

Herbal Smoking Mixtures by Howie Brounstein

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Introduction

I became an adult immersed in the counter-culture of the Pacific Northwest. As a teacher, wildcrafter, herbalist, and botanist for more than a decade, many unique herbs have passed through my hands.

It was only a matter of time before I tried to smoke them, to see how I might mix different herbs for varying psychological and physiological effects.

After my knowledge and experience grew, I began teaching a lecture titled Herbal Smoking Mixtures: Local, Legal Roots, Barks, and Leaves, and Flowers.

Local Legal Roots, Barks, and Leaves, and Flowers. This class was very popular. Many more people will show up to a class titled "Herbal Smoking Mixtures" than will for "Medicinal Herbs for the Lungs."

Perhaps this is a sign of the wild North American society I live in. Perhaps it's a sign that humans have been intrigued with the idea of fire and smoking since the earliest of our race's memory.

Smoking is a synthesis of fire and smoke, such powerful archetypal images. Perhaps it's just a fad and means nothing at all. Nonetheless, I have

expanded my lecture, and after smoking many a pipe full over this computer keyboard, produced this book.

It doesn't cover every possible herb. It is a starting point for your own explorations into the world of herbs and smoke. Take this knowledge and run with

it, make it your own, create you own herbal stories to tell. I hope this helps you in your quest for a satisfying legal alternative to Tobacco or Marijuana, or perhaps the perfect ceremonial blend.

I am a smoker, and I am writing from the viewpoint of a smoker. If you don't smoke anything regularly, my suggestion is don't start. Smoking every day on a regular basis is never healthy. Occasional use of smoking herbs, or even Tobacco, is not very damaging. It's our trend towards making it a habit in excess that becomes the problem.

Many of the plants described in this book are difficult, if not impossible, to find on the commercial herb market. These need to be gathered in the wild (wildcrafted), or garden grown. Wildcrafting requires skill and practice. It requires a positive identification.

If you are not sure of the plant, or if you are not sure how to harvest wild plants ethically, DON'T wildcraft. Seek one of the many fine teachers available to obtain the necessary skills first.

Why Smoke?

There are many reasons why people smoke Tobacco, Marijuana, and other herbal mixtures. Here are but a few reasons:

Recreation: Some folks find the act of smoking and its effects pleasurable. Sometimes they are just bending under a social pressure (it's cool to smell like an ashtray). Some herbs taste good when smoked. Certainly, an oral fixation, or some subconscious early childhood memories of mom's nipples, contribute to constant smoking.

Addiction: Recreational use of Tobacco can lead to the dreaded addiction so prevalent in the world today. Tobacco has firmly ingrained itself in every culture in the world it has been introduced to, except for a few religious sects. Don't let the advertisement fool you; the Marlboro man is an addict. It is very hard for most people to stop on their own. Marijuana is not physically addicting, but there are a few folks who smoke every day and form an emotional dependence on it.

Tobacco and Marijuana Alternatives: There are numerous reasons not to smoke Tobacco, health reasons not a small factor. It may be social pressure (it's so cool not to smell like an ashtray). A satisfying replacement for Tobacco is like the search for the holy grail. Many will look for it and come close, but nothing will be exactly like it. Have you heard the mythical story of the sage herbalist, quite a wise and aromatic fellow? After years of spiritual purification he finally found the proper herbs and curing process to make the perfect Tobacco-like smoking mixture substitute. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter he became fully enlightened and gave up smoking completely. The formula was lost forever.

Many people smoke marijuana for a variety of reasons, but wish not to. It may not agree with their constitution; it may not give them the effects they're looking for. The fact that it is selectively illegal and semi-legal in some places might contribute to the desire to quit. The biggest reason I see people wanting to quit is drug testing. In the Pacific Northwest, these tests are very popular with employers. Even workers who are not responsible for welfare of others are tested. Evidently, occasional weekend use of marijuana might impair the judgment of janitors, domestic workers at hotels, and the check-out clerks in the local market.

Medicine: There are a variety of medicinal uses of

smoking mixtures. One can use calming or tranquilizing herbs to relax physically or mentally. Some herbs can be smoked for calming the lungs or to aid in expectoration. The difference between poison and medicine is dosage; smoking a strong herb is one way to regulate its dosage.

Spiritual and Ceremonial Uses: Throughout history people have taken (and smoked) herbs to produce altered states of consciousness. Although some in modern times seek hallucinogens for pure recreation, many still use these plants respectfully on the journey for spiritual knowledge. Even the milder herbs are useful during meditation and vision quests. Smoking is a ritual, and the more conscious we are of it, the more we will get from it. It is such a powerful mixture of fire and air.

Preparation of Herbs into Palatable Smoking Mixtures

A number of factors contribute to making a palatable smoking mixture. First and foremost is the way you cure the herbs. If you take fresh Tobacco and dry it like any medicinal herb, it becomes an unpalatable obnoxious smoke that the most hard-core smoker couldn't stomach (or lung, as the case may be). Tobacco is semi-dried slowly, allowing for chemical changes, and is never dried to a crisp. It is packaged slightly moist in air tight containers. If it dries out, the smoker adds an apple slice or sprays it with water. Dried out Tobacco is harsh.

Herbal smoking blends are similar. In most cases you do not want the herbs to be dried crispy. It's OK for some of the ingredients, but as a whole the mixture should be ever so slightly moist. Some of the most flavorful smoking ingredients need to dry slow, and cure, but the majority are best picked fresh and not dried completely. Package in an airtight container.

Most store-bought herbs are too dry for a pleasant smoke and taste harsh. If you use herbs that are too dry, try spraying your mixture lightly with water. Mix it thoroughly and let sit in an airtight container to let the moisture travel throughout the herbs. Experiment with the liquid. Try adding an apple slice or honey. You can always let the herbs air dry if they get too moist to burn properly.

Another factor is the consistency of the mixture. The herbs should be well mixed and burn evenly. If you are using a pipe to smoke, this is not quite as important. The mixture can have small pieces of stems and roots without problems. If you plan to roll the herbs in cigarette papers, this becomes very important. Even small stems will poke holes in the paper. Remove all the stems. Powder or finely chop the slower burning roots and hard herbs.

Some herbs are especially helpful to obtain the proper physical consistency of the mixture. By far the best physical base for a smoking mixture is Mullein. When prepared correctly, it is light and puffy. The other herbs mix well into it, and it will burn evenly when lit. It is a good carrier of the other substances. You can also use finely shredded barks. Thin slices or inner barks of plants like dogwood and willow should be finely cut into long strips, much like fine Virginian Tobacco. This can be difficult to do, but it works well.

Certain plants need to be rubbed before use. Mullein and Mugwort don't become fluffy until you take the herbs in your hands and rub them. Keep rubbing until the herb becomes light and puffy. Sometimes I put the Mullein in a blender before mixing. It becomes even more fluffy, but it lacks the personal touch hand rubbing gives.

Finally, the amounts and kinds of flavoring herbs you use will change the palatability. You need to just play with it until you get it right. Unfortunately, most commercially available herbal smoking blends don't properly prepare, cure, and package the herbs. They often have good recipes, and I have to assume the manufacturers have the best intentions but lack of resources or knowledge. Some are still good enough to smoke. Very few rival even the simplest hand picked, rubbed and/or cured, and semi-dried do it yourself mix.

Barks for Body: Hearty Smoking Mixture Bases

Barks were a standard ingredient of Native American smoking mixtures, at least on the West Coast of the United States. Good smoking barks are usually astringents, and have medicinal value for external burns, cuts, etc. Smoked, however, they have no medicinal effects, and no apparent physiological effect other than the act of smoking. They have a dull thick flavor that adds Tobacco-like "body" to the smoke. They can be too "raspy" to smoke alone.

Willow and Dogwood bark are two common barks. Use the thin barked willows, or inner layer of the thicker barks for best results. If possible, cut the bark into very thin strips to approximate a fine cut Virginian Tobacco. This isn't always possible, but it helps to make the smoking mixture easier to deal with for rolling and mixing other herbs.

You can use other astringent herbs like Kinnikinnick in a similar fashion. There are many undiscussed astringent herbs that might add body to smoking mixtures. Try Avens, Geum sp., Cinquefoil, Potentilla sp., Rose, Rosa sp., and Spirea, Spirea sp.

Willow Bark, *Salix* sp.

The species of Willows are numerous and hard to identify. As a botanist, there seems to be as many different kinds of Willows as stars in the southern sky. Each of these Willows has a slightly different flavor and texture. Experiment to find the one you like the best.

Willows have medicinal effects internally. They contain salicylates that act like aspirin to relieve inflammation, lower fevers, and relieve pain. These properties do not transfer through smoking.

Dogwood Bark, *Cornus* sp.

Dogwood Bark is another herb for body and texture. You can use any *Cornus* tree or shrub. Each will be different, but this includes Flowering Dogwood and Red Osier (Creek) Dogwood.

Pipsissewa, *Chimaphila* sp. and *Pyrola*,
Pyrola sp.

The leaves of all species of these plants are mild astringents that add body to the smoking mixture, yet are very mild. You can smoke them alone with good results, and they break up easily into usable size pieces.

Kinnikinnik, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*

Kinnikinnik or Bearberry is the standard for the Northwestern smoking mixture. It is a fine thick smoke, but mild enough for some to smoke alone. The leaves are usually used, but it is possible to smoke the red bark. The leaves are leathery, and may require some extra attention to break into small enough pieces to roll into a cigarette.

Kinnikinnik is an Native American word for smoking mixture. It is true they smoked Kinnikinnik (the plant), but usually the "Kinnikinnik" they smoked also contained willow bark and other ingredients. Sometimes it did not even contain Bearberry. This confused some of the ethnobotanists cataloging their herb usage, so be aware of this when reading "Indian Uses for Herbs" type books.

In order of strength from mildest to strongest:

- * Pipsissewa, Pyrola: Mild, can be smoked alone.
- * Kinnikinnik: Medium, can be smoked alone
- * Manzanita: Strong, can be too raspy to smoke alone
- * Madrone Leaf: Very strong, too raspy, excellent to mix with other herbs.

Manzanita, Shrubby Arctostaphylos sp.

Manzanita leaf (and bark if you wish) is a strong astringent with body and flavor that can be too harsh to smoke alone. The leaves may be difficult to break into small pieces. Mix it in small amounts with other herbs, and it will work just fine.

Manzanita has an unusual relationship with fire. Manzanita is fire slowed down and embodied into a plant. Just look at its red bark and wispy habit. Manzanita evolved with fire. If Smoky the Bear wasn't in charge of fire suppression, most ecosystems with Manzanita would burn naturally on a regular basis. Old thick unburned Manzanita eventually becomes unhealthy. Burning doesn't kill the plant, it invigorates its growth. The wood is fire resistant and often has unique grains and "burls." It makes excellent pipe material.

Madrone, Arbutus menziesii

Madrone is a fiery red barked tree. Its leaf and bark are even stronger than Manzanita. It can still be useful in mixtures, but mix just a little with the other herbs. It is very raspy and harsh when smoked alone, so use a gentle hand when adding it to a mixture.

Blackberry, Rubus sp.

Blackberry root is a strong astringent that has use in smoking mixtures. Be sure to powder the root and mix well. The bark of the stems can also be used. The leaves are very gentle, and can be added also. Any Rubus like Raspberry, Loganberry, Thimbleberry, and Salmonberry might be useful additions.

Ceremonial Uses

Some of the milder psychotropic herbs can be effective in smoking mixture for ceremonial reasons. These light smokes will not knock you down as the heavy counter-cultural chemicals, but they will give you the feeling of the plant. The best use of these mixtures is during meditation or vision quests where you pay great attention to the way the herb feels. These are not for everyday smoking mixtures.

Many people are looking for psychotropic herbs that are legal and smokable. If you are looking for a replacement for Marijuana, stay with the calming herbs or Calamus. There are many other plants available in the wild that range from mild LSD-like experiences to strong other worldly experiences. Many are very dangerous and unhealthy to your body. Certainly a spiritual experience maybe worth short term bodily discomfort. but it's not worth death.

These stronger psychotropics should be used under the guidance of a Shaman or other experienced practitioner trained in the specific uses and dosages of these herbs. Carlos had his don Juan to help him back to earth from these outlandish worlds. Don't be stupid and get lost in other dimensions leaving your body in a coma in a hospital for your loved ones to pay for.

The hardest part of being a teacher is not teaching what I know but knowing what not to teach. If you are looking for heavy duty psychedelic smoking mix you won't find it in this book.

Scotch Broom, *Cytisus scoparius*

Scotch Broom is planted by the roadside to prevent erosion, but it regularly escapes to the neighboring areas. When I was about 19, I heard that if you dry the flowers and smoke them, they will get you high. What I got was a sore throat, a headache, and a hangover, but no real psychoactive effects.

As the years went by I researched it further. Merlin smoked it in a legend, but he must have done something to it. I finally found out about a curing process. Put the freshly picked flowers directly into a jar and seal it. Let it cure about two weeks. It should turn brown and look like scat. If not, open the jar for a minute and close it up again. It'll turn brown in a moment. When it's ready it will smell putrid; however, when you dry it, it will have a very pleasant aromatic aroma. Don't dry it to a crisp; leave it slightly moist. It will have the most amazing flavor. I tried this curing process and smoked it. It gave me a mild altered state with a minimum of a headache. I then tried curing it for eight months. The resultant product is a hallucinogen, although mild.

Even cured it is still harsh on your body. It will cause nausea along the altered states. It can also cause a loss of motor control in larger amounts, with no major hangover if you are healthy. People with liver problems should probably stay away from this herb, and most other organic hallucinogens as well. Many people are allergic to Broom, and should not smoke it. It is not an everyday blend to replace Marijuana smoking. The effect is nothing like Cannabis, and it feels as if it will cause damage to your body with long term use.

I sometimes teach this process in my apprenticeship. It depends on the students' attitudes. If they're looking for highs ... forget it. I won't even mention it. If they really understand about "power plants" then I will. Broom to me is a very powerful spirit that enters your body when you take it internally in the described fashion. When harvesting it, one has to be careful to pay attention. The plant forcibly stops some students from

harvesting it. It will actually warn them to stay away, and then hurt them through rashes, hives, headache, sneezes, and nausea. All from just a harvest; it is a very powerful plant indeed.

