

# ***Herbal Allies for Trauma Recovery: Supportive remedies for nourishing, replenishing, and growing new roots***

“The ax forgets, the tree remembers.” Maya Angelou, *Even the Stars Look Lonesome*

## **Oats (*Avena sativa*)**

Milky Oats Seed (best delivered in a tincture, 2mL/60 drops, 3x/day)

- Gentle nervine tonic with reputation for addressing exhaustion, sleeplessness, adrenal burnout, or addiction (nicotine, caffeine, other drugs).
- Deeply replenishing to adrenal function, calms and strengthens nerve function and stress response, antidepressant, useful for withdrawal and re-patterning neural reactions (trauma imprints and recovery)
- Long-term use is best (daily for 3-6 months+) but its effects are noticeable on nerve damage (physical trauma, injury, shingles) within 2-3 weeks.
- Oats and Skullcap tincture combo for people who don't like to be touched; frayed nerves that spark when touched. Good for people averse to receiving bodywork.



Oatstraw, Oatgrass (best delivered in an infusion, 1 Tbsp per 8oz boiled water, up to 32oz everyday)

- Herbal food, packed with vitamins and minerals (Ca, Cr, Cu, Fe, Mg, K, Zn, B-3, B-5, B-2, B-1) as well as some protein, easily assimilated, best taken in water extraction (an infusion is preferable to a tincture).
- Calming and restorative to the nervous system. Similar actions to Milky Oats (nervine tonic), with focus on building from the ground up rather than more psychoactive (altering CNS function) effects of Milky Oats seed.
- Oatstraw is more specific for states of depletion (the tired, cold, deficient person).
- Pairs with:
  - chamomile - nourishing, weak sedative, nervous stomach energy
  - skullcap - mild sedative, relaxant, allows for deep breath
  - nettles - goes deeper in effect to rebuilding/revitalizing nervous system
  - valerian - much stronger sedative effect, heating, moves energy upwards

- lavender - makes oats lighter, uplifting to mood, calming
- No known contraindications. However, those with Celiac disease or severe gluten intolerance may be cross-reactive to oats and should exercise caution (more so with the infusion than tincture).

## Blue Vervain, Wild Hyssop (*Verbena hastata*)

- An herb that will tone and strengthen the whole nervous system while relaxing tension and stress. For many centuries, verbena was taken as a cure all due to tonic and restorative properties.
- A common species found in Nebraska is *Verbena stricta* or hoary vervain. It has very similar medicinal



PLATE 166  
(left) Blue Vervain, *Verbena hastata* (right) Hoary Vervain, *Verbena stricta*

characteristics as *V. hastata*. Horticultural varieties of *Verbena* are not useful medicinals.

- Tincture, 1-2mL/30-60 drops up to 1-3x/day. For emotional/spiritual/mental focus, take 1-4 drops of tincture 2 times per day.
- Infusion 1tsp. per 8oz water, up to 32oz per day. Best taken in a formula with other herbs. Bitter flavor.
- Cautions: contraindicated in pregnancy and overt liver disease; at higher doses than recommended may cause GI irritation, including vomiting.
- Bitter tonic with hepatoprotective effects, anti-inflammatory, sedative, cool and dry energetics. Can be used to ease depression especially when it follows a period of illness or high stress. Useful for depleted states, rebuilding, tonifying and facilitating return to parasympathetic state. Has an ability to stimulate or mimic the parasympathetic nervous system, decreasing heart rate, increasing GI secretions and contracting smooth muscle (bronchi, uterus, bladder, etc.)
- Used specifically to address anxiety and the nervous exhaustion that follows long-term stress or a traumatic experience. Vervain is both stimulating (to physical function) and relaxing (to the mind).
- Also useful for recovery from excess alcohol consumption and spasms (esp. of neck and back) due to overexertion.
- Stimulates mental and spiritual clarity. Specific indication is a strong-willed person who tamps down their emotions and frustrations until they build and release in an outburst. These individuals tend to develop physical afflictions related to their unexpressed emotions (similar to Bach Flower Essence indication).
- In healing from trauma, Vervain is specific for the feeling of over-stimulation due to being in a constant state of sympathetic response.



- Combinations:
  - for supporting symptoms of depression, combine with skullcap, oats and damiana
  - with white peony root to calm a constant stress response

## Rosemary and Reishi (*Rosmarinus officinalis* and *Ganoderma lucidum*)

- This pair is a superb ally for long-term recovery after trauma has past the crisis stage and is a memory, but still persists to inflict emotional upset (especially when a physical sensation, like a twinge in the stomach or solar plexus, accompanies painful memories).
- Suggested Preparation and Use: Long, low simmer of Reishi (2+ hours), remove from heat and add chopped Rosemary. Cover and steep for 15+ min. Drink 16oz daily. The medicinal constituents of Reishi are best extracted into water, not alcohol.
  - Approx. ¼ cup Reishi per 32oz water (you can expand this into a large batch made in the crock pot then stored). Also consider adding roasted dandelion root and chai spices!
  - A pinch of fresh or dried Rosemary per 8oz water (add to the reishi preparation after it has been removed from heat and allow to steep for 15 minutes or more.)
- Through a focus on facilitating release in the liver and improving circulation of the blood (where emotional trauma may be held in stagnation), this pair aids in rebuilding and regaining stability. Emotional wounds are



