

# Tisane



*ti-sane ti-'zan, -'zän, n.*

*Etymology:* Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin *ptisana*, from Greek *ptisanē*, literally, crushed barley, from *ptissein* to crush - *Date:* 14th century : an infusion (as of dried herbs) used as a beverage or for medicinal effects

## HEADLINES

**Final posting of Guild device and ranking proposals**

**Frankincense**

**Rue**

### Mission Statement:

The goal of the Eastern Kingdom Herbalists and Apothecaries' Guild is to encourage study, teaching and practice of medieval herb uses, as well as study of medieval apothecary and pharmacy practice, in the East Kingdom. The Guild should serve as a conduit for herbalists and apothecaries in the kingdom to communicate with and learn from each other, and to disseminate knowledge about medieval herbalism and pharmacy to others.

## Report from the Agitatrix:

First of all, thanks to everyone who contributed to the tithe presented at 100 Minutes War.

*Johanna le Mercer - sweet bagges*

*Lady Mariota - potpourri*

*Aegidius of Eisental - fighter massage oil*

*Baroness Sheherazade - necklaces*

*Sarra the Lymmer - Cards*

*Aegidius, Sarah bas Mordechai, & Jadwiga - comfits (caraway and coriander)*

*Jadwiga - Queen of Hungary Water, Anti-Gas cordial*

The general consensus from the meeting is:

**a-** we need to have an event.

**a1-** if anyone is interested in a Spring/Summer gathering at the Women's Club where we had the last herb event,

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To get on our mailing list, e-mail to [joanne@jafath.com](mailto:joanne@jafath.com) or drop an old-fashioned note to the return address on the mailer. If you are on line, join us on the sca-herbalist mailing list (go to [www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist](http://www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist) to sign up) or the East-specific EK-Herb (sign up from [www.eastkingdom.org/herb](http://www.eastkingdom.org/herb)).

While you're on line, take a look at our website at [www.eastkingdom.org/herb](http://www.eastkingdom.org/herb)

Do you have a favorite herb, gardening tip, historical tidbit, or recipe? Maybe a review of a book you think the world should share? That's perfect for this newsletter — send it to the Chronicler!

As Jadwiga noted, we've been tossing around ideas concerning a guild device and ranking system ever since our founding. This is the beginning of our fifth year since then — time to make a decision or two.

Here is the **device**, "*fieldless, on a mortar and pestle or, a sage leaf vert*" →



As for the **ranking system** (remember, this is a voluntary system, for the amusement of those who enjoy this sort of thing only), we identified ten fields of expertise:

*Cooking/Food*

*Brewing/Vinting*

*Dyeing with herbs*

*Gardening/Growing herbs*

*Period Medical Herbalism or Apothecary Practice*

*Comparative Herbology*

*Scents/Perfumes*

*Herbal Cosmetics*

*Wild crafting*

*Allied Arts (Illustration, Toolmaking).*

A person could be a "novice" in one field and a "sage" in another, while working on "journeyman" ranking in several more, if that's the way he or she likes it. The actual names of the four ranks are not yet decided, although "Sage" has generally been accepted for the supreme level.

If you have any objection to any of this, or if you have a Better Idea, please contact the Agitator (jahb@lehigh.edu) or the Chronicler (joanne@jafath.com). If no one has any comments to make, both decisions will have been made by objections procedure, and the device and ranking system will become fact, and we can proceed to register the device and figure out how to panel the ranks.

# Olibanum

Lady Mariota de la Moor

*Boswellia Thurifera* is a member of the Burseraceae family. It's more commonly known as **Frankincense**. The name *olibanum* came from an older Arab name al luban. This translates to Oil of Lebanon.

The sweeping views of the Somalia, Yemen and Oman lands were seen by travelers of the Middle Ages. The short leafy trees gripping to water polished marble rock by use of a mixture of lime and mortar — there is no soil — were very common. The young trees supplied the gum; as the trees aged the production decreased until it is just a watery fluid.

Yearly, groups of people paid the Arabs for the right to collect the resin. They made a deep vertical cut into the tree, with a 5" long piece of bark from around the tree below the cut was removed. The cut was reopened several times to get more resin to flow. This was over the course of three months. The result is this was golden resin with tear-drops on the surface. The finest frankincense was a bluish-white, from Oman.

Kohl, the black powder used as an eyeliner, is charred frankincense. Frankincense is most commonly known for its use as incense in stress release.

Frankincense is not widely used now, but had many uses in the past. It is a natural stimulant, antidote to hemlock, and a treatment for leprosy, as examples. Pregnant woman chewed frankincense gum to increase the child's intelligence. In the 10th century Avicenna recommended it for dysentery, tumors and other ailments.

People with weakened immune systems are not advised to ingest frankincense. It is currently being used to treat osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis because of its natural anti-inflammatory properties. It is effective and said to be a better anti-inflammatory than pharmaceuticals, such as aspirin, ibuprofen and others. (Please do not use this as a medication with out doctor direction).

