



I sit here typing this during a lovely summer thunderstorm. One of my favorite summertime things. It cools everything off, waters the trees and plants, and pushes us inside for a glass of cold tea and a cool down from the days activities. Some of the not so favorite things of summer include: bug bites, burns, poison ivy rashes, actually any rash, but poison ivy is the worst of these I think; mosquitos, stings, scratches, etc. So I thought I would share some of my favorite summer time aids and herbal support.

Hydrate!

This has to be first, as it helps most everything. This is the season to drink lots of water and fancy it up a bit. The mint patch is taking over, fresh cucumbers are abundant, and fresh weeds and herbs are everywhere! I have a ritual I started when my son was very young of gathering yard tea. Take a mason jar out and gather what looks beautiful out in your yard. Maybe plantain and dandelion leaf, rose petals, calendula, and the self heal that is taking over your yard. Lemon balm, bee balm, pine needles...the list is endless. Get to know your garden or yard weeds and even if you only have a few pots...grow some mint, holy basil, rosemary, or any other herb that you like. Herbalists often say "Pay attention to what grows around you. It is often what you need." As far as cooling and summer support, muddle some basil or mint and add cucumber slices. One of my favorite herb waters is muddled mint with lime slices kept cold in the fridge. If you haven't tried the Vietnamese Cinnamon Sticks yet....a couple of those broken up in a mason jar, fill with water and enjoy. Add orange slices if you like. So delicious, does not add any unnecessary sugar, and inspires you to drink more.

Now Skin

Our skin absolutely can feel under attack in this season of sun, bugs, and heat. One of my basic helpers is Rosewater in the fridge. Rose is cooling and demulcent and a spritz or two of that after mowing or working in the garden is so delicious! You can also add a splash to your water or tea if you like the flavor.

Suncare

The sun can provide some unique challenges. On one hand, we NEED the sun. We need to get vitamin d, and getting sun is the best way to get it. We have vitamin d receptors all over our bodies, so if you can...yes, I am going to say THAT...get some naked sun if possible. Every nook and cranny. I also recommend this for fungal infections (aka Swamp Ass). Many of the old herbal texts recommend getting 30 minutes or so of early morning sunlight. No sunglasses or glasses, just you in the sun. Not only will you absorb some vitamin d, but the sun stimulates serotonin production, like the dark stimulates melatonin production. So, if you can, get outside in all your naked glory and sun. If that isn't an option for you, put on as little as possible and get out there.

That said, there is no doubt that too much sun is not a good thing. We know that damaging our skin with sunburn increases the likelihood of skin cancers, as well as being painful. Sunscreens are often problematic due to the chemicals in them. Not only do sunscreens stop the vitamin d synthesis, but you are literally baking chemicals on your skin. I would say that is also a recipe for skin cancer. So, what to do? Especially for sensitive skin or pale, easily burnt skin? First, cover up. Especially those sensitive areas. Check out clean sunscreens such as Badger. I also recommend going reef safe if you are choosing a sunscreen. Avoid the most intense parts of the day...12-4 is generally the most intense. I also have been making this sunspray for my family for years. I originally made it as an after sun soother, but after years of using it, realized that it prevented burns if reapplied often. And that is the key! Reapply every hour or two.

Healing Sun Spray

- You will need a 4oz spray bottle
- Add 1 oz of aloe juice
- 30 drops lavender essential oil
- 30 drops peppermint essential oil
- Fill to top with lavender or rose hydrosol or distilled water.
- Shake well before applying and keep in fridge for extra cooling effect.

I think that this blend works so well because the peppermint cools the surface and temp of the skin and lavender is one of the best burn remedies that I know of. I, and others, have used this for years with great success. From afternoon soccer matches, all day garden work, or months hiking the pacific coast trail, I have seen this formula ease many sun lovers skin.

I also recommend consuming antioxidants. This is the season to eat out of the garden. Increasing our antioxidants helps prevent free radical damage and makes our skin more resilient to sun exposure. So, eat all of the berries you can. Make sure your salads are all of the colors! Sure, we should do this regularly but I think even moreso in the summer months. Also, consider antioxidants for your skin. Evan Healy released a limited edition Sanctuary Oil and Balm that we will carry this summer that is filled with antioxidants such as: rosehip, pomegranate, olive, and seabuckthorn oils as well as calendula and other nourishing oils. We have only a small amount of the serum and the Nectar Balm, so get it while you can. We are passing on the 20% discount that we received and hope that it becomes a permanent product in their line. I have tried these both and love the serum! It looks and feels like my skin glows after I apply it.

