

Hoosier Botanicals™ Newsletter

Labels, Available to Order

Labels for Hoosier Botanicals are on hand and available to order. Price of these labels is five cents each plus shipping. Order as many or as few as you would like. The smallest order so far was for one hundred and the largest was one thousand. We have eight thousand still available when this is being written.

Now would be a good time to order your supply for next spring. Plan to use them on pots to create a display. Informative plant tags for the different herb varieties would still be useful for informing the purchaser.

We are running a sale on the labels while this supply lasts.

Air Layering with Floral Foam

Kent Fenley

Some herbs are propagated easily with air layering like lemon verbena, rosemary, and regular thyme. I have used foliage fresh Wet Foam that I purchased from Wal-Mart. A value pack has three bricks in the package, I cut the bricks into cubes of various sizes. The size of the cubes will depend on the plant and it's size. When the cubes are wet they are heavy and will weight down the plant. The smaller the plant the smaller the cube size should be.

When using a large cube I cut the cube in half and soak it in rooting hormone liquid. The rooting liquid should not be as strong as you would normally use for a quick dip method. I take each half and place it around the stem of the plant at a leaf joint after the stem has been scratched a bit. I use plastic wrap that has been torn off and made into a rope and I tie the two cube halves together. Pull the rope tight so the foam is tight against the stem. After the foam is securely in place

use the plastic wrap to wrap the foam and stem to slow the drying of the foam. Aluminum foil is also great to use when the air-layer is in full sun. I usually leave one end open a little to allow watering the foam when it dries.

When using a small cube I will cut the cube only to the middle. That makes them easier to handle instead of working with two small halves. I will take Scotch tape and wrap the half of the cube that wasn't cut, this prevents splitting the cube. I do this before I immerse the cube in rooting hormone. I slip the small stem into the slit of the cube after they have been scratched. Secure the foam with Scotch tape and cover with plastic or aluminum wrap.

The Wet Foam inhibits bacterial growth and promotes callus formation. I will sometimes remove the foam after a lot of callus has formed but before roots appear. Plant the cutting in fresh potting soil. Some plants are sensitive to moisture that the foam attracts after it has been potted in potting soil.

I use the foam during the hot summer months to control bacterial decay problems.

Hoosier Botanicals Directors

The following participants have agreed to serve as directors for Hoosier Botanicals. Diana Clausen, Lali Hess, Constance Ferry, Joyce Miller, Ted Kroger, Linda Forster John Klueh, Dave Yeager and Kent Fenley. The directors will meet January 24 at the Indiana Horticultural Congress in the Adam's Mark Hotel. The Directors will meet at 12:00 noon during lunch and at 4:00 p.m. during the Hoosier Botanicals Roundtable session to field ideas and conduct business. This meeting will be the only meeting planned for the upcoming year so attendance is very important Any one who can't attend needs to contact Kent Fenley to receive information from the meeting.

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Kent Fenley
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Hoosier Botanicals Workshop at the Indiana Horticultural Congress January 24

The Center for New Crops and Plant Products and Hoosier Botanicals will be offering a workshop at the Indiana Horticultural Congress this January for anyone interested in herbs, herb production, product development and use. Lyle Craker and Connie Weaver are the featured speakers for an informative workshop.



Lyle E. Craker is Professor in the Division of Plant and Soil Sciences at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Chairman of the Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Section in the International Society for Horticultural Science, and Editor of the *Journal of Herbs, Spices and Medicinal Plants*. Professor Craker has worked with herbs and medicinals for the past 25 years, teaching a foundation course in herbs, spices, and medicinal plants and overseeing five others in this area at the University. His recent research has focused on a survey of black cohosh populations in North America and on manipulation of plant metabolic systems to enhance essential oil production.

