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Volume One:

Calendula (Calendula officinalis)



Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Calendula is likely one of the most common remedies used in folk and clinical herbalism and has a broad spectrum of uses and applications. From German folk medicine, to the ancient Greeks, to the homeopaths and clinical herbal traditions of North America- everywhere Calendula pops up it is adopted and used as a valuable medicinal agent.

It gets its name Calendula because it has been seen to flower throughout the “calends of every month,” as we see it has the same root of our word for calendar. As a remedy that is ruled by the Sun astrologically, this makes sense, and you will learn the importance of this plant-planet connection later in this lesson.

While commonly thought of as simply a topical remedy used for minor cuts, scrapes and wounds, it's common for people to overlook the other uses of Calendula as an internal agent. I consider it to be an herbal “polycryst,” meaning that it has a very wide range of actions that are beneficial for a variety of common conditions both acute and chronic. In our modern world of chronic digestive imbalances, leaky gut syndrome and food intolerance, it is in my opinion one of *the most important* remedies for a symptomatic pattern that is almost universal amongst modern humans.

Here we will explore some of those uses and applications, as well as the underlying constitutional picture and energetic pattern behind this humble, yet powerful medicinal plant.

- Common Name:** Calendula, Marigold, Pot Marigold
- Latin Name:** *Calendula officinalis*
- Part Used:** entire flowering head. It is important to use the entire flower and not just the petals, for it is underneath the flower base that contains much of the aromatic and resinous properties of the plant which are responsible for its medicinal actions. The petals themselves are relatively mild and sweet, but the entire flower is distinctly much more medicinal. Some practitioners also use the leaves, which are said to contain a degree of iodine.
- Family:** Asteraceae
- Geographical Data:** Originally native throughout Europe. Naturalized throughout North America and other parts of the world.

The 5 Keys of Calendula

Tastes

The taste of Calendula is rather complex. First and foremost it is a bitter remedy, which indicates many of its primary actions and organ affinities. Next we see it has a slightly sweet and salty taste, as well as a degree of pungency. These inform us that it has a slightly nutritive quality (sweet) which it has upon the mucosal membranes, a water regulatory aspect (salty), as well as a stimulating property (pungent). Through understanding these tastes we can determine and understand much more of the complex properties of this valuable remedy.

Primary Actions

- Lymphagogue-** This is one of our best gentle lymphatic remedies which is used for swollen and painful lymph nodes. Matthew Wood always says its specific for “those places where the sun don’t shine,” such as the armpits, the nodes along the neck, and the inguinal region. Whenever the lymph nodes are swollen, it is an indication of heightened immunological activity with fluid stagnation and a general need for “detoxification.” I have found Calendula most beneficial in cases where the acute cough, cold, flu or infection has passed, but there is a lingering after effect of the sickness, where the person just doesn’t feel all the way better, perhaps with low grade fever and lymphatic congestion.
- Alterative-** This is a relatively broad term in regards to herbal actions, as it generally means something that will open up the channels of elimination (bowels, skin, liver, lungs, kidneys), and are typically used whenever there is some form of toxicity in the body in the form of dampness and sometimes accompanied by heat. There are many subcategories of alterative and in Calendula’s case I would say that it is primarily a bitter tonic and lymphatic alterative, with a focus on the bowels, liver, skin and lymphatic system. People who need alteratives can often be quite tired and run down due to the fact that their vital force is busy trying to clean the system out- a sign of low vitality or deficiency of the Sun, but more on that later.
- Vulnerary/Astringent-** This is likely Calendula’s claim to fame, as it is one of *the best* wound healing remedies in our western materia medica. It helps wounds to heal much more rapidly,

prevents suppuration and stagnation of fluids, modulates any local inflammation, and prevents bacterial overgrowth and infection. The astringency helps to draw the wound together to heal it more rapidly and preventing excessive scar formation. It is quite specific in its treatment of **damp/heat** type wounds, where there is swelling, pus, redness and inflammation. Matthew Wood notes that Calendula seems to “clean the wound from the inside out,” indicating that rather than just superficially preventing infection and sealing the wound, it works on a deeper level of the blood and lymphatics in the local tissues and works up and out from there. It is also quite useful as a topical agent for sunburns.

- Bitter tonic/Cholagogue:** The bitter tonic property of Calendula is quite important to understand its unique synergy, and is often overlooked by many practitioners. **All** bitter tonics will have a stimulant effect upon the liver, increasing its detoxification capacities and often increasing production of bile and its secretion by the gallbladder. This is beneficial for the metabolism and digestion of fats and oils, as well as general digestive insufficiency. Bitters have a *downward baring mechanism*, meaning that they bring the vital force down and out. This typically results in fluids being drained from the body, which ultimately leads to a constitutional net drying effect. **This is critical to understand about bitters!** Thus we see Calendula drains fluids not only through its action upon the lymphatics, but also through a constitutional bitter action on the liver, gallbladder, and entire gastrointestinal tract.

- Inflammation modulator:** Most texts will say “anti-inflammatory.” I prefer not to use that term because it makes us think that an herb will completely take away inflammation. A better term to use is “inflammation modulator,” because most plants will not completely halt the body's inflammatory process (which is a critical healing aspect of the vital force) but will simply modulate it to a certain extent. This action of Calendula is demonstrated through its topical effects in wounds, but also in its internal effects upon the GI. Whenever there is the presence of a food allergy or intolerance, the digestive system will be inflamed which will typically reflex to systemic inflammation elsewhere in the body. This can manifest as joint pain, autoimmunity, or chronic skin conditions like eczema and acne. While Calendula may not act like “herbal aspirin,” it is beneficial primarily in the treatment of inflammation in the GI, which then has a reflex action upon inflammation elsewhere in the body. Because of its major affinity for the lymphatic system, we see it also benefiting swollen lymph accompanied by inflammation due to the stagnation.

- Emmenagogue:** In North America this is not one of the primary uses of Calendula, though throughout Europe we see that it is one of the major standby remedies used to bring on a stuck and stagnant menses, as well as to relieve painful menstruation. We can see this linked to the bitter taste/action, which again has a downward baring mechanism of action and drains fluids from the body. As we will see under the energetics, because Calendula is primarily warming, we want to use it when the uterus and blood are cold and stagnant and require stimulation to get things moving again.

- Immune tonic:** Lastly we see Calendula has a mildly tonic action upon the immune system. This is slightly different from the directly immunostimulant properties of Echinacea or the deeper acting tonic properties of something like Reishi mushroom. Rather, Calendula acts as a gentle remedy which builds up the vital heat of the body, maintains balance in the fluid

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metabolism by clearing any stagnation, keeps the channels of elimination open and detoxifying, and helps keep any pathogenic bacteria at bay. Many authors note that it is “anti-bacterial” and “anti-fungal,” though rather than acting as a direct antimicrobial agent, it is best considered a “bacteriostatic,” meaning that it contains the bacteria and prevents their spread and infiltration by keeping the lymph moving. Remember, the lymphatic system is a critical part of the immune system and through keeping the lymph moving and cleansing the blood the immune system is able to better screen the system and do it’s job more efficiently and effectively. Traditionally in folk herbalism it was put into soups and stews in the wintertime for this effect.

