

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

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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.

From the Agitatrix

Unto the august membership of the Herbalists' & Apothecaries' Guild of the East Kingdom, from Jadwiga Zajackowa, Guild Agitatrix, Greetings!

As I write this, various sources have confirmed that the last frost date in my area should be past. I'm looking forward to vanishing into a fog of seeds, plants, digging, garden shops, watering, weeding and muttering from which I generally don't emerge until mid-June. I'm starting up a new garden, to which all the plants and seeds I put in during April were merely the prelude. But while I'm wandering around squeezing more plants and gathering the assorted muscle aches, cuts and bruises (to paraphrase Alexei Panshin, I'm exactly the sort of person who is most likely to step through the hole in a disused pond because she knows it's there...) proper to the gardener, I don't want to continue to neglect another garden — that is, the guild.

Chronicler Johanna Le Mercer, Webmaster Corwin

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To get on our mailing list, e-mail to 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](http://www.yahoo.com/groups/sca-herbalist) mailing list (go to www.yahoo.com/groups/sca-herbalist to sign up) or the East-specific EK-Herb (sign up from our website at www.eastkingdom.org/guilds/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!

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Mugwort

Artemisia vulgaris

Artemisa, Carline Thistle, Chiu Ts'ao, Cingulum Sancti Johannis, Common Mugwort, Douglas Mugwort, Felon Herb, Sailor's Tobacco, St. John's Plant, Wormwood

The rest of that list of aliases may be accurate, but Mugwort is definitely not Wormwood. They are related, and often each is described by comparing it to the other (“may be readily distinguished by the leaves being white on the undersurfaces only and by the leaf segments being pointed, not blunt” says Mrs. Grieve, whose “Mugwort” section is illustrated by a drawing of the Common Wormwood). One major difference appears to be that Mugwort has far less of the thujone compounds characteristic of Wormwood, aka absinthe.

It's antibacterial, anthelmintic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, cholagogue, diaphoretic, digestive, diuretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, haemostatic, nervine, purgative, stimulant, stomachic, and tonic — obviously the herb for all seasons.

Culpeper, after listing several specific ways of using Mugwort (“The Herb it self being fresh or the Juyce thereof taken, is a special Remedy upon the overmuch taking of Opium”) concludes, “This is an Herb of Venus, therefore maintaneth the parts of the Body she rules, and Remedies the Diseases of the parts that are under her Signs, Taurus and Libra.” The *Herbal PDR* expresses this as “Mugwort is not to be used during pregnancy.” Under “Unproven Uses”, the PDR lists



In some Northern Slavonic languages, mugwort has another, unrelated name which is said to mean “black stalk” or “dark grass”, e.g., Czech *černobýl*, Ukrainian *chornobyl* [чорнобиль], and Russian *chernobyl* [чернобыль]; the latter, however, is less commonly used than *polyn*. In both Russian and in Ukrainian, the same names apply to a city in Northern Ukraine which became famous due to a disastrous accident in a nuclear power plant in 1986. This has often been linked to a verse of the biblical Revelation about the Third Trumpet, when the angel cast a star into the waters, making them bitter and deadly: *kai to onoma tou asteros legetai ho Apsinthos* [και τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται ὁ Ἄψινθος] “and the name of the star is called wormwood”. Taking the bitter waters as a metaphor for radioactive pollution, and identifying wormwood with mugwort, one might then interpret the reactor accident as “predicted by the Bible”.
from www.uni-graz.at/~Arte_vul.html

Complaints and problems involving the gastrointestinal tract ... worm infestations, epilepsy, persistent vomiting, as a sedative, and for delayed or irregular menstruation ... in combination with other remedies also for psychoneuroses, neurasthenia, depression, hypochondria, autonomic neuroses, general irritability and restlessness, insomnia and anxiety states.

Gerard: “Mugwort cureth the shakings of the joynts inclining to the Palsie”

Parkinson recommended it for hysteria.

