



# Diann's Herb Newsletter

FALL 2013

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**The International Herb Association selects the Herb of the Year. Here is a list of the ones starting from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:**

- 2014 Artemesia**
- 2013 Elder**
- 2012 Rose**
- 2011 Horseradish**
- 2010 Dill**
- 2009 Bay Laurel**
- 2008 Calendula**
- 2007 Lemon Balm**
- 2006 Pelargonium**
- 2005 Oregano**
- 2004 Garlic**
- 2003 Basil**
- 2002 Echinacea**
- 2001 Sage**
- 2000 Rosemary**

*When I prayed for success, I forgot to ask for sound sleep and good digestion.*

--Mason Cooley

## Herbs for Digestive Health

"Nothing is permanent." We hear that often, yet it's not until we reach a certain age that we internalize the concept. That brings my thoughts to indigestion. When I was young, I believed I had a cast-iron stomach and ate everything—well maybe not oysters, although I tasted them once. Now I have to be very careful not only *what* but also *when* I eat.

Gas, belching, diarrhea, loud noises emanating from the bowels—these are a few of the potentially embarrassing issues many of us face from time to time. Digestive distress is one of the most common health problems. Many herbs can help to relieve our distress quite well.

Our digestive tract performs three important functions—breaking down food, absorbing nutrients, and eliminating waste. If our digestive system does not receive the nutrients it needs for any one of these functions, our body's ability to rebuild, repair, make energy, and create important compounds will be impeded.

Acid in one's stomach works with the immune system by killing pathogens directly; it also chemically breaks down food and "increases absorption of many difficult-to-assimilate nutrients like calcium." As food moves down the tract, "beneficial bacteria in your intestines break down fiber; help manufacture vitamin K, B12, biotin, and folic acid; boost your mood; and make your body less hospitable to dangerous bacteria and yeast."

Bitter herbs are probably the best source of nutrients to the body. Unfortunately, bitter herbs are not included in most American diets—artichoke leaf, gentian root, orange peel, dandelion leaf and root. They help the pancreas produce and excrete more digestive enzymes and saliva, produce more acid in the stomach, and increase more bile, thus aiding elimination. It is not necessary to get large doses of bitter herbs. They form the basis of several drink amenities, such as Angostura Bitters, Fernet, and Jagermeister. Many vegetables act as mild bitters—lettuce greens (not iceberg lettuce), watercress, arugula, and artichokes.

It's possible to over-use antacids. Digestive acids are so important to our overall good digestion that when we reduce them,



*I don't know a  
better preparation  
for life than a love  
of poetry and a  
good digestion.*

--Zona Gale

we may in fact be creating conditions that will increase acid reflux. Acid is what signals the sphincter above the stomach to close, blocking the reflux. If you are taking a prescription antacid, please consult your physician.

Stress is a leading factor in bad digestion. So it follows that relaxing herbs may aid in good digestion. Among them are chamomile, lemon balm, and catnip, which may be consumed as a soothing tea. These can be easily grown in your garden.

Other herbs that help reduce bloating and pain from gas include "peppermint, fennel seeds, dill seeds, cardamom, cumin and anise. These herbs loosen muscle tension in the intestines to help things move through more easily." Carrying a few seeds with you to chew will provide a quick remedy anywhere, anytime.



Ginger root aids in digesting protein and seems to be helpful in all phases along the digestive tract. "Fresh ginger root steeped in hot water for 30 minutes makes a great digestive tea, and you can incorporate the herb into almost any other herbal remedy. ... As supportive remedies, ginger and rose petals encourage growth of beneficial bacteria, and fiber gives probiotics something to chew on." I drink two cups of ginger tea every morning. I like it straight, honey or other condiments may be added if you wish.

Antibiotics are absolutely necessary for various diseases, but we need to keep in mind that they don't discriminate between good and bad bacteria—they kill it all. As a result, excessive use of antibiotics can sometimes leave our digestive systems lacking the good bacteria we need for good digestion.

The best complement for any digestive tract is a variety of vegetables—green, red, white, yellow, orange--seasoned with a variety of herbs.

Much of this information taken from "Herbs for Digestion," by Maria Noel Groves, *Herb Quarterly*, Fall 2013

## **Herbal Workshops**

One workshop at Diann's Greenhouse is still available this year:

Oct. 12, Sat., 10:00 AM-1:00 PM, *Making Herbal Breads*

Go to [www.diannsgreenhouse.com](http://www.diannsgreenhouse.com) for more information and registration form for the workshop.

## **Clarksville Downtown Market**

I will not be going to the Downtown Market this fall; however, I have many perennials, which ought to be planted this fall for harvesting next year. Remember, I am open anytime by appointment. Call 921-648-8701.

*Happiness:  
a good bank  
account,  
a good cook,  
and a good  
digestion.*

--Jean-Jacques  
Rousseau

## Recipes

### Cinnamon Basil Chicken

4 servings

1 frying chicken, about 4½ pounds, cut into 8 pieces without the backbone  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 large onion, halved and sliced from root end to top  
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
1½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh ginger  
One (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained of half the liquid  
Three 3-inch cinnamon sticks  
3 star anise pods  
1 ½ cups torn leaves of sweet basil or cinnamon basil, gently packed

Season all sides of the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat the olive oil over medium high heat in a large skillet with a tight-fitting lid. When the pan is hot, put the chicken pieces in the pan, skin side down and cook uncovered until the skin turns deep golden brown, at least 6 to 8 minutes. Turn the chicken and cook another 2 to 3 minutes on the other side. Take the chicken out of the pan and pile it on the platter.

Reduce the heat to medium and add the onion, garlic, and ginger to the pan. Stir them around for 3 to 4 minutes, or until they soften and begin to brown. Add the tomatoes, cinnamon sticks, star anise, and 1 teaspoon kosher salt. Put the chicken back in the pan. When the tomatoes come to a simmer, cover the pan, turn the heat to very low, and cook for about 50 minutes, or until there is little resistance when you pierce a thigh with the tip of a paring knife. If the sauce seems watery, turn the heat to high and boil it uncovered until it thickens. Scatter in the basil as you toss the chicken in the sauce with tongs. Serve right away.

### Lavender Mai Tai

3 ounces white wine  
1 ounce orange curacao or Cointreau  
1 ounce Lavender-Ginger Syrup\*  
1½ ounces fresh lemon juice  
Sparkling water  
2 lavender sprigs for garnish

Shake the rum, curacao, lavender-ginger syrup, and lemon juice with plenty of ice in a cocktail shaker. Strain into two 10-ounce tumblers filled with ice and top off with just a splash of sparkling water. Garnish with lavender sprigs.

#### \*Lavender-Ginger Syrup

½ cup sugar  
½ cup water  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger  
2 tablespoons lavender buds, fresh or dried

Bring all ingredients to a full boil in a small saucepan. Turn off the heat and steep the syrup for at least 15 minutes. Strain.

--Jerry Traunfeld, *The Herbal Kitchen*, 2005

**Diann's  
Greenhouse**

**Clarksville, TN  
931-648-8701**

**Open anytime by  
appointment**