



## e02-three-ways-herbs-heal

**Rosalee:** [00:00:00] Welcome to the Herbs with Rosalee podcast. I'm your host Rosalee, herbalist, teacher and best-selling author. I created this herbal podcast to share trusted herbal knowledge so that you can get the best results when using herbs for your health. I'm passionate about helping people discover the world of herbalism and natural health, and I'm excited to be your new guide.

[00:00:21] Before we jump into it, if you're new to the podcast, welcome. I love to share recipes and practical information about using herbs in your everyday life. So make sure you're subscribed to the show in your favorite podcast player. And if you enjoyed today's episode, I'd love it if you would leave a five star rating and review. It helps us get the word out about the show.

[00:00:43] All right. Let's jump into it.

[00:00:45] In this episode, I'm sharing three important ways that herbs heal.

[00:00:50] Herbs are powerful medicines. I've seen them bring instant relief to bee stings and other painful injuries. I've seen them heal up surgical wounds so fast that it amazed doctors.

[00:01:00] I've seen them reduce blood pressure and relieve arthritis. I've seen them bring welcome relief to insomniacs and help people to clear up acne to reveal radiant skin underneath. I even credit my own miraculