

Brittany's Favorite Herbal First Aid Recipes

Jean's Poison Ivy Wash

1 tablespoon comfrey root or leaf
1 tablespoon jewelweed herb*
1 tablespoon meadowsweet herb
1 tablespoon mugwort leaf
1 tablespoon plantain leaf
1 tablespoon sweet fern leaf
1 tablespoon witch hazel bark
5 cups water
Prepared commercial witch hazel astringent

Combine all the herbs and simmer in the water, covered, for 1 hour, then let sit overnight. In the morning, strain and cut with ½ part prepared witch hazel. Store in the refrigerator. Use both to wash your skin after poison ivy exposure and to soothe areas already infected by poison ivy. You can apply the wash with a tissue or put it in a spray bottle and spray it directly onto the skin.

*The generic term “herb” refers to the above ground parts of a plant - leaves and stems (and flowers, if the plant is meant to be used during the flowering stage).

Herbal Bug Repellent

1 ounce good-quality olive oil, almond oil, or jojoba oil
5 drops citronella essential oil
5 drops lavender essential oil
5 drops peppermint or tea tree essential oil
5 drops rose geranium essential oil

Pour the oil into a 1-ounce bottle. Add the essential oils and shake well to mix. Store in a cool, dark place and make sure to shake well before using.

You can also prepare your bug repellent in a base of mostly water (I like to add a little bit of oil to help it stick to the skin). This way the repellent can be mixed in a spray bottle and applied to the skin as a spray; some people find this more convenient. When I make bug sprays I like to use herbal tea for the base. It is especially helpful to use herbs with natural bug-repelling properties, such as lemon verbena, lavender, rue, peppermint, or clary sage.

Herbal Bug Spray

1½ ounces lemon verbena or mint tea (preferably made from fresh herb)

1 tablespoon good-quality olive oil, almond oil, or jojoba oil
1 tablespoon prepared commercial witch hazel astringent or water
1 tablespoon prepared commercial aloe vera gel or water
10 drops citronella essential oil
7 drops lavender essential oil
7 drops peppermint or tea tree essential oil
7 drops rose geranium essential oil

Pour the oil into a 2-ounce spray bottle. Add the essential oils and shake well to mix. Store in a cool, dark place and make sure to shake well before using.

Hydrating Herbal Tea

1 tablespoon hibiscus flowers
1 tablespoon coriander seeds
1 teaspoon orange peel
Pinch of mint (optional)
1 quart water

Steep the herbs in the (unheated) water overnight. Strain and drink cool or cold, 1 to 3 cups a day.

After-Dinner Digestive Tea

1 tablespoon lemon peel
1 tablespoon fennel seed
1 tablespoon coriander seed
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger root
1 quart water

Combine the herbs with the water and simmer over low heat, covered, for 15 minutes. Strain and drink hot, 1 to 3 cups a day.

All-Purpose Healing Herbal Oil

1 tablespoon St. John's wort infused oil
1 tablespoon calendula infused oil
1 tablespoon plantain infused oil
3 drops tea tree essential oil

Combine all the oils in a 1-ounce bottle, shake well, and store in a cool, dark place. Apply to clean, dry skin. This oil is great for cuts, scrapes, bruises, and dry skin.