

HERBALISM

There is power in the fruits of nature. And in the seeds, stems, roots, and leaves, too. In worlds with sapient animals, some animals have discovered that particular combinations of plant components, called **herbs**, can influence others' minds, speed the healing process, or even harm enemies if properly mixed and applied. Sometimes called "natural alchemy," this primitive chemistry is often mistaken for magic by observers. And some herbalists guard their secrets as closely as any mage, lending a further air of mystery to their craft.

Any animal with levels in Herbalist lore can try to concoct or deploy herbal mixtures, but only those with Herbalist as their niche can ever truly master the craft. Masters of herbalism often serve as advisors to pack leaders, beast kings, and other rulers of animal communities. Their potions and powders are useful for the control, and sometimes elimination, of rivals.

It is important to note, however, that despite its sometimes dramatic effects, herbalism is not magic. In games where magic is real, herbalism can be a way around magical defenses, or a way of supplementing magic, but it operates by different rules. Immunity to magical charms, for instance, provides no protection against herbs that induce the same effect in targets.

Herbalism is in some ways more flexible and reliable than magic, but it does have limitations. Most herbal concoctions have to be ingested or inhaled by targets, or applied to their skin somehow, in order to take effect. And the art relies on intimate knowledge of local plant lore; if an herbalist journeys beyond her home habitat, it becomes harder for her to replenish her stores using materials found in the new local ecology.

Herbs are classified by three metrics: difficulty, delivery method, and school.

DIFFICULTY OF HERBAL CONCOCTIONS

Herbal concoctions have a Task Modifier, like most other tasks in the game. Concoctions are rated from Average to Formidable, based on the Threat Level of saving throws against them. Any character with levels in Herbalist lore can learn and concoct Average herbs (though not necessarily automatically knowing any), but only niche Herbalists can make more difficult ones.

The listed Threat Level of an herbal concoction is both the difficulty of an Herbalist lore check to successfully prepare a single dose of the herb, and the rating against which an unwilling recipient of the herb must roll to resist its effects.

DELIVERY METHODS

There are three ways “setting off” an herb’s effect: Contact, Ingestion, or Inhalation. In addition to these methods, any herb can be successively administered by pressing it into an open wound, which may require a successful attack roll.

Contact herbs must be applied to the target’s skin, which could call for a successful attack roll (melee or ranged; Contact herbs can be thrown at targets). Luckily, Contact herbs don’t have to be delivered by the Herbalist herself, so if she is not good at fighting, she can pass the concoction on to a companion who’s better at it. The difference, however, is that characters with Herbalist as their niche run no risk of accidentally causing the concoction to affect themselves. Non-specialists do run this risk. Any non-Herbalist character who touches or carries a dose of a Contact herb must make the listed saving throw vs poison, or accidentally spark the herb’s effect on herself (which requires a second save to resist the herb’s effects). The Threat Rating of this save is reduced to Average if the concoction is being handed over to her by the Herbalist who prepared it.

Contact herbs can only affect one target per dose.

Ingestion herbs have to be taken into the target’s body somehow, normally through eating or drinking. The usual method is surreptitiously introducing the concoction into the target’s food or water supply (though obviously anyone can freely consent to taking an herb if they wish). This might require a Trickster lore check to avoid being seen. Again, the herb can be delivered to its target by a non-Herbalist, but in this case, the non-Herbalist runs no risk of accidentally poisoning herself. She does, however, risk accidentally spoiling the concoction and rendering it ineffective. This accidental contamination can be avoided with a Challenging Herbalist lore check. As with Contact herbs, Herbalist niche characters run no risk of accidental spoilage when delivering Ingestion herbs.

Ingestion herbs can potentially affect more than one target (for instance, if multiple characters eat or drink from the same source). However, affecting multiple targets with an Ingestion herb requires the preparer to concoct multiple doses and deliver them through a common source. This should be easy enough if the Herbalist knows for sure how many potential targets will be eating or drinking from a particular source of nourishment. One dose per target (depending on the target’s Size, as noted later) is necessary to affect multiple targets.

Inhalation herbs take effect upon being breathed in by the target. Unlike Contact and Ingestion herbs, one dose of an Inhalation herb affects all targets within a 30 ft. radius. The dose is delivered either by throwing it at a particular point, where it “detonates” upon contact; or by blowing it into an area. In either case, potential targets can avoid the effect

completely with a save vs. blast effects. Failure on this save means they then have to make a second, standard save vs. poison to resist the concoction's effects. Note that the concoction will affect allies and enemies alike within its area of effect, including the Herbalist herself!

THE SCHOOLS OF HERBALISM

Herbalism is divided into five broad schools: astringents, boosters, enchantments, poisons, and psychoactives.

Astringents are herbs that treat wounds and otherwise aid in the alleviation of pain and suffering. They will mostly mimic minor classic fantasy clerical healing effects, but never be as good as the Healer's abilities.

Boosters provide recipients with bonuses to lore checks, or grant them temporary abilities that mimic Species Traits from other animal types. They are, in effect, temporary spandrels.

Enchantments are "love weeds," that make targets more susceptible to suggestion, or alter their default Attitude rating in some way, or otherwise affect their state of mind (as opposed to their perceptions). They will generally mimic the effects of classic fantasy spells like *sleep*, *charm person*, etc., but with fixed durations, limited targets, and so on.

Poisons are self-explanatory; they are herbal concoctions that inflict damage, or even death, upon recipients.

Psychoactives are herbs that confound the recipients' perceptions of reality. They will mimic the effects of classic fantasy illusion magic, but only be perceptible to the subjects receiving them.

RESISTING HERBAL EFFECTS

Unless otherwise noted, the effects of herbal concoctions are resisted with a saving throw vs. poison (though Inhalation effects can be initially avoided with a save vs. blast effects, as noted above).

HERBAL CONCOCTIONS FOR BEGINNING CHARACTERS

Niche Herbalists begin the game with access to two "schools" of Herbalism, and know the recipes for all of the Average herbs in those schools. Alternately, they can choose to specialize in one of the schools, which grants them access the Tough-rated recipes from that school, as well, at the cost of starting without knowledge from any other school.

In addition to recipes known, niche Herbalists begin play with 2d5 prepared doses of Average

difficulty concoctions of their choice, gifted to them by their mentor, whether they know the recipes for those concoctions or not.

As they gain levels, niche Herbalists improve their skill at their chosen schools. At 3rd level, niche Herbalists can learn and concoct Tough recipes from their chosen schools; at 6th level, they can learn and concoct Challenging recipes; and at 9th level, they can learn and concoct Formidable recipes.

Specialists improve faster than generalists in their specialized school, gaining access to Challenging recipes at 5th level, and Formidable recipes at 8th level. However, their progression in and access to other schools is limited, as noted below.

Niche Herbalists gain access to new schools as they go up in level. At 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels, they gain access to one new school each, at Average level. Each time they gain access to a new school, their knowledge in the previous schools goes up one rating.

For instance, if a niche Herbalist begins play with access to Poisons and Psychoactives, she knows the Average recipes for those schools at 0-level. When she reaches 3rd Herbalist level, her knowledge of these schools improves to Tough, and she gains access to one new school -- say, Astringents -- at Average rating. Then, at 6th Herbalist level, her knowledge of Poisons and Psychoactives improves to Challenging, her knowledge of Astringents improves to Tough, and she gains access to a fourth school -- in this case, Boosters -- at an Average rating of knowledge. This pattern repeats in a similar way at 9th Herbalist level, by which time she should have access to all five schools of Herbalism.

Specialists gain access to new schools at the same rate, but can only access four total schools before 10th level.

REPLACING USED HERBAL CONCOCTIONS

A character with levels in Herbalist lore can replace a dose of any herb she knows by making a search of the local habitat to gather the materials. This requires an Herbalist lore check (+ Herbalist niche die result, if applicable) with the difficulty based on the herb's listed Threat Level. She gets a +1 bonus to her roll for each hour that she searches, to a maximum of +4.

Once she has collected the required materials, she must treat the correct part of the plant to extract or create the herb she needs. She makes another Herbalist lore check against the herb's Threat Level. Success indicates that she has mixed up a dose of the used herb; critical success means she has prepared a double dose. Failure on the roll means she has spoiled her materials and must gather more ingredients before attempting to prepare another dose. Critical failure means she has produced a poison without knowing it. Anyone affected by

this botched preparation must make a standard save vs. poison or suffer a poison effect determined by the BM.

If she has enough material to make more than one dose, she can try to do so all at once, but at -1 for every extra dose she wants to make.

DOSAGE & TARGET SIZE

The amount of an herbal concoction necessary to achieve its full effect in a target depends on the target creature's Size, as detailed on the table below.