These are the **primary** herbal actions of Calendula and represent it’s major physiological effects upon the body. It may have other uses, but these are the critical and primary actions that it has. The goal with studying herbal actions is to remember that **they are all connected**. The more you can see the net synergistic effect of the total actions of the plant, the more you are able to see the *essential medicinal pattern* of the plant and how it is best used holistically.

Now that you know the major actions, let’s take a look at the primary organs and systems of the body it has an affinity to. Naturally, there will be some overlap here, but it is helpful to see the specific parts of the body it operates upon separate from the actions.

Affinities

• **Physical Organs, Systems and Tissues:** These are the primary organ, systems, and tissues which Calendula has an affinity for. Each of these will be gone into much more detail later on within this lesson.

- Lymphatic and Immune Systems
- Liver and Gallbladder
- Digestive System (mucosal membranes)
- Skin
- Female Reproductive System (uterus)

• **Dhatu/Srotas of Ayurveda:**

Energetics

- **Temperature:** Warming. Calendula is beneficial in that it a gentle warming agent of the 1st degree according to the Greek humoral system. This means that it gently warms the solar plexus, thins fluids, and dispels moisture through the pores of the skin and other channels of the body. From the perspective of the Physiomedicalists, it would be considered a *stimulant*, meaning that it directly activates and directs the vital force in a particular direction. All of these temperature qualities point to it’s usefulness in the treatment of damp and cold type tissue states.

It should be noted here that although Calendula has a bitter taste to it, one might immediately think that it is cooling. But we cannot tunnel vision in on simply one aspect of the plant. While the triterpenes it contains are bitter and cooling (IE inflammation modulating), we cannot overlook the fact that it also contains resins and aromatic oils which are pungent and warming. Thus the **net effect** of Calendula is warming, although it does have the slightly cooling and draining properties of a bitter.

Matthew Wood notes that although the Greeks classified Calendula as warming in the 1st degree, he feels that it is rather penetrating in its influence. He juxtaposes it to Ginger, which has a more peripheral warming effect on the exterior components of the body- the muscles, peripheral circulation and stomach, whereas Calendula is working more deeply in the body- liver, gallbladder, and lymphatics.

- Moisture: Mixed. The effects upon moisture are varying depending upon the situation and organ systems being analyzed. On the one hand Calendula has a moistening property, and on the other it has drying properties. Because it is bitter, we see it has a net draining effect upon fluid metabolism and thus has a constitutional drying effect. Yet it has a soothing effect upon the mucosal membranes, particularly those lining the gastrointestinal tract, and can be used for dryness and irritation of those tissues- a critical action in chronic inflammation of the gut associated with food intolerance and antibiotic trauma.

Anyone that has prepared Calendula into a tincture or an oil from the fresh plant knows that it has **a lot** of moisture content to it. Biochemically, it contains a degree of mucilage in the form of polysaccharides, which are responsible for its tonic effects on the immune system, as well as its soothing and moistening effects on the mucosal membranes.

- Effects upon Doshas:

- Knowing that Calendula is warming and primarily drying remedy, we see that the primary dosha it is used to treat is *kapha*, which manifests primarily in the body as coldness, dampness, and heaviness. The *kapha* constitution typically manifests in people who tend to be larger framed, tending towards weight gain and obesity, fluid and organ stagnations, slow and steady rhythms, and accumulation of waste products. Because it is a primarily warming agent, we want to exercise caution in using Calendula in *pitta* type constitutions and to also be aware of using it with *vata* constitutions as it may excessively dry them out. That being said, the warming quality of Calendula would benefit a *vata*, though oftentimes someone with a predominance of *vata* will be much less likely to have the lymphatic stagnation that is the typical hallmark for the use of this plant.

From an energetic perspective, Calendula is said to stimulate the *upana vayu*, which is considered the downward bearing wind element in Ayurveda. This force is associated with essentially all bodily actions which force things down and out (menstruation, defecation, etc.). This is revealed to us through Calendula's bitter taste as well as its emmenagogue action.

•Effects upon Tissue States:

•In terms of the 6 Tissue States of the Physiomedicalists, we see that Calendula is best used in the cold/depression tissue state. It's important to understand that when I say "cold," I'm not merely referring to *just* a quality of temperature, but rather an overall state of the tissues. In energetic systems worldwide, heat is associated with life- in fact one of the differentiations between a live body and a dead body is that the living organism contains a quality of warmth. When the Solar force returns to the Earth at the Spring Equinox, we see that plant and animal life spring back into action, things start growing and life returns to Earth so to speak.

The great herbalist and healer Samuel Thomson noted the great importance of the quality of heat within an organism and said that this vital warmth must be preserved and generate to promote health and longevity. He called it the Fountain of Life. "If you raise the stream level with the fountain, it stops the current and all motion will cease, and the same effects will follow by lowering the fountain to a level with the stream. When the outward heat becomes equal with the inward... cold assumes the power and death takes place." (Samuel Thomson)

Thus, when we discuss the cold/depression tissue state, we have to consider the latter descriptor of that tissue state- "depression." This is not just a reference to psychological depression as we are commonly used to using the term, but rather a depression of the vital response of the organs and tissues of the body. This tissue state is "cold within the organism from the dying down of the innate heat of life, and not from mere exposure to cold... Depression is characterized by cold skin and extremities, pus generating diseases, sepsis, putrefaction, dark colors in the complexion and tongue, low oxidation of the tissues, the appearance of bacteria or parasites which are living off tissue waste and secreting toxins that depress the tissue functions of the host." (Matthew Wood)

Holistic treatment of the cold/depression tissue state is typically treated with pungent, aromatic, warming stimulating plants which help to bring the vital heat back into the tissues and organs. With Calendula, we see this tissue state primarily afflicting the major organs/systems it operates upon: the lymphatics, the liver and the gastrointestinal tract.

"Now wait a minute" you might be asking, "I thought Calendula was anti-inflammatory!" (or inflammation modulating rather) This is true, it is. Which brings us to an important aspect of the cold/depression tissue state and another pattern we get from Traditional Chinese Medicine, which is called "heat from cold."

I know that sounds totally contradictory, so let me explain. We have to remember that the vital force that operates within our body has intelligence- it's much smarter than we are actually (just think if you had to manually pump your heart, squeeze your gallbladder, secrete insulin, etc.!!) When cold penetrates to the interior, or is generated through poor diet and lifestyle factors, the tissues begin to deteriorate, lose function, and ultimately can putrefy and alter their anatomical structure. In response to this cold, the vital force often initiates a reflex inflammatory process in an attempt to stimulate the local tissues, detoxify

the local area, bring fresh oxygenated blood, and basically get things moving again. Thus we see heat being generated from cold.

