Monastic Medicine



CANOLFAN DDIWYLLIANT CONWY CULTURE CENTRE

















Landfill Disposals Tax Communities Scheme



Introduction from Phillip the Monk

I'm Phillip. It is tiring being a Monk these days, I have to haunt the castle, haunt the church and now I'm here keeping the medieval monastic history of Conwy alive.

My 'fellow monks' moved here in 1186 (834 years ago, I look good for my age, looks at teacher – you must be from around the same time!!). What did we do here? Well we prayed a lot, didn't sleep much and worked hard in the gardens and fishing. We received seeds and information from visiting monks. We sowed crops and planted seeds and learned about how plants could help people when they were sick. Did you know, the princes of Gwynedd thought we were great

and gave us whatever we needed. In return we gave
 them advice and stuck up for them when people
 were mean. The abbey became a mausoleum

(a place for important dead people) for the greatest of the Welsh royal dynasties, even Llywelyn ap lorwerth was buried here. Aberconwy Abbey was important to this area, and we were striking in our unusual white robes. We lived and worked and prayed here until 1283 when King Edward I encouraged us to move to Maenan so he could build Conwy Castle and the walled town.

One of the most important things we did was to make medicines. Many plants have healing properties. We mixed plants and sometimes animal bits together to see if they healed people. Some worked wonders and others were a disaster. A scientist recently discovered one of our medieval manuscripts that had lists of ingredients that we used to make potions. They experimented with one of our recipes and found that it had astonishing antibiotic properties. Now it's being used to fight the superbug MRSA and it may even hold the answer to antibiotics that are becoming ineffective.

That particular medicine was a salve, a bit like a cream that you would use today. We made salves, ointments, scents, rubs, compresses, all sorts of medicines for every disease or injury. Most of the medicines used today contain plants. Aspirin came from willow bark, heart medication was developed from foxgloves and morphine was developed from poppies. You have to be very careful though and study and learn about plants, because some can make you poorly.

Today I thought we'd test your Medieval Medicinal Monk skills. I've harvested and dried some of our wonderful plants from the garden and invite you to make your own medicine.

You're going to make scent bags. All of the plants we have here are safe for you to touch and smell – but no eating! You need to take your time to smell the dried flowers and leaves, it helps if you close your eyes – sniff - and think about how the smell makes you feel. All of these plants have calming and relaxing powers. They are particularly good if you are worried or can't sleep. Some are also good to help you to breathe more easily if you have a cold. They don't all go together well, so sniff and mix carefully.

I'm going to leave you with your instructions. I must appear at the Castle, I will be back in 30 minutes.



Make your Monastic Medicine

Equipment:

1 bagTo put your dried plants in1 labelTo label your ingredients1 penTo write1 piece of paperTo help you work out the amount of each plant to use to add up to 10gBowlTo mix your dried plants
1 penTo write1 piece of paperTo help you work out the amount of each plant to use to add up to 10g
1 piece of paper To help you work out the amount of each plant to use to add up to 10g
to use to add up to 10g
Bowl To mix your dried plants
A nose To smell the dried plants
Patience To take your time and get it just right for you

Method:

You will need a total of 10 grams of plants in each bag. You will need to work out which plants you would like to use and how many spoons of each you will need – use the paper provided for your workings out.

Dried plant	Grams per spoon	Medicinal powers	Latin name
Chamomile	1g	Calming and promotes sleep.	Matricaria chamomilla
Hyssop	2.5g	Clear breathing.	Hyssopus officinalis
Jasmine	2g	Relaxation.	Jasminum
Lavender	2.5g	Calming and promotes sleep.	Lavandula
Lemon balm	2.5g	Relaxation.	Melissa officinalis
Peppermint	1g	Breathing and relieves headaches.	Mentha
Rose	0.5g	Calming and relaxation.	Rosa
Thyme	2.5g	Clear breathing.	Thymus vulgaris

For example:

I would like to use; chamomile, lavender, jasmine and rose.

- If I use one spoon of each the sum is 1 + 2 + 2.5 + 0.5 = 6g.
- I need 10g so 10 6 = 4. I have 4g left.
- I really like the lavender and rose and a spoon of each is
 2.5 + 0.5 = 3g.
- I have 1g left so I'm going to add one more spoon of chamomile.

How do you use your scent bag?

All you need to do is keep it close and rub it gently and sniff. Even better if you breathe in (count to 3 in your head) hold the breath in (count to 2 in your head) breathe out slowly (count to 3 in your head) then hold the out breath (count to 2 in your head) then start again

2 in your head) then start again.

Name your Medieval Medicine.

Think about the medicinal powers of the plants you used. The WordArt and Latin names may help to get your creative juices flowing. When you know what you are going to call your Medicine, create your label. Don't forget you will need to put a list of the ingredients on the label too.

Inspection.

Have your scent bags labelled and ready for Brother Phillip to inspect. Make sure you've tidied up too. Monks don't like mess!

cent

sniff

pouch

calm relax

heal Bag

herh

bag