

How do you formulate an effective formula? Which herbs do you choose that will work together towards the intended outcome? How much do you use of each one? How do you know that they will all work together well?

There are many ways to put an herbal formula together. Different traditions look at formulating in different ways. Here are guidelines from our Western Herbalism tradition. We closely consider these guidelines when choosing which herbs to combine. Intuition also plays an important part, so we always keep this awake and pay attention to it as well.

Keep in mind that one herb can play different roles and have different effects in a formula. It is not necessary to have a different herb for each component of the formula. One herb can often do more than one task.

Once you have your formula formulated it is important to combine the herbs or extracts, and let them sit together for a few hours, if possible, to let the energies synergize and form a cohesive unit.

Components

There are two components of a formula, the Main Herbs and the Supporting Herbs. The Main Herbs are the main part of the formula and the Supporting Herbs make up a smaller portion.

Often the Main Herbs will be 1-2 parts of the formula and
The Supporting herbs will be ½-1 part of the total formula.

1. Main Herbs

A. These are also known as: Chief Herb/s, Activators, Effectors, Carrier Herbs

1. These are the active herbs that address the specific condition or body system that you want to address
2. These herbs have a very specific noticeable impact
3. These herbs carry, or direct, the formula to the desired system or area
4. The actions may come from the whole plant, or just from specific active constituents

2. Supportive Herbs

A. Builders, Tonics, Normalizers, Nourishers,

1. These are the herbs that nourish, feed, build and support a specific body system

2. These are very important and key in any formula, no matter what is being addressed

A. Stimulant

1. These are the herbs that get the formula moving
2. They activate and increase vital action
3. Raise body temperature, to interrupt and lessen pathogenic reproduction
4. Increase body's energy
5. Increase blood flow
 - a. Can bring blood to the surface or increase sweating
6. distributes blood so aids in spreading herb action through-out through increased circulation
~ this may not be appropriate for very directed formulas

C. Astringent

These herbs help with the following

1. Resiliency, for bouncing back
2. Closing up/drying up
3. Rebuilding/toning
4. Pulling together
5. Heating
6. Keeping muscles toned to allow Qi for flow and be utilized
7. They can have a permanent invigorating effect

There are four types of Astringents

1. Tonic
2. Stimulant
3. Sedative
4. Antiseptic

D. Demulcent

1. These herbs are very important to a formula
2. They soothe, calm and relieve
3. They can be used for building or for eliminating
 - a. As a lubricant & soother to mucus membranes
 - b. In the intestines to improve assimilation & elimination
 - c. In the stomach to aid excessive acid absorption

E. Eliminators

1. These are very important to assist the body in eliminating all waste

F. Herbs for a Secondary System or Condition

1. Usually there is a second system that is affected by the imbalance in the primary system, so it is advisable to add herbs to support that system during the time of recovery

Examples

Astringents

1. Blood - External – styptic Witch hazel, plantain, yarrow
– Internal – hemostatic, Yarrow
2. Muscle tissue - to restore tone - Hawthorn – very specific to heart muscle
3. Nerve tissue - Rosemary – stimulant & astringent tonic
- Skullcap – sedative & astringent tonic
4. Skin - Internal – white sage - stop night sweats & excretion
- External – Aloe - causing cells to contract (gums)
- Bayberry bark – tighten pores

Astringent Tonic

To direct the formula to:

1. Bowels – blackberry leaves
2. Deep lungs – wild cherry bark
3. Kidneys – uva ursi
4. Lungs – coltsfoot, for upper respiratory, and light condition
5. Women's Reproductive- raspberry leaf

Stimulants

Primary stimulants:

1. Cayenne
 - a. to build fire & stimulate heat
 - b. quick fire, burns out
 - c. yin condition
 - d. goes directly to heart
 - e. distributes blood, so aids in spreading other herb action through circulation,
 - i. not appropriate for very directed formula

Ginger

- a. builds warmth, fire & heat
- b. steady heat for lasting fire
- c. best for lower organs
 - i. pelvic area, spleen, liver, kidney/bladder, repo organs, stomach, sm intestine

- d. works slowly to heart
- e. pain relief

Peppermint

- a. stomatic
- b. normalizes digestion
- c. strengthen nerves
- d. relax muscles
- e. cleanse blood
- f. expels gas
- g. small dose for longer time
- h. cleanses through blood (fever, flu)

Demulcent

Marshmallow

- a. Kidney/bladder specific
- b. Soothe inflammation
- c. No astringent action - won't stop pus
- d. Uterus, lungs & lg intestines

Licorice Root

Caution: water retention and pressure on kidneys if overused

- a. Chest – esp bronchitis
- b. 'Throat
- c. Intestine, mild laxative
- d. Stomach builder
- e. Adrenal
- f. Urinary
- g. Liver cleansing
- h. Thin and dehydrated

This a list of the systems that are connected to each other and are impacted when one becomes weakened, according to Traditional Chinese Medicine

The times listed are the times of the day that these systems are the most active (again according to TCM).

7-9 am	Stomach – Spleen	9-11 am
11-1 pm	Heart- Small Intestine	1-3 pm
3-5 pm	Bladder – Kidneys	5-7 pm
7-9 pm	Pericardium – Triple Burner	9-11 pm
11-1 am	Gall Bladder – Liver	1-3 am
3-5 am	Lung – Large Intestine	5-7 am