.

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Chinese Herbal Medicine Treatments for Atopic Eczema

PHOTO: Johannes Plenio

by Michael Lavian, MAcCHM
Reviewed by Dr. Zhenni Jin LAc, DAOM and Daniella Lavian, MAcCHM 2023

In my previously published article for the 2022 summer issue of Medicinal Roots Magazine titled "Acupuncture for Atopic Eczema: A Case Study", I shared the success of an acupuncture treatment protocol for atopic eczema.

In this article, I would like to highlight three key Chinese medicine herbal formulas and topical treatments that can be used in conjunction with acupuncture for the treatment of atopic eczema. Chinese medicinal herbs for topical use as cosmetic and/or skin care treatment can be traced back more than 2,000 years (Pan, 2021), with one of the earliest in the Chinese medical classic 'Wu Shi Er Yao Fang' *(Fifty-Two Prescriptions)* (Pan, 2021).

THE FORMULAS

1. XIAO FENG SAN *(ELIMINATE WIND POWDER)*

Used to release exterior wind, nourish the blood, clear heat, and transform dampness, this formula may be used for acute, mild, or initial stages of

atopic eczema. Xiao Feng San includes the following herbs: Fang Feng (Radix Saposhnikoviae), Jing Jie (Herba Schizonepetae), Niu Bang Zi (Fructus Arctii), Chan Tui (Periostracum Cicadae), Cang Zhu (Rhizome Atractylodis), Ku Shen (Radix Sophora Flavescentis), Mu Tong (Caulis Akebiae), Shi Gao (Gypsum Fibrosum), Zhi Mu (Radix Anemarrhenae), Sheng Di Huang (Radix Rehmanniae), Dang Gui (Angelica Sinensis), Hei Zhi Ma (Black Sesame Seed), Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae). A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was conducted on Xiao Feng San for the treatment of refractory atopic dermatitis. In the study, 71 patients were put on an 8-week oral treatment of Xiao Feng San and 24 patients were given a placebo (Chen & Li, 2011). The results showed a decrease in total lesion score in the treatment group compared to that of the placebo group (Chen & Li, 2011). The study suggests that Xiao Feng San may be an alternative treatment for severe, refractory, extensive, and nonexudative atopic dermatitis (Chen & Li, 2011).

2. DANG GUI YIN ZI *(TANGKUEI DECOCTION)*

Used for severe and/or chronic eczema and other dermatological disorders such as psoriasis or vitiligo when blood deficiency and dryness are dominant. It works to tonify blood, nourish the skin, reduce dryness, release wind, and stop itching. Dang Gui Yin Zi includes the following herbs: Dang Gui (Angelica Sinensis), Bai Shao Yao (Radix Paeoniae Alba), Sheng Di Huang (Radix Rehmanniae), Chuan Xiong (Rhizome Chuanxiong), Bai (Ci) Ji Li (Fructus Tribuli), Jing Jie (Herba Schizonepetae), Fang Feng (Radix Saposhnikoviae), Huang Qi (Radix Astragali), He Shou Wu (Radix Polygoni Multiflori), Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae). In a randomized clinical trial involving elderly patients with skin symptoms, the efficacy of Dang Gui Yin Zi (Tokiinshi in Japanese Kampo) was reported to significantly improve dry skin, and reduce itch (Kaneko & Ishii, 2018).

