



A HAZEL WHITAKER FIELD GUIDE

Home Remedies Starter Kit



Five printables to choose your first healing plants & make your first remedies — your free companion to *The Forager's Home Remedies*.

TEN STARTER PLANTS · FIVE PREPARATIONS · SAFETY CARD
THE MAKING YEAR · YOUR FIRST-YEAR APOTHECARY



THE ALMANAC HOUSE · AN IMPRINT OF CONFLUENCE MEDIA GROUP

The Ten Plants for Year One

You do not need all thirty in year one. These ten are the most useful across the most common household troubles, the easiest to find or grow, and — with two honest exceptions — the most forgiving to identify and prepare. Confirm every plant by its *botanical name* first. See the Safety Card.

PLANT	BOTANICAL	FIND IT	REACH FOR IT WHEN...	MAKE IT AS
Calendula	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	Grow	Scrapes and chapped hands — the salve you will reach for most	Infused oil → salve
Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	Forage	Bites, stings, and small scrapes; no dangerous look-alike	Fresh poultice, salve
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Forage	Small wounds and the first night of a cold — your teaching plant for the hemlock look-alike	Poultice, tincture, tea
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Forage	The bitter digestive tonic growing in every lawn	Decoction (root), tea (leaf)
Stinging nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Forage	The spring mineral tonic; nearly impossible to mistake for anything harmful	Long infusion
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra / canadensis</i>	Forage or grow	The winter cold-and-flu syrup — cook it, always	Syrup
Chamomile	<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>	Grow	The bedtime cup, for a restless mind or an unsettled stomach	Hot infusion
Peppermint	<i>Mentha x piperita</i>	Grow (pot)	After dinner, for a too-full stomach or a tension headache	Hot infusion
Lemon balm	<i>Melissa officinalis</i>	Grow	The bright, gently calming cup for a frazzled day	Hot infusion
Thyme	<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Grow	The cough tea, gathered off your own kitchen plant	Hot infusion

AND TWO YOU ALREADY COOK WITH

Garlic (*Allium sativum*) and **ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*) become medicine the day you start reaching for them on purpose — at the first scratch of a cold or the first turn of a queasy stomach.

Garlic is food first, medicine in larger amounts — and it thins the blood. Keep it to the kitchen lane in year one. *See the Safety Card.*

● *When in doubt, leave it. Two of these ten carry a caution serious enough to learn before you start: yarrow has a deadly hemlock look-alike, and elder must always be cooked. The Safety Card has both.*



The Five Core Preparations

Learn these five and there is nothing in the thirty-plant section you cannot make. Everything in your first-year cabinet is one of them.

1 The infusion

A tea of leaves and flowers — boiling water over the herb, covered, 10–20 min, strained. For the mineral and mucilage plants (nettle, mallow), steep cold overnight instead, 8–12 hrs.

2 The decoction

A simmered tea for the tougher stuff — roots, bark, berries. Lid on, gentle simmer 20–40 min. The long extraction the hard parts need.

3 The folk-method tincture

A plant put up in vodka in a glass jar and left six weeks, then strained. Your way of keeping a summer plant on the shelf all year; keeps for years.

4 The infused oil & salve

Dried plant in a stable oil, 4–6 weeks — then thickened with beeswax (about 1 oz per cup of oil) into a salve. The skin-and-wound lane.

5 The syrup

A strong decoction sweetened and kept in the refrigerator — chiefly elderberry, the single most-made beginner remedy there is.

WHICH PLANT, WHICH FORM — THE STARTER TEN AT A GLANCE

CALM & DIGESTION

Chamomile · restless mind, unsettled stomach · *hot infusion*

Peppermint · too-full stomach, tension headache · *hot infusion*

Lemon balm · a frazzled day · *hot infusion*

Dandelion · sluggish digestion, bitter tonic · *decoction (root), tea (leaf)*

Nettle · spring mineral tonic · *long cold infusion*

Ginger · nausea, queasy stomach · *tea, syrup*

COLD, COUGH & FEVER

Elder · the winter cold & flu · *syrup (cook it, always)*

Thyme · a cough · *hot infusion*

Yarrow · the first night of a cold, fever · *hot infusion, tincture*

Garlic · the first scratch of a cold · *food, oxymel*

SKIN & WOUND

Calendula · scrapes, chapped hands · *infused oil, salve*

Plantain · bites, stings, splinters · *fresh poultice, salve*

Yarrow · small wounds, bleeding · *fresh poultice, salve, tincture*

● *A navigation aid, not a prescription. Read the plant's full entry in the book first — several of these carry a medication, pregnancy, or child note the matrix cannot hold.*



Safety Card — Identify First, Always

The most important rule in the book: never use a plant identified by fewer than four characters. The forgiving starter ten still carry real cautions — read the caution box on any plant, every time.

1 · FOUR CHARACTERS MINIMUM

Leaves. Stem. Flowers or fruit. Habitat. Look-alikes match on one or two — the mistake happens at the second character, where someone decided they had seen enough.

2 · THE PHONE IS NOT ENOUGH

A plant-ID app can match a photo and still be wrong in a way that hurts you. Use it as a start, then walk the four characters yourself.

3 · WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT

No harvest is worth a guess. Never taste an unknown plant to decide — water hemlock tastes pleasant, and by then it is too late.

