

HERBAL LINIMENTS

GENERAL INFORMATION—LINIMENTS

Liniments, as mentioned a few pages earlier, can be made from any carrier-type oil. Examples of these oils are listed below as possible salve making ingredients. Liniments may also be made from rubbing alcohol or vodka.

Similar liniments are sometimes made with alcohol. Often rubbing alcohol is used because it is less expensive than the alcohol used for tinctures. This is what you are getting when you buy a commercial liniment. Rubbing alcohol is toxic to the body and it *does* absorb into the tissues when used as a liniment. (If it didn't absorb in, there would be no point in rubbing it on to heal muscles and bones below the surface of the skin.) Liniments made with rubbing alcohol should be avoided whenever possible. They should certainly not be taken internally.

BASIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING INFUSED OIL LINIMENTS

Infused oil tinctures are made much like an alcohol tincture, but with a few notable differences.

Place the herbs in the oil (almond or olive or whatever you choose) using a 1:8 ratio. Cover with cheesecloth and let sit in a warm place for 10-14 days. It is best to cover the jar with a cloth rather than a tight lid. A little air flow keeps the oil mixture from molding. The mixture should be shaken or stirred often. When the 14 days have passed, strain much as you would an alcohol tincture.

When using fresh plants, let the plants wilt for 4-8 hours before placing in the oil. This eliminates some of the moisture that might cause mold. Adding 2 drops of benzoin essential oil to each 3-4 cups of oil will also help prevent mold from forming and give the oil a longer shelf life.

Fresh plants for tinctures or oils are far superior to dried ones. The peak harvesting time varies greatly from plant to plant, making fresh plant combinations nearly impossible. This can be coped with by tincturing each plant, fresh, at its peak harvesting time and then combining the tinctures later to make the combination.

One plant oil that is much better made with fresh flowers is arnica; the dried flowers lose some key essential oils and do not have the same potency as the flowers do when fresh. Arnica grows in our area. Most years it is ready for harvest by the end of June. Rosehips are another herb that should be harvested fresh, if possible. They are mature when they turn red. This will occur after the first hard frost. Place the herbs in just enough oil to cover the herb.