3. QIN ZHU LIANG XUE DECOCTION (QZLXD)

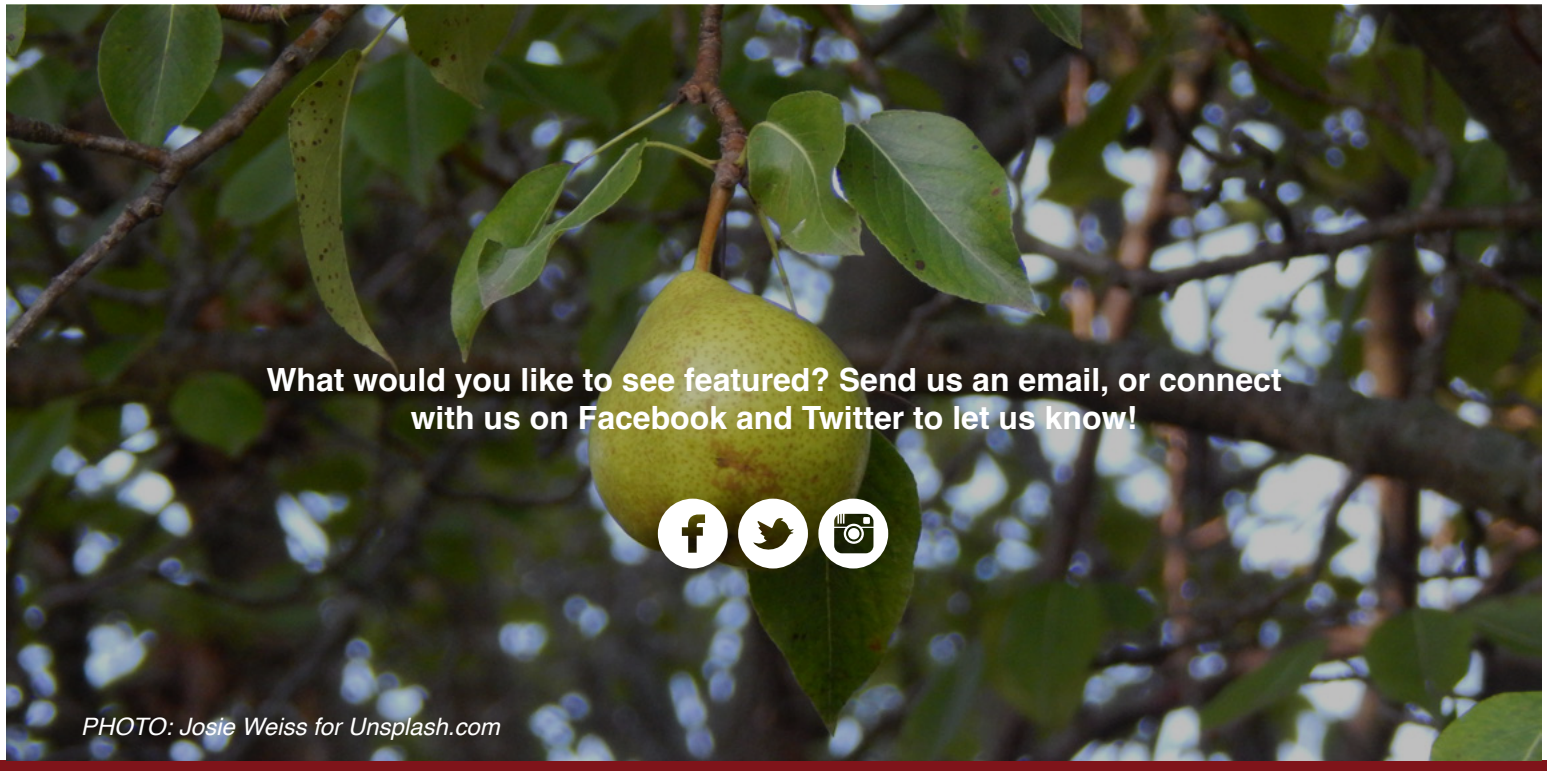
Used for the treatment of blood heat-type eczema, the Department of Dermatology, at Yueyang Hospital of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, conducted a randomized controlled trial to test the efficacy and safety of this Chinese medicine herbal decoction for treating atopic eczema. The conclusion showed that the QZLXD decoction with larger doses of Huang Qin (Radix Scutellariae), and Zhen Zhu Mu (Concha Margaritafarae Usta), was potentially safe and effective at relieving symptoms for this type of eczema by reducing relapse rates and enhancing the itching threshold of histamine phosphate (Xu & Li, 2020). Improvements were shown after treatment with QZLXD, which was effective at reducing erythematous, dispelled swelling, and antipruritic effects (Xu & Li, 2020). Qin Zhu Liang Xue decoction consists of the following ingredients: Fang Feng (Radix Saposhnikoviae), Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae), Huang Qin (Radix Scutellariae), Mu Dan Pi (Cortex Moutan), Yi Yi Ren (Semen Coicis), Zhen Zhu Mu (Concha Margaritafarae Usta), Ci Shi (Halloysitum Rubrum), and Zi Cao (Radix Arnebiae/Lithospermi).

CAUTIONS

If you prescribe or recommend Chinese herbal medicine (CHM) for oral use, it may be important to monitor patients' liver function for signs of damage.

Reports of potential associations with various herbs used to treat skin diseases have been recorded (De Smet & Murray, 1995), however, although no clear causal connections have been made with any formula or single herbal ingredient(s) to date (De Smet & Murray, 1995), a few common herbs have been linked to episodes of clinically apparent liver injury (Bethesda 2012). They are:

- Ba Jiao Lian (Rhizoma Dysosmae Pleianthae)
- Qi Ri Yun (Breynia officinalis)
- Shen Jin Cao/Jin Bu Huan (Herba Lycopodii)
- Ma Huang (Herba Ephedrae)
- Shou Wu Pian (Polygonum Pill)



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TOPICAL TREATMENTS

The most basic approach in the treatment of dermatological disorders is the use of a topical ointment, wash, or other type of skin moisturizer that is based on pattern differentiation.

