

## **Medicinal Desert Plants**

**Creosote Bush:** *Larrea tridentata*

uses: antioxidant, antiseptic, anti-microbial, hair tonic, arthritis, blood, skin, tumors, cysts

used by: Pima, Papago, Seri, Cahuilla

**Mesquite:** *Prosopis julifera, glandulosa, pubescens*

uses: anti-microbial, astringent, demulcent, nutritive, eye wash, fuel, chewing gum, dye

used by: Pima, Papago, Seri

**Prickly Pear:** *Opuntia phaeacantha*

uses: nutritive, demulcent, first aid, anti-inflammatory

used by: Aztex, Pima, Papago, Seri, Navajo

**Ocotillo:** *Fouquieria splendens*

uses: pelvic lymphatic, benign cysts & tumors, shelter, fencing

used by: Pima, Papago, Cahuilla, Apache

**Globe Mallow:** *Sphaeralcea ambigua*

uses: demulcent, colitis, ulcers, sore throats, mild urinary tract irritations

used by: Seri, Pueblo, Navajo

**Mormon Tea:** *Ephedra spp.*

uses: bronchial dilator, decongestant, coffee replacement, stimulant

used by: Pima, Papago, Navajo, Zuni

**Jojoba:** *Simmodia chinensis*

uses: astringent, sore throats, colitis, vaginitis, ulcers, hemorrhoids, coffee replacement

nuts are high in oil, great for skin, scalp & hair

used by: Seri, Pima, Papago

**Brittlebush:** *Encelia farinosa*

uses: analgesic, expectorant, incense

used by: Cahuilla, Mojave, Pima, Papago, Seri

**Buckwheat Bush:** *Eriogonum*

uses: colds, coughs, sore throats

used by: Hopi, Zuni, Pima, Papago, Navajo, Seri

**Bursage:** *Ambrosia deltoidea*

uses: cramps, allergies

used by: Seri

**Desert Mistletoe:** *Phoradendron californicum*

uses: nervine, anti-spasmodic, tonic

used by: Seri, Pima, Papago, Zuni, Navajo

**Juniper:** *Juniperus monosperma*

uses: urinary tract infections, cystitis, saunas, incense

used by: Tewa, Zuni, Navajo, Seri

## ***Medicinal Desert Plants (cont'd.)***

***Desert Barberry:*** *Mahonia trifoliata*

*uses: edible berries, stem, & root bark as a bitter tonic, anti-microbial for skin & intestinal tract, liver tonic, yellow dye.*

*used by: Navajo, Seri*

***Crucifixion Thorn:*** *Castela emoryi*

*uses: inhibits intestinal protozoa*

*used by: Seri*

***Yucca:*** *Yucca spp.*

*uses: anti-inflammatory, urethra, bladder, prostate, shampoo, nutritive, basket crafts*

*used by: Navajo, Zuni, Seri*

***Sagebrush:*** *Artemisia tridentata*

*uses: flu, diaphoretic, fevers, disinfectant, smudging incense*

*used by: Paiute, Zuni, Navajo*

***Agave:*** *Agave spp.*

*uses: indigestion, chronic constipation, gas*

*used by: Papago, Pima, Seri*

***Catclaw:*** *Acacia greggii*

*uses: dystentery, diarrhea, astringent*

*used by: widely used by all Native Americans*

***Ratany:*** *Krameria lanceolata, grayii, parviflora*

*uses: astringent, topical hemostat, sore gums, abscesses, mouth sores, sore throat, diarrhea*

*used by: Papago, Pima*

***Larkspur:*** *Delphinium amabile*

*uses: kills body lice*

*used by: the entire Western world for a hundred years!*

***Jimsonweed, Thornapple:*** *Datura stramonium*

*uses: leaves smoked for bronchial spasms (mix with desert sage) Not for internal use.*

*used by: Pima & Papago*

***Desert Sage:*** *Salvia spp.*

*uses: anti-microbial, astringent, disinfectant, sore throats, sweat baths*

*used by: Cahuilla, Comanche, Navajo*

***Medicinal Plants (continued)***

***Manzanita:*** *Arctostaphylos spp.*  
*uses: urinary tract infections, emetic*  
*used by: Navajo*

***Desert Willow:*** *Chilopsis linearis*  
*uses: antifungal, first aid, sore throats*  
*used by: Navajo, Seri*

***Saguaro:*** *Carnegia gigantea*  
*uses: poultice foe muscle pain*  
*used by: Seri, Papago, Pima*

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# HERBAL PREPARATIONS

## INFUSIONS:

Commonly called “teas” or tisanes, these are easily prepared by steeping the herb, either fresh or dried, in 8 oz. of boiling water. The vessel should be covered for 5-15 minutes to preserve the volatile oils. The usual ratio is 1 teaspoon of dried herb to 8 oz. Hot water, however that varies with the herb being prepared and the intended use. Most measures are made with fingers. Herbs prepared in this fashion are usually aromatic leaves. Mild and flavorful.

## DECOCTIONS:

These preparations are made from the stems or roots of herbs. Preparation involves boiling in a glass or ceramic pot of water until half of the water, used to cover the herbs, is gone. A very strong liquid is obtained which is used primarily for external conditions or with great care for internal circumstances. This preparation can last for several days if refrigerated. May be strong and bitter. Use sparingly.

## TINCTURES:

Alcohol based preparations using leaves, stems or roots in an effort to extract all soluble phytochemicals. The alcohol used should be 40 proof vodka due to its lack of taste and color. A ‘handful’, or an ounce of dried herb to 4 or 5 ounces of vodka is the recommended ratio. All of the herb **MUST** be covered by the liquid even if it changes the ratio. The covered herb should remain in a dark cupboard for 30-60 days before being removed. When removed, decant the liquid off of the herb through a coffee filter if necessary. Keep the filtered liquid in a dark colored bottle with a plastic cap and use as needed. Dropper bottles are the best way to preserve and use a tincture. Extremely strong and concentrated. Lasts indefinitely.

Infusions were used most frequently by the indigenous peoples of the Southwest. A few herbs were prepared as decoctions when a stronger concentration was desired. Tinctures were almost never used.