

**INTRODUCTION:**

The following notes are guidelines for the lecture entitled, "Medicinal Plants of the Southeast".

Herbalism is a modality of healing in which plant medicine is applied for the purpose of supporting the body, mind and spirit as a whole. Medicinal plants are multi-faceted and can work on many levels, but not every plant may be your ally. Only a few qualities of each plant have been chosen to begin the discussion of using plant medicine. This lecture will introduce medicinal properties of plants commonly found in the Southern Landscape.

Please consult your primary care physician before using herbs and supplements, or before replacing current medications. Some warnings and contra-indications are provided for your safety.

**Antonia Viteri** cannot take responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants discussed in this presentation.

**Alabama Medicinal Plants of Southeast Traditional & Medicinal Uses:****I. Native Plants****BEE BALM: Lemon Bergamont, Lemon Mint**

**Botanical Name:** *Monarda Citriodora* (similar use to *Monarda fistulosa*)

**Family:** Lamiaceae

**Origin:** Eastern North America

**Properties:** Antibacterial, antimicrobial, antifungal, diaphoretic, carminative, stimulant

**Energetics:** Warming and relaxing

**Parts used:** Aerial parts & flower

**Best Harvested:** June to September

**Warnings:** None

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

- Plants in this family are often aromatic and used for their soothing effects due to their high concentration of volatile oils, yielding sedative, diuretic, tonic, antispasmodic and antiseptic properties. These properties help the body combat flu and colds. It induces sweating and soothes sore throats and infection, as well as helps in treating headaches and stomachaches.

**BLUE VERVAIN, AMERICAN VERVAIN, INDIAN HYSSOP**

**Botanical Name:** *Verbena Hastata*, *Verbena bonariensis*

**Family:** Verbenaceae

**Origin:** North America

**Properties:** Bitter, nervine, antispasmodic, astringent, diaphoretic

**Energetics:** Relaxing, cooling, drying,

**Parts used:** Aerial Parts, while in bloom

**Best Harvested:** July - September

**Warnings:** Avoid in high doses. Avoid during Pregnancy

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

- All *Verbena spp.* are pollinator plants, attracting bumblebees, honey Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.

- Nervous system tonic: neurotrophorestorativ: It soothes and builds damaged nerves.
- Folk tradition used as a strong bitter to stimulate digestion, soothes stomach spasms and calm Nerves. Relieve nervous coughs, insomnia and anxiety.

### **BIRTHROOT**

**Botanical Name:** *Trillium sessile*, *T. erectum*, *T. decumbens*

**Family:** Melanthiaceae

**Origin:** Southeastern United States

**Properties:** Astringent, tonic expectorant, antiseptic

**Energetics:** Drying & Relaxing

**Parts used:** Dried rhizomes or Root

**Best Harvested:** fall

**Warnings:** Not recommended for long-term use. Taken in high doses can stimulate menstruation or labor, or it may cause nausea or queasiness. Applying this herb externally may also result in irritation. Do not use in pregnancy or lactation.

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

**Specific Indications and Uses:** For relaxation of tissues, with mucous discharges or passive hemorrhage. Birthroot (*Trillium erectum*) is said to have been in use among the native peoples and early settlers of North America. It is a plant that contains a natural precursor of the female sex hormones, which the body may use if it needs to or otherwise leaves unused, an example of the normalizing power of some herbs.

### **CROSSVINE**

**Botanical Name:** *Bignonia capreolata*

**Family:** Bignoniaceae

**Origin:** Southeastern United States

**Properties:** Adaptogen, restorative, alterative

**Energetics:** Balancing, nutritive

**Parts used:** Leaf

**Best Harvested:** All year

**Warnings:** Avoid during pregnancy, if you have low blood pressure, or if you are on any blood pressure or anti-psychotic drugs.