I harvest Broom in the spring and cure it throughout the year. In the fall it's dried and mixed with a number of other plants harvested as the seasons cycle. I blend it in small amounts with the other herbs to make a special smoking mixture that is mild and pleasant. One that gives a feeling of our connection with the earth and the fine gifts we've harvested, and the fine gifts we've given back to nature. This is my smoking blend used for special purposes in times of meditation and retreat.

I regularly make a blend like I this. I only gather a small amount each year, enough for a few times of smoking. I don't always add Broom. Broom will make it so I don't feel like walking. I like to walk. In contrast, to smoke Broom regularly just to get high is to invite bodily damage. If you're looking for a daily Marijuana replacement use Skullcap or Pedicularis. They won't give you a hangover.

Calamus, Acorus calamus

This ancient herb is mentioned in the Bible and is chewed by the Natives of Northeastern Canada on a daily basis. It is also used in ayurvedic medicine for canceling out the negative effects of consistent marijuana smoking. This makes it an especially good smoke for those who are quitting long term marijuana use. In small doses it is a stimulant. In large internal doses it is hallucinogenic. It's main ingredient (TMA) is more psychoactive by weight than mescaline. However, smoking it will not cause psychic pyrotechnics. It appears to provide a relaxed, pleasant, mild psychotropic effect very different from Marijuana. It is very unlike calming herbs used to quit Marijuana because it will make your head cloudy.

The active ingredient of Calamus is not the most stable of compounds. It will deteriorate within a few years leaving the herb useless. Try to get as fresh an herb as possible and buy large pieces if possible. Break these pieces up small before use in a pipe. If you use papers, powder the herb and mix well.

Medicinal Uses

People often ask me how smoking herbs can possibly be good for your lungs. I tell them the peanut butter story. Is peanut butter good for you? If you wake up to coffee and a maple bar (it has the sugar I need to get up and go in the morning), a quick coffee and some sugary lunch snack bar, followed by a processed dinner with an extra serving

of tensions, then replacing the lunch with a peanut butter sandwich will be healthy. If you're on a strict vegan diet of raw fruit only, a peanut butter sandwich will clog your digestive tract like super-glue. Peanut butter is bad. It all depends where your body is.

It is the same with smoking herbs. If you have never smoked and your lungs are healthy and clean, then smoking anything will not be healthy. On the other hand, if your lungs are filled with crud that won't come out from cigarettes and a mild respiratory cold, smoking some lung herbs will help your body's natural expectoration. Smoking will be good for your lungs. It all depends on where your body is.

Herbs for the Lungs

Mullein, *Verbascum thapsus*

Mullein is a fine medicinal for the lungs, even when you smoke it. It soothes inflamed or infected lungs, and prevents coughing until infection or inflammation is broken. Then it aids in expectoration, helping to break up congestion and promote "effective" coughing. It was smoked to stop the coughing of tuberculosis years ago. It is wonderful for any kind of lung cleansing. Very gentle and non-toxic, you can use it anytime. If you are a smoker, and you are sick and can't stop coughing from a cold, you can smoke some Mullein instead of Tobacco. It may help you to stop coughing, and you will have smoked one less cigarette. If you are not a smoker, stick with tincture (extract) or Mullein tea. After all, there's no need to smoke when you're sick in your lungs.

It also has almost no flavor and is a very light smoke. I have never seen anyone become addicted to smoking Mullein, as after a while it is very unsatisfying. The average smoker would feel as if they're smoking air.

Crispy dried crushed Mullein is a lousy smoke. Be sure to keep it ever so slightly moist. Dried Mullein should be rubbed for the best results. It will become very fluffy and puffy. This fuzzy rubbed Mullein will burn evenly when smoked in a paper or pipe. It will hold other herbs that are in the form of small pieces and powder, and keep them evenly distributed. And it has no flavor! Ideal for a smoking base; I use it in almost every smoking mixture.

I like the light green baby leaves found in the center of the first year basal rosette, but it's a matter of personal choice. Any leaf will work.

Horehound, *Marrubium vulgare*, and
Coltsfoot, *Tussilago farfara*

These commonly used smoking ingredients are expectorants. They promote coughing and aid in the upward flow of mucus. Let me repeat this: these herbs will make you cough. Let me relate to you a story I have heard more times than I can count on my hands and my feet. The person hears that Coltsfoot was smoked by the Native Americans. They run to the health food store, roll up a cigarette of dried raspy Coltsfoot, and proceed to smoke it as if it was marijuana. After they cough a piece of their brains out, they decide that perhaps this wasn't such a good idea. However, the difference between poison and medicine is dosage. If used properly, these herbs are very effective healthful herbs.

Mix these herbs in medium amounts with other herbs. If the mixture makes you cough too much, use less of the expectorant. They are ideal for a general lung cleanse, for the ending of respiratory flus and colds, when you're quitting Tobacco, and to get the crud out of you lungs in general. Do not use them when you are coughing up blood or if it hurts when you breathe. See a qualified health professional if this is the case. Also, do not use them when you can not stop coughing. If this is the case, stick with Mullein. Ideally theses mixtures should not make you cough incessantly, but just cough effectively once in a while, bringing up some of that excess phlegm.