Bugs

So. Many. Bugs! Some we love (talking to you lightning bugs) and some we do not (sorry hornets, but you are mean). The most complained about are mosquitos. Any pot or cup, birdbath or wheelbarrow that gathers water becomes a mosquito love shack. And as we sit out on our porch or deck to enjoy a meal, a cocktail, anything really....we become the feast. My go to bug spray is:

- 4oz spray bottle
- 1 Tbsp vodka
- 30 drops total of all or some of these essential oils:
- Lemon eucalyptus (I list this first because if you can only do one, this is the one I would recommend most), rose geranium, cedar, rosemary, lavender, peppermint

Fill the rest with distilled water. Shake well and spray often. You can also spray your bedding, screens, curtains, cushions, etc to deter pests everywhere. If you are not interested in making your own, we have many options. My favorites are Quantum BuzzAway Extreme and Four Elements Bug Away. We have a local option in Red Moon Herbs Bug Away and we also have sting and bite soother products for after bite care. I am a plantain fan for bites and stings of all kinds. You can chew up a plantain leaf (plantago major or lancelet) and apply a spit poultice to the bite or sting or blend plantain leaf with witch hazel and apply. The plantain leaf actually draws out the poison from the venom. It also works on splinters.

Old timers around here always used tobacco for stings and bites and it does work!

Poison Ivy

In defense of poison ivy, it plays an important environmental role. It grows on disturbed or damaged ground and has actually been found growing around endangered or sick plants. Its' job is to keep us out. It is very effective at that job. So, thank you poison ivy for your medicine. Also, if you have gotten poison ivy...it stinks. The rash itself is so

Hot and irritated. It is truly amazing how much damage is done to the skin from the oils in this plant. We have lots of folks come in covered and desperate for relief. As someone who who has been covered every summer, here are my go to's-

1. Jewelweed Spray! I make my own, as I have large patches of it around my home. Chop up fresh jewelweed and place in a mason jar. Cover completely with Witch hazel. Cover and let sit 2-4 weeks. Strain and then bottle. This is excellent put into a spray bottle and applied as needed. If you need it in a hurry, just blend up some jewelweed with water or with hazel and place on affected area. You can put this in ice cube trays as well to preserve and have all season, as fall is a time of many poison ivy rashes. The plants die back, we get out in the yard and garden and start weeding and cleaning up and BAM! We find ourselves covered. That urushiol oil is still in those vine and dying parts and absolutely will cause trouble if you are allergic. A warning...never burn poison ivy. There have been cases of folks breathing the burning plant and getting it internally. Goats are wonderful for clearing out large patches of poison ivy. A lot of farmers and herbalists actually use to drink goats milk as a preventative for poison ivy since the goats love it so much. It would be like getting a homeopathic dose that way, which leads to:

2. Rhus tox homeopathic. Especially if it is bad or starts to spread and go systemic. You can get the plain blue tube by Boiron or Hyland's has a good formula that includes Rhus tox along with other homeopathics to help relieve itching, swelling, and burning.
3. Clay packs! I have had great success using clay packs to help dry up a rash. It can get messy, but the relief is worth it. I take a couple of tablespoons full of green or white clay, add 1 drop of peppermint essential oil, and add a splash of jewelweed spray. Mix to make a smooth paste and apply as needed. The peppermint helps to cool down that hot, itchy rash.
4. Drink calming nervine teas. Getting a bad case of poison ivy can be miserable. The rash is so hot and itchy...it makes us angry, irritated, and inflamed. Keeping hydrated with cool nervine teas can help our suffering. I suggest lemon balm, blue vervain, st. johns wort, holy basil, and chamomile.

Fungal skin issues

This is the season of itchy, fungal skin funk. In my family, we call it "swamp ass". It is the south. It is humid, hot, sticky. Bacteria and funguses thrive! There are several things that I love to keep our skin healthy:

There is nothing better on a hot humid day than a cold shower and Dr. Bronner's Peppermint Castile Soap. You can feel the cooling sensation for at least an hour after showering.

Swamp A** powder

- 1 cup green or white clay
- ½ cup black walnut powder
- ½ cup neem powder
- 10 drops tea tree oil

(if infection is present add a tablespoon of goldenseal or oregon grape root powder). Use this liberally for the jiggly bits (under breasts, crotch area, belly folds, etc.) and for athletes foot. You can also add mint essential oil to further the cooling effect.

Other summer support includes:

A good skin salve. Comfrey, plantain, calendula, st. john's wort and yarrow are wonderful plant to consider for a lovely skin healing salve recipe. Salves are wonderful for helping heal cuts, scrapes, and bug bites.

Cooling and nourishing herbal teas such as mint, nettle, and red clover. Cooling and simple foods are wonderful too. Watermelon is one of my favorites! Especially out of the cooler or fridge, it is a summertime ritual. Porch, tall glass of iced tea, and spitting watermelon seeds into the yard while chomping on a slice. Salads filled with herbs and veggies fresh from garden, market, or csa are a wonderful dinner that cools and refreshes.

I love summer, I love the sun, the warmth, the abundance in the garden and woods, and afternoon thunderstorms. I love how much outside living and adventures happens in the summer. Hopefully with these suggestions, summer's challenges will not dampen your appreciation for this season.

May the rest of your summer be filled with effective fans, cool nights on the porch, some creek stomping, and goodness.

Melissa

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