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) is an evergreen vine native to the southeastern United States, which grows in sunny woodland edges and in clearings where it can get enough sun. It is sometimes grown as an ornamental since it has showy orange trumpet-shaped flowers in the summer that attract hummingbirds.

- **Tommie Bass** learned of the plant and used it to get overworked, exhausted mules and horses back on their feet, then on similarly exhausted women, and among a few herbalists in the southeast it continues to be used as an adaptogen and to boost energy.

### **HYDRANGEA**

**Botanical Name:** *Hydrangea quercifolia*, *H. arborescens*

**Family:** Hydrangeaceae

**Origin:** Southeastern United States

**Properties:** Analgesic, diuretic, antilithic

**Energetics:** Cooling and drying

**Parts used:** Dried rhizomes or Root

**Best Harvested:** fall

**Warnings:** Not recommended for long-term use

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

- Hydrangea's primary use is for treatment of inflamed or enlarged prostate, as well as effective against gravel associated with infections, such as cystitis.
- Used as a diuretic and a calcium solvent, hydrangea is used to help rid the body of kidney stones and calcium deposits. It may also relieve bladder pain, back pain, and arthritis.

### **OATS, WILD OATS**

**Botanical Name:** *Avena Sativa*

**Family:** Poaceae

**Origin:** Southeastern Europe

**Properties:** Antidepressant, antispasmodic, demulcent, laxative, nutritive, nervine & sedative

**Energetics:** Moistening and nourishing

**Parts used:** Flowering tops

**Best Harvested:** Late Summer

**Warnings:** May decrease the effects of Morphine

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Wild Oats are a versatile herb working on many body systems at once. It is mainly a Nerve tonic, supportive the body during stressful times, relieving depression, anxiety, tension, and nervous exhaustion. Externally, application of wild oats makes a good facial scrub and soothing remedy for irritated and inflamed skin conditions.

### **OREGON GRAPE, LEATHERLEAF MAHONIA**

**Botanical Name:** *Mahonia bealei*

**Family:** Berberidaceae (Barberry Family)

**Properties:** Antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, febrifuge, depurative

**Energetics:** Cooling

**Parts used:** Leaf, Fruit, Root

**Cultivation:** Grows wild

**Warnings:** Barberry, goldenseal, Oregon grape and other plants containing berberine should be avoided during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Avoid if over active thyroid gland. High doses cause vomiting, lowered blood pressure, reduced heart rate, lethargy, nosebleed, eye irritation and kidney infection. Liquorice as *Glycyrrhiza* species nullify berberine effects.

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Leather Leaf Mahonia is a berberine containing plant. Berberine is present in the rhizomes of Mahonia species, which gives it an antibacterial property and is used as a bitter tonic.

Often used by Native North American Indian tribes to treat loss of appetite and debility. Its current herbal use is mainly in the treatment of gastritis and general digestive weakness, to stimulate the kidney and gallbladder function and to reduce catarrhal problems.

### **PURSLANE**

**Common name:** Purslane, pigweed, little hogweed

**Botanical name:** *Portulaca oleracea*, *Portulaca pilosa*

**Family:** Portulacaceae, Purslane Family

**Properties:** Antiscorbutic, diuretic, febrifuge, tonic, vermifuge.

**Part used:** Leaves and stems

**Wild Food:** Purslane is also a rich source of vitamin C, and some B-complex vitamins like riboflavin, niacin, pyridoxine and carotenoids, as well as dietary minerals, such as iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, and manganese.

**Warnings:** Avoid during pregnancy and for those with cold and weak digestion. Avoid if there is a history of oxalate-based kidney stones

#### **Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Purslane has an affinity for skin irritations and intestinal parasites and is used internally and externally as an infusion, tincture, or eaten as a wild food. Fresh Purslane has more omega-3 fatty acids than some fish oils. Its nutritive qualities make this sour and salty plant a super food.