Jimson Weed Seeds, Datura sp.

One good reason to smoke an herb as a preferred method of ingestion is regulation of dosage. You can smoke an herb that is very strong and regulate the dosage safety. The difference between medicine and poison is dosage. Many plants are too strong to take internally safely. If you take a tea, it may take half an hour or more before you can tell how strong of a dosage you took. At that point it is too late to take less. When you smoke an herb the effects or side effects become apparent quickly. If the herb doesn't agree with you, you can stop before overdosing.

Jimson weed is definitely a strong hallucinogen, poison, medicine any way you look at it. The dosage is all important. I do not recommend internal use of Datura without the guidance of a shaman. The use of Datura for a high by pimply adolescents looking for some fireworks is deplorable. Too many of them end up as newspaper reports. I personally know of people who have landed in the hospital for extended stays because of this plant.

Used in the proper dosages, Datura can be a very effective treatment for a variety of problems. Smoke the crushed seeds only. The seeds are the mildest part of the plant. Just a few puffs will anesthetize your throat and larynx. This could be very helpful

with some lung problems. You will not feel psychological effects from this small a dosage. I have used this method of taking this herb and will guarantee that you will not get high from two puffs. This plant does not agree with some people. If you feel light headed or nauseous, then stop smoking it. No harm will be done.

In some oversea countries, you may find that the cigarettes still contain Datura leaf. Datura has been used as smoking mixtures in a variety of cultures. Generally this is for their hallucinogenic effect and doesn't concern us in this book.

Herbs to Quit Smoking Tobacco

Let's face it, herbal smoking mixtures will not cause you to quit Tobacco. Only you can cause you to stop. Smoking mixtures can aid in the process if you are ready. A variety of mixtures can be helpful.

At first, a thick bodied flavorful smoke with Lobelia and calming herbs is indicated. After the physical withdrawal is finished with, drop the Lobelia smoke and use a calming smoke with lots of astringent herbs for a heavy "Tobacco" smoke. In reality, no herbal smoking mixture tastes as "thick" as Tobacco. Be sure to add some Mullein and possibly some expectorants to aid in the cleansing process. Finally, you may wish to cut the astringents and just go with the very light Mullein alone. Mullein is so light it will feel as you aren't really smoking anything, and you will eventually lose interest in it. This regimen is an example, and can be modified to your own personal needs. Some examples of these mixtures are found in the recipe section.

Other herbs, taken as tea or tincture, may be helpful during the withdrawal process. A liver stimulant like Oregon Grape Root or Goldenseal may help your body remove the nicotine quicker. This won't make the withdrawal symptoms easier, but it will just speed it up. Salicylate herbs, like Willow and Oak, can help with headaches. Calming herbs like Skullcap, Valerian, and Parrot's Beak, are definitely indicated. After the physical addiction is broken, it's up to you to break the psychological addiction.

Lobelia, Lobelia inflata

Lobelia is another example of a strong herb whose dosage can be regulated by smoking. It is a very strong muscle relaxant and tranquilizer that should not be mixed with any other pharmaceutical tranquilizers or alcohol. It also is an expectorant. As an added bonus it is an alterative that increases your body's own natural defense mechanisms. All this makes it ideal as an herb to stop smoking with.

Your body sees Lobelia's main inaredient. lobeline.

as nicotine. Certain receptors in your body are waiting to be filled with nicotine and so you feel nicotine fits. Lobeline is the same shape as nicotine and fits into these receptor sites, fooling your body into thinking you've been smoking Tobacco.

Lobeline, however, is not addictive when used properly for the short term. The prescription chewing gums that doctors prescribe to quit smoking have lobeline as the main ingredient.

Years ago I had a booth at a weekly fair where I sold my herbal products. Eventually I got very tired of this. Towards the end I could no longer stand being available for questions for eight hour stretches. One day I had a wicked headache and took some Lobelia. It was a good solid dose; I had to sit down but my headache was gone. I went to light a cigarette, but after one puff I could not smoke any more. My body felt as if I had smoked too many cigarettes already. It was just the Lobelia.

The important thing to remember about Lobelia is that it is so strong. When making tea, use a teaspoon per 1/2 gallon of water mixed with other herbs. For a smoking mixture add a pinch to a bag of other herbs. If you do take too much Lobelia will make you throw up over 90% of the time.

Unfortunately, if you do not throw up, you can have respiratory failure from the sedative effects. This is a very difficult thing to do because you'll feel so wretched long before it's dangerous. Unfortunately, Jethro Kloss in Back to Eden recommends an insane fasting regime that includes using Lobelia every day to throw up. This recommendation has sent a few alternative minded folks to the hospital.

My suggestion: don't use Lobelia as an emetic (causes vomiting), use something that is safe and effective like syrup of ipecac.

In the United States Lobelia is illegal to sell for internal consumption. Certainly official reasons include the possibility of poisoning. Strangely enough Lobelia is extremely effective for a significant amount of asthmatics. For some people the tincture is useful in place of inhalers. I am sure that the powerful pharmaceutical companies losing a significant percentage of inhaler business has nothing to do with this law.

When I was a pimply adolescent looking for psychic pyrotechnics, I found this ad in the back of High Times for legal highs. My friends and I purchased some Lobelia touted as a mild LSD type feeling. Leaving our parents and going on a camping trip, we promptly rolled thick joints of Lobelia which we smoked endlessly. After puking our guts out, we were left with headaches and not so vague feelings of depression. We were so bummed out we canceled the camping trip. The difference between poison and medicine is dosage. Personal note:

almost all of the 15 or so herbs we tried during that time period had similar results.

Lobelia is the herb for stopping smoking with its calming, expectorant, alterative, and nicotine mimicking effects. When making your mixture, add a pinch of Lobelia. If it's not satisfying, add more. I once tried to quit smoking. It was very difficult for me, so I smoked a too strong Lobelia cigarette. It made me dizzy, light headed, and nauseous. However, when I smoked my first cigarette after quitting Tobacco, it made me dizzy, light headed and nauseous. These herbs are very similar in some ways.

Herbs for Calming

Calming herbs are antispasmodic for muscle cramps, sore muscles, menstrual cramps, hiccups, spasms, tight muscles, etc. They are also used for their psychological effects. They are good for anger, fear, pain, anxiety, circular thoughts that go round and round in your head that you can't get rid of, relaxing after a hard day, blues, melancholy, irritability, too much coffee or other stimulants, and circular thoughts that keep coming back to you.

Calming herbs are very good for quitting Marijuana smoking. Many people smoke Marijuana because they want to unwind after work. The constant hustle-bustle of modern life only leaves us a few hours in the evening to relax. Many people are too wound up from work. The only socially acceptable drugs available are alcohol and pharmaceutical tranquilizers that wreak havoc on our bodies, thus the evening Marijuana smoker.

Unfortunately, Marijuana has effects other than just relaxing. Many people become cloudy, paranoid, or shaky from blood sugar imbalances, but it is the only drug they know to take. These people can be helped greatly by calming herbs.

These herbs will relax you without clouding your judgment. You will feel them. They are as strong as Marijuana but with a different effect. It causes a calm clear feeling that will not interfere with the rest of your evening's thoughts. It will relax you and stop the rehashing of the days constant traumas so that you can fall asleep naturally, if you're tired. I find many people try these herbs for this reason and wake up in front of the TV set after smoking these plants. It didn't knock them out. They were just so tired they needed the sleep.

Sometimes people smoke these plants and don't feel anything. You may have to take notice of it consciously. However, if you are irritable and about

to fight with your partner, you will find the effects pronounced.

Other smokable calming herbs worth an honorable mention include Passionflower, *Passiflora* sp., and Hops, *Humulus* sp.

Skullcap, *Scutellaria* sp.

Skullcap is a very good calming herb to smoke. I find that the commercially available *Scutellaria lateriflora* is not very strong as a smoke. Almost all commercially available Skullcap is too dry and stemmy to make a good smoke. The *Scutellaria galericulata* the more common plant found growing wild in the United States is much stronger. It is roughly equivalent in strength to good Marijuana leaf or bud shake. It works in almost all cases. The nice green leaf is easy to roll and blends well with many smoking mixtures. It is one of my standard smoking ingredients.

I have found through blatant experimentation that the desert species of Skullcap, *Scutellaria nana*, is exceptionally strong. We affectionately call it Mad Dog Desert Skullcap. Mad Dog Weed is another common name for Skullcap as this plant was used to treat rabies in the past. Found throughout the Great Basin the small, nearly invisible plant is as strong as the highest quality Marijuana. Unfortunately, it will cloud your head and make you tired unlike most of the other herbs we use. If you live in a desert area you should definitely try your local little Skullcap. This herb is so strong I urge mixing it with other herbs.

Elephant's Head, Parrot's Beak, and Indian Warrior, *Pedicularis* sp.

All of the *Pedicularis'* are tranquilizers and muscle relaxants. They are of varying strengths with Elephant's Head, *Pedicularis groenlandica*, being the mildest. The most outstanding thing about *Pedicularis'* are their flavor. They are the best tasting herbs for smoking I have found. Some are so strong that they rival Mad Dog Desert Skullcap. Many of them form unusual looking groups of flowers that dry into illegal looking buds. Indeed, Elephant's Head dries to beautiful red or purple buds with what appears to be red hairs. Cobrahead, *Pedicularis bracteosa*, dries into green buds that could easily confuse a local peace officer. The effects however are profoundly different.

A student of mine went by herself to collect some Elephant's Head for her smoking mixture. While she picked, she kept munching on the heads. The next thing she knew, she was waking up from a nap and the sun was going down. It is a fine herb indeed.

There is very little reference to these plants in the herbal literature except for Michael Moore's Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West. I did find two other references. One was an Italian article on identification. Another was that the natives in Tibet use their Pedicularis for upset stomachs and kidney problems. Still as I wander through the high mountain meadows enjoying the wonderful gifts of the earth, I find it very hard to believe that the Native Americans in my area did not use this plant.

A number of years back I had a student whose uncle was very woods wise. After a number of classes he visited his uncle. The uncle was impressed with his knowledge, and with a wry grin asked, "But have you tried the Pedicularis yet?" I wondered how the uncle knew about these plants. I found out that he learned of Pedicularis from a Native American friend whose tribe smoked it. There are many uses of plants that have not been recorded even now.

These plants are a welcome addition to any smoking mixture both as flavor and a medicine. Elephant's Head has the best flavor but is the mildest, but every Pedicularis I have tasted has been an excellent smoke.

Flavorings

Sometimes an herbal smoking mixture can be quite bland, or the smoker may like menthol cigarettes. The herbs in this section are good for flavoring. Most are aromatic or good smelling herbs with no system wide effect when smoked.

If you were to smoke these herbs alone full strength, they wouldn't taste good. They may even be irritating this way. Only add a little to the mixture and taste it. Experiment to find your own special flavor and strength. Go light handed at first.

Feel free to go further in experimenting with flavors. Any smelly edible plant might be useful as a flavoring. Look in your spice and tea rack for possibilities like lemon grass, etc.

Mints, *Mentha* sp.

Mints are probably the most accessible and used flavoring agents for smoking mixtures. They impart a menthol flavor. This includes Spearmint, Peppermint, and all the numerous ornamental varieties such as Apple Mint, etc. Remember to go light so as not to irritate your lungs and throat.

Mugwort

Herbaceous *Artemisia* sp. (not shrubs)

Mug means glass; Wort means plant. It's the mug plant used for beer in medieval times. It is also used

today at country fairs and gatherings by the more esoteric beer makers. It replaces hops in the beer formulas.

Mugwort is a very interesting plant deep in historical references. It is often said to promote prophetic dreams. I don't find this to be true all the time. It seems to me that Mugwort intensifies the dreaming process. It all depends on where you are in this process.

If you don't dream, Mugwort will help you to dream, but you may not remember them. If you don't remember your dreams Mugwort will help you to remember them. If you remember your dreams, Mugwort will help you to have conscious dreams. Conscious dreams are dreams where you are aware that you are dreaming and in full control of the situation. If you are consciously dreaming already, the plant will increase the frequency and control.

None of this implies that the dreams will be pleasant. Some people don't remember their dreams for a reason. Mugwort can cause nightmares and restless dreams leading to lack of sleep or poor quality of sleep. I know of an essential oil company that puts a warning on their Artemisia oil: Caution, may cause nightmares.

Certainly, Mugwort can lead to prophetic dreams if that is what you are into. I do not prefer that course of dream work. It is all up to you. One of my long term students feels that Mugwort is the most reality altering of all the psychotropics he's tried. Maybe you will too.

These effects are most pronounced with long term exposure to the herb. Dream pillows, fresh bundles allowed to dry by your bed, and smoking over a period of weeks. You may not always experience the subtle effects with one joint.

You can smoke Mugwort alone, but it's best to use as a flavoring agent because it is strongly aromatic. Mugwort can also be rubbed into a very good consistency as a carrier for the smoking mixture like Mullein but the flavor can overwhelm the mixture.

Internal use of Mugwort has physiological effects on your stomach and reproductive system but this will not transfer through smoking.

Tarragon is a herbaceous Artemisia called Artemisia dranunculus or Dragon Sagewort.

Sagebrush, shrubby Artemisia sp.

Sagebrush is a shrub found growing throughout the desert western United States. It is in the Sunflower family and is not related in any way to the Salvia Sage used in cooking. It has been traditionally used

to purify the environment. It is indeed an anti-bacterial for airborne bacteria. Often found in Sage sticks, and in stores labeled as Sage, it can be used as a flavoring for smoking mixtures. Native people used this plant like Salvia if they lived in an area where there was no Salvia.

Sage including White, Black, and Hummingbird
Salvia sp.

There are many kinds of Salvia Sages. Some are good to smoke as flavors including the white, black, purple and garden Sages. Some are not so pleasant but worth a try. Some of these Sages were used by Native Americans for purification rituals. They are in the mint family and are not related to Artemisia Sagebrush or Mugwort. These are also found in sage sticks.

Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis*

Melissa is an herb often escaped from gardens and easy to find in the Pacific Northwest growing wild in cities. It is a very mild and friendly calming herb that will add a peaceful lemony flavor to any blend.

