

Herbs and Magick

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Herbs have been used for medicinal *and* magical purposes throughout history. The uses and knowledge of herbs have been passed down from civilization to civilization, and through countless generations of healers in all cultures. As do all things living and natural, herbs carry particular vibrational energies that make them useful tools and powerful supplements to magic (as well as healing). In magic, a particular herb may aid the effectiveness of spells, may influence states of consciousness, or it may simply set the stage for ritual. In a house blessing, for instance, lavender, wood betony, or rosemary may be used to help cleanse the area and promote "good vibrations." On another level, a person wanting to calm the nervous system or to induce visionary dreams may drink an infusion of mugwort tea before sleep or trance.

In order to select herbs for magical purposes, you can start by consulting a reference book of plant and herb correspondences. Choose herbs associated with the intent of your work, or herbs associated with the particular time of the year or month. Moon herbs can be used for moon magic, and so on. Astrologically, if your ruling planet is the Sun, you may find yourself naturally attuned to chamomile, eyebright, or ginseng—all sun herbs.

Often if you know what a plant's medicinal power and use is, you can make an obvious connection with its potential magical power. Cayenne used medicinally as a stimulant (to heat the body, promote sweating or increase circulation) can also be used as a spiritual stimulant. Used magically, cayenne can hasten action on a spiritual level; it may quicken the magician's will or strengthen a mental effort. Cinnamon, another stimulant, can also be used to stir the mind. It is a well-known herb used as an incense or tea to increase powers of concentration, help focus the mind, or increase psychic awareness.

Herbs can also be used for their "associative" characteristics in ritual. Place a lotus on your altar to Isis or decorate your Lughnassad altar with bunches of sunflowers.

However you decide to use herbs to further your magic, remember that they are multifunctional, and you will need to use your own intuition and experience to determine what works best for you. As in using herbs for healing, some work better magically than others, and, what works very well for your friend may not work that well for you. Experiment and notice what happens (or doesn't happen).

Some source books for herbs and magic are:

***Master Book of Herbalism*, by Paul Beyerl.** This book includes medicinal and magical uses for herbs, incenses, oils, amulets, balms, etc. Beyerl concentrates on the role of the magician as herbalist, ritual use of herbs, and how herbs relate to gemstones, astrology and the tarot in addition to giving practical information on how to collect, prepare, and store herbs. (Phoenix Publishing Co., 1984, 415 pages, illustrated)

***Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs*, by Scott Cunningham.** An excellent source book of over 400 herbs, their magical uses, powers, elemental and planetary rulers, genders and folk names. Each herb is accompanied by an illustration and other attractive woodcuts are interspersed in the text. Extensive, easy-to-use tables and appendices of correspondences. Includes an annotated bibliography. (Llewellyn's Sourcebook Series, 1992, 318 pages)

***The Spiritual Properties of Herbs*, by Gurudas.** Trance channeled material on over 100 Western and Chinese herbs, their use in Atlantis, Lemuria, China, and Egypt; how they affect

negative thought forms, animals, and disease (AIDS in particular), and information on crystals and flower essences. Tables give information on corresponding herbs for psychospiritual, psychological, psychic, chakras, subtle bodies, meridians, rays, nadis, and others. Did you know that milk thistle is the herb associated with alchemists? (Cassandra Press, 1988, 278 pages)

***The Magical and Ritual Use of Herbs*, by Richard Alan Miller.** Written by a biochemist, physicist and herbalist, this book describes the use of nineteen narcotic, hallucinogenic, stimulant and depressant herbs. As a chemist, Miller can't help but tell all about the chemical makeup of the herbs, with appropriate diagrams (whether you want to know or not...), but he also has included some well-written rituals, too. Unfortunately, some of the herbs in this book are exotic and hard to get (mail order has made this easier since I wrote this article), which could hinder your actual use of this interesting book. (Destiny Books, 1983, 120 pages)