This is why having an energetic model of the body and how plants function is **the #1 essential factor in holistic herbalism!** If you see there is heat and just throw some “anti-inflammatory” herbs at it, without assessing the underlying cause of the inflammation (which is based at the root state of the tissues) your therapeutics will not be nearly as effective.

So Calendula is not to be used as a general “anti-inflammatory” as some of the books would have you think about it- but rather specifically when there is inflammation due to an underlying coldness and depression of the afflicted organs and tissues. Because it has a specific affinity for the lymph, liver, and GI, these are the areas of the body of which it is most remedial for. If someone has inflammation in the lungs or the kidneys or elsewhere, another remedy would be more suitable.

While this discussion has primarily been in regards to the cold/depression tissue state, Calendula also has applications in damp/stagnation tissue states, where the Water Element has become toxic with an accumulation of metabolic waste products, immunological components, bacteria/parasites/viral debris, and other cellular materials which are congesting the channels of elimination. This tends to have a taxing effect upon the liver who has to clean up and manage all this stuff! Thus we see this remedy being beneficial from cold and damp conditions which can lead to a more superficial heat condition. The specific manifestation of these energetic patterns will be outlined in more detail below.

In the full Materia Medica Monthly program, there will be additional lessons going into the specifics on tissue state energetics, the doshas of Ayurveda, and other energetic and constitutional models so you have a deeper grasp and understanding of these critical principles of holistic herbalism.

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Prabhava/Specific Indications

• **Pulse, Tongue and Specific Indications:** Here are some general indications on the pulse and tongue that may indicate the appropriate use of Calendula. (Note these are all drawn from the work of Matthew Wood from The EarthWise Herbal and The Practice of Traditional Western Herbalism)

- The tongue will be slightly puffy and swollen, which indicates an accumulation of fluids within the tissues (IE lymphatic stagnation). There will also be red or pink papillae along the edges of the tongue, which is the region in correspondence with the lymphatic system and the Spleen. The red and pink coloration indicates heat patterns and “unresolved infections.” The edges of the tongue may be “scalloped” or with

indentations, also indicating damp accumulation within the system and poor absorption in the GI.

- The pulse will be indicative of coldness and dampness, and will typically be low, sluggish, languid, and difficult to find.
- Other indications may be a “yellow look about the eyes; tired eyes, feels and looks “bone weary”; sometimes the facial skin is red and dry; generalized yellow complexion” (Matthew Wood)
- “Calendula is indicated when the individual feels worse in damp, heavy, cloudy weather. There is a tendency to get cold easily and is greatly affected by the cold. It is specific for wounds that will not heal and lymphatic congestion with a predilection for the chest, axilla, and inguinal crease.” (Sharol Tilgner)

•Psychological Picture: The psychological picture we want to see in someone that would strongly indicate the use of Calendula would be a slight depression or melancholy- what modern physicians might call “Seasonal Affective Disorder” or S.A.D. It’s important for me to put a disclaimer here that if someone has depression, especially severe depression, that it is important to do a full workup and history to see what might be the underlying cause. Depression is complex, and can have it’s roots in psychology, but can also be due to underlying spiritual influences (such as hexes, curses, envy, jealousy, malevolent spiritual influences, etc) OR physiological causes.

What a lot of the recent research is pointing to is that in fact a lot of cases of psychological depression are not because of some biochemical imbalance in the brain, but the result of systemic inflammation due to food intolerances/allergies. We actually have more serotonin in our gut than we do our brains! Thus we start to see the greater actions of Calendula upon restoring digestive function having an influence upon it’s psychological actions.

I love how the herbalist Chris Hafner describes Calendula as “herbal sunshine.” This not only points to it’s actions upon the physiological and psychological axis, but also to it’s astrological rulerships, which I will describe later. It points to Calendula’s actions upon the lymphatic structures where “the sun don’t shine” as pointed out earlier, but also upon it’s influence upon the psychological sphere. This remedy not only cleanses cold/depression and dampness from the tissues and organs, but also from the mind, gently but effectively lifting up our consciousness, shining the light into those darkened recesses of the self, and clarifying the senses.

The symptomatic picture of Calendula is said to be worse in cold damp weather, or when the Sun is behind the clouds for extended periods of time. This is quite fitting for people living in the Pacific Northwest of the United States or England, where it can be cloudy and rainy for extended periods of time, and many people often get sick with cold/damp underlying tissue states.

In short, Calendula is best used when someone has a degree of psychological melancholy, immunological deficiency, lymphatic stagnation, and inflammation in the digestive system with a likelihood of food intolerance. In this case, the root of the problem lies in the gut and Calendula’s action upon the psychological spectrum is likely due to its influence upon the

gastrointestinal tract. We want to specifically use it when the psychological depression is supported by physiological depression as well, thus the remedy matches the entire axis of influence needed by the individual.

Matthew Wood also notes it has a “positive psychological effect for people with fear of cancer.”



Clinical Patterns and Uses

Herein lies some of the key symptomatic pictures and patterns of which Calendula would be most beneficial for. It is in essence where you start to see all of the information from above come together into **patterns** that you want to observe in your clients that indicate the appropriate uses of Calendula. I will essentially break them up into different primary categories- though keep in mind that oftentimes these categories will overlap. The goal here is to see what the **core essential pattern** of the plant is, and how it is this pattern that is exerting its influence across various physiological dynamics.

1. Food Intolerance, Leaky Gut Syndrome and Antibiotic Trauma: This is a **major** subject these days and is typically one of the first things I assess in *all* of my clients because 95% of everyone has some food they are eating that is giving them some troubles. While I cannot get into all of the details on this subject here, I would like to outline some of the general premises and principles here, because Calendula is my #1 remedy for these types of issues.

It is unfortunate that most modern humans living in western culture have had to take antibiotics at some point in their life. Even more unfortunate is the lack of education amongst medical professionals as to the adverse impact they have upon our health and fail to educate their patients on some simple things they can do to mitigate those adverse effects. Antibiotics are like atom bombs- they just go in there a nuke every sign of life, both good and bad. After all, the word “antibiotic” literally means *anti-life!* So they kill the pathogenic bacteria, but also the beneficial bacteria which inhabit our gastrointestinal

tract. It is this microbiome of bacterial ecology living in our intestines that are a critical facet of our immune system, nervous system, and of course digestive system.

So we get what I call “antibiotic trauma:” impaired digestion, lowered immunity and host resistance, and a heightened sensitivity to everything that comes into contact with the digestive system (IE: almost *everything* you put into your body). This weakens the gut lining and makes it much more sensitive and prone to an immunological hyper-reactivity to various substances- including those present in food.