In period, mugwort was one of the herbs used to flavor beer before the introduction of hops. It has a pleasant taste and smell, caused by the

coumarin derivatives it carries. It also has ritual uses lasting down to the present day in traditions which include dreaming.

... the chemistries in question have always been associated with the leaf-part of the plant. Mugwort is a slightly different species than Wormwood, but of the same genus (and oils). Mugwort has an irritant which limits the ability for deep sleep. Hence, its use as a “dream pillow” ingredient (allowing only low aliphoid activity). Dr. Richard Alan Miller, quoted on <http://altnature.com/library.htm>

SOURCES

www.botanical.com, (*A Modern Herbal* online)

<http://info.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm> (Culpeper on line, Yale University)
PDR for Herbal Medicine

BOOK REVIEWS BOOK REVIEWS BOOK REVIEWS

Dyes from American Native Plants, A Practical Guide

Lynne Richards & Ronald J. Tyrl
Portland, Timber Press, 2005

\$29.95 from www.timberpress.com.

The drawback to this book from a Scadian point of view is right in the title: it deals with North American plants exclusively. On the other hand, what wannabe dyer starts out by confining themselves to period plants?

The first two chapters deal with the nature and history of “natural dying,” as the authors call the process of coloring with organic materials. The second two deal with process, and if you don’t already have a basic dying handbook, this one would do nicely. The directions are not confined to “cook the dyestuff in a pot and add the yarn” procedures — they go into “decomposition” as well. This includes not only the classic pennies-in-vinegar methods but details sun-dying with plants and associated systems, at least one of which I hadn’t run across before.

Then come six chapters of tables, arranged by color: Purple/red, green, yellow, orange, brown, and black, with color samples, mordants, type of method, and name of plant (common and scientific) for each example. Then there’s a chapter entitled, “Materials That Produce Little Or No Color”. One caveat: the authors have not allowed for water, soil, and seasonal differences; so that, for instance, they report Greater Ragweed as giving a pale beige whereas for me it came out deep gold!

After leafing through these tables, the reader might be tempted to give up, overwhelmed by sheer volume of data, but one of the more useful sections is yet to come: Chapter 12, “A Catalog of Native Dye Plants”. For each plant referred to in the tables, here is a section with color photo, botanical description, growing habit, Native American use, and alternate popular names. (Doesn’t everyone always need one more plant-identification book?)

Yes, the whole thing is indexed, thank goodness. And there’s a glossary, metric/imperial conversion tables, and three pages of references, as well.

If you’re not determined to be drop-dead authentic as you learn, this is a nice compendium of lore.

— *Johanna le Mercer*

The Naming Of Names: The Search For Order In The World Of Plants

Anna Pavord
Bloomsbury, 2005

\$00.00

Who was Julia Anicia and why did she have a herbal? Why did Pliny think pictures in herbals was a bad idea? (And was he right?) Who was John Ray and why should we be grateful to him? And why did contemporaries say that Linnaeus had a dirty mind?

The Naming of Names, by Anna Pavord is, at bottom, a history of botanic nomenclature from Theophrastus to the present day. Pavord isn’t interested in herbalism as a study, nor of pharmacy, or any other pragmatic aspect of plant study. She is interested in the why and how of our naming system. Along the way, however, she describes (and shows samples from) a wide variety of books concerned with plants, giving as much credit to illustrators as to authors.

It makes a great history of ideas as she traces Theophrastus' first attempts to organize knowledge and what she considers the blind alleys later attempts went up, until the Enlightenment. And the illustrations are wonderful.

It's a big book (471 pages), printed on heavy paper. It's not for subway reading, and probably not for purchase by most people. But your library may be able to get it for you.