As practitioners, we can offer traditional Chinese herbs, and topicals in conjunction with acupuncture to help treat eczema. Some ready-made Chinese medicine topical products you may consider offering patients for skin conditions include those from well-known herbal supply companies such as Spring Wind and Blue Poppy as well as many others (Urban Herbs, Botanical Blends, Emily Skin Soothers, Kuan Yin Apothecary to name a few). All of which vary slightly in their actions based on the presenting pattern. Patch testing is recommended before using topical products for treatment. Patch testing allows for the discovery of unknown allergies or sensitivities to the product's ingredients before using it. To perform a patch test, apply the product to the skin of the inner wrist or forearm and wait up to 30 minutes for signs of reaction such as redness, itching, rash or other sensations of discomfort. If any undesired reactions occur, do not proceed.

Chinese medicine is abundant in its offerings to help patients find relief from eczema and other skin conditions, and as such, approaches to treatment should incorporate dietary recommendations and the use of acupuncture in addition to Chinese herbal medicine and/or topical washes, lotions, or ointments that aim to moisturize and treat the skin directly.

- Michael Lavian

Example of patch test on forearm.

Example of applying topical wash with gauze.

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Dr. Zhenni Jin
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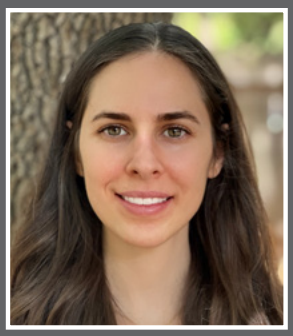

Daniella Lavian
MAcCHM

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Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds as Medicinal Plants

By Christiaan Spangenberg

PHOTO: Courtesy of Karen Lai

INTRODUCTION

The open faces of flowers and fruits are the perceptual doorways to the four seasons. Clocks and calendars may tell the facts of an objective chronology, but it is plant phenology that signals the beginnings and transitions of natural and cultural existence in our lived experience. Picture the autumn senescence of deciduous maples in Canada, summer-blooming peonies in China, or cherry blossoms in spring-time Japan. Each locality around the world has its unique assemblage of native vegetation and culturally significant plants that characterize the seasons. This geographical distinctiveness of flora is more diffuse in our globalized world of today, where an abundance of plants are happily growing outside their native range. But where the mass blooming of such plants as tulips and roses are widely admired outside their native range, the flowering and fruiting of other plants, such as scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry, instead invite alarm and apprehension as invasive species and weeds.

> *Invasive species are organisms that exhibit certain traits, such as fast growth rate, prolific seed production, and broad environmental tolerance, that allow them to quickly establish, outcompete, and oftentimes, displace native plant species in a particular place.*

Invasive species are usually—but not always—introduced (non-native) species to a certain geographic region. Their range of damaging ecological and economic impacts are extensive, and include habitat loss, biodiversity loss, fire hazard, reduced crop yield and quality (in agriculture), and the costs of ecological restoration and invasive species management. A recent UN assessment estimated that the global economic costs of invasive alien species exceeded $423 billion in 2019 (IPBES secretariat, 2023).

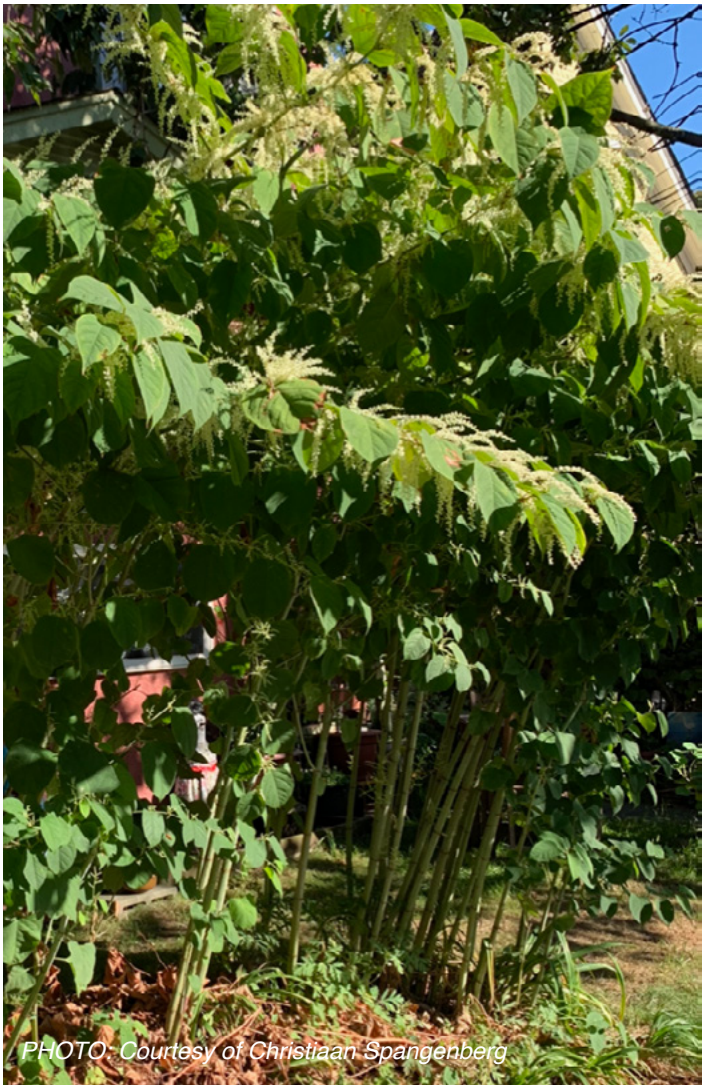
> *Herbalists and herb growers are thrust in a unique predicament concerning the presence and management of invasive plant species, as many species considered invasive, or weeds, are also presently or potentially medicinal.*

In this article, I will discuss medicinal plants in the context of invasive species and their management.

FEATURE:

The Clusius symposium I attended last September in Leiden, the Netherlands, celebrated the life and work of the German doctor and botanist Philipp Franz von Siebold, who spent 8 years as a physician in Edo-period Japan. The symposium featured a series of lectures reflecting on Siebold's botanical legacy in the Netherlands, the innumerable botanical specimens, and cultural artifacts, he sent over, as well as the plant species Siebold introduced to Europe. It was a fascinating glimpse into the life and legacy of a man who I had previously only known in another context: as one of the authors for a botanical synonym of *Reynoutria japonica*, or Japanese knotweed, which is popularly acknowledged as one of the worst contemporary invasive plant species in the world. Japanese knotweed is a semi-woody herbaceous perennial plant with an unparalleled aggressive spreading habit, capable of creating dense stands over 20,000 square meters, and growing through concrete and causing structural damage to houses (Subramanian, 2023). As I found out only later, Siebold also introduced and commercially distributed this plant in Europe in 1848. In an 1863 plant catalogue, Siebold spoke effusively about Japanese knotweed:

This knotweed is one of our most important introductions from Japan, a perennial ornamental plant, inextirpable, with shining foliage, clusters of very graceful flowers, useful in creating groves, sheltering young plantings, and fortifying sandy hills and dunes. The plant, which can be cut in the spring many times over, provides an excellent forage for fattening livestock, which eat it out of preference;



Japanese Knotweed in a front yard.

the flowers, which appear in autumn, are very sweet and give bees winter food; the bitter and tonic root is a medicine of repute among the Chinese and Japanese; finally, even the stalks which die in winter are good for burning and for matches. (Siebold 1863, translated by Townsend 1997, as quoted by Del Tredici).

Siebold's description is interesting for highlighting multiple use-values of the plant, especially its medicinal use. Notable 19th century gardeners, such as the British William Robinson, commended the plant as "one of our finest and most effective plants", and contributed to its popularity as an ornamental and landscaping plant in that era (Robinson, 1874). By the end of the century, however, concerns over the invasive vigor of Japanese knotweed displaced any aesthetic or utilitarian benefit it had. Robinson stated that the plant was "easier to plant than to get rid of in the flower garden" (Robinson, 1921), and horticulturalists that visited Siebold's former garden site in 1883 described it as overrun with Japanese knotweed (Christenhusz et al., 20021, as quoted by Del Tredici, 2017).

The story of Japanese knotweed is unfortunately not unique. Japanese knotweed was first introduced to Europe and North America during the colonial plant-hunting era of the 19th century, when European plant-hunters and botanists scoured continents for ornamental and useful plants of interest.

> *This period of plant transfer saw the introduction of many other garden plants that would only later emerge as invasive, such as the common rhododendron (Rhododendron ponticum) and butterfly bush (Buddleja davidii).*

Global plant transfer has not slowed since then, and ornamental horticulture is both presently and historically a primary pathway for invasive alien plant introductions (Hulme et al., 2017).

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However, it's important to note that non-native invasive and weedy plants are not inherently negative. Our definitions of weeds are human-centered, and essentially designate unwanted plants growing in the wrong place. For example, the beauty of annual cornflowers *(Centaurea cyanus)* is vaunted in cut flower farms or gardens, while they are problematic as agricultural weeds in cereal and grain fields. Invasive species can also be understood as plants 'out of place', here taking advantage of a novel ecological context that favors their biological attributes. Organisms can become invasive by being liberated from their native habitat, where their population numbers were regulated by local flora, fauna, and climactic conditions. It's worth noting that invasive and weedy plants have benefits as well: for instance, as nutrient-dense food sources for humans and animals (see Himalayan blackberry, or common purslane), as possible pollinator plants (though this is strongly debated), and as wild resources for the medicine cabinet.