So what ends up happening when you eat the glutenous bread (yup I’m about to tell you to go gluten free... sorry!) or the proteins found in milk and dairy products (yup that one too... sorry!) **our immune system sees it as a foreign antigen.** Meaning, it thinks that it’s a pathogenic bacteria. This sends our immune system into a sort of frenzy, inducing both localized and systemic inflammatory processes, which can lead to a whole slew of symptoms, such as: skin conditions, asthma, all manner of digestive complaints (gas, bloating, nausea, diarrhea, constipation etc.), musculoskeletal pain, candida, brain fog, fatigue, anxiety, depression, ADD, and a lot more.

This localized immune and inflammatory reaction in the GI tract further weakens the gut wall, making it more permeable to these food antigens and other larger than normal substances that shouldn’t normally be able to cross the gut wall. This is what we commonly refer to as Leaky Gut Syndrome. As this occurs, the web of lymphatic tissue in the gut (called GALT- Gut Associated Lymphatic Tissue) becomes inflamed, congested, and overworked, which leads to the classic “bloated belly” associated with food intolerance and GI inflammation.

Ultimately as these substances cross the gut wall, they congest the liver, blood, lymph and other tissues in the body leading to an overall damp/stagnation tissue state which is accompanied by heat and inflammation. Thus you get damp/heat- the classic pattern that calls for our major category of herbal actions: alteratives. This is a common pattern we also see in systemic candidiasis, which is honestly more rare than the alternative health industry would lead you to believe, and most people that think they have candida really have Leaky Gut Syndrome- but they *do* go hand in hand more often than not.

In steps Calendula. I know that was a lot of build up, but take a look at the whole pattern on which this plant operates upon and how it is *perfectly suited* for this symptomatic picture. First and foremost, Calendula is an astringent/vulnerary which knits tissues together and heals wounds. Most people think of this only as a topical action, but in truth **our digestive system is our inner skin-** what you use to treat the skin topically can be used to the same end internally for the gut. Think of it, essentially the gut is like a big scrape, a wound, a laceration. So first Calendula goes in there and starts to repair these wounds and thus the leaky gut.

Secondly, as a lymphagogue Calendula will facilitate in the digestive bloating by cleansing the lymphatic system and providing the immune system with support. As an inflammation modulator it will also help to damp down and overly reactive inflammatory response and

on top of that, the polysaccharides will help to soothe the overly irritated mucosal membrane. That was more like 3 in 1!

Next we see that Calendula as a bitter will just help to overall stimulate digestion, but furthermore it will help to move any stagnancy in the liver which is likely overburdened with cellular debris from the GI, blood and lymph, and is overwhelmed by all the “stuff” that it has to deal with from the digestive system (remember it’s getting more than it’s used to because the “gates” are essentially wide open). In this way it increases portal circulation by clearing out metabolic waste products congesting the blood and liver.

Lastly, remember that Calendula is a stimulant, thinning and moving stagnant fluids from the core out the periphery for detoxification. By opening the channels of elimination in the liver, skin, lymph, and digestion, it is helping to prevent stagnation of fluids which then prevents possible bacterial, viral or fungal infection.

Thus you can see how Calendula is a *specific* remedy for this all too common pattern in modern life. I’ll show you how I like to put it together in some formulas later on to modulate and amplify these effects, as well as how you can potentially balance out some of it’s properties to make it more suitable for other constitutions.

While we are on this note on the digestive system, another important use of Calendula is in the treatment of gastric and duodenal ulcers. An ulcer is essentially a wound in the lining of the stomach (gastric) or the small intestine (duodenal) which is inflamed, potentially bleeding, and often quite painful. Now whenever someone has an ulcer, **you have to exercise caution** because that ulcer is likely going to be quite sensitive to overstimulation of gastric secretions. Remember, bitters stimulate gastric secretions, so you have to be a bit careful here with your dosage. Now, Calendula isn’t the *strongest* bitter tonic stimulants in the world, but it does work that way, so exercise a bit of caution.

But in short, we see the vulnerary/astringent, inflammation modulating properties, bacteriostatic, and lymphagogue properties all come together nicely here in the treatment of an ulcer in which it will help clear infection, cleanse the fluids, reduce the inflammation, and heal the wound. The mucilage will also beneficially soothe the irritated mucosal membrane as well. It also works in this regard as a mouthwash for mouth ulcers (canker sores).

2. Immune Deficiency and Lymphatic Swelling: This is probably the main way in which Calendula is used internally in modern herbalism, which is great because it works like a charm! As mentioned previously, this remedy is excellent for dispersing stagnant and congested fluids within the lymphatic system- as commonly seen by swollen nodes. The picture here is someone who is run down, weak, tired, melancholic-depressed, and just can’t get over that cough or cold from a few weeks ago. As Matthew Wood notes, it is specific for “lingering unresolved infections.” This could be a respiratory infection, a fever, or simply the common cold.

I didn't mention the diaphoretic property of Calendula earlier under herbal actions, but it does have an influence upon the febrile mechanism (fever) by warming up the system and pushing fluids to the surface. In this regard it is considered a *stimulant diaphoretic* (as compared to a relaxant diaphoretic) and can be used in the treatment of fever.

Thus Calendula has applications in acute situations of the immune system, such as coughs, colds and flus, but specifically when it is accompanied by fever and swollen lymph nodes. On the other hand, it is also of great benefit *after* the primary symptoms have subsided and the person just isn't "quite all the way right," feels tired, sluggish, and has a bit of lingering infection or low-grade fever.

This "post cold sensation" is often due to an accumulation of metabolic waste products congesting the tissues. Think about it, or even better visualize it, the blood and lymphatic system (and other afflicted tissues) were just the host to a major battle scene between your immune system and some invading pathogen. The war has been fought, you won (congratulations!) but the battlefield is littered with the dead and dying. Your body is trying to get back on track but the fluids are filled with dead white blood cells, viral and bacterial cells, metabolic waste products and cellular debris. This makes it difficult for the tissues to receive adequate oxygen and nutrients from the blood, as well as to expel the normal waste products of metabolism. Hence to low energy, fatigue, and foggy headed sensation after being sick.

The solution! Not just Calendula, but alteratives in general! You gotta cleanse all that stuff out so your body can get back to it's normal physiological state. This is the big mistake of modern medicine, is they focus on killing the bacteria and not on the normal physiological functioning of the body. This is the beauty of herbs is that while some of them yes do kill bacteria, most of them function through **changing the ecological dynamics of the body to make it inhospitable to pathogens**. See the difference there? It's a critical one. One perspective sees the body as a machine, the other as an ecosystem, a microcosm. To effectively see the body as this ecosystem, you have to take an energetic approach to see what the underlying state of the tissues is, and use remedies to shift that ecological basis to return the body to homeostasis.

It's important to remember here that Calendula was classically used as an immune tonic throughout the autumn and winter to drive off the cold, keep the fluids of the body moving, and as a general preventative agent. To this effect it was often cooked in soups and stews and delivered more as a food!

