



***Stay Well:***  
***Boosting Your***  
***Immune System***  
***Using Traditional***  
***African Herbs***



# *African Cultural Retentions*

African healing practices survived the middle passage to be transplanted and adapted in the new environment.

West African beliefs related to healing influenced Southern herbal medicine.

Folk traditions and ineffectiveness of white medical traditions.

Enslaved played an active role in own healthcare.

Plantation medicine forced the survival of African folk medicine.



# Granny's Remedies

Grandmothers and other African American women have been known to be the “healers” in the community since the enslavement period. They always had something growing in the garden or in the medicine chest to keep you healthy or help you to get better. Some of these remedies were used well into the early 1960s.

The remedies presented in this lecture come from oral histories passed generation to generation.

## **Notice:**

*These remedies are not intended to treat, diagnose, or prescribe, and are presented for educational purposes only.*





# Preventative Herbs

- Basil: Leaves made into a health tonic
- Saw palmetto: Used as a health tonic
- Asefetida and nutmeg: Worn to ward off illness and promote health; prevention of childhood diseases, i.e., measles, whooping cough, mumps, chickenpox, smallpox, diphtheria
- Garlic: and rum tonic: To ward off illness or worn as a prevention measure; worn around waists of children to ward off worms and stomach infections.
- Life everlasting: To prolong life, and for a charm against illness. Drink the tea.



# *Traditional Folk Curatives*

## **Turpentine**

- Used for almost any ailment.
- Apply to sores, cuts and sore throats.
- Soak for snake bite.
- Put on tooth for ache or teething pain.
- Take 15 drops for indigestion.

## **Honey**

- Mix with turpentine and onions to make syrup for colds.
- Mix with pine tree bark and onions to make cough syrup.
- Mix with mullein and alum to make syrup for colds.
- Use for common ailments and spring malaria.

## **Catnip**

- Leaves used for infant colic and teething.
- Catnip tea for relieving fevers.



# *Traditional Folk Curatives*

## **Sassafras**

- Drink tea to bring out spots and hasten recovery from measles.
- Use also for general health, body strength, and bathe in sassafras tea for backache.
- Root used as tea for fever, chills, and colds.
- Root tea made to treat malaria.

## **Tobacco**

- Chewed for gum pain.
- Smoke blown into ear for earache.

## **Slippery Elm**

- Use inner bark for sore throat, constipation and gastric problems.
- External use for wounds, burns, and infections.





# *Traditional Folk Curatives*

## **Collards / Cabbage**

- Use collard leaves for headaches.
- Use collards as a poultice for boils.
- Use cabbage leaves for fever.

## **Cloves**

- Clove oil for toothaches and as an anti-inflammatory.
- Use to alleviate nausea and to stop vomiting.
- A mixture of cloves and whiskey as a cleanser after birth (bruised blood).

## **Jerusalem Oak**

- Jerusalem root seed mixed with castor oil and turpentine for worms.
- In the springtime, Jerusalem oak seed in syrup given for nine mornings.
- Use seeds for worms and mix it with sugar to make candy for colds.
- Used as a spring tonic to build up children's immunity.



# Common Ailments & Folk Curatives

## Stomach Problems

- Ginger Tea: Drink ginger tea or eat pickled ginger slices with and after your meal.
- Peppermint Tea: Drink one cup of tea twice daily.
- Pickled Vegetables: Eating pickled vegetable helped digestion by adding healthy bacteria to the gut.

## Toothache

- Clove Oil: Rub clove oil mixed with coconut or olive oil on affected tooth and gum three times daily for pain and to reduce infection.
- Garlic: Bite down on one garlic clove where the affected tooth is. Leave there for as long as possible. Rub affected gum and tooth with garlic oil.
- Saltwater: Rinse mouth with very warm water 3 times daily, using ½ to 1 teaspoon of salt per 1 cup of water.

## Arthritis

- Make a castor oil pack by soaking a cloth in castor oil, warming and placing over the inflamed tissue and joints.
- Slice a raw red potato, put in a glass jar, cover with water and a towel or top. Let the mixture sit overnight. Strain and drink one cup of the liquid in the morning.





# Common Ailments & Folk Curatives

## High Blood Pressure

- Galax/ wild leek: boil galax root and drink the liquid or steep galax in vinegar and water
- Spanish Moss: boil and drink the tea or wear in one's shoes.

## Colds

- Red onion: colds in chest and shortness of breath, eat the onions raw.
- Pine tar: as a decongestant, boil with snakeroot, life everlasting and lemon. Mix with onions and honey to make a cough syrup.