- often trapped and remembered in the circulatory system. Herbs that promote blood flow can be helpful for clearing old physic pain. Reishi does this very nicely.
- Rosemary is also a potent blood mover. It is very warming and can be a bit harsh on its own. Together, these herbs promote circulation to the brain and improve oxygenation of the blood. Both help to clear obsessive ideation and past events that have left a strong imprint on our bodies. Individually they are both noted for bringing wisdom, improved memory, and longevity.
- It's important that this process of detoxing long-held and stagnant emotions be undertaken with intention and in a safe, low-stress environment. You will need longer, unstructured periods of time to sit

with your feelings as they rise, and you may re-experience these same held emotions (hurt, anger, fear, grief) or even flashbacks. It's important not to suppress these feelings as they rise. Don't bury them. Have an emotional first aid kit ready and practice self-care. Use nervines as tools to soften the edges of associated

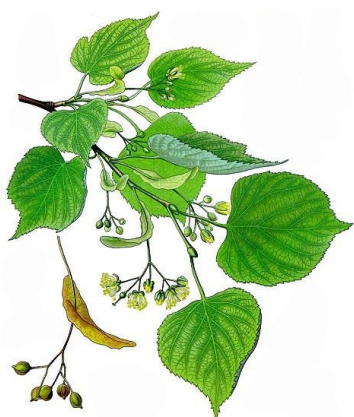
stress. Let people in your family/community know that you are emotionally detoxing. Ask for support, seek counseling or therapy. You are not in this work alone.

## **Motherwort** (*Leonurus cardiaca*)

- A comforting (but bitter tasting) medicine that is helpful for those who feel overwhelmed and are on the verge of burning out.
- Best enjoyed as a tincture. Suggested Dose: For an emotional focus, take 1-4 drops, 2-3 times a day. For a physical focus, take 15-30 drops, 3 times a day. Take at the higher end of the dosing spectrum for menstrual irregularity.
- Calming, grounding, and helps you come more fully into yourself and to connect with your inner strength. This medicine is good for those who always put others first, to center themselves as well as make sure their own needs are met.
- For melancholy, restlessness and disturbed sleep from emotional/physical ailments of the heart. High blood pressure due to stress, nervous palpitations, insomnia due to anxiety. Strengthens the heart without straining.
- As the name suggests, Motherwort is helpful for the portal into mothering, birth and postpartum. Help ease the pains of afterbirth and act as a balm to mood swings. Can be used to prevent uterine infection after childbirth, but may also contribute to bleeding. Motherwort can also act as a relaxing tonic to menopausal changes (heart palpitations, hot flashes) especially if anxiety and stress accompany.
- Cautions: Not to be used during pregnancy. Can increase flow for some women during menopause. Excessive dosing may induce menses and disrupt menstrual cycle. Large consistent doses may interfere with cardiovascular medications and hypothyroid conditions. Use caution with low blood pressure.



## **Linden** (*Tilia americana*, *T. cordata*)



- An herb of sweetness, youth and fresh beginnings.
- Suggested Dose: Best enjoyed as an infusion, 2-4 cups a day. A gentle remedy that is appropriate for most children and elders as well (½ cup – 2 cups in divided doses). Linden tincture can be enjoyed in energetic doses of 1-4 drops, 2 or more times per day.
- Drink Linden tea regularly, especially if you lament the loss of summer as cold weather sets in. Helpful for those with seasonal affective disorder.
- Aids in the release of heat from the body (physically with fever and

emotionally with anger). An energetically sweet herb that moistens and cools the body's tissues. Relaxes the nerves, sedative, calms the spirit.

- Specific for nervousness, restlessness, hyperactivity, insomnia (esp. sleeplessness due to racing thoughts). Helpful for panic attacks and anxiety, nervous headaches, dizziness. Very helpful for stress that comes from holding onto too much, feeling full and tense with a quick temper.
- Topically an infusion (strong tea) is useful for irritated, itchy skin. It helps to moisten, calm and cleanse. Linden also makes a lovely face wash and soothing throat gargle.
- Harvest when the flowers are in full bloom. Find a tree that is buzzing with bees. Breath deeply, take note of the smells. Thank the tree for its medicine.

