

Herb and Spices



Appendix 2 - Some Medicinal Herbs and Their Uses

Name	Propagation	Culture	Use	Growth Habit	Harvest
Burdock – <i>Arctium lappa</i>	Seed, sow 1.3 cm deep, thin to 15 cm.	Full sun, moist, average to high organic soil; heavy soils should be avoided.	Mild laxative, diuretic, antirheumatic, antibiotic, promotes sweating, skin problems, arthritis.	Naturally a perennial, but grown as an annual crop; taprooted, very large plant with hairy leaves.	Harvest roots at end of first growing season. Difficult to dig. Leaves sometimes dried. Seeds can be harvested in second year.
Chamomile, German – <i>Matricaria recutita</i>	Seed, direct sow or transplant, irrigate to germinate.	Rich soil not required, should be well-drained; full sun; some irrigation desirable.	Teas used for appetite, indigestion, insomnia; ointments for bites, wounds, eczema, mouthwash.	Annual plant, 30 – 60 cm tall; branches readily; finely divided leaves and white daisy-like flowers.	Flower heads are harvested as they open. Hand harvesting may not be economical; mechanical harvesters are still being adapted.
Echinacea/ Purple Coneflower – <i>Echinacea angustifolia</i>	Seed (should be certified as to identity and purity), direct sow after stratification or transplant.	Light, well-drained soil important; full sun. Very poor weed competitor in first year. Minimal irrigation.	Immune stimulant; infections, inflammation, colds, flu, kidney and urinary tract infections, sore throat.	Perennial, 30-45 cm tall, upright plants with narrow, hairy leaves; pale lavender flowers with orange-brown centres.	Roots dug in September of third year. Seed can be harvested in second and third years. Prices are dropping.
Feverfew – <i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>	Seed, direct sow shallowly or transplant.	Tolerates most soils; full sun preferred; drip irrigation may increase yields; overhead irrigation may reduce medicinal potency.	Migraine headaches, arthritis, menstrual pain.	Perennial, but may not overwinter in Saskatchewan; grow as annual. Bushy, chrysanthemum-like growth, 30-45 cm tall, white, daisy-like flowers.	Traditionally only leaves harvested, but some companies desire flowering tops. Short shelf-life; must be isolated from other herbs.
Ginseng – <i>Panax quinquefolius</i>	Seed, sown in fall or stratified and sown in spring.	Needs shaded conditions from artificial shade cloth or grown in wooded areas; raised beds desirable, highly organic soil; good moisture and high humidity; may need fungicides for disease control; summer and winter mulching essential.	Tonic, stimulant, regulates blood sugar and cholesterol, simulates immune system, used for diarrhea, asthma, coughs.	Slow growing perennial, 30 - 60 cm tall, with large broad leaflets. Small greenish-white flowers form red berries in fall. White roots are taprooted and take several years to develop size.	Usually harvested in the fall of the fourth or fifth year; larger roots giving better prices. Proper drying necessary to retain quality. Seed may also be marketed. Prices have dropped considerably. Not currently recommended here.