Table 3: Concoction Dose & Size Categories

Target's Size Category	Dosage Needed for Full Effect
Fine	1/8
Diminutive	1/4
Tiny	1/2
Small	3/4
Medium	1
Large	2
Huge	4
Gargantuan	6
Colossal	8

INVENTING NEW HERBAL CONCOCTIONS

There are several herbal concoctions described below. However, some BMs may want even more variety, and some players may want their characters to come up with something new.

A good source of inspiration for new herbal concoctions are the spells, magic items, and monster abilities of other classic or "old school" fantasy games. Depending on how much fantasy the BM wants in her story setting, such new concoctions can either replicate the effects of spells, magic items, or monster special abilities directly, or simply use them as inspiration for similar but lesser effects. It is best to focus on spells, magic items, or monster abilities that inflict or heal damage to characters, alter their perceptions or behavior in some way, or apply modifiers to combat or skill checks.

Though they can have similar effects, there are some important distinctions between G&S herbal concoctions and classic fantasy spells, magic items, or monster abilities to keep in mind when designing new herbs.

First, under the default G&S rules, herbs are non-magical. This means their effects cannot be dispelled or disrupted by methods that do such things to magical effects. It also means that herbal concoctions might be able to affect beings normally immune to magical versions of the same or similar effects. For instance, standard classic fantasy elves are usually either immune or highly resistant to charm effects. This immunity tends to assume all such effects are magical, but the BM could rule that herbal effects get around this immunity because elves still have a fairly standard mammalian biology that can be altered by drugs and poisons. However, this decision is in the BM's hands, not the player's.

Second, it should be noted that the duration and potency of herbal concoction effects are not dependent upon the preparer's level, as spells often are in other old-school-style fantasy games. Herbal concoctions are a form of primitive chemistry, and as such have more reliable and predictable effects than classic fantasy spells, magic items, or monster abilities. Most herbal concoctions have effects that last for minutes or hours, while most classic fantasy effects have durations in rounds. Thus, introducing herbal concoctions based on high-level, powerful spells or abilities can be a tricky affair. This can be handled by assigning Threat Levels to invented herbs, based on the levels of the spells, magic items, or monster abilities that inspired them.

A good guideline here is that 1st to 2nd level spells can inspire Average ranked herbal concoctions.

3rd level effects are ranked as Tough herbs.

4th level effects are ranked as Challenging herbs.

And 5th level effects are ranked as Formidable herbs.

Spells or spell effects of higher than 5th level are beyond the scope of GREAT & SMALL, which only covers characters of up to about 10th level in classic fantasy terms. Thus, higher-level spells and effects will be harder to convert to herbal concoctions. However, a BM could continue with the scheme outlined above, and give a Heroic ranking to spells or effects of 6th to 7th level, and an Epic ranking to spells and effects of 8th to 9th level.

Spells, magic items, or monster abilities that affect a single target should be either Contact or Ingestion herbs. Spells that can affect more than one target, or have an area of effect, should be Inhalation herbs.

A final important difference between herbal concoctions and spells, magic items, and monster abilities is that herbal effects are almost always resisted by a saving throw vs.

poison. Spells, magic items, and monster abilities in classic fantasy games are much more unpredictable, having saving throws from all five categories, and some allowing no resistance at all. Herbal effects should always allow the target some kind of saving throw, even if the classic fantasy sources that inspired them do not.

Again, as in all things, the BM has final approval in what new herbal concoctions will be allowed in the game, and under what parameters.

HERBS & THEIR EFFECTS

Below are listed several herbal concoctions, along with their Threat Levels, Delivery Methods, Schools, and effects. Many are converted from similar effects in classic fantasy games of one sort or another. While not the only possible herbs in a game of G&S, they should be flexible enough to provide plenty of fun for a long while, especially to new players.

BADGER FLOWER (TOUGH INHALED BOOSTER)

Badger flower induces a berserk rage in its subjects for 10 minutes (10 turns). They gain a +2 bonus to all attack rolls and Warrior combat abilities, but suffer a 1-point penalty to their Armor Class, for an indeterminate amount of time. They can take no other actions except attacking the nearest creature (friend or foe), and continuing to attack until either the recipient or all potential targets in the area are defeated. The rage can be ended with a successful save vs. paralysis.

BASIC CHARM (AVERAGE INGESTED ENCHANTMENT)

The recipient of this concoction becomes enamored of the first character she sees (or otherwise senses) after imbibing the herb. Her default Attitude towards this character becomes Friendly for 1 hour (60 turns).