## Rose (*Rosa spp.*)

- One of the most ubiquitous flowers in addressing emotional states. Rose is both an exhilarant and relaxant for the emotional heart. It is specific to healing a heart that has been offended or trampled on by authority.
- Suggested dose: Infusion: 1 Tbsp dried petals to 1 cup hot water. Enjoy in combination with other herbs or alone 2 cups/day. Tincture or glycerite: 2-3mL/60-90 drops, up to 3x/day. Energetic dose is 1-4 drops, 2 or more times/day.
- Rose is a gentle medicine that can be enjoyed in limited quantities by elders and children too.
- It also acts nicely as a cooling and moving aid for the liver. This action of relieving liver heat and congestion lessens emotional irritability. Rose clears heat from the body and soothes an upset heart. As a uterine stimulant and decongestant, large amounts of rose are contraindicated in pregnancy, but can be helpful for a stagnant or delayed menses.
- The energies of rose medicine are like adolescence. The young fresh blooms speak to growth and new beginnings as the thorns caution boundaries and protection. It is an alluring plant that helps us to better understand our hearts' boundaries and heal them when they have been violated.

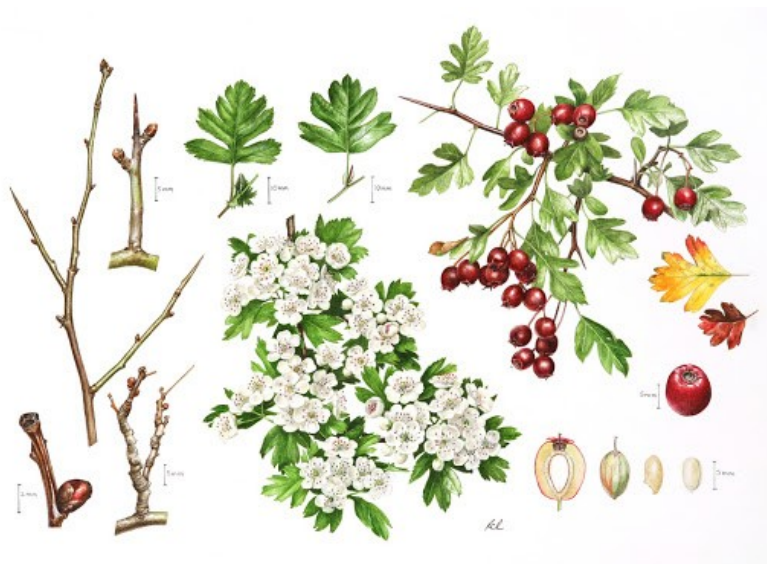


## Hawthorne (*Crataegus oxyacantha*, *C. monogyna*, and related species)

- A tonic for the heart. Well known nutritional and medicinal agent that physically improves cardiovascular function when taken over the long term. The flower, leaves and berries are also a protective and supportive medicine for the emotional and spiritual heart. The tree itself is beautiful, abundant and generous, but the thorns command respect and prevent one from getting too close.
- The berries, flowers and leaves are all important medicinal agents. The Hawthorne berry provides a flavorful

and nutritionally dense delivery of antioxidants that has been shown to aid in the passage of blood and remove congestion associated with excess heat/inflammation. The flowers and leaf are lighter and provide a sense of calm that speaks to Hawthorn's reputation as a wisdom remedy.

- Suggested Dose:
  - Tincture of flower/leave/berry – 10-30 drops 2-3x/day
  - Flower and leaf infusion – 1-2 tsp/8oz hot water, steeped 15min, 8-16oz daily
  - Berry decoction – 1 tsp dried fruit/8oz water, simmered for 10min then infused for 30min, 8-16oz daily



- After the event(s) of trauma have passed, all the elements make up our-selves often need support and gentle coaxing in order to return to the physical body. Hawthorn is a helpful remedy to help ground all our senses back to the present. A sort of etheric glue to reunite the physical and the more subtle selves when we're feeling buffered by fog, stuck in the sense of 'this is not real' long after the impact of danger has waned.

- Hawthorn medicine is that of a generous and well protected heart. Regular interaction with this plant (visiting the tree or working with an extract) can aid the wounded heart to speak its truth while healing from emotional insult. This is useful when needing to bolster oneself to face potential triggers of past trauma. The berries can be carried on the body (alone or with the thorns) to invoke heart-healing and protection.
- The flowers, leaves and berries are supportive for people struggling with PTSD. Add to tea formulas, infuse into medicinal wine, craft an herbal elixir (see *Wild Hearts Elixir* recipe). Hawthorn is helpful in small doses (1-5 drops of tincture taken 1-2x/day) for children and adults who feel that they are totally out of place in this world. A balm for those bright creatives who have trouble fitting into a dull world.

#### Resources:

- *Herbal Medicine from the Heart of the Earth*, Sharol Tilgner, ND
- *Advanced Materia Medica* (lecture) Paul Bergner, North American Institute for Medical Herbalism
- *Reishi and Other Allies for Emotional and Spiritual Healing*, Matthew Becker
- *A Garden Party Guide to Anxiety and Depression*, Sofia Rose
- *The Earthwise Herbal*, Matthew Wood
- *Summer of Tree Love: Linden*, Michael Blackmore
- *300 Herbs: Their Indications and Contraindications*, Matthew Alfs