

DIY Herbal Salves

Fragrant with herbs and creamy in texture, there's something especially comforting about a homemade herbal salve. By choosing herbs for your particular purpose, you can customize your salves, too. And the DIY part is easy!

Herbal Salve Ingredients

A salve is made mostly of oil and beeswax. In fact, you can make a salve simply by melting the two together.

Beeswax is an emollient that also serves to solidify the salve. It's available in beads or in a block. The beads are very convenient; they're easy to measure and melt readily. To use the block, shave or chop off pieces.

You can weigh them for exact measurements, but salve making needn't be that exact.

Good oils include any that are appropriate for skin care, including: almond, apricot kernel, argan, avocado, baobab, grapeseed, jojoba, macadamia, rosehip, sunflower, sweet almond, or tamanu. To infuse the oils with the beneficial properties of herbs, you'll want to make an herbal oil infusion before blending your salve.

Select herbs that suit the purpose of your salve. Popular choices include: arnica flowers, calendula flowers, comfrey leaf, echinacea, elder flowers, German chamomile flowers, goldenseal, horsetail herb, lavender flowers, lemon balm, marshmallow root, roses, and yarrow.

Other ingredients that might be added include: essential oils (for scent, botanical and aromatherapy properties), vitamin E oil (thought to be beneficial for the skin), lanolin (to make a creamy salve), butters (such as shea and cocoa, for their emolliency; these can be used in place of some or all of the oil), and glycerin (to add moisture and help prevent rancidity).



notes from the field

Location: *Bulgaria*

Product Sourced: *Bulgarian Elder*

The Story: Our Elder Leaf and Elder Berry come from our Well Earth partner in Bulgaria. We recently visited them, traveling the countryside, where we were amazed at the rich diversity of plants - including many herbs that were brought to the United States by early settlers from Europe. These familiar herbs thrive in their native land, growing in dense colonies of color, texture and shapes in fields and wild meadows, along roadsides, and at forest edges. All of our Bulgaria-sourced herbs are grown on small farms or are responsibly wildcrafted.



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Herbal Salves

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Q&A

My salve is too hard now that it's cooled. Is it too late to fix it?

No, it's easily fixed. Simply melt your salve back into a liquid form, and then add more oil. On the other hand, if your salve is too soft, simply add more beeswax.



Is there a way to tell if my salve is going to be the right consistency before it hardens?

Yes. In fact, it's a good idea to test your salve before it cools so that you won't have to melt it down again if it's the wrong consistency. Simply dip a metal spoon into your salve and place it on a piece of waxed paper in the freezer. It will harden in just moments to the final consistency.



Learn more about herbal salves at www.frontiercoop.com

Salves & Infusions

How to Make an Herbal Oil Infusion

There are several easy methods for making an herbal oil infusion. Start by placing a handful of herbs in a glass jar. (If you're using dried herbs, rub them gently between your palms first. If using fresh, allow them to wilt for a couple of hours—on a clean towel—to remove moisture.) Cover the herbs with oil, stir, and put a lid on the jar.



At this point you can place the jar in the sun (outdoors or on a windowsill inside, if the weather is cold) for a few weeks, tipping the jar upside down every day or so.

Another method is to put the jars in a pan with a couple of inches of simmering water. Allow the jars to sit in the simmering water for a few hours, being careful to replenish the water as it evaporates, if necessary.

Yet another method is to place the jars in a crockpot, set on low, for about eight hours. (Or, if you're only infusing one herbal oil, you can place the herbs and the oil directly in the crockpot on low for eight hours.)

When your oil is infused, strain through a cheesecloth. Using your hands, squeeze all of the oil out of the herbs.



Super Skin Saver Salve

You don't need an exact recipe to make a salve, but here's one to walk you through the process. This versatile salve is full of wonderful herbs!

¼ cup apricot kernel oil infused with chamomile flowers

¼ cup olive oil infused with nettle leaves

¼ cup apricot kernel oil infused with calendula flowers

1 tablespoon shea butter

¼ cup jojoba oil infused with comfrey leaves

5 tablespoons beeswax beads

Combine oils in the top of a double boiler over simmering water (or use a large glass measuring cup set in a pan of simmering water).

Stir in the shea butter and the beeswax beads. (A wooden spoon works well for salve making.) Continue stirring until everything is melted together.

Remove from heat and pour into sterilized containers. Allow to cool, and then cover.

Makes enough to fill three 4-ounce salve containers.

