



Yarrow. Why You Just Gotta' Love It

While we are tilling away in our yards and gardens, Mother Nature is cultivating her own bounty - beautifully and effortlessly. But, because it's so easy to get caught up growing blue ribbon tomatoes and impressive blooms, we often fail to notice the breathtaking beauty nature freely surrounds us with.

This summer, because of nature's bounty, I promised myself to learn all I can about foraging. I am fascinated with the idea of living off the land and with the cultures of past that did so without cultivating any food. They knew their patch of the world so intimately that they were able feed and heal entire tribes solely off of the land.

I have learned much from friends who know our area well and who have been foraging for some time. Their knowledge is priceless to me because it is coupled with real life experience. I have also taken to my own research, which entails much time but has proven to be of true value. I hope, as you read below, that what I have studied and learned about wild plants will bring value to you too.

One of my favorite wild plants, Yarrow, grows abundantly in our area and in most of North America. Yarrow is an ancient medicinal herb that has found its way into many mythological tales and legends because of its perceived magical healing powers. The Greek hero Achilles is men-

tioned to have used Yarrow to heal many of the soldiers' wounds during the Trojan War.

Yarrow is easily identifiable and chances are you have seen it and didn't even know it. You normally see it in fields and other dry areas and can be mistaken for baby's breath. The plant grows about 8-18 inches tall with dusty green colored leaves, a long stalk and a lacy flower. The flower can range anywhere in color from white to bright yellow to red. In our area you will only find white.

The flowers bloom in delicate clumps on the supportive stalk. The blooms are very small, almost like tiny snowflakes, and literally hundreds dot one plant. Yarrow blooms in late spring, early summer and then again in the fall. When you smell Yarrow you won't notice much, but if you rub the flower between your fingers, the scent is gently released.

There are many uses for Yarrow. It's most common use is for fevers. Yarrow is very effective for breaking fevers naturally, which makes it a wonderful thing to have in the home during the colder seasons. Yarrow has also been proven as an effective aid for relieving headaches, colds, gas, excessive bleeding during menstruation, stomach issues (such as ulcers), and also as an anti-itching aid during chicken pox, measles, small pox and for bug bites.

In the Middle Ages Yarrow was normally used for wounds because Yarrow is very effective when used to stop bleeding. It is also an anti-inflammatory, which makes it great for reducing bruising. When applied to wounds, the whole plant is boiled and applied directly to the injured area as a poultice.

Harvesting Yarrow

Harvesting Yarrow is quite literally a snap. Just snap the flower off near the ground. Both the flowers and the leaves can be harvested and used. After harvesting the Yarrow, simply cut the flower portion off the plant and separate the leaves from the flowers. Use your pointer finger and thumb to pinch the flower bundles off and gently fan them out. Then, with a small pair of scissors, cut the flowers off. Once you have cut all the flowers from the plant place them evenly on cookie sheets lined with parchment paper. Make sure not to over lap the flowers. If the flowers touch or overlap on the cookie it will create an environment for mold to grow, especially if you live in

an area with high humidity. Next, find a shady place in your home and allow the Yarrow to dry. It will only take a couple of days for the flowers to dry and during this process the color and size will naturally change a bit.

Just like the Yarrow blooms, the leaves are easy to harvest and dry. Simply pinch off the leaves at the base of the plant where the leaves connect to the stem. Once you have removed all the leaves, repeat the cookie sheet process mentioned above. Once the flowers and leaves are completely dry, store them in airtight containers. Mason jars work perfectly. Be sure to store the jars in an area that is cool, dry and out of direct light. It is best to label your jars with names and dates so that there is no confusion. Like all dried herbs, Yarrow is best used within a year.

How To Use Your Dried Yarrow

One excellent use for your dried Yarrow is for making delicious medicinal tea. Making Yarrow tea is super easy. All you do is take one heaping teaspoon of dried Yarrow and place it in 1 cup of boiling water and steep for

30 minutes. Yarrow is only effective when warm, so make sure to drink your tea directly after steeping and while warm. It is suggested to drink 3 to 4 cups a day when needed for certain aches and pains and preferably before meals.

Another way to brew Yarrow is in the bathtub. When our boys are sick with a fever I will triple the Yarrow needed for the tea recipe and pour it into their bathwater. This is a really good way to break a fever and to get my little guys feeling better quickly.

I love that feeling I get when I realize the wisdom found in nature and how nature always knows best. It is so cool that what we harvest and preserve in the summer can be used to improve and aid our vitality in the winter! I hope you can get yourself out on a nice hike and harvest plenty of Yarrow. Take the time to dry it out and store it so that you will have an optimized and well-stocked natural medicine cabinet.

And, as always, enjoy today's recipes, keep healthy, stay active and spread the word on why we all just gotta' love Yarrow.