### **VIOLET**

**Common name:** Violet, Sweet Violet, Garden Violet, English Violet

**Botanical name:** *Viola odorata* and related spp.

**Family:** Violaceae, Violet Family

**Properties:** Anti-inflammatory, antitumor, demulcent, emollient, expectorant, lymphatic,

**Energetics:** Cooling and moistening

**Part used:** Whole plant

**Affinities:** Congestion in lymphatic and respiratory systems

**Preparation:** Used internally or externally as an infusion, decoction or tincture. Prepare fresh or dried

**Contraindications/ warnings:** Prepared root decoction can have a strong emetic effect

#### **Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Violet is a good remedy for cooling heat and relieving congestion in the lymphatic and respiratory systems. It soothes irritation and inflammation in the gut and works as gentle laxative.

It is also recommended for grief and heartbreak and improves memory.

Used in cancer: breast, lung, digestive tract, skin, throat and tongue

- External application: as a poultice for boils, conjunctivitis, breast cysts, cancers and hemorrhoids.
- A soaked cloth of Violet tea placed behind the neck, helps alleviate headaches.

**WILD LETTUCE:****Botanical Name:** *Lactuca virosa*,**Family:** Asteraceae**Properties:** Sedative, antispasmodic, analgesic, bitter, cholagogue, analgesic**Energetics:** Cooling**Parts used:** Leaf and latex**Cultivation:** Grows wild**Warnings:** May cause drowsiness. Latex may cause rashes or eye irritation**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

- Stimulates bile flow from liver and aid the elimination of toxins and the digestion of fats.
- Aids in stress-related digestive disorders, calming for anxiety, panic attacks, hyperactivity, restlessness, and agitation as well, a sedative for inducing sleep

**YELLOWROOT****Botanical Name:** *Xanthorhiza simplicissima***Family:** Ranunculaceae (Buttercup Family)**Origin:** North America**Properties:** Antibiotic, digestive aid (bitter) & anti-inflammatory**Energetics:** Cooling and drying**Parts used:** Dried rhizomes**Best Harvested:** Fall**Warnings:** Do not use internally for more than three weeks. Avoid during pregnancy or if you have high blood pressure.**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Yellow Root is a berberine containing plant, with toning properties for digestive disorders.

- Berberine is usually found in the roots, [rhizomes](#), stems, and bark, and active against a wide range of bacteria
- Stimulates the secretion of bile and bilirubin. This can be helpful in correcting high tyramine levels in patients with liver cirrhosis.
- Fungal infections, [Candida albicans](#), yeast, parasites, and bacterial/viral infections.
- Traditional remedy uses include: Diabetes and hypertension.

**II. SOUTHERN PLANTS IN HERBAL PRACTICE:****DANDELION****Botanical Name:** *Taraxacum officinale***Family:** Asteraceae**Properties:** Alterative, anti-bacterial, antiviral, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, astringent, bitter, carminative, cholagogue, diuretic, expectorant, tonic, vermifuge,**Energetics/Taste:** Bitter**Parts used:** leaf, root, and flowers**Warnings:** Avoid use with bile duct or gall bladder disease**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Used for the stagnant tissue state and helpful for most body systems:

- Respiration: Bronchitis
- Digestion: Indigestion, gas
- Liver: Congestion, thick bile, gallstone formation, constipation due to lack of bile.
- Cardiovascular: High cholesterol, High Blood Pressure, best remedy for cardio renal edema
- Kidney & Bladder: Diabetes II hypoglycemia, edema, stones
- Female: Breast congestion, hardness, mastitis, PMS
- Musculoskeletal: rheumatic pain, tight muscles and swollen
- Skin: Acne, boils, eczema

### **ELDER**

**Botanical Name:** *Sambucus nigra*, *S. Canadensis*

**Family:** Caprifoliaceae

**Properties:** Anti-Inflammatory, **anti-viral**, decongestant

**Energetics:** **Cooling** and drying

**Parts used:** Flower, berry

**Warnings:** None

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Elder Flower syrup is Europe's most esteemed formula for colds, flu, and upper respiratory infections. Both Flowers and berries are powerful diaphoretics; by inducing sweating, they reduce fevers. Elder also has immune-enhancing properties and is especially effective when combined with Echinacea. Berries not only increase resilience to stress, they have collagen stabilizing action, useful for varicose veins, hemorrhoids, sprains and arthritis.