## Rheumatism

- Clay: red or blue clay used alone or in a poultice for rheumatism and sprains
- Bittersweet/bitter weeds: Combine with grease to cure rheumatism.
- A potato carried in your pocket.



# Folk Curatives for Boils, Burns, Cuts

## Boils / Cysts

- Boils and cysts: Put warm castor oil on the affected area and wrap with a cloth. Change daily; keep in place until the boil or cyst disappears.
- *“ When you get a boil, put the skin of the egg shell on top of it and make it go down. If the boil ain’t open, get some fatback and put on there and it’ll jus’open it up and draw all that infection on out.” Ruth Patterson*

## Burns

- Rub the gel from an aloe vera leaf on the burn several times a day.
- Rinse the affected area with cold water to stop the pain and to pull the heat out. Dry the area, and then rub butter on the burn.

## Cuts

- Spider webs:
- *“ For puncture wounds, because we were always barefoot and stepping on nails, I remember my grandmother would make the wound bleed, and she would paddle it until it bled, we’d get all of the poison out and cover it with spider webs and smut from the stove and wrap it up on your foot and then you’d be walking around.” Ms. Etta Minor-Williams*





# Folk Curatives for Respiratory Ailments

## Colds

- Rabbit tobacco tea: Drink rabbit tobacco tea to treat congestion and coughs; and to combat infections due to colds and flu.
- Sassafras tea: Drink 2 cups a day. Can add lemon.
- Hot totty: Ingredients are whiskey or brandy, peppermint, lemon, honey, cayenne pepper.

## Congestion

- Turpentine salve:
- Mix 1 tablespoon of turpentine into 2 tablespoons of lard, olive oil, coconut oil, or shea butter. Spread on chest and place a warm woolen cloth over area.
- Tea: Add 1 to 2 dried bay leaves per one cup of water. Sweeten with honey if desired. Cover and steep 10-15 minutes. Drink 3 times a day to relieve congestion.

## Asthma

- Use a pencil to mark a line on the wall or door. When the child's height reaches the mark, he or she will outgrow the asthma.





# Folk Curatives for Childhood Diseases

## Measles

- Sassafras: Tea made from root used for measles. Drink one cup daily to reduce fever and symptoms. Put one teaspoon of dried root into 1 cup of hot water.
- Corn Shuck Tea: Put dried corn shuck leaves in a pot, cover with water. Bring to a boil and let sit for 15 minutes. Drink freely, refrigerate remainder.

## Mumps

- Hog maws: *“They would take hog maws and rub us with that and that would be good for mumps. When you get the mumps your have hurting jaws and they would swell. We would always rub up our jaws with the hog maws and it would go down.”* Pete Smith
- Sardine Juice: Rub affected areas with the juice, particularly under the chin.

## Chickenpox

- *“For chicken pox, go in the chicken coop, face forward and leave walking backward. Do this before 5 a.m. sunrise.”* Ms. Jacobs
- Get dried corn shuck. Put the leaves and silk into a pot, cover with water. Bring to a boil and let sit 15 minutes. Strain and drink 3 times a day. Keep remainder refrigerated.
- Apply aloe vera gel to affected area 2 to 3 times a day to treat itching and pox sores.



# *Folk Curatives for Herbs Used to Treat Flu*

- Boneset Tea: Used to treat fever and congestion, and to boost immunity to shorten the length of the ailment.
- Tonic to boost immunity: equal parts of garlic cloves, white onion, ginger root, and cayenne pepper in jar filled with apple cider vinegar. Rested two weeks, shook daily, then strained, and stored in refrigerator.
- Preventative: 1-2 tablespoons a day for 1 week.
- Onset of flu: preventative dosage 3-5 times a day for 3-5 days.
- Illness: 1-2 tablespoons 6 times a day, while flushing the body with water.
- Castor oil: used to boost the immune system.



# *Interested In Growing Your Own Medicine Garden?*



(Photo: pinterest.com)

**Check out these webpages:**

<https://www.medicine-garden.net/nursery>

<https://www.tenthacrefarm.com/8-herbs-medicine-garden/>

<https://www.southernexposure.com/blog/2020/06/beginners-medicine-garden-10-healing-plants/>

<https://www.hgtv.com/outdoors/landscaping-and-hardscaping/medicine-garden>

<https://www.motherearthliving.com/gardening/herbs-anyone-can-grow>





# Please be safe and stay healthy

Out of an abundance of caution and safety for our volunteers and visitors, the Blanchard House Museum remains closed during the pandemic.

**For the latest COVID-19 guidance and prevention, visit the CDC's page at:**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

