

2026 FUNDAMENTALS OF HERBALISM

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Overview

Format: Hybrid (In-Person + Online Option)

Location: The Vervain Collective Classroom or Virtually via Zoom

Duration: 10-month program, meeting **once per month** (Weeks 1–10)

Who This Course Is For:

This course is designed for students, practitioners, and community members interested in foundational herbal knowledge rooted in traditional wisdom, bioregional awareness, and modern integrative perspectives. No prior herbalism experience is required.

Classroom Cohort: Receives herb and tea samples during class.

Online Cohort: Will have all herb and tea samples mailed each week prior to each module.

Recordings: Sessions may be recorded and available for up to 30 days after class. Audio and visual quality may vary.

Materials Needed

- Binder and loose-leaf paper for an alphabetized Materia Medica (herbal monographs)
 - Divider or notebook for notes
 - Small (1–4 oz) jars and tins — start saving them now!
 - 32 oz mason jar
 - Small fine strainer
 - Olive oil, 80-proof or higher alcohol, vinegar, honey, beeswax or cocoa butter, cheesecloth, clean straining fabric
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Homework and Time Commitment

Plan for **5–10 hours per month** outside of class for herbal documentation, recipes, wildcrafting, and creating materia medica entries based on personal research.

Your Final Project will be to submit your completed Materia Medica and Homework assignments (handwritten or digital).

Recommended Reading

- *Botany in a Day*, Thomas J. Elpel
 - *The Embodied Mind*, Thomas Verny, MD
 - Additional favorites available at The Vervain Collective, Once and Future Books, and Rediscovered Books
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Course Flow & Learning Objectives

Each module integrates herbal theory, applied practice, and ethical awareness. Students will deepen understanding of anatomy, energetics, and herbal preparation through experiential learning.

Week 1: Course Orientation & Global Herbal Wisdom

- Introductions, course overview, and expectations
- World Wisdom Traditions: Ethical scope, decolonization, and bioregionalism
 - Africa, the Americas, Ayurveda, Curanderismo, Europe, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Persian Unani Tibb
- Herbs for Immune Support: Astragalus, Boneset, Echinacea, Elder, Honeysuckle, Lomatium, Yarrow
- Tastings: Elderberry Syrup and Fire Cider

Homework: Recipes provided for Elderberry and Fire Cider

Week 2: Botany and Herbal Foundations

- Botany, glossary, and medical terminology
- Herbal actions and applications

- Herbs for Respiratory Support: Coltsfoot, Elecampane, Gumweed, Licorice, Lobelia, Mullein

Homework: Describe one lung herb using botanical terms; determine best extraction method and prepare it

Week 3: The HPA Axis and Nervous System

- The HPA Axis and Enteric Brain: Stress, mood, sleep, and inflammation
- Infusions and decoctions
- Herbs for Nervous System Support: Lemon Balm, Kava, Passionflower, Skullcap, Tulsi, Vervain

Homework: Make an infusion or decoction and record personal effects

Week 4: Digestion, Nutrition, and Wildcrafting

- Ethical wildcrafting principles
- Tincture making
- Gut Health: Nutrition, bitters, and carminatives
- Herbs for Digestive Support: Anise, Berberis (Oregon Grape), Burdock, Celandine, Fennel, Ginger, Mint, Marshmallow Root

Guest Speaker: Dr. Nicole Pierce, NMD

Homework: Prepare Marshmallow Root Balls, Bitters, and Milk Thistle Tincture

Week 5: Adaptogens, Mushrooms, and First Aid

- Check-in and integration
- Adaptogens: Ashwagandha, Gotu Kola, Schisandra, Eleutherococcus, Panax, Tulsi
- Medicinal Mushrooms: Chaga, Cordyceps, Lion's Mane, Turkey Tail, Reishi
- Lymphatic Support: Calendula, Chickweed, Cleavers
- Herbal First Aid: Cayenne, Marshmallow Root, Yarrow, Plantago

Homework: Take one adaptogen daily for one month; collect Honeysuckle and Elderflower

Week 6: Cardiovascular System and Herb Walk

- “The Heart of the Matter”
- Herbs for Cardiovascular Support: Blueberries, Cayenne, Cinnamon, Garlic, Hawthorn, Linden, Motherwort
- Herbs to support people with penises
- Fieldwork: Herb Walk with Botanist; use iNaturalist app

Homework: Collect Rose Petals, Yarrow, Cleavers, and Red Clover

Week 7: Reproductive Health & Life Cycles

- “Womb Service”
- Herbs for Menstruation, Pregnancy, and Postpartum
- Menopause discussion with Dr. Joan Haynes, NMD
- Herbs: Black Cohosh, Lady’s Mantle, Motherwort, Red Raspberry Leaf, Vitex
- Community Practice: Moon Circle

Homework: Take a nourishing tonic (Nettle, Raspberry, or Lady’s Mantle) for one month; keep a cycle diary

Week 8: Musculoskeletal Health & Energetics

- Musculoskeletal System and Autoimmune Complexity
- Flower Essences and Herbal Energetics with Dr. Dana Mockenhaupt, NMD
- Herbs: Chamomile, Feverfew, Horsetail, Licorice, Turmeric, Willow, Wood Betony
- Discussion: Essential Oils and Hydrosols with guest Anna Demetriades

Homework: Keep a one-month food diary; collect Elderberries

Week 9: Synergy, Formulation, and Legal Herbalism

- Synergy and contraindications
- Legal and ethical herbal practice
- Case studies and real-world application
- Guest: Krista Willmorth, the FunGal Forager — Mushrooms and Ethical Wildcrafting

Homework: Complete an Herbal Intake exercise

Week 10: Nootropics and Closing Integration

- Kid-Friendly Herbs: Catnip, Chamomile, Plantago
 - Nootropics: Ginkgo, Gotu Kola, Rosemary
 - Developing organoleptic (sensory) skills
 - Closing ceremony and reflection
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Notes

- Syllabus and materia medica are subject to change based on seasonal availability and guest scheduling.
- Payment in full required prior to first class.