### **GOLDENROD**

**Botanical Name:** *Solidago Canadensis*, *S. virgaurea*

**Family:** Astereaceae

**Properties:** Diuretic, Anti-inflammatory, **anti-catarrhal**, decongestant

**Energetics:** warming and **drying**

**Parts used:** Aerial Parts

**Warnings:** Not to use with edema from Kidney failure

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Goldenrod has an affinity for the kidneys, Urinary tract and respiratory systems.

It is a useful diuretic for Urinary tract problems, obstructions, bladder infection and kidney stones.

QUERCETIN: a flavanoid has been reported to have an antihistamine effect and a bronchial dilator

In the garden:

- Deer resistant
- Beneficial for attracting butterflies, bees, and beneficial insects.
- Honeybees collect large amounts of nectar from goldenrod prior to winter, and other bees use pollen from goldenrods to provision late-season nests.
- Draw bad bugs away from valuable vegetables.

### **MIMOSA**

**Botanical Name:** *Albizia julibrissin*

**Family:** Fabaceae

**Properties:** Anti-depressant, **relaxant**, vulnerary

**Energetics:** **Moistening**, cooling and relaxing

**Parts used:** Flower, bark

**Warnings:** None

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Chinese name translation means “Collective Happiness Bark”. In Chinese Medicine Mimosa is used for people with disturbed Shen or spirit. It aids in mitigating bad dreams, irritability, anger, depression, drug addiction and poor memory. It calms the spirit and elevates the mood.

Common for broken hearts, grief and deep sadness and often combined with rose and hawthorn. Promotes emotional balance.

### **PASSIONFLOWER**

**Botanical Name:** *Passiflora incarnata*

**Family:** Passifloraceae

**Properties:** Anti-spasmodic, **nervine**, relaxing

**Energetics:** Cooling and **relaxing**

**Parts used:** Vine, flower, fruit

**Warnings:** Avoid passionflower if you are on anti-anxiety or MAO inhibiting anti-depression medication

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Passionflower helps to minimize MIND CHATTER and attaches at GABA receptor sites, calming the mind and bringing energy back into the body.

Effective on multiple body systems: It is a nervine that works on the digestive, circulatory, respiratory and mental/ emotional systems.

### **PLANTAIN:**

**Botanical Name:** *Plantago major*

**Family:** Plantaginaceae

**Properties:** Anti-septic, anti-venomous, expectorant

**Energetics:** Cooling, moistening, constricting

**Parts used:** Leaf

**Warnings:** Care is for diabetics on insulin as seeds can lower blood sugar. May inhibit absorption.

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Plantain is valuable in the healing process with its anti-microbial, anti-venom, and anti-septic properties. It is famous as a wound healer and an antidote to poisons; hence, a go-to herb for cuts, stings, and insect bites. It also acts as a gentle expectorant, helping with bronchial congestion, and allergies such as hay fever and asthma. Its mucilaginous properties protect mucosa from irritation, soothing inflamed and sore tissues in the lungs, stomach and bowels: as in gastritis, colitis and colic. mucus membranes.

**ROSE****Botanical Name:** Syn. *R.gallica*, *R.damascena*, *R. centifolia***Family:** Rosaceae**Properties:** Anti-inflammatory, astringent, antidepressant**Energetics:** Cooling, drying & constricting**Parts used:** Hip, leaf, flower**Warnings:** None**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Rose reduces heat, reducing excitement in the limbic centers, which regulate both heat and passion.