3. Wound Healing: I mentioned this briefly earlier on, but this is Calendula's primary claim to fame. No other remedy truly surpasses Calendula in it's ability to effectively keep wounds clean, facilitate healing, and prevent infection. From the run of the day cuts and scrapes and road-rashes, to more intense wounds like lacerations, puncture wounds and traumas, Calendula is your go to topical first aid remedy.

Once again, it's major benefits is that it is not just healing the wound, nor is it "killing the bacteria," but it is operating on the level beneath the skin and the wound itself,

maintaining a healthy flow of lymphatic fluids and thus keeping a consistent supply of immunological components and preventing any infection from spreading. As with all things Calendula related, it is best for wounds which are swollen, puffy, red, inflamed, and filled with pus and fluids. Now you can of course use Calendula in all manner of wounds, but those with a marked dampness are particularly benefited by it.

It is useful here to differentiate it from a few other common topical remedies that are typically used. Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) is a great vulnerary agent as well, and combines quite nicely with Calendula in this regard, just be sure to exercise caution with Comfrey as it sometimes heals a wound a bit too quickly and can seal in a deep wound and lead to infection (hence it combines well with Calendula which works on that deeper level).

Next we have Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), which is best used for *very* deep wounds that are bleeding excessively. Yarrow is also a great vulnerary and antibacterial remedy, but it is specific for staunching the bleeding of wounds and does a much better job than Calendula at this (though Calendula does work well in this regard, just not *as* well). Next we have St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). This plant is specific for puncture wounds and is the top remedy for treatment of these. It combines well with Calendula in this regard, but the important point is to **never use** Comfrey for puncture wounds- as it will prevent it from draining and can lead to infection which can be quite dangerous for deep puncture wounds.

So there's a little bit of topical first aid remedy differentials that you can keep in mind when treating the skin and it's wounds.

4. Female Reproductive Actions: As mentioned earlier, Calendula is widely used throughout European traditions as a reliable emmenagogue, used to help stimulate a stagnant menses (amenorrhea) and to relieve any associated pain (dysmenorrhea). As we have seen, Calendula is a warming agent, and thus we want to only use it in cases where the uterus is constitutionally cold, with a lack of circulation and overall congestion of fluids. The symptom of amenorrhea and dysmenorrhea can be due to various underlying tissue states, such as excess wind/tension or damp/relaxation, so it's important to assess the underlying tissue imbalance and only use Calendula when it is constitutionally indicated.

This remedy also has applications as a mucosal membrane tonic and soothing agent when the vaginal wall is overly dry and irritated, especially if there is any bleeding. This is especially applicable post childbirth if the vaginal wall tears at all. As an overall lymphagogue and bitter, it can be used for states of vaginal discharge (leucorrhea) which would be another indication of damp/stagnation tissue states.

As a remedy with shown anti fungal actions, Calendula becomes an important remedy in the treatment of systemic candidiasis, which commonly goes along with Leaky Gut Syndrome (actually the leaky gut is usually the root cause). So we can see that Calendula's net global action set addresses this concern on many levels- lymphatic, gut, immune, and now even the female reproductive system.

5. Liver Detoxification: This was mentioned earlier under the first point in this section of the monograph, but deserves a brief mentioning here again as Calendula is an extremely useful remedy for use in general liver stagnation and detoxification. It has been shown to actually lower liver enzyme levels, which are typically higher in chronic liver disease such as hepatitis and cirrhosis. Obviously these conditions are pretty serious and will likely need much more than just Calendula, but it's worth being aware of it's benefit here for the liver and the stagnation that it can experience. In this regard it formulates well with things like Dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinale*), Oregon Grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*), Artichoke leaf (*Cynara scolymus*), and Greater Celandine (*Chelidonium majus*). As the liver is so connected to the digestive system, and *so* many people have a leaky gut and antibiotic trauma, it is a beneficial remedy to consider- as it's global action set operates upon the greater axis of liver issues.

Like what you're reading? Tired of 1 paragraph descriptions of herbs that leave you feeling like you *still* don't understand how to use a plant holistically? Want in-depth training that gets you knowing your herbs inside and out? Click the link below to register for Materia Medica Monthly and get lessons like this *every month!*
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Pharmacological Data

- Primary Constituents: Triterpenes (calendulosides A-D), carotenoids, flavonoids (isoquercitrin, narcissin, rutin), volatile oils and resins, chlorogenic acid, polysaccharides, minerals (iodine- primarily found in the leaf)
- Mechanisms of action: We see that the triterpenes contained within Calendula are primarily responsible for it's bitter taste and thus relate to it's actions upon the liver, gallbladder, digestive system, as well as it's draining property on the fluids of the body. These constituents are also responsible for the inflammation modulating properties of Calendula, along with the flavonoids. Flavonoids in general have a protective effect upon the vasculature, reduce heat and inflammation, and generally improve their elasticity and tone as well as providing antioxidant protection. This is juxtaposed with the presence of volatile oils and resins, which are the pungent aspect of Calendula and result in it's The polysaccharides are responsible for it's immune tonic properties, as well as it's soothing and slightly demulcent effect upon the gastrointestinal mucosa. The wound healing properties are due in part to the presence of flavonoids and carotenoids.

Contraindications

- Contraindications: Calendula is generally regarded as a relatively mild and safe plant for internal consumption. Though due to it's emmenagogue effects, it is suggested to be avoided for internal use during pregnancy. Topical use during pregnancy on the other hand is acceptable.

•Energetic/constitutional side effects: As mentioned previously, due to Calendula's heating properties it is recommended to exercise caution in its use with people with overly hot and irritated tissues, *pitta*/Fire Element constitutions, or an excess of the Sun and Mars in the natal chart.

•Herb-Drug Interactions: There are no documented herb-drug interactions with Calendula.

Preparations

•Tincture: 1:5 at 70% alcohol from freshly dried material. Due to the presence of triterpenes, as well as the volatile oils and resins, Calendula best yields to a high percentage alcohol extraction. I use around 70% alcohol and *strongly* recommend using the freshly dried plant material. While I usually *always* prefer fresh plants over dried, the fresh flowers of Calendula have a very high water content which tends to dilute the menstruum significantly to a point of either risking the preservation of the extract, or at the very least diluting it to where it will not properly extract the major constituents. A 1:5 (grams:mL) ratio is generally acceptable for Calendula, though I always say if you can make it stronger, why not?

•Infused oil/salve: The other primary way in which Calendula is extracted is through oils. Again, this is because the resins, volatile oils and triterpenes are insoluble in water, and thus soluble in high alcohol and oils. The freshly dried flowers yield nicely to all manner of carrier oils, such as cold-pressed olive oil. This oil can be used directly on the skin, or prepared into a salve with beeswax, other infused oils, and/or essential oils to create a nice broad spectrum topical medicine.

•Succus: I do not personally have any experience with the succus of Calendula, but it is commonly used so it's worth mentioning here. A succus is essentially a pressed juice of the fresh plant material, which can either be immediately applied (usually topically) or preserved in alcohol. If you do not preserve it in alcohol it will go bad within a few days, so be sure to use it up quick or preserve it somehow!

•Infusion: Because the flowers are light and delicate, it is best prepared as an infusion if doing an aqueous extract. But it's important to remember to cover it with a lid, as the volatile oils and resins will evaporate off with the water and you will lose a portion of the medicine in the steam.

•Powder: I really like using Calendula as a powder because you get the whole herb administered in relatively high amounts *and* with powders you are getting the entire biochemical profile of the plant. That being said, Calendula doesn't really taste that great, so it's good for compliance to formulate it with some other herbs that modulate it to make it a bit more palatable.

In the Materia Medica Monthly membership site, there will be additional videos and lessons on herbal preparations, best practices to get the most out of your plants, and recipes and formulas as well!

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Dosage

- Liquid Extract: depends on therapeutic context. Anywhere from low doses (1-3 drops) up to larger doses (1 tsp/5 mL)
- Powder: 3-6 grams
- Infusion: 2-3 heaping tablespoons in 1 cup of water. I prefer a quart mason jar filled 1/2 way and then filled up with boiling water, covered for 20 minutes.
- Succus: ideal for topical applications, use as needed.

Formulation Strategies

I want to start off by being super clear about something... I absolutely *love* formulation! I think it is one of those areas of herbalism that treads the boundary between science and art, each pallet being like a different color on our pallet, and the principles of holistic formulation being our brush strokes and techniques to achieve the desired result.

But *the most important thing* about creating effective herbal formulas, is that you *have* to know the net global effects of each herb you are using, that is, their tastes, actions, affinities, energetics and special potencies/specific indications. Formulation isn't just haphazardly throwing herbs together in a bottle and *hoping* it will work. Rather, they must be assembled with strategy, precision, and a clear intent behind each plant and it's ratio in the formula. In that way, a formula is *always* greater than the sum total of it's parts, and you can achieve wonders through them.

Again, there's a lot of foundational teachings that can be gone into on herbal formulation, but at it's basis lies the art of creating simple pairs and triplets with plants and stacking them on top of one another to create more complex formulas. Herbs can be combined to create secondary and tertiary actions, balance the humoral or energetic properties of certain plants, improve the flavor, or drive it to particular organ systems and tissues.

In short, formulation is complex, but I'd like to share a few ways you can work with Calendula as a lead herb in some formulas for different symptomatic pictures described above.

Wound Healing Pair

Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	50%
Plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>)	50%

This is an excellent starting point for both topical applications in salves and infused oils, but also works well as a starting point for a gut restoration formula or for ulcers. Let's take a look at how it can be modulated in different ways for that purpose.

You can add a basic digestive carminative herb to enhance it's digestive affinity and to alleviate the many GI symptoms that are associated, such as Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*). If you wanted a stronger bitter component to it, you could add some Dandelion root (*Taraxacum officinalis*). Say the person has some nervousness and anxiety associated with it, you could add a nervine herb like Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*).

But wouldn't it make more sense to use an herb that has **all** of these properties in one? Chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) stands proud here as it has all of these actions: it's a great aromatic carminative remedy, a digestive bitter, *and* a nervine. So rather than adding some Fennel, Dandelion root, and Passionflower, you could get it all done in one with Chamomile. *That* is strategic formulation- getting the most out of each herb selected.

But say this person has some pretty intense anxiety and Chamomile just isn't going to cut it, and you actually do want something that's a bit stronger on the bitter side and another carminative to round it out better. Well you could select one bitter that is nervine, say Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) or Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*). Upon further investigation we find out this person feels their anxiety in their heart rather than their head, so in that case Motherwort would be a much better option. Then you could add some Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*), whom is also a nice heart oriented nervine sedative, as well as a nice aromatic carminative.

So now our formula could look something like this:

Gut Restoration Formula

Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	30%
Plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>)	30%
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutita</i>)	20%
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)	10%
Lemon Balm (<i>Melissa officinalis</i>)	10%

That's a pretty sweet formula. Looking at it, we see there's a good wound healing pair (Calendula, and Plantain), a bitter triplet (Chamomile, Motherwort, and Calendula), a carminative pair (Lemon Balm and Chamomile), and a nervine triplet (Lemon Balm, Motherwort, and Chamomile). You see the strategy there?

Let's take it one step further. The one thing about this formula is that it is on the drying side. Plantain has some moistening properties, but it's only 30% of the formula- the rest of these herbs are going to dry someone out! So to adjunct the humoral drying effect of the formula, let's add the great moistening remedy and harmonizer Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), but just a little bit to moisten it up a bit more. I would also like it to have a *bit* of a stronger carminative effect as well, but I don't want to make it too much warmer, so I'm going to go ahead and add some Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) to polish this formula off.

In the end, here's what it looks like:

Gut Restoration Formula

Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	30%
Plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>)	30%
Peppermint (<i>Mentha x piperita</i>)	10%
Chamomile (<i>Matricaria recutita</i>)	10%
Motherwort (<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i>)	7.5%
Lemon Balm (<i>Melissa officinalis</i>)	7.5%

Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) 5%

In the end, this formula will have a net warming effect (the only cooling herbs there are Motherwort, Chamomile, and Peppermint- though the latter is mixed warming/cooling in that weird Peppermint fashion, which is its Prabhava by the way). It is likely to be more on the drying side, but not too much with the Licorice added in which will prevent constitutional dry imbalances to occur.



Let's do one for the lymphatic system.

Lymphatic Base Pair

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)

Red Root (*Ceanothus americanus*)

This is a pretty good place to start for a general lymphagogue formula. Of course there are many other herbs that one could use here, but I really like Red Root so we'll go with that. To this formula, let's add another very common lymphagogue remedy, though it's usually only seen as an immunostimulant: Echinacea (*Echinacea purpurea*). Let's also add something to stimulate the liver who's going to have to deal with all this metabolic waste being detoxed! For this I choose Oregon Grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*).

Let's further support the body's ability to remove these waste products by adding a diuretic herb to help move the water soluble toxins out of the system. While there's tons of diuretics, I choose Cleavers (*Galium aparine*) because it is not only diuretic, but also a great lymphagogue too!

So here's what our updated formula would look like:

Lymphatic Formula

Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	25%
Red Root (<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>)	25%
Cleavers (<i>Galium aparine</i>)	20%
Oregon Grape (<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>)	20%
Echinacea (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>)	10%

This is a pretty solid lymphatic formula, with secondary and tertiary support for the liver, blood and kidneys along with it. But I'd like to give this formula a serious kick, as this theoretical person has some *serious* lymphatic congestion and swelling that we need to get moving now! Lastly I'd like to get something with some serious pungent qualities to really

move the blood and open up the circulation. To this end, I'll add some Cayenne (*Capsicum annuum*) and Poke root (*Phytolacca decandra*). *Note: Poke root is a low dose medicinal and should always be used as such- don't exceed a few drops per dose in your formulas as it's a strong herb!!*

Here's our final formula

Lymphatic Formula

Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	20%
Red Root (<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>)	20%
Echinacea (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>)	20%
Cleavers (<i>Galium aparine</i>)	15%
Oregon Grape (<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>)	15%
Poke (<i>Phytolacca decandra</i>)	5%
Cayenne (<i>Capsicum annuum</i>)	5%

So you'll notice I did something there. I rearranged the order of the formula. It's hard for me to explain, but there's a *feeling* to a formula and how it feels on the page, for me the order of the herbs is imperative for it to feel right, especially in regards to ratios. I was looking at the formula and realized that Cleavers and Oregon Grape are really supportive herbs with their liver and kidney actions, and that I wanted Echinacea to be one of the lead herbs to further support the immune function, stimulate circulation of the blood, and move the lymph (this is the way it was traditionally used actually). The Poke and Cayenne get a small percentage of this formula as they are rather strong, 5% of each is plenty.

The net effect of this formula is going to be *very* drying- we've got a lot of bitters, pungents, and astringents in there. Obviously when someone has lymphatic congestion, the general state of the body is damp so that's what we are looking for. The Cayenne and Echinacea bring about a good amount of stimulation to keep things moving and also warm it up- as the Oregon Grape, Cleavers, and Red Root are on the cooling side. This formula is affected the lymphatic and immune systems, liver, gallbladder and portal circulation, kidneys and urinary tract, as well as the blood and circulatory system.

All Purpose Salve

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*)
Plantain (*Plantago major*)
St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

This is a pretty classic formula used for infused oils and salves for a long time. Can't beat it.

Inner Sunshine (proprietary formula)

St. John's Wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)	20%
Lemon Balm (<i>Melissa officinalis</i>)	15%
Milky Oats (<i>Avena sativa</i>)	15%
Rosemary (<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>)	15%



Schizandra (<i>Schisandra chinensis</i>)	15%
Calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	10%
Black Cohosh (<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i>)	10%

This is a formula I created a number of years ago that I used quite frequently when I was living in the northwestern most corner of Washington state- where it is rainy, wet, and cold *all* the time. A lot of folks there tend to get pretty depressed in the wintertime and this formula worked like a charm. You'll notice here that Calendula is more of a supportive remedy for the rest of the formula, using it as it's specific indications for depression and melancholy, to which end Black Cohosh was used as well. The rest of the formula is essential a neuro-trophorestorative compound. It's a really nice formula and can be modulated in different directions (ratios of the herbs and such) to suite the specific picture of the person in front you.

The above examples illustrate a few ways you can think through formulation strategies with Calendula for a few different situations. I believe that to fully understand an herb it's critical to study it in juxtaposition with other herbs it can be combined with in different ways to exemplify it's various actions, affinities and energetics.

Love formulating? Me too. In *Materia Medica Monthly*, each month you'll get strategies like the ones above for every herb we cover, plus additional information on holistic formulation theory and practice. So if you haven't already- you should really [click here to register for *Materia Medica Monthly*](#) to cultivate your mastery of herbal medicine.

Energetic Architecture

The discussion of the energetic architecture of a plant is something very unique to the Evolutionary Herbalism model, and often my favorite part to discuss!

But first I have a question for you.

What is it that brings together *all* of the information shared above? What is the *essential nature* of Calendula that reflects throughout all of it's layers of influence?

The answer to that lies in it's energetic architecture. What does that mean exactly? The energetic architecture of a plant is charting it's correspondences to the primary forces of nature, or the underlying blueprint that governs, directs, and creates all of life. These energetic patterns have been directly witness and observed throughout all cultures that followed the Light of Nature- from spiritual traditions to medical traditions, they all recognized a cosmology to life and how all things are interrelated and connected.

From my 10 years of research into traditional systems, I have found that there are 3 fundamental patterns universally recognized throughout the ancient and modern world. They

are the 3 fold pattern, the 5 fold pattern, and the 7 fold pattern, which I called the 3 Principles (a term from western alchemy), the 5 Elements, and the 7 Planets. Many traditions will focus on just one of these patterns as their system of herbal energetics, actions and classification, as well as constitutional theory of people, but in the Evolutionary Herbalism model we use all 3 layers of energetics, for they all reflect different layers of the organism from the physical to the spiritual.

If you enroll in Materia Medica Monthly you will get additional lessons outlining the Energetic Architecture model and how it applies to both people and plants so you can have a stronger grasp on the concept, as it will be a *big part* of the teachings throughout your subscription. If you haven't subscribed already, why not!? Get on over there and sign up- it's only \$19 a month!! [Click here to get started](#) =)

So let's breakdown the energetic architecture of Calendula by it's primary ruling Planet, Element and Principle.

- Ruling Planet: The Sun. The Sun makes *so* much sense for the main ruler of Calendula for a number of different reasons. First and foremost, it has one of the most distinctive signatures of a Sun ruled plant- the bright orange solar shaped flowers. Wow! It's almost as if a piece of the Sun broke off and fell to the Earth and grew into Calendula flowers. They are such a significant symbol for the solar force, as they grow through the "calends of the year," and represent the solar cycle and the life it brings to Earth.

The medicinal virtues of Calendula are distinctly solar as well. As noted, we see that it is warming, disperses and thins fluids, relieves stagnation and coldness, and raises the overall vital force. It's interesting to note that one of Calendula's specific indications is that the symptoms are worse in cold damp weather and when the Sun goes behind the clouds!

The depression that afflicts both the tissues and the minds of which Calendula is remedial for is a key indication that someone's inner Sun is deficient or depleted, which can often be indicated in the birth chart or by transits (there's not enough time to go into all the specifics on Medical Astrology here- for that, see the [Astro-Herbalism Online Program](#)) Thus Calendula builds up the solar force, raises vitality, boosts immunity, and helps to shine the light onto the dark places in both the body and the mind.

It's also interesting to note that the yellowish-orange coloration of the flowers relates to the *manipura* and *svadhisthana* chakras (the 3rd and 2nd, respectively), which are associated with the Fire and Water Elements. As we have seen, Calendula is warming like the Fire, but acts upon the Waters of the body through the lymphatics and as well as the female reproductive system. It's operations upon the "solar plexus" shows it's affinity for the digestive system as well as the liver and gallbladder. All of these patterns of relationship show very nicely how there is a *chain of correspondence* between Calendula and the Sun.

But a planetary rulership doesn't only indicate the physical properties of the plants, it denotes how a plant will impact us on the level of the soul. The Sun represents the essential Self, the core of who we are- the gravitational center of the psyche- just as the

Sun in our solar system is the gravitational center. In this way, solar remedies in general help to strengthen one's sense of self and personal empowerment. We can see Calendula being specific for people whose inner Sun is dim, covered by the clouds of doubt, uncertainty and depression. It is specific when people have lost hope and connection to the core of who they are, and in response feel lost and out of touch with their vital essence.