*Frankincense to offer have I  
Incense owns a deity nigh  
Prayer and praising  
All men raising  
Worship Him, God on high!*



They sayen the stolen sede is butt the bestte  
— fifteenth century herbal

When the Weesell is to fight with the  
serpent, shee armeth her selfe by eating Rue  
against the might of the serpent. — Gerard

Rue maketh chaste: And eke preserveth  
sight; / Infuseth wit and putteth flies to flight.  
— *Schola Salernitana*

The juice of Rue made hot in the rind of a  
pomegrat and dropped into the eares, takes  
away the paine thereof. — Gerard

Here did she fall a tear; here, in this place /  
I'll set a bank of rue, sour herb of grace  
— Shakespeare, *King Richard III*

If a man be anointed with the juice of rue,  
the poison of wolf's bane, mushrooms, or  
todestooles, the biting of serpents, stinging of  
scorpions, spiders, bees, hornets and wasps  
will not hurt him — Gerard

## Rue

*Ruta Graveolens*

a.k.a. herb of grace, herbygrass,  
garden rue

In ancient times and in SCA period, it was proof against poisons, insurance of chastity, and sovereign against earache, not to mention preserving eyesight, repelling fleas, and warding against the devil and the plague. Mention Rue today and the response is likely to be either “it’s an abortifacient,” or “I break out when I touch it.” How did such an all-around-useful herb fall so far in the public estimation?

The name *Ruta*, according to Mrs. Grieve, comes from the Greek *reuo*, to set free. The Greeks regarded it as a defense against magic, an idea which appears to be traceable to its use as a remedy for indigestion. (If you got

nervous and had an upset stomach when eating with your enemies, it’s their fault, right? Must be magic.) Later it was considered a defense against witches, and to foster second sight. Hippocrates commended it highly, and Mithridates’ famous antidote included a generous portion of Rue. The *Modern Herbal* also says that Rue “is still eaten by the Italians in their salads” and that “country people boil its leaves with treacle, thus making a conserve of them. These leaves are curative of croup in poultry. It has also been employed in the diseases of cattle.”

The “herb of grace” title appears to be due to its being used to sprinkle holy water during Mass. Again, it is a ward against evil influences.

The Romans took rue to England as part of their medical kit. It is mentioned in the early Saxon “leech books.”

### **Internal Use**

According to Culpeper, “being often taken in meat or drink it abateth Venery, and destroyeth the ability to beget children. Aha! The chastity connection! He also recommends it for killing worms (boiled in wine with a little honey). Culpeper has a very low opinion of Mithridates, by the way.

The cynically inclined are apt to say, “Hmmm, insures Chastity. Is an abortifacient. Ooooookay. But the herbal PDR advises that a tea or decoction may be taken several times a day, up to two cups (of a strength one heaping teaspoonful to ¼ liter of water). Usage includes menstrual disorders, cramps, and intestinal worms. It is, however, contraindicated in pregnancy.

### **External Use**

Culpeper recommends the application of rue to combat gout, joint pain, and dropsy, not to mention nosebleeds, pimples and warts (boiled in wine with some pepper and nitre).

For those who don't immediately break out in a poison-ivy-like rash, the irritant qualities of rue make it useful as a rubefacient. Compresses saturated with a strong decoction (says Mrs. Grieve) applied to the chest, will help relieve chronic bronchitis, and the bruised leaves are supposed to ease the pain of sciatica. She also says, "If a leaf or two be chewed, a refreshing aromatic flavour will pervade the mouth and any nervous headache, giddiness, hysterical spasm, or palpitation will be quickly relieved."

A more modern source ([www.naturalhealthnotebook.com](http://www.naturalhealthnotebook.com)) says that "Rue is used to relax the muscles of the digestive system. It eases griping and bowel tension." Current U.S. regulations allow the herb to be used in food only if the concentration is less than 2.0 ppm. Canadian regulations do not allow it at all.

The herbal PDR lists it for skin inflammations, earache, toothache and bruising.

### **Chemistry**

The active factor is called rutin, contained in a volatile oil distributed over the entire plant, but most concentrated in the young shoots before flowering starts.

The herbal PDR says "The alkaloids in the drug are anti-exudative. Chalepensis inhibits fertility, and the coumarin derivatives and alkaloids are spasmolytic. In addition, the drug is antimicrobial, abortifacient and photosensitizing."

### **Bibliography**

Bianchini, Francesco, & Francesco Corbetta, *Health Plants of the World*.

Newsweek Books, New York 1975.

<http://info.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm>

*PDR for Herbal Medicines, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Montvale, Medical Economics Company, 2000.

[www.botanical.com](http://www.botanical.com)

[www.naturalhealthnotebook.com](http://www.naturalhealthnotebook.com)



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let us know.

**b** - we need a procedure for group decision making. The procedure will be that one person in the guild will be responsible for publishing proposed things that we need a decision on and collecting responses. This person is not me. Person to be determined.

**c**. In default of the appointment of such a person, we will post the rankings info in the *Tisane* and on the website and unless we hear major objections go ahead with it. Ta da.

**d**. Badge. We will publish in the *Tisane* that we want [Fieldless] On a mortar and pestle Or, a sage leaf vert. (that is, a gold mortar and pestle with a sage leaf on the outside of the mortar, on any background)

(See page two! – *Chronicler*)

Unless anyone throws a fit, we will then ask Brigantia herald of the East to submit that badge to the college of heralds.

**e**. Tithe. We seem to have gone to a twice-a-year tithe, unless anyone objects.

**f**. Our next event should have a competition with face-to-face judging, like the first herb guild event

**g**. We like working with the Cooks Guild. They feed us. – *Jadwiga, Agitatrix*

## CALENDAR

**Mudthaw**, March 20, Settmour Swamp: Guild meeting and feast handwashing

**Coronation**: April 3, Settmour Swamp: Guild meeting

**Emmaus Fair**, April 17, Eisental: Guild Prize and Panelling

*Yes, I will be giving out a prize for the best herbal display at Emmaus Fair. This is a bribe, ladies and gentlemen.*

**Landsknecht**, June 19: Guild Meeting and classes

**Northern Region War Camp**: Guild meeting and classes (tentative)

**Southern Region War Camp**, July 24: Guild Meeting and classes

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