— Johanna Le Mercer

The Apothecaries Shop Opened

The Still Room Opened

Hugh Petrie
Stuart Press

\$13 from Sykes Sutlery

In the mainstream literature, there isn't a lot that is specifically aimed at discussing Apothecary practice, so when I saw Hugh Petrie's *The Apothecaries Shop Opened* and the companion volume, *The Still Room Opened*, published by Stuart Press, I was very excited. Admittedly, these pamphlet size works can't cover material to much depth, and they are essentially 'home-published'. Hugh Petrie's spelling and sometimes grammar are somewhat erratic. The hand-sketched illustrations are usually clear and give at least as detailed an idea of what goes on, for instance in distilling, as one would find in a good woodcut (see John French's *Art of Distillation* for comparison.)

However, as overviews of 16th and 17th century apothecary practice and distillation they make a good beginning. The target audience appears to be 17th-century re-enactors and interpreters, but material from *In The Apothecaries Shop* does cover earlier time periods to some extent.

The Still Room is a good introduction to the terminology and equipment of medieval distillation, though the author cautions that all(?) distillation is forbidden in Great Britain and should be avoided. But *The Still Room* helped me to understand a good many terms and descriptions I'd been struggling with. In particular, there are some practical points about distilling spice oils vs. herb oils, the different 'heats' of distillation, etc. that are helpful.

The Apothecaries' Shop discusses the nature and status of apothecaries, ingredients and their background, and gives some sample ingredients and recipes. Again, this is targeted primarily to the re-enactor, so things I would consider key are left out, and modern-ish applications are emphasized. But again, a good background, with lots of specific examples. There are descriptions of various pieces of equipment and a drawing/plan of a useful druggists' cabinet as well.

My biggest quarrel with this series is one the author admits:

"Although a lot of work went into this booklet it is a summary of other peoples work. Sometimes I have included references, but mostly I simply have not had the space to credit work. I apologize in advance to those who recognize their work here but are not mentioned."

To me, I'm afraid, such an admission is tantamount to admitting plagiarism. At the very least, a lot of information in this text would be infinitely improved by some sort of references. At minimum, a bibliography for further reference would be an immense improvement.

Still, for less than \$13.00 for the pair this was well worth my money, if only to encourage others to keep collecting information and publishing it. I'd recommend both texts for those interested in the background of our art.

— **Jadwiga Zajackowa**



From the *Agitatrix*

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Ravenwing, and others have put a lot of effort into keeping us all informed about the doings of the guild. But what have we been doing? Some members have been playing with period uses for herbs, and displaying and entering them in competitions. I'm pleased to report that I saw a selection of Hungary Waters at Northern Lights, some stomach powders, as well as comfits and other herbal projects. A quick survey on the EK-Herbs list elicited a number of projects, in dyeing, in cooking and other fields. We need to do more of this. I repeat my perennial cry for people to teach (and for that matter, learn) more. I'd like to see enough of us turn up at EKUs and other scholas to run entire class tracks.

But more importantly, we need to cultivate our gardens, as Voltaire put it. Each of us has specific interests and areas of expertise. I would like us, via the newsletter, the website, or the mailing list, to share what projects we are working on. For instance, this year I've been concentrating on Salad herbs, and in my new garden I'm growing them from seed (since the gardening bug usually hits me in May, I haven't done much with seeds in past years!) What are you all doing? Write to Johanna and report in. No matter if it's three pots on a windowsill, or experimenting with adding one herb to your cooking repertoire, doing handwashing at an event, reading some period texts, working on squashed-bug illumination, or just adding some simple herbs to your first-aid kit, let's hear about it.

There will be a meeting at Pennsic; if you can come, please share with us what you have been doing. There will also be a tithing of some sort this summer; if you have anything you've made you would like to share with the Crown. If anyone is interested in hosting a guild gathering at an event, please let me, Johanna or Corwyn know so that we can post it on the website and help get publicity out. We would also be interested from hearing from anyone whose local group would be interested in hosting an Herbal event...

But most of all, let us cultivate our gardens, both physically and intellectually/creatively! I look forward to hearing from you all by or at Pennsic.

In love and in service,
Jadwiga Zajackowa

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