THE TWO TO LEARN CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU START

YARROW — THE DEADLY LOOK-ALIKE

Yarrow is your lesson in the hemlocks — the most toxic plants in North America. Learn its four characters cold: feathery thousand-leaved foliage, a sharp smell when crushed, flat white flower clusters, dry open ground. A smooth, purple-blotched, musty stem is hemlock — never yarrow.

ELDER — COOK IT, ALWAYS

Raw elderberries, leaves, and stems cause nausea and vomiting; cooking the berries destroys the compounds — which is why elder is a *syrup*, never eaten raw. Use only blue/black elder; **never red elder**.

LEAVE THESE FOR LATER — NOT IN YEAR ONE

The standing-box plants: **comfrey** (external use only), **garlic** as anything more than food (it thins the blood), and above all **St. John's wort** if you take any medication at all — it interacts with a long list of drugs.

THE CAUTION STILL STACKS

Go gently if **pregnant or trying to conceive, nursing, on medication, treating a child, or facing surgery**. This book shares traditional uses for education — it is not medical advice.

IF ANYONE EATS AN UNKNOWN OR TOXIC PLANT

Call Poison Control now — free, 24 hours, staffed by nurses and pharmacists; they do not call the police or bill you. **1-800-222-1222**. For a pet, the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center is 1-888-426-4435 (a fee applies). Save both in your phone.



The Making Year

You do not need exact dates — you need the order of the year, which never changes. Do the simplest preparation in each season and you will have a working home apothecary by your first winter.

SPRING — THE GREENS

Gather young **nettle** tops and dry a year's supply. Dig and tincture or dry **dandelion** root before it bolts. Start a **plantain**-infused oil. And put your garden herbs in: **calendula**, **chamomile**, **peppermint** (in a pot), **lemon balm**, and **thyme**.

SUMMER — THE FLOWERS & LEAVES

Pick **calendula** all season for the salve. Gather **yarrow** flowering tops to tincture and to dry. Cut and dry **chamomile**, **peppermint**, **lemon balm**, and **thyme** as they come on. Gather **elderflowers** if your elder is in bloom.

FALL — THE BERRIES & ROOTS

Make **elderberry** syrup, the cornerstone of the winter cabinet. Finish drying any roots. And with the garden winding down, render your **calendula** and **plantain** oils into salves.

WINTER — THE USING & LOOKING BACK

This is the season the work pays off — the syrup for a cold, the salve for chapped hands, the chamomile for a wakeful night. Read back through your notes, decide what earned its place, and plan the two or three plants to add next year.

♦ *A starting point, not a calendar. Spring arrives in Georgia weeks before it reaches Vermont — treat the order as fixed and watch your own ground for the timing. The plants keep better time than any date.*



Your First-Year Apothecary

If you did the simplest preparation in each season, by your first winter you have most of what a household actually reaches for in a year — built from a few jars and a bottle of cheap vodka. Tick each as it lands on the shelf.

IN THE CABINET BY YEAR'S END

<input type="checkbox"/>	A jar of dried nettle for tonic tea
<input type="checkbox"/>	A jar of dried dandelion root — and perhaps a tincture of it
<input type="checkbox"/>	A plantain -infused oil, and a calendula salve
<input type="checkbox"/>	A jar of dried yarrow — and a small bottle of yarrow tincture
<input type="checkbox"/>	A bottle of elderberry syrup in the refrigerator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jars of dried chamomile, peppermint, lemon balm & thyme

REMEDY LOG — WHAT I MADE, AND WHEN

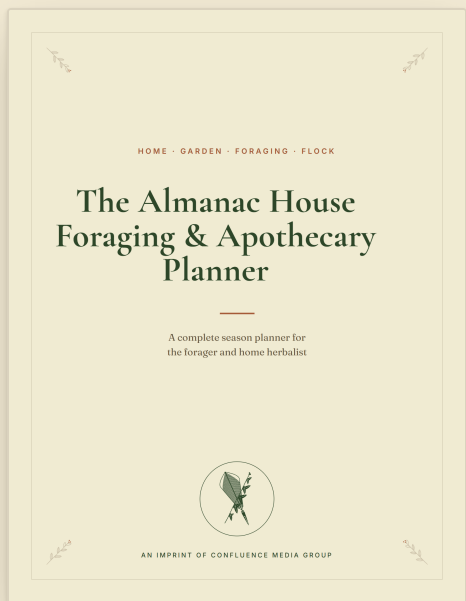
DATE MADE	PLANT	PREPARATION	READY ON	NOTES · HOW IT WORKED

🍷 *Date the tinctures and oils as you start them — six weeks is easy to lose track of. Label every jar with the plant, the preparation, and the date; an unlabeled jar in March is a mystery by November.*



KEEP GOING

When You're Ready for More



The Almanac House Foraging & Apothecary Planner

For the home herbalist & forager

The full season system for the forager and home herbalist — a foraging calendar, a plant directory, a patch map, harvest and drying logs, and the apothecary batch log that tracks every tincture, salve, and oxymel from plant to label.

ON ETSY — [THEALMANACHOUSE](#)

*More free guides, plant write-ups, and resources from Hazel Whitaker — and the full book, *The Forager's Home Remedies* — at confluencemediagroup.net/hazel-whitaker.*



THE ALMANAC HOUSE

THE ALMANAC HOUSE