THE ROSACEAE are primary remedies for autoimmune heat and irritation.

In general the excited tissue especially affects:

- MUCOSA: creating allergies of the respiratory and gastro-intestinal tracts.
- CAPILLARIES: Irritates and congests the capillaries, causing renal congestion and cardiovascular problems
- The Hips and Petals are used for acute inflammatory conditions of the respiratory tract, including sore throat, free nasal secretion and bronchial secretion or obstruction.

**SASSAFRAS****Botanical Name:** *Sassafras albidum***Family:** Lauraceae**Properties:** Astringent, Stimulant**Energetics:** Warming & drying**Parts used:** Bark and Root bark, Leaves**Warnings:** Safrole is now recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture as a potential carcinogen\*\***Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

- Sassafras is a warming plant mainly used to thin the blood and typically enjoyed during the hot southern summers. Uses include:
  - Blood Purifier and spring cleanse, arthritis, kidney cleanse
  - Gout, colds, stomach-aches
  - High Blood Pressure (but typically use caution since Sassafras brings blood to the head)
  - Good use if one has low BP with Cold feet.

**SOLOMONS SEAL****Botanical Name:** *Polygonatum multiflorum***Family:** Polygonaceae**Properties:** Demulcent, adaptogen, kidney tonic**Energetics:** Cooling and balancing**Parts used:** Root**Warnings:** None**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

True Solomon's Seal is an Herb for the muscle-skeletal system. It tightens or loosens tendons and attachments, strengthens and repairs joint damage. This is a great herb to use on repetitive injury problems such as Tennis elbow, jogger's knee and/or carpal-tunnel syndrome.



- Solomon's Seal is specific to conditions with inflammation and dryness, with friction in the joints or bones (Jim Macdonald). Often when it comes to inflammation, esp. in joints, rx will deal with inflammation but dryness is not addressed, leaving a structural abrasion that over time will worsen. So lubricating the dryness with the "moistening" aspect of SS is indicated.
- Also used for the Fascia (connective tissue connecting muscle groups), which often gets dry and stiff in such conditions as, joint pain from LUPUS, Statin Drug side effects and repetitive stress injuries

### **SUMAC**

**Botanical Name:** *Rhus glabra*

**Family:** Anacardiaceae

**Properties:** Alterative, antiseptic, astringent

**Energetics:** Cooling & constricting

**Parts used:** Tuber (dried for 6 months)

**Warnings:** None

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

Sumac has an affinity for the Kidneys, skin and fluids of the body.

It is indicated for people that are thin, weak, lethargic, lacking will, codependent with weak kidneys and dark circles under the eyes. Generally kidneys are relaxed, exhausted not able to move fluids, and retain urine. Further examples:

- Helpful for swollen prostate with painful urination
- Helps with colds and flu with copious, post nasal drip and sore throat
- Helps with Bronchitis with copious free secretion
- Aids in impotence with frequent urination at night.
- Indicated for spongy gums, canker sores and ulcerations in the mouth.

### **YARROW**

**Botanical Name:** *achillea millefolium*

**Family:** Asteraceae

**Origin:** Europe & Asia

**Properties:** Anti-inflammatory, diaphoretic, styptic

**Energetics:** Cooling, drying & constricting

**Parts used:** Aerial parts: stems, leaves and flowers

**Best Harvested:** when in flower, June- September

**Warnings:** Though safe, reserve for specific medicinal use

**Medicinal/ Traditional Uses:**

- Organ Affinities: Blood, veins, capillaries, GI Tract, female reproductive tract
- Main action of yarrow is exerted on the veins, to tone and clarify and stimulate them, so it cools by opening the veins and allowing congestion out of the capillaries.
- Indicated for hot, red, tender, swollen tissue at the same time because it is bitter/acrid, it settles fever and chills that affect the circulation, opening pores to release sweat.

### III. RESOURCES

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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