- **Ruling Element:** Water. As mentioned in the last paragraph, Calendula also bears a strong relationship to the Element of Water. This correspondence can be directly witnessed through its influence upon the lymphatic system, which is its primary and main organ affinity, as well as its actions upon the female reproductive system, also ruled by the Water Element. It's as if Calendula works like the Sun heating up, warming, thinning, and dispersing the Waters of the body.

This correspondence is also indicated in the plant itself, as it contains mucilaginous polysaccharides which are primarily soluble in water and responsible for much of its immunological actions, as well as its soothing effects upon the mucosal membranes. This high content of water within the plant itself also impacts our extraction methods of the medicine, as outlined in more detail below.

- **Ruling Principle:** Sulfur. You might be wondering why a chemical is used to describe this aspect of Energetic Architecture. This is a term that is derived from the western alchemical tradition, aspect of what is called "tria prima" or the Three Philosophical Principles, were are Sulfur, Mercury and Salt. These three principles are the *exact same* as other 3 fold models we see in other traditions, such as the 3 modes of astrology (Cardinal, Mutable and Fixed), the 3 *doshas* of Ayurveda (*Pitta*, *Vata*, and *Kapha*), the 3 constitutional types of Sheldon (Mesomorph, Ectomorph, and Endomorph), the 3 treasures of Chinese Medicine (Jing, Shen and Chi) and so on.

The Sulfur Principle is similar to the cardinal mode of astrology and the *pitta* constitution of Ayurveda- it is pungent, warming, activating, dispersing, and stimulating in its qualities. It also relates to the bright colors of Calendula flowers, which are distinctly dynamic and "masculine" in their quality (by masculine here I do not mean "male" per se, but more so the dynamic aspect of the polarity- or *yang* to use the Chinese term).

But where we *really* see the Sulfur aspects of Calendula isn't just in its medicinal properties, nor its morphological appearance, but also in its *spagyric anatomy*. Without getting into too much detail on it here (there will be some more content on spagyrics within the Materia Medica Monthly membership site), spagyrics is the practice of plant alchemy, whereby a plant is separated into its Sulfur, Mercury and Salt components, purified, and then recombined into what is considered a more refined, evolved state of being. One primary way of determining a plant's primary Philosophical Principle is to spagyrically separate it into these 3 primary components and see what their relative yields are.

In short, the Sulfur is represented by the volatile oils of the plant, whereas the Mercury is the alcohol and the Salt is the mineral alkali. Simply observing Calendula organoleptically

(IE sensory observation) reveals that it has a distinct aromatic resinous nature- which is represented biochemically as the triterpenes, resins and volatile oils. While there is not a distinct amount of essential oil yielded upon steam distillation, there is a remarkable amount of fixed Sulfur within this plant when compared to many other remedies.

I don't have enough time to get into how the fixed Sulfur is extracted as it's a rather involved process (if you want to learn more about this, be sure to check out the [Alchemical Herbalism](#) where we go deep into the alchemical and spagyric dynamics in plants). But it is quite noticeable in the spagyric anatomy of Calendula that it yields a significant amount of highly aromatic, resinous fixed Sulfur as compared to its yields of Mercury and Salt.

Esoteric Significance

I hope this doesn't get too far out there for you! The entire premise of Evolutionary Herbalism is that you are able to use herbs not only for physical healing, but for your personal growth, development, and evolution of the soul. Many of us feel that plants operate in this way but don't have a framework, a map of that territory.

This is one of the greatest offerings of western alchemy and the Hermetic teachings to the practice of plant medicine. Through understanding the Energetic Architecture of a plant- that is, its ruling Planet, Element and Principle- we are able to then translate that information to see how that plant corresponds to the archetypes of the Tarot and Qabalistic Tree of Life.

Once again, these are *massive* systems that I don't have the space to get into any level of detail on here, but I would like to demonstrate in this program how the plants correspond to these systems so you have a sense for the bigger picture of this work, and more importantly, how you can begin to chart and understand how a medicinal plant will initiate you into a higher level of consciousness- especially when prepared spagyrically, which is designed to magnify these esoteric properties.

So, if we take the Energetic Architecture of Calendula: the Sun, Water, and Sulfur we have various ways in which we can correspond it to the Tree of Life of the Qabalists, and some possible card correspondences in the Tarot (note I primarily use the Thoth Tarot deck as it is based on the Hermetic teachings, which are also the foundation of alchemy so they are all part of the same root philosophy).

The possible cards Calendula could correspond to are as follows:

- The Sun (XIX)
- The Chariot (VII)
- The 5 of Cups (Disappointment) note this correspondence is based on Qabalistic correspondences from the Tree of Life.

The sphere and world on the Qabalistic Tree of Life would be:

- Briah (Water) of Tiphareth (Sun). This equates to the 5 of Cups, as Tiphareth is the 5th sphere on the Tree and Briah is the suit of Cups.

As I said, the above teachings can get a bit complex and do require peripheral studies in Alchemy, Qabalah, Astrology, and the Hermetic Traditions. But I know we got some people in the audience that are into Alchemy, so I wanted to include this in here to get you thinking about the nature of correspondences and how they can be used to understand the deeper properties of our medicinal plants. There is a lot to this and ultimately to go into any depth on it would be to get outside the context of this lesson, and that is ultimately the intention of the [Alchemical Herbalism Program](#).

If you would like to learn more about some of these subjects, I suggest first and foremost starting with some introductory books on alchemy and spagyrics, such as *Real Alchemy* by Robert Bartlett and *Spagyrics* by Manfred Junius. To learn more about the Qabalah, I really like the book *The Mystical Qabalah* by Dion Fortune. For the Tarot, the place I like to start is *The Tarot Handbook* by Angeles Arrien, which provides great descriptions and explanations of the symbolism of each card as well as the astrology. There are (many) other books I could recommend, but I think those are good places to start!

As you can see, plants are complex and have a wide spectrum of dynamics to be studied and understood in order to use them holistically. I believe that too many herbal texts and resources out there are far too simplistic in their approach to plant medicine- I mean how many books are on your shelf that when you look up a certain herb read like this:

“So and so herb is anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-tumor, stomachic, and antispasmodic. It is used for swelling in the joints, respiratory infections, candida, ulcers, constipation, and cramping.”

I can't tell you how many times I've read paragraphs like that in herb books and that's *all* they say about the plant. I read it, put the book down, and end up scratching my head about how I'm supposed to effectively and *holistically* use that plant.

I believe it's time we get out of the “use this herb for that symptom” kind of mindset, that we get beyond “shotgun” and “kitchen sink” formulas, and start to study the **critical essential patterns in plants** that will enable and empower you to use them with therapeutic precision, formulate them with strategy, and ultimately be able to effectively heal others with them.

That after all is the goal with all of this right!? To bring about a greater level of healing and consciousness through the potency and power of plant medicine. Let's do it together! I hope to see you in *Materia Medica Monthly* so we can walk this plant path together.

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