



# Herbal Teas

***Disclaimer: This hand out is provided as information for general knowledge. Master Gardeners do not intend to teach how to cure, treat and prevent illnesses.***

## **HERBAL TEAS**

Teas are steeped for many health benefits. It has been used as a “natural medicine chest” or even a life saving herb. Tea is beneficial to the skin, eyes and mental clarity. There are more than 5,000 types of tea, but only one plant, the *Camellia sinensis*.

Tea can be generally classified into three major categories:

- Green- not fermented
- Black-fermented
- Oolong-partially fermented

The difference in fermentation gives us distinct flavours and aromas with slight variations in the content of each active ingredient.

All tea contains the same active ingredients: Polyphenols, Caffeine, Phyto-nutrients, Amino Acids, and Aromatic Oils.

### Polyphenols:

Antioxidants collectively referred to as catechins, which work to neutralize free radicals and lower LDL cholesterol levels. A recent study discovered that the antioxidants in green tea are even more potent than the antioxidants in vitamins E and C.

### Caffeine:

Promotes mental alertness, is a diuretic, helps burn fat, and stimulates the central nervous system. However, too much caffeine tends to make us nervous or even experience nausea.

### Phyto- Nutrients:

Certain organic components of plants that promote human health stimulating detoxification enzymes, stimulate the immune system, act as antibacterial or antiviral agents, and positively affect hormones.

### Amino Acids:

Often the first line of defence against many types of bacteria, viral, fungal and parasitic infections. The L-theanine increase the alpha-waves in the brain, improving our memory thus assisting in prevention of dementia, high levels of the L-theanine amino acid is found in green tea.

### Aromatic oils:

Contribute to the complex fragrance and taste.

### **Therapeutic Benefits:**

- Teas can protect against heart disease
- Research indicates that teas may reduce the risk of cancer
- Protect against and destroy harmful bacteria and viruses
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces hardening of the arteries
- Fights infection
- Relieves migraines
- Reduces cavities and gum disease
- Lowers LDL (bad) cholesterol and raises HDL(good) cholesterol
- Flavinoids in tea help to protect the bones
- Herbal Teas are ideal for warming the body, reducing colds and fevers
- Herbs (mints) are good for digestion and cooling the body
- Herbs are used to ease pain and to reduce swelling in joints

### **METHOD**

Beverages may be brewed from fresh or dried herbs. A general rule is to use one teaspoon of dry herbs or three teaspoons of fresh herbs per cup of boiling water.

Gently crush the herbs and place them in an infuser. Pour boiling water over the selected herbs and let steep three to five minutes. If an iced tea is desired, brew a double strength infusion, and then add ice.

When adding an herb to your favourite China tea, a leaf or two per cup will usually give enough flavour.

Check with your doctor before treating yourself with herbal teas. Drug interactions are possible.

### **Plants Utilized for Herbal Teas**

#### **GINGER (Root)**

- Fresh root applied externally stimulates circulation
- Infuse root as a tea to cleanse the body's systems, eases a cold and brings warmth on cold days.
- Chewing the ginger root will help soothe a sore throat.
- An infusion is excellent to settle the stomach and prevent nausea when travelling.

#### **CHAMOMILE**

- Infuse flowers as a tea for general tonic and sedative good for night time restlessness
- Apply a compress to treat wounds and eczema.
- Use in a bath to relieve sun or wind burned skin.
- Also used for nightmares and insomnia helps to suppress nausea
- Use tea bags for circles under eyes, poultice for eczema and wounds
- In the garden it is known as the physician plant, reviving and healing ailing plants

#### **SAGE**

- Seeds infused in water may be used to remove foreign matter from eyes painlessly.
- Leaves are antiseptic, antifungal and contain estrogen.
- Leaves aid digestion, combat diarrhoea.
- Use tea after a meal to aid digestion.
- Teas are nerve and blood tonics.
- Tea reduces sweating, soothes coughs, colds and laryngitis
- \* Should not be taken in large doses for a long period of time.

### **STINGING NETTLE**

- Young shoots are rich in vitamins and minerals-eat in a salad, boil as a vegetable, drink as herbal tea.
- Infuse or decoct herb as a digestive, diuretic and astringent.

### **PEPPERMINT**

- Infuse in a tea to help digestion, colds, influenza, hiccups and flatulence.
- \*Exercise caution if suffering from kidney problems.

### **SPEARMINTS AND PEPPERMINTS-**

- Macerate leaves in oil and massage affected areas to treat migraines, facial neuralgia and rheumatic and muscular aches.

### **ROSE BLOSSOMS**

- Infuse for tonic and astringent tea. Never use any flowers that have been treated or sprayed with chemicals or insecticides.

### **ROSE HIPS**

- Contains vitamins B, E, K, and high in vitamin C.

### **LEMONS**

- Fruit, juice and peel are rich in vitamins and minerals.
- Antioxidant and antiseptic.

### **LEMON BALM**

- Antiviral, for sleep, anxiety.
- Also used for memory, studies are being conducted for Alzheimer's disease.

### **CINNAMON**

- Antiseptic, astringent and stimulant.
- Used to relieve nausea, flatulence and diarrhea.

### **LICORICE**

- Infuse as a tea for treatment of coughs and chest pains.
- Strong decoction used to treat fever and as a laxative for children.

### **BASIL**

- Tea used as a tonic can be used as an aphrodisiac - stimulates the adrenal cortex
- Varieties: Cinnamon, Greek, Purple delight and Lemon are known as the spice boys.

## **Herbal Teas to Avoid/ Contra-indicated**

### Chaparral:

- may damage the liver

### Coltsfoot

- This herb has been linked to liver damage and cancerous tumors and has been banned in Canada.

### Ephedra

- Otherwise known as mahuang is a popular energy-booster and diet aid, however, according to the FDA; it has been attributed to many deaths and can cause liver damage, heart palpitations, elevated blood pressure and stroke.

### Lobelia:

- Loosens secretions in the respiratory tract, in some cases it causes severe nausea and vomiting.
- Can also depress breathing and cause rapid heart rate, leading to coma and even death.

### Pennyroyal

- While the leaves are relatively safe, the oil can induce miscarriage and is highly toxic.

### Senna:

- This is a strong laxative when used as directed, but, using it for long periods of time can lead to heart problems.

### Yohimbe:

- Contains a major alkaloid that raises the blood pressure and causes nervousness and fatigue.