



# Tincture Making

## Micks' Spring Foraged Herbs

### **Chickweed** (*Stellaria media*)

- Part used: herb, emergency food source, high in vitamin C, can be eaten raw

### **Cleavers** (*Galium aparine*)

- Parts used: herb

### **Dandelion** (*Taraxacum officinale*)

- Zones 3a-9b; wide range of conditions, best full sun and moist soil; perennial; seed; invasive; Cech,
- Buhner H AB. CAUTION: Not to be used where there is an obstruction of the gallbladder ducts or small intestines.
- Parts used: roots, leaves, flowers, Vitamin A & C, high in Calcium.

### **Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*)

- Zones 4a-10b; full to partial sun; rich, moist soil; perennial; division, seed; invasive; Cech, CAUTION: Fresh plant will cause minor to severe skin irritation.
- Parts used: Leaves & roots.

### **Plantain** (*Broadleaf Plantain* (*Plantago major*))

- Zones 3a-12b; full to partial sun; any soil; perennial; seed; invasive; Cech, Buhner H AB
- Parts used: leaves & seeds, Leaves are edible and can be used as a pot herb.

### **Sweet Violet** (*Viola odorata*)

- Zones 4a-9b; full to partial sun; moist but well-drained soil; perennial; seed, division; non-invasive;
- Cech, Buhner H AB

### **Tincture Making:**

Tincture-making allows you to preserve your medicinal herbs practically indefinitely, and it requires very few tools: grain alcohol, vinegar (a very small amount, if the herbs contains alkaloids), glass jars (canning jars, old spaghetti-sauce or pickle jars, etc.), labels or masking tape, a scale which weighs in ounces, cheesecloth or a straining bag, a sieve or a tincture press, and a bowl. As a general rule, tinctures of dried herbs are made in a 1:5 ratio – one part herb by weight in ounces, per 5 parts liquid by volume in ounces. So if your dried herb weighs 4 ounces, you need 20 fluid ounces of liquid. For fresh herbs, the ratio of herb to liquid is generally 1:2. Fresh-herb tinctures are generally made with 95% alcohol, whereas the percentage of alcohol needed for dry-herb tinctures varies by herb.

Tincture-making is fairly simple. It takes about 15 minutes to make the average tincture, and this includes finding all your tools. Once you've put it together, your tincture will be ready to use in anywhere from 2 weeks (for tinctures made with powdered herbs) to 4-5 weeks (for tinctures made with dried root or bark pieces). Tincture-making is also economical, especially if you grow or wild-harvest your herbs. Even if you are buying herbs, the per-ounce cost of homemade tinctures can be as low as one-tenth the cost of buying them.

For dry-herb tinctures, all the herbal books expect you to dilute 95% (190-proof) alcohol with water in order to achieve the correct percentage of alcohol for your tincture. The problem with this is that

## Tincture Making *(continued)*

95% alcohol is expensive, and there are many states in which it is unavailable. One way to lower the cost of your alcohol and make it last as long as possible is to dilute your 95% alcohol with ordinary vodka (which is 40% alcohol) rather than with water. Vodka is cheap, and this will keep you from blowing through your 95% alcohol as quickly as you otherwise would.

Below is a chart that indicates how much 95% alcohol to mix with vodka in order to get 80 ounces of liquid with a given alcohol percentage (80 ounces is the amount of alcohol needed in order to make a 1:5 tincture starting with 16 ounces of dried herb):

Target Alcohol Percentage	Oz of 95%	Oz of Vodka
45	6.7	73.3
50	13.3	66.7
55	20.0	60.0
60	26.7	53.3
65	33.3	46.7
70	40.0	30.3
75	46.7	33.3

In some states where 95% alcohol is not allowed to be sold, 75.5% (151-proof) alcohol is available. Below is a chart that tells how much 75.5% alcohol to mix with vodka in order to get 80 ounces of liquid with a given alcohol percentage (for a 1:5 tincture starting with 16 ounces of dried herb):

Target Alcohol Percentage	Oz of 95%	Oz of Vodka
45	11.4	68.7
50	22.9	57.1
55	34.3	45.7
60	45.7	34.3
65	57.1	22.9
70	68.7	11.4

Tinctures must be stored out of direct sunlight. Ideally, they should be stored in a dark, not-too warm location (in a basement or closet, in a lidded box, or on a shelf and covered with a dark towel). Try high-quality products. These include Pacific Botanicals, Mountain Rose Herbs, Frontier Herbs, Mountain Maus Remedies, Starwest Botanicals, 1st Chinese Herbs, Herbies Herbs, and Monteagle Herbs. Some of these companies also sell ready-made tinctures if you would prefer to buy rather than make them.

To dispense your tinctures, you'll need glass dropper bottles and a very small funnel for filling them. The glass bottles should be amber, blue, or green (rather than clear), to keep sunlight from degrading your tinctures. Although 1-ounce dropper bottles will do, 2-ounce bottles are more convenient because they don't have to be filled as often. Mountain Rose Herbs carries bottles, but their shipping cost can be rather high. Other options would be Amazon (the Vivaplex brand is very good), a company called Specialty Bottle, and A2Z Homeopathy.