Yerba Buena *Satureja douglasii*

Yerba Buena is a good herb for flavoring that grows in the coastal west. It should not be confused with peppermint, which is also sometimes called Yerba Buena. It has a menthol flavor that should satisfy those people who like "Kools."

Angelica, *Angelica* sp.

Angelica has many physiological effects when taken internally. When smoked as a flavoring in small amounts, it should have no system wide effects. You can use the root, dried and powdered and thoroughly mixed with the rest of the blend. Feel free to experiment with the leaves and green seeds for different flavor and strengths.

Osha, Oshala, Lovage *Ligusticum* sp.

Ligisticums are yet another very special herb that the Native Americans deemed powerful and sacred. *Ligusticum porteri*, Osha, is called Peyote's little sister. All native *Ligisticums* were held in high regard by the local Natives. As a smoke it is only a flavor. You can use the root, dried and powdered, but I find that the root hairs, not usually used for their medicinal effects, to be the best for flavor.

Clove

A common kitchen spice used with a light hand. Use the powder. Clove cigarettes with Tobacco were very popular for a while. Clove can be very irritating

to the esophagus and lungs. This, together with the exceptionally strong Tobacco found in these imported cigarettes, quickly caused lung and esophageal problems. I have known many singers who have lost their voices in a few weeks of clove cigarette smoking. So feel free to use it, but respect it.

Lavender

Use the flowers and rub them if you wish. I love the smell of lavender but I hate the taste of smoked dried lavender. Perhaps you will love it, feel free to check it out.

Sweet Cicely *Osmorhiza* species

This is another local Pacific Northwest plant with a pleasant aromatic anise flavor. You can use the root dried, powdered if it smells good. Seeds are also useful.

Ginger

Use dried powder, thoroughly mixed with a light hand.

Licorice

Use dried powder, thoroughly mixed with a light hand.

Anise

For those who like the licorice flavor, try these seeds.

Further Experimentation

This area of herbalism is still very unexplored. If you want to experiment further with herbs not mentioned here, check out innocuous edible leafy herbs like Violets, *Viola* sp., Self-Heal, *Prunella vulgaris*, Waterleaf, *Hydrophyllum* sp., and Paintbrush, *Castilleja* sp., to name a few. You may wish to explore plants with names like Indian Tobacco, but be cautious. This common name refers to many plants. Some are not good to smoke. Some were not smoked by Native Americans at all. Yellow Dock is called Indian Tobacco because the old flowers look somewhat like Tobacco in some people's eyes.

Recipes

Standard Smoking Mix

Rubbed Mullein leaf as a base
Kinnikinnik leaf, for body, finely broken
Optionally Manzanita leaf and Pipsissewa for

added body
Optional flavoring herbs to taste

Another Favorite Mix

Rubbed Mullein leaf as a base
Willow Bark, finely cut for body
Skullcap Leaf, for calming effects
Osha Root, finely ground for flavor

Mix thoroughly. Mildly relaxing

To Quit Smoking

Phase 1

Rubbed Mullein leaf as a base
Kinnikinnik leaf, for body, finely broken
Manzanita leaf, for added body, finely broken
Skullcap Leaf, for vitally needed calming effect
Lobelia, as needed for lobeline
Mint, small amounts for menthol cigarette smokers

Phase 2

Stop adding Lobelia
Add Coltsfoot, as needed, not so strong as to cause coughing fits
Increase the Mullein Leaf

Continue to add more Mullein until Phase 3, Mullein alone.

Expectorant Blend

Rubbed Mullein leaf as a base
Coltsfoot, not so strong as to cause coughing fits
Horehound, not so strong as to cause coughing fits
Flavorings optional

This blend is excellent for a general lung cleanse or chest cold, but do not use when coughing up blood, or if it hurts when you breathe.

Mellow Mixture

Skullcap
Parrot's Beak
Elephant's Head to taste

Relaxing, mild and pleasant alternative to Marijuana

Strong Relax

Desert Skullcap
Lobelia - a pinch

This can make you sleepy so do not drive any bulldozers or jumbo jets when smoking.

Too Stoned Blend

Rubbed Mullein Leaf as a base
Calamus Root, small pieces or powder
Elephant's Head Buds, for calming effect and flavor
Coltsfoot, not so strong as to cause coughing fits

This mixture is smoked as an aid to quit a long term Marijuana habit.

Too Expensive Blend

1/2 High Quality Cannabis buds
1/4 Elephant's Head Buds
1/4 Skullcap Leaf

This blend will help with the rising costs of Cannabis. You can substitute the Cannabis buds with any quality Cannabis, and the other herbs will help to stretch it out without diluting its effect.

Ceremonial Smoke

Rubbed Mullein leaf as a base
Fermented Scotch Broom Flowers
Desert Skullcap, just a small amount
Skullcap Leaf
Elephant's Head Leaf
Parrot's Beak Leaf
Osha Root, powdered for flavor

Not an everyday smoke, for vision quests and spiritual pursuits. Use consciously.