BATSEAR (TOUGH INGESTED BOOSTER)

The imbiber of this herb gains the Echosight ability of microbats (both its bonuses and penalties) for 2 hours (120 turns).

BLESSBERRY (AVERAGE INGESTED BOOSTER)

A single dose of this herb grants the imbiber a +1 bonus on all attack rolls for 1 hour (60 turns).

BROWN MOLD SPORE (FORMIDABLE INHALED POISON)

One dose of this herb contains enough *brown mold spore* to affect all targets within a 5 ft. radius once it is burst open, including the Herbalist herself if she has not thrown the dose beyond that range. All creatures within the area of effect must succeed at a save vs. blast effects or suffer 2d7 hp of cold damage as their body heat is drained away. The following

round, a save vs. death effects must be made, or the affected creatures continue losing 1d7 hp per round until they "freeze" to death. A successful second save ends the effect.

CLEANSEROOT (AVERAGE INGESTED ASTRINGENT)

Cleanseroot grants the imbiber immunity to poison for 1 hour (60 turns), or cancels further effects of any poison to which the subject has already been exposed.

DAZZLEBERRY (CHALLENGING INGESTED PSYCHOACTIVE)

One dose of this herb confuses a single Medium sized target, causing her to act randomly for the duration. On a roll of 2d7, the target(s) takes the following action:

<u>Die Roll</u>	<u>Reaction</u>
2 – 6	Attack herbalist & her allies
7-10	Become baffled & remain inactive
11-14	Attack nearest ally, or wander off if no allies present

The herb takes effect immediately, and lasts for 2 hours (120 turns). The subject's behavior changes every 10 minutes, however, at which point she re-rolls on the table above.

Creatures of fewer than 3 Total Levels are automatically affected and do not get a saving throw. Targets of 4 Total Levels or more are entitled to a standard save.

DODGELEAF (AVERAGE INGESTED BOOSTER)

This concoction reduces (that is, improves) the subject's Armor Class by 1, for 1 hour (60 turns).

DREAMBERRY (AVERAGE INGESTED PSYCHOACTIVE)

This herb induces vivid hallucinations in the subject for 10 minutes (10 turns). The nature of these hallucinations can be directed or determined by a successful Storyteller lore check with a +2 bonus, leading to the desired change in the subject's Attitude, or possibly inducing further mental effects like fear.

DRIED SWIFTRoot (TOUGH INHALED BOOSTER)

All creatures within the area of effect become able to move and attack at double their normal speeds for 30 minutes (30 turns).

FAIRY ROOT (CHALLENGING INGESTED PSYCHOACTIVE)

The recipient perceives a terrain all around her that is different from the one in which she currently resides. The type of terrain she sees is up to the herbalist who concocts the herb; there are separate recipes for desert, forest, swamp, etc. The imbiber will attempt to interact

this hallucinatory terrain as though it were real, until she is physically touched by another character.

FEEBLEMIND (FORMIDABLE INGESTED POISON)

On a failed save, the imbiber of *feeblemind* becomes unable to make lore checks that involve intelligence, reasoning, or interpersonal interaction (usually any lore check other than Runner or Warrior). The effect is permanent, unless undone by another herbal concoction or magical effect.

FEVERGONE (AVERAGE INGESTED ASTRINGENT)

A dose of *fevergone* cures any single, non-magical disease after a waiting period of 30 minutes (30 turns).

FIREDDUST (FORMIDABLE SPECIAL CONCOCTION)

This potent and dangerous concoction catches fire if left in direct sunlight for 1 minute (6 rounds).

FLAMEBANE (TOUGH CONTACT ASTRINGENT)

This potent balm grants its subject complete immunity to natural fire for 1 hour (60 turns). In campaigns featuring magical effects, *flamebane* also grants its subject enough protection to reduce damage from magical fire by half for the same duration.

FRESHDUST (AVERAGE INGESTED ASTRINGENT)

When sprinkled over or mixed into enough food for up to a dozen Medium sized creatures, or up to 10 gallons of water, a single dose of *freshdust* removes any contaminants, spoilage or poisons it may contain.

GRAND CHARM (CHALLENGING INHALED ENCHANTMENT)

This herb produces the same result as basic charm, but affects all targets within the area of effect, rather than affecting only one target.

HAWKEYE (AVERAGE INGESTED BOOSTER)

This herb grants the imbiber the Ultravision species trait for one hour.