Goldenseal – <i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>	Seed, but must be kept moist from harvest until planted; young divisions or root buds often used.	Requirements similar to ginseng; may tolerate slightly more sun; less disease-prone but requires good drainage and winter protection. Questionable adaptability here.	Tonic, digestive stimulant, for skin inflammation, eczema, mucous conditions, yeast infections, menstrual pain, mouth and gum problems.	Slow growing perennial, to 45 cm; light green, palmate and toothed leaves, insignificant flowers followed by red berries; rhizomes are yellow.	Rhizomes are harvested in fall or early spring; usually in year four if from root divisions, but one or two years later from seed planted crops.
Milk Thistle – <i>Silybum marianum</i>	Seed, sown in fall or spring.	Will grow on any well-drained soil; full sun; long season required to ripen seeds. Improved selections available from SHSA.	Liver and gallbladder diseases, jaundice, cirrhosis, hepatitis, poisoning by alcohol, drugs, chemicals and Amanita mushrooms.	Grown as an annual; large plants 1.2-1.8 m tall, upright, with large stiff, very spiny leaves which are dark green marked with white. Thistle like purple flowers produce black seeds attached to white hairs.	Seeds are harvested, but timing is difficult as not all mature at once. Flower heads are cut and allowed to dry, then cleaned to remove seeds. Pre-desiccation of plants is desired to reduce biomass.
Milk Vetch, Chinese – <i>Astragalus membranaceus</i>	Seed sown in spring or fall; often transplanted.	Well-drained soil essential to prevent root rot. Prefers dry, sandy soil and full sun. High fertility not required.	Used in traditional Chinese medicine as an energy tonic, to increase immunity, to treat incontinence.	Perennial legume with grooved stems and pinnate leaves, growing to 40 cm and similar width. Yellow, pea-like flowers and rhizomatous roots.	Rhizomatous roots are harvested in fall of third year or later. Roots are cut up to facilitate drying.
Nettle, Stinging – <i>Urtica dioica</i>	Seed or root divisions.	Moist, fertile soil, high in organic matter is best. Sun or light shade. Irrigation may be desirable.	Internal use to treat anemia, hemorrhage, arthritis, skin problems; externally for burns, bites, arthritis, gout, sciatica. More recent use of roots for prostate problems.	Tall bushy perennial plant up to two m. Dark green, toothed leaves with stinging hairs (except when very young); greenish tassel-like flowers in summer; creeping roots.	Cut entire plant to near ground before flowering starts. More than one harvest per year possible on established plantings. Foliage loses stinging properties once dried. Roots may also be harvested.
St. John's Wort – <i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Seed direct or transplant from seed plugs.	Adapted to dry, porous soils, but may grow better in moister, richer soils. Full sun. Some irrigation may be beneficial. Noxious weed in some areas. Snowcover necessary.	Internal use for treatment of depression, anxiety, shingles, sciatica, menopausal problems; externally for burns, bruises, injuries, pain.	Bushy, small-leaved plant 60-90 cm in height, perennial. Flowers are prolific, showy, yellow with 5 petals, in midsummer. Rhizomatous roots will spread.	Flowering tops are harvested at early to prime bloom. In some areas more than one harvest per year may be possible. Spoils easily if not dried properly.

Skullcap – <i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i> ; <i>Scutellaria baicalensis</i> , <i>Scutellaria barbata</i> .	Seeds or root divisions; occasionally by cuttings.	Good fertile soil; often grown in shade, but sun tolerant if moisture is adequate. Likes ample moisture and may need some fertilizer; hard to weed. <i>S. baicalensis</i> needs good drainage and requires less moisture.	<i>S. lateriflora</i> for insomnia, irritability, neuralgia, nervousness; <i>S. baicalensis</i> for fever, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, improving digestion, dysentery, diarrhea, hemorrhages.	Perennial; <i>S. lateriflora</i> grows to 75 cm and is rhizomatous, spreading widely. <i>S. baicalensis</i> is shorter to 40 cm. Leaves are ovate-lanceolate, flowers are blue or purple and tubular, in racemes.	Entire above-ground plant can be harvested; multiple harvests per year may be possible. Needs quick drying to prevent overheating.
Valerian – <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Seed or root division; often transplanted.	Well-drained, rich moist soil; irrigation common. Supplementary fertilizer may be desirable. Full sun or light shade. Very prone to aster yellows disease and accompanying root-rots.	Treatment of insomnia, anxiety, cramps, migraine, ulcers, minor injuries.	Perennial, tall vigorous plant to 1.5 – 2 m; large pinnate leaves; showy, scented white flowers in summer; roots are short rhizomes.	Only roots are harvested, usually in autumn of second year. Difficult to clean; roots have unpleasant odor but which attracts cats.
Willowherb/ Fireweed – <i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Seed; direct or transplanted plugs.	Little cultural information available; often harvested from wild stands. Adaptable to dry soil, may not require high nutrient levels.	Cosmetic uses; treatment of sunburn.	Tall, perennial plants to 2 m, narrow, with somewhat willow-like leaves and very show pink, light purple or white flowers in racemes. Roots are rhizomatous. Often considered invasive.	Harvest top growth in summer during early to full bloom by hand picking in wild or swathing cultivated crop. Dry in field for 2 days then use dryers (large capacity required). Markets limited at present.
Yarrow – <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Seed; direct sow or transplant.	Well-drained soil; high fertility not required. Drought tolerant but occasional irrigation may improve yield.	Treatment of colds, flu, measles, diarrhea, rheumatism, arthritis, menstrual problems, hypertension, wounds, nosebleeds, ulcers.	Perennial, 60-90 cm, strongly rhizomatous. Foliage is soft and fern-like, flowers are small, in umbels; usually white, but red and pink forms exist.	Flowers, leaves or entire top growth may be harvested in summer. Limited markets.