PHOTO: Courtesy of Christiaan Spangenberg

Common Plantain

Many plant species characterized as invasive or noxious weeds are also potent medicinal herbs, with a long-recorded history of traditional use. The common dandelion and plantain, native to Europe, are two such examples, and both are common sights in disturbed areas and waste grounds. Dandelion *(Taraxacum officinale)* is an herbaceous perennial with a basal rosette of leaves and a thick taproot. Some gardeners dread its yellow flowers, which grow into a distinctive fluffy seed-head, and whose wind-dispersed seeds are easily distributed. Dandelion roots or leaves have diuretic properties, and are helpful for improving appetite, easing digestion, and stimulating urination (MacKinnon et al., 2014; Simmonds et al., 2016). Plantain *(Plantago major)* is another herbaceous perennial with a basal rosette of elliptic leaves, while its green flowers bloom in spikes on long stalks. Plantain is treasured for its anti-inflammatory properties, and its leaves and leaf-juice are widely valuable as topical agents in treating insect bites, stings, snakebites, sunburns, rashes, cuts and burns (MacKinnon et al., 2014).

> *The pharmacopoeia of traditional Chinese medicine includes a number of noxious weeds, and plant species that are invasive in North America.*

Japanese knotweed is perhaps the most notorious representative of this list, but another high-profile invasive plant is kudzu. Colloquially known as 'the vine that ate the South', kudzu *(Pueraria montana)* is a semi-woody vine first introduced to the USA in 1876, and widely planted in the southern states to prevent soil erosion (Nature Conservancy, 2019). Kudzu's phenomenally high growth-rate—a foot per day for mature vines—and spreading ability through its runners and rhizomes are evidenced in photographs showing whole landscapes swallowed by the vine. Besides Japanese knotweed and kudzu, other invasive horticultural escapees that

feature in the Chinese materia medica include fish mint *(Houttuynia cordata)*, Japanese honeysuckle *(Lonicera japonica)*, and Chinese wisteria *(Wisteria sinensis)*. The **Provincial Priority Invasive Species list** in British Columbia further records sweet fennel *(Foeniculum vulgare)*, tree of heaven *(Ailanthus altissima)* and puncturevine *(Tribulus terrestris)* as regional priority species (BC Government, 2023)

Invasive plant species present herbalists and herb-growers with both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, invasive plants threaten local and regional biodiversity, and endanger wild populations of endemic medicinal plant species with possible extinction. This happens indirectly, as invasive plant species alter ecosystem functioning, and directly, through outcompeting vulnerable medicinal plants. Management and removal of invasive plants is important for the conservation of populations of endangered or endemic medicinal plants. At the same time, however, invasive plant species can also represent new sources of wild-harvested and forageable medicine, and harvesting can be a way of managing these plants. For example, take kudzu, where both the flowers and root tubers are harvestable as medicinal materials: the root tuber is called ge gen (葛根), used in TCM to clear wind-heat and release the exterior, while the flowers are called ge hua (葛花), and can be helpful in relieving hangovers (Leon & Yu-Lin, 2017). The mature fruit from sweet fennel is the medicinal material xiao hui xiang (小茴香) and helps to promote qi circulation and harmonize the stomach (Leon & Yu-Lin, 2017). With burdock, not only is the seed the medicinal material niu bang zi (牛蒡子) in TCM, which helps to dispel wind-heat, but the roots are a culinary delicacy in Korea and Japan (Leon & Yu-Lin, 2017). This valuation of locally available plants—including invasive plants—is important to consider in the context of herb sourcing. The instability of climate change and contemporary socio-politics is likely to deeply impact our global supply chains and decrease accessibility to internationally grown or wild-harvested medicinal herbs.

For herb-growers and gardeners, it is our responsibility to properly screen and monitor all the non-native medicinal plants we introduce and grow in our gardens and fields. Please exercise caution when growing non-native plants and be mindful of how corresponding growing conditions between its original habitat and your site can indicate potential for invasiveness. Always do your research first and look for whether the species in question is historically or currently invasive in your region; avoid growing any plants that are on your regional or provincial invasive species list. Check for any potentially invasive qualities, such as high seed production, or effective seed dispersal.

Preventing invasive plant introductions is far less problematic than managing them.

Sweet Fennel

Yet, some potentially 'opportunistic' plants, such as goji berry *(Lycium chinense)*, are worthwhile growing when carefully done. For these, it's important to take appropriate preventive measures and control methods to manage and curb their growth and spread. For further reading, consult Peg Schafer's book *The Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm* (2011) for the section on managing invasive plant risk.

PLANT PROFILE:

Goji berry (枸杞子) embodies that popular proverb reciprocally linking food and medicine: it is as common in traditional Chinese medicinal herbal formulas as it is in dietary therapy and has in recent years become popular as a 'super-food'. The goji berry plant (*Lycium chinense* or *Lycium barbarum*) is equally as incredible in its ease of cultivation, its adaptability, and its wide harvestability. Other common names for the plant include Chinese wolfberry and the matrimony vine. Native to China, where it is widely distributed, Goji berry is a deciduous woody shrub growing between 3-6 ft tall with multiple arching branches, occasional thorns, ovate leaves,


PHOTO: Courtesy of Karen Lai

Gogi Berry

PHOTO: Maddy Baker for Unsplash.com

and star-shaped purple flowers that bloom in late spring and develop into fleshy red berries. It is hardy from zones 3 to 10, or down to -26 degrees Celsius. Goji berry is an easy and essential addition for the kitchen garden or food forest as a low-maintenance, vigorous, and versatile plant.

> *However, be mindful of its suckering and layering habit that are potentially invasive qualities, especially in moist soils.*

It is naturalized in Europe and North America and is flagged as invasive in parts of the United States.

Grow goji berry in full sun in well-drained soils, that are slightly leaner. Richer and organic soils tend to promote leaf growth over fruit production. Give plants between 3 to 5 feet of space to allow for their bushy habit. Goji berry shrubs benefit from support, such as a trellis or a fence, to hold up the branches: this both facilitates harvesting and prevents layering (where stems that touch the ground develop roots and produce new plants). These plants are excellent by the fence, or in a hedgerow. Watering needs are average, as it is fairly drought tolerant once established, and fertilizer is not strictly necessary.

Goji berry can be propagated from seed or cuttings. Seed is purchasable from Richters or Strictly Medicinal Seed: start them in a greenhouse in spring in potting soil mix between 18-20 degrees Celsius (they will germinate in about 2 weeks), and they can be planted out the next year, with fruit development possible after 2-3 years. Stem cuttings of new growth are obtainable in early summer: ensure the stem has at least 3 sets of leaves and is around 10-15 cm in length. Remove the leaves from the bottom half of the cutting, dip in rooting hormone, then place in pots of potting soil mix. Cuttings will produce fruit faster than seed-grown plants. Purchase goji berry plants if you want to skip the propagation fuss, and harvest fruits pronto. A range of cultivars are available, such as 'Phoenix Tears' and 'Crimson Star'. I was quite content with the 'Firecracker' cultivar, which is a dwarfing, thornless, early-fruiting variety. In Vancouver, I have found 1- or 2-year-old goji berry plants at Gardenworks and Phoenix Perennials, but this plant should be generally available at garden centers and nurseries.

Make sure you prune back the stems—terminal and lower branches—while they are winter-dormant. This helps both to maintain size and encourage fruiting. Goji berry has a long fruiting period, from July to September, and is self-fertile—meaning you only need a single plant in order to have fruit. Install nets to protect the fruits from birds. The fruits are harvestable throughout the summer and into the fall, when they are fully ripe and bright red. The fresh or dried fruit is nutritious, with a sweet-sour flavor somewhat reminiscent of cranberry and cherry. The leaves are also edible.

In traditional Chinese medicine, the fruit and bark are commonly used as medicinal materials. The fruit is called gou qi zi (枸杞子), and is sweet and neutral in flavor, helping to nourish the liver and kidney and improve the eyesight (Leon & Yu-Lin, 2017; Schafer, 2011). Commonly addressed issues include blurry vision and dizziness. The bark is called di gu pi (地骨皮): sweet and neutral in flavor, it works to clear heat, cool blood, and lower blood pressure, which help conditions such as fevers and bleeding disorders (Leon & Yu-Lin, 2017; Schafer, 2011).

- Christiaan Spangenberg

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Christiaan Spangenberg

Christiaan Spangenberg is a gardener and medicinal herb grower of German-Chinese heritage based out of Vancouver, British Columbia. He is a recent graduate from the Global Resource Systems program at the University of British Columbia, where he studied ethnobotany and the cultivation of Asian medicinal plants, and is also a member of a working group of TCM practitioners, herb growers, and researchers in British Columbia that are working towards establishing a market for organic and locally-grown Asian medicinal herbs in the province. Christiaan is passionate about the cultivation and conservation of Asian medicinal herbs, and he is interested in exploring opportunities for dialogue between different fields that could lead to interdisciplinary collaboration. He is currently growing traditional Chinese medicinal plants at two community garden and farm sites in Vancouver to promote Asian herbal medicine and medicinal plant cultivation.

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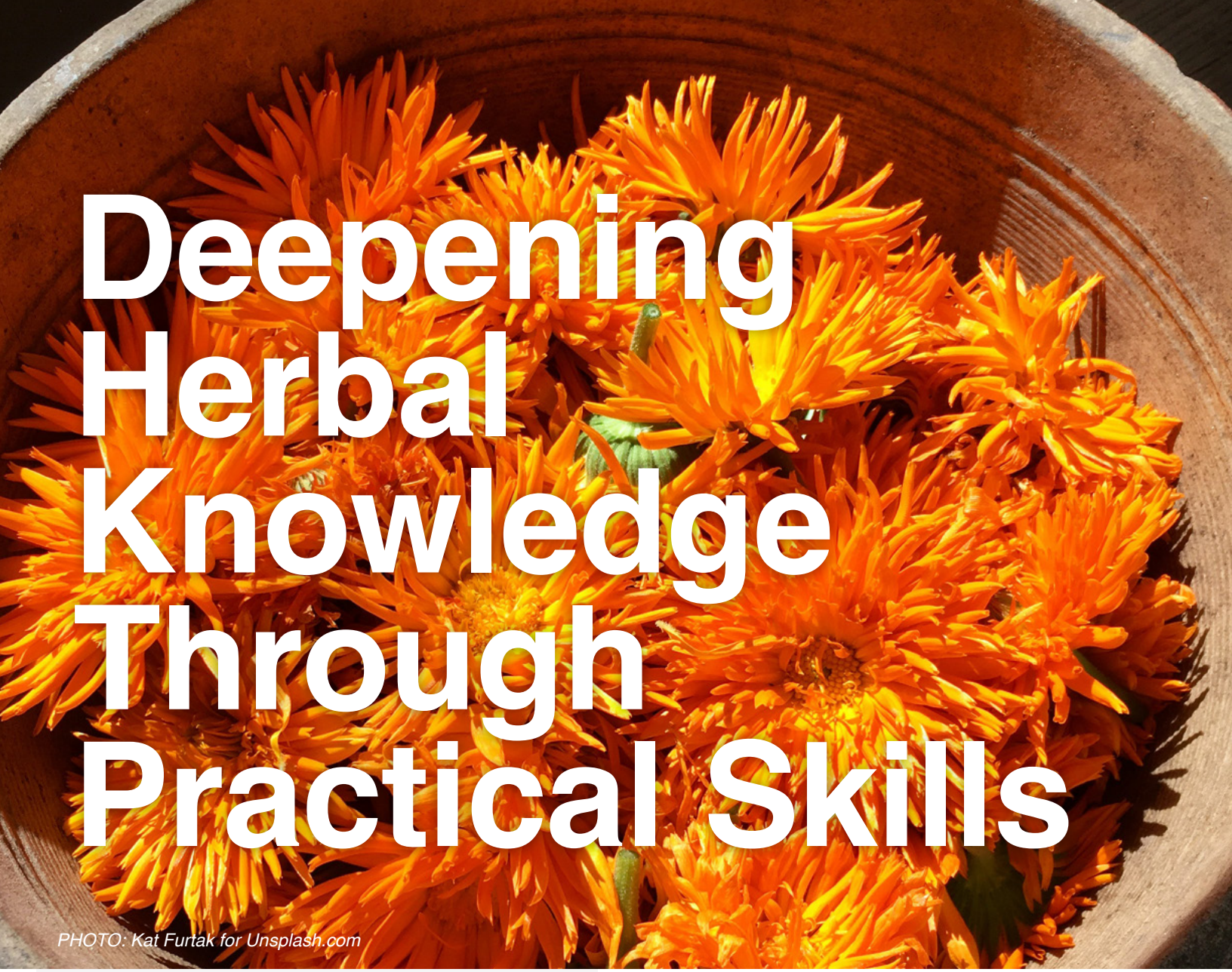

Deepening Herbal Knowledge Through Practical Skills

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by Dr. Angela Foran Dr.TCM. RAc., BSc

As Chinese medicine practitioners we wear many hats - clinician, entrepreneur, receptionist, social media marketer, coach, but what about medicine maker or herb grower?

How many of us grow herbs or make herbal products, such as liniments, teas, honey pills for ourselves, families or patients? Probably not many, but by working with plants in different ways we can deepen our understanding of their healing properties.

There can be several barriers to growing herbs and making them into various products. Time, or lack of is an often cited reason for not doing the thing, whatever that might be. In this case there are several methods of preparing herbs that take little effort. Soaking herbs in alcohol to make a topical liniment is one or using olive oil to make an infused oil. Another simple method is grinding herbs up and mixing with honey and roll into pea sized balls.

Other concerns may include not being licensed to prescribe herbs or having limited space to grow them. Options are to grow herbs that do well in pots, find a community garden space, use herbs that double as culinary ingredients or make products for your own use.

> *At first using raw herbs can feel intimidating, especially if there has been limited exposure during formal TCM education.*

Often herbal training is relegated to textbook learning, memorization of formula ingredients, herb actions and indications with prescriptions of granules and very little hands on experience with creating herbal formulas using raw herbs.

During my education there was no contact with raw herbs and only pre-made pellets were used for herbal prescriptions. When I started my own practice I moved from tablets to granules and then to using raw herbs for making my own liniments, salves, tinctures and honey pills. Working with the herbs - seeing, smelling, tasting them makes it easier to learn and remember the different properties. You can see the yellow in huáng bǎi, taste the sweetness of gān cǎo, smell the aromatic scent of huò xiāng.

More people want to know where their food and herbs are coming from and what kind of conditions they were grown in.

> *Doing it yourself gives the most control and autonomy and the satisfaction of planting a seed, seeing it sprout, watching it grow, harvesting it and then using it in cooking or medicine.*

Paying attention to how the plant changes over time - how the leaves grow, when it blooms or goes to seed. Spending this time with the plants helps one to tune into the changing environment and the cycle of the seasons. At the same time cultivating patience as some medicinal plants can only be harvested after several years. Once herbs have been harvested and dried there are many different methods of processing plants into medicine - tea/decoction, liniments, ointments, salves and plasters. Salves are a wonderful way to preserve the plant and relatively easy to make.

Following is a salve recipe created for a workshop at Loutet Farm using plants that were grown at the TCM Herb Learning Garden in North Vancouver. The garden is relatively new therefore the options for herbs to harvest were limited. We harvested calendula (jīn zhǎn jú 金盏菊), Chinese motherwort (yì mǔ cǎo 益母草) and Japanese catnip (jīng jiè 荆芥) and although we haven't used these herbs in combination they all have topical uses for skin.

Calendula is well known for its first aid treatment of minor injuries, burns and bruises as well as other skin conditions such as dry skin, eczema and hemorrhoids. Topical uses include creams, ointments, poultices, lotions or compresses. Calendula has anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, anti-fungal and vulnerary actions. The chemical

PHOTO: Dr. Angela Foran

Japanese Catnip

constituents include saponins and flavonoids which help to reduce inflammation. Xanthophyls encourage wound healing. Its anti-fungal properties are due to the resins that are present, which can only be extracted in 90%EtOH.

Chinese motherwort (yì mǔ caǒ 益母草) is frequently used in gynaecological conditions, treating irregular menstruation, heavy periods with clots and premenstrual abdominal pain through its action of invigorating the blood and dispelling stasis. Another function of yì mǔ caǒ is clearing heat and resolving toxicity. This function lends itself to topical applications for treating sores, toxic swellings, eczema and itchy rashes. A few of the chemical constituents present in Chinese motherwort are leonurine, linolenic acid. Vitamin A, which can be extracted in oil, is also present and promotes healthy epithelial growth.

Japanese catnip (jīng jiè 荆芥) has several therapeutic actions such as releasing the exterior, dispelling wind, relieving muscle spasms, alleviating itching and stopping bleeding. Although typically taken internally for exterior and dermatological conditions it can be applied as a powder to the affected area to treat itchy rashes.

Making a salve is a two part process. The first step is to make an infused oil, which involves infusing the selected herbs in an oil of your choice. I prefer olive oil as it is easy to find and minimal allergy issues. Part involves adding a wax of your choice to the warm oil. Beeswax is commonly used and for a vegan alternative soy or candelilla wax is readily available. To get started the following supplies are required:

- Herbs
- Oil
- Wax
- Pot
- Heat proof glass jar (I like to use a glass pyrex measuring cup)
- Glass measuring cup
- Strainer (I like to use a funnel with a very fine mesh strainer attachment)
- Grinder/mortar and pestle
- Scale
- Ointment jar/tin
- Label

Continued...

PHOTO: Dr. Angela Foran

Calendula

PHOTO: Dr. Angela Foran

Chinese Motherwort

Once all the supplies have been gathered follow the step by step instructions:

1. Weigh out herbs and coarsely grind. Using a 1:5 or 1:7 ratio of herb to oil. For personal use 10 grams of herbs with 50 to 70 grams of oil is recommended.
2. Weigh the oil.
3. Put the herbs and oil in a heat proof glass jar.
4. Heat the jar in a water bath where the water is up to the level or over the oil and herb mixture. Not too high to ensure water won't splash into the glass jar.
5. Temperature should be medium-high.
6. Heat for 30 minutes then cool. Repeat 2-3 times. Alternatively leave on low for several hours. I like to use a slow cooker for this option. There are other methods to infuse herbs into the oil but I find this the most efficient.
7. Strain oil into the glass measuring cup.
8. Weigh the oil.
9. Measure wax according to the desired softness. A ratio of 1:2 wax:oil is very hard, 1:8 is very soft. I prefer a ratio of 1:6.
10. Heat oil and wax until all the wax has melted.
11. Pour into jars or tins and let cool.
12. Once cool put the cap on and label with the ingredients and date.

As you work with herbs in different ways you can experience them differently. The scent as they are infusing the oil, the colour change as the herbs are extracted, how the infused oil feels on the skin compared to the pure oil, watching the different

PHOTO: Denys Nevozhai for Unsplash.com

stages as plants grow and learning how to harvest and process. There are so many ways to engage with the plants and each experience can provide more insight and a deeper understanding.

- Dr. Angela Foran

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PHOTO: Dr. Angela Foran

Final Salve

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Angela has been in practice in Vancouver, BC for 16 years. Shortly after her daughter was born, 12 years ago, she turned what began as a way to have a home apothecary into a herbal dispensary supplying practitioners with custom tinctures, teas, salves for their patients.

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