HOPLEAF (TOUGH INGESTED BOOSTER)

A dose of *hopleaf* improves the subject's reflexes and makes them more nimble for 2 hours (120 turns). During this time, her Armor Class lowers by 2, and she receives a +2 bonus on all Runner lore checks, including saves against paralysis and petrification.

ITCHWEED (AVERAGE CONTACT POISON)

Any target who comes into contact with a dose of *itchweed* becomes subject to intense itching for 30 minutes (30 turns). This imposes a -2 penalty on all of the target's Trickster lore checks for the duration of the effect.

LEGENDLEAF (FORMIDABLE INGESTED BOOSTER)

Legendleaf lives up to its name by granting the subject a +4 bonus on all strength-related Warrior lore checks (including damage inflicted by successful melee attacks), as well as a 4-point improvement to Armor Class, for 24 hours.

MENDING MUSHROOM (AVERAGE INGESTED ASTRINGENT)

This herb heals 1d5+1 hit points of damage per dose.

MENDSPORE (CHALLENGING INGESTED ASTRINGENT)

A concentrated version of *mending mushroom*, this herb heals 2d5+2 hit points per dose.

MIGHTSHROOM (AVERAGE INGESTED BOOSTER)

Mightshroom boost's the subject's strength for 1 hour (60 turns), granting her a +2 bonus on all Warrior lore checks related to using her muscles (including damage rolls from successful melee attacks).

MIRRORWEED (AVERAGE INHALED PSYCHOACTIVE)

Anyone in the area of effect sees 1d3 images of the herbalist acting in perfect synchronization with her, like mirror images. Attackers cannot distinguish the false herbalists from the real one, and may attack one of them instead of her (determined randomly). If a mirror image of the herbalist is successfully struck in combat, it disappears from the perception of the attacker... but not from that of others who are still under its influence.

MOLE'S EYE (CHALLENGING INHALED POISON)

This concoction causes blindness in its target for 10 minutes (10 turns). A successful save only causes blindness for 1d5 rounds.

ORCHID ROOT (TOUGH INGESTED BOOSTER)

Orchid root provides its subject with enhanced protection from all hostile herbs. After consuming a dose of orchid root, you gain a +4 bonus to all saves vs. herbal concoction effects for 1 hour (60 turns).

PANIC POWDER (CHALLENGING INHALED ENCHANTMENT)

On a failed save, all creatures within this herb's area of effect flee the area in terror. There is a 60 percent chance they will drop any items they were carrying.

PESTFLOWER DUST (AVERAGE CONTACT ASTRINGENT)

A potent balm against pests such as fleas, tics, parasitic worms, etc., *pestflower dust* provides its subject with a +2 bonus on all saves vs. disease effects borne by such pests for 24 hours.

RENDING MUSHROOM (AVERAGE INGESTED POISON)

Although it smells and tastes identical to *mending mushroom*, this herb actually has the opposite effect: it inflicts 1d5+1 hit points of damage per dose on the imbiber.

RENDSPORE (CHALLENGING INGESTED POISON)

A concentrated version of *rending mushroom*, this herb inflicts 2d5+2 hit points of damage per dose.

SLUMBERROOT (FORMIDABLE INGESTED POISON)

The target falls asleep and remains asleep until a third party rouses her by touch. There is no saving throw against this effect.

SNAIL DUST (TOUGH INHALED POISON)

All creatures within the area of effect find themselves only able to move and attack at half their normal speed.

SNOOZEWEED (AVERAGE INGESTED ENCHANTMENT)

This herb puts one Medium Size target per dose into a deep sleep that lasts for one hour (60 turns). 0-level targets do not get a saving throw.

SNUFFBALL (AVERAGE INHALED POISON)

The targets sneeze uncontrollably for 1 minute (1 turn). As a result, they suffer a -2 penalty to all attack rolls and Runner or Trickster lore checks for the duration of the effect.

SOURSHROOM (CHALLENGING INGESTED POISON)

A potent poison, *sourshroom* inflicts 3d5 hp of damage on the subject. A successful saving throw means she only suffers half damage.

SWEETLEAF (CHALLENGING INGESTED POISON)

This powerful concoction paralyzes its subject for 10 minutes (10 turns).

YELLOW MOLD SPORE (CHALLENGING INHALED POISON)

A single dose of *yellow mold spore* contains enough of the herb to affect all targets within a 10 ft. radius, once it is burst open (this includes the Herbalist herself, if she has not thrown the

dose beyond that range). Anyone caught within the *yellow mold spore* cloud must make a save vs. death effects, or choke to death within 2d3 rounds.