

Medicinal Desert Plants

Creosote Bush: *Larrea tridentata*

uses: antioxidant, antiseptic, anti-microbial, hair tonic, arthritis, blood, skin, tumors, cysts

used by: Pima, Papago, Seri, Cahuilla

Mesquite: *Prosopis julifera, glandulosa, pubescens*

uses: anti-microbial, astringent, demulcent, nutritive, eye wash, fuel, chewing gum, dye

used by: Pima, Papago, Seri

Prickly Pear: *Opuntia phaeacantha*

uses: nutritive, demulcent, first aid, anti-inflammatory

used by: Aztex, Pima, Papago, Seri, Navajo

Ocotillo: *Fouquieria splendens*

uses: pelvic lymphatic, benign cysts & tumors, shelter, fencing

used by: Pima, Papago, Cahuilla, Apache

Globe Mallow: *Sphaeralcea ambigua*

uses: demulcent, colitis, ulcers, sore throats, mild urinary tract irritations

used by: Seri, Pueblo, Navajo

Mormon Tea: *Ephedra spp.*

uses: bronchial dilator, decongestant, coffee replacement, stimulant

used by: Pima, Papago, Navajo, Zuni

Jojoba: *Simmodia chinensis*

uses: astringent, sore throats, colitis, vaginitis, ulcers, hemorrhoids, coffee replacement

nuts are high in oil, great for skin, scalp & hair

used by: Seri, Pima, Papago

Brittlebush: *Encelia farinosa*

uses: analgesic, expectorant, incense

used by: Cahuilla, Mojave, Pima, Papago, Seri

Buckwheat Bush: *Eriogonum*

uses: colds, coughs, sore throats

used by: Hopi, Zuni, Pima, Papago, Navajo, Seri

Bursage: *Ambrosia deltoidea*

uses: cramps, allergies

used by: Seri

Desert Mistletoe: *Phoradendron californicum*

uses: nervine, anti-spasmodic, tonic

used by: Seri, Pima, Papago, Zuni, Navajo

Juniper: *Juniperus monosperma*

uses: urinary tract infections, cystitis, saunas, incense

used by: Tewa, Zuni, Navajo, Seri

Medicinal Desert Plants (cont'd.)

Desert Barberry: *Mahonia trifoliata*

uses: edible berries, stem, & root bark as a bitter tonic, anti-microbial for skin & intestinal tract, liver tonic, yellow dye.

used by: Navajo, Seri

Crucifixion Thorn: *Castela emoryi*

uses: inhibits intestinal protozoa

used by: Seri

Yucca: *Yucca spp.*

uses: anti-inflammatory, urethra, bladder, prostate, shampoo, nutritive, basket crafts

used by: Navajo, Zuni, Seri

Sagebrush: *Artemisia tridentata*

uses: flu, diaphoretic, fevers, disinfectant, smudging incense

used by: Paiute, Zuni, Navajo

Agave: *Agave spp.*

uses: indigestion, chronic constipation, gas

used by: Papago, Pima, Seri

Catclaw: *Acacia greggii*

uses: dystentery, diarrhea, astringent

used by: widely used by all Native Americans

Ratany: *Krameria lanceolata, grayii, parviflora*

uses: astringent, topical hemostat, sore gums, abscesses, mouth sores, sore throat, diarrhea

used by: Papago, Pima

Larkspur: *Delphinium amabile*

uses: kills body lice

used by: the entire Western world for a hundred years!

Jimsonweed, Thornapple: *Datura stramonium*

uses: leaves smoked for bronchial spasms (mix with desert sage) Not for internal use.

used by: Pima & Papago

Desert Sage: *Salvia spp.*

uses: anti-microbial, astringent, disinfectant, sore throats, sweat baths

used by: Cahuilla, Comanche, Navajo

Medicinal Plants (continued)

Manzanita: *Arctostaphylos spp.*

uses: urinary tract infections, emetic

used by: Navajo

Desert Willow: *Chilopsis linearis*

uses: antifungal, first aid, sore throats

used by: Navajo, Seri

Saguaro: *Carnegia gigantea*

uses: poultice foe muscle pain

used by: Seri, Papago, Pima

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HERBAL PREPARATIONS

INFUSIONS:

Commonly called “teas” or tisanes, these are easily prepared by steeping the herb, either fresh or dried, in 8 oz. of boiling water. The vessel should be covered for 5-15 minutes to preserve the volatile oils. The usual ratio is 1 teaspoon of dried herb to 8 oz. Hot water, however that varies with the herb being prepared and the intended use. Most measures are made with fingers. Herbs prepared in this fashion are usually aromatic leaves. Mild and flavorful.

DECOCTIONS:

These preparations are made from the stems or roots of herbs. Preparation involves boiling in a glass or ceramic pot of water until half of the water, used to cover the herbs, is gone. A very strong liquid is obtained which is used primarily for external conditions or with great care for internal circumstances. This preparation can last for several days if refrigerated. May be strong and bitter. Use sparingly.

TINCTURES:

Alcohol based preparations using leaves, stems or roots in an effort to extract all soluble phytochemicals. The alcohol used should be 40 proof vodka due to its lack of taste and color. A ‘handful’, or an ounce of dried herb to 4 or 5 ounces of vodka is the recommended ratio. All of the herb **MUST** be covered by the liquid even if it changes the ratio. The covered herb should remain in a dark cupboard for 30-60 days before being removed. When removed, decant the liquid off of the herb through a coffee filter if necessary. Keep the filtered liquid in a dark colored bottle with a plastic cap and use as needed. Dropper bottles are the best way to preserve and use a tincture. Extremely strong and concentrated . Lasts indefinitely.

Infusions were used most frequently by the indigenous peoples of the Southwest. A few herbs were prepared as decoctions when a stronger concentration was desired. Tinctures were almost never used.