Tuesday January 24 is the date for the workshop in the Adam's Mark Hotel at the airport in Indianapolis, Indiana. The welcome and first session begins at 8:30 am. If you plan to come for the one-day workshop, come early to compensate for rush hour traffic and delays. Registration is required to attend the workshop so early registration will make your morning move a little faster. The weather can be snowy and difficult for travel so it may be a good idea to secure lodging at the Adam's Mark Hotel. The registration fee is \$50 for early registration and a few dollars more for on site registrations.

The workshop schedule for the day is as follows.

8:30 Welcome by Jules Janick and Kent Fenley

8:40 Culinary Herbs Workshop Lyle Craker

10:00 Break

10:30 Botanicals and Health: Research review
Connie Weaver

12:00 Lunch

1:30 Medicinal Herbs Workshop Lyle Craker

3:30 Break

4:00 Hoosier Botanicals Roundtable Kent Fenley

Connie Weaver is a Distinguished Professor and Head of the Department of Foods and Nutrition at Purdue University. In 2000, she assumed the position of Director of the National Institute of Health funded Botanical Center to study dietary supplements containing polyphenolics for age related diseases. Her research interests include mineral bioavailability, calcium metabolism, and bone health.



Aloe Vera's Fresh Use Potential

Kent Fenley

Early one spring several years ago a neighbor brought me a large pot of Aloe Vera. I graciously accepted the gift and I began to tear this plant apart and I potted the small starts. Most of the small plants had one or two roots still attached. These small starts turned a light green for about three weeks before they became rooted enough to begin active growth. These small starts took three to six months to become large enough to sell and I have never been without Aloe Vera in the greenhouse since. I have observed that in the spring aloe plants are slow to sell, it just seems to be the last plant people want to buy. Last fall I discovered a strong demand for aloe when I began wholesaling houseplants to a small variety store in our town.

Aloe Vera holds a lot of potential for fall and winter herb plant sales. Promoting the fresh use of aloe for healing wounds, skin care and odor reduction. Hunters to mask the human scent use aloe in Africa. Fresh aloe along with regular bathing helps control foot odor and it can be promoted as a good foot treatment. The fresh aloe gel exhibits antibacterial and antifungal properties and the continued use can dry the skin, using aloe on oily skin could be helpful. Shaving irritation can be reduced by fresh aloe and the gel could replace shaving cream. There are several time honored cosmetic uses of fresh aloe.

Aloe Vera needs to be promoted as the houseplant we won't let you live without. (Now let's form a plan of action.) In the month of April or May get some Aloe Vera into your greenhouse. If you obtain a large pot from a friend, divide the plant by gently pulling it apart (after you have taken it out of the pot). If you order small starts from a liner company pot the liner in a 3" or 4" pot. The aloe will take from three to six months to become large enough to sell. Come fall your plants could be large enough to sell so tell deer hunters about aloe's ability to mask human scent. (Most hunters are willing to try something new if it will help them bag a deer.) Let them know that it will also help with that persistent foot odor problem when they apply aloe to their feet after showering. (Please remember that building sales of any plant can take several years.) I wouldn't worry about having a lot of aloe to begin with for the first few years maybe 30 plants or so. I usually get excited about a plant's potential and I always over stock my greenhouse. Go slow to start with and sell out of your



supply. I have also noticed that aloe is slow to sell in the spring unless you have been actively promoting it, so don't worry about having large supplies for your spring sales. This year I am growing some poinsettias in small 3" pots and I plan to combine them with aloe and ferns for a decorative planter for the holiday season. That way people can purchase a decorative and useful gift for a friend.

Based on my experience aloe is not a hard plant to grow. Let's start with a balanced fertilizer whether it is sodium based or organic use only on established and actively growing plants. The light requirements go like this, the more light that you provide the plant the growth rate will increase. I have placed aloe on the floor and under a bench, the aloe survived but grew very slowly. When I put the aloe on top of the bench it went through a shock and after about one month assumed normal growth. I will place a slow to sell plant under the benches to save bench space for plants that are in demand. The light level and rate of plant growth will determine aloe's water use. Aloe will suffer from root rot if it stays too wet for extended periods of time. Let aloe dry between watering. In my greenhouse aloe does not attract harmful or destructive bugs or pests. The temperature of your greenhouse should not drop lower than 50 degrees at night so as to keep the aloe looking good. There is one thing that I have noticed about temperature and how it affects aloe. When the temperature is high and the aloe is growing fast the aloe gel is watery. When the temperature is cool and the aloe is growing slow the gel has more substance.

Making Herbal Salves

Joyce Durbin Miller

I am always amazed at all of the things I can find to do with herbs. Of course you can find many delicious ways to season foods, create dips, sauces, jellies vinegar and other tasty things. I also really enjoy all of the things that you can craft out of herbs. I have used herbs to make wreaths, arrangements, sachets, potpourris, soaps, scented waters, and even skin creams. But recently I have begun to make salves out of herbs. It is quite easy to do and doesn't require any special equipment.

When I was growing up, my family relied on the salves produced by the Stanley Company. They produced Cloverine salve, which Mom used on all of our cuts and scrapes. Dad always liked Raleigh salve, especially when he had a splinter, or something that needed "drawing" out. Throughout the years there have been a myriad of herbal salves. With a little research and a little work you can produce similar salves right from your own kitchen.

Salve is basically herbs infused in an oil base and hardened by adding beeswax. Earlier salves were produced using lard or other meat fats, but today the trend is to only use vegetable-based oils. Herbs can be used fresh or dried, with care taken to be sure the water content has been cooked out of the oil before the beeswax is added, or you run the risk of having your salve spoil.

When I started making salves, I had a hard time finding recipes with exact measurements. Most salve recipes call for 1 part of this or 1 part of that, cover with oil, and add enough beeswax to harden. Very vague! How many herbs do I put in? How much oil do I use? This was very difficult for me to start without knowing EXACTLY how much to start with. Luckily, it is very easy to make salve without knowing exact amounts—and it's easy to correct some mistakes as you go along. My first batch of salve was very runny—an ointment, I guess you could call it. But I just put it back into the double boiler and added more beeswax to bring it to a nice firmness.

Here are some basic supplies to start making salves: Olive oil, beeswax, a stainless steel double boiler, a strainer and some cheesecloth or other cloth, herbs, Vitamin E capsules, essential oils, little jars or tins to package the salve in.

Olive oil is readily available, relatively inexpensive, and good for the skin. Look for extra virgin, cold-pressed olive oil. You can find this in most grocery stores, Wal-Mart, Sam's Clubs, etc. The larger the bottle, the better the price usually.



I like to use stainless steel when making most things, but glass and enamelware are also good. (I just happen to have a stainless steel double boiler) I always simmer my herbs in the olive oil in a double boiler at the lowest heat setting on my stove. You don't want to get the temperature too high or you are destroying essential oils in the herbs. Don't cover it with a lid while you are simmering, because you might have condensation, which would drip into the oil.

Some herbs that are good for salve making are chickweed, plantain, comfrey, calendula, chaparral, arnica, chamomile, and nettles. These are all good for skin repair, soothing the skin, fortifying the skin. There are many other herbs that can be used for other actions and fragrance such as rosemary, mint, lavender, cayenne, and the list can be endless. Research the medicinal properties of the herbs and learn what actions different herbs have.

I usually start with about 2 cups or more of olive oil. I usually use the herbs dried, just because with chickweed and some other herbs, there is an abundance of them at certain times in the spring and summer, so I harvest lots of it at that time and dry it to use throughout the year. If you are using fresh herbs, let them wilt overnight to reduce the water content. I use handfuls of herbs (not really measuring), trying to judge how much herbs to use so that the 2 cups of olive oil will cover it well in the pan. So I chop up my dried herbs—just crushing it or tearing it in my hands—and put it in the top of my double boiler. Then I pour over the herbs the 2 cups of olive oil and turn the heat on very low and just let it simmer on the back of the stove for 2 or 3 hours or more.

After I have cooked the herbs in oil long enough, I strain the herbs out of the oil into a measuring cup. I use a strainer lined with a piece of cotton fabric, or several layers of cheesecloth. Then I gather up the corners of the fabric to squeeze out as much of the oil as I can. I measure it to see how much herb-infused oil I have. Then I return it to the top of the double boiler and add the grated beeswax.

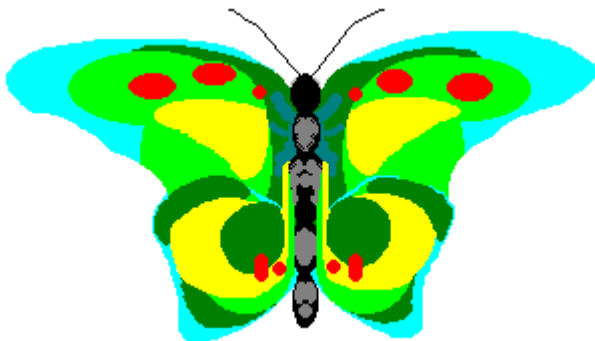
Beeswax can be purchased from local beekeepers, bee supply companies, or you can even find beeswax pellets in large craft stores like Michael's, Hobby Lobby, etc. I am lucky enough that my dad keeps bees and can supply me with pure beeswax that is golden in color and has that wonderful rich beeswax smell. Some of the processed pellets you can buy have been purified – removing the color and smell of the beeswax. However, they are in nice little pellets, and I spend quite a bit of time grating the blocks of natural beeswax.

I finally found salve directions in one of Rosemary Gladstar's books that recommends 1/4 cup of beeswax to each cup of oil. That formula is the ratio I use in my salve to make it a nice firm salve, but it has an easy-to-apply consistency. But you can always put a spoonful of the hot salve mixture in a bowl and stick it in the freezer for a couple of minutes to test the consistency of your salve.

The final things that I add when the beeswax has melted are Vitamin E and some essential oil. The Vitamin E will add a little preservative to your salve. You can buy the liquid capsules and just clip open one end with scissors and squirt into your salve mixture. The essential oil just adds a light fragrance to the salve. Some herbs infused in the olive oil just don't have a pleasant fragrance. I usually use about 20 to 30 drops of essential oil to this size batch of salve. I like to use lavender, mint or rosemary, but you can use any oil you would like.

I then quickly transfer the hot melted salve in the jars or tins I have waiting and it will set up as it cools. This size batch will usually fill about 7 to 9 two-ounce tins.

Salve making has become an interesting sideline for me. And I have found that the public is very interested in the all-natural herbal salves as well. My most popular salve is the first one I made using chickweed, plantain, and comfrey. It's good for itchy bug bites, rashes, cuts, scrapes, and even bruises. I have found my customers coming back for more once they have used it and realize that it really does work!



Growing Hoosier Botanicals

As participants of Hoosier Botanicals have you ever wonder what is expected of you? We are a group that needs to serve each other by providing our support and talents to help meet each other's needs. If you have a problem with your business inform the group or if you have an idea that could benefit you and others let that idea be known. For instance Joyce Myers informed Jules Janick about her idea for a web site for Hoosier Botanicals. She suggested that each participant have a page on this web site with at least one picture show-casing your business and business interests. Hoosier Botanicals is dependent on the contributions of its participants, until we can seek a grant. Pooling resources for the development and operation of a Hoosier Botanicals web site is the most practical approach. Individually a web site could cost around one thousand dollars to create and maintain. We could divide the cost between our participants that would lower our cost to maybe one hundred dollars, depending on the number participating.

Another need we have is the recruitment of new participants. If you know of anyone you think would be a good participant that has an active interest in growing herbs talk to him or her about joining our group. The contributions of each of our participants will provide for the needs of our group. The spring and summer is usually devoted to business but fall and winter could grow our Hoosier Botanicals Group.

If you have any ideas you can contact me by phone at 812-663-2408 or by e-mail Fenleykent@aol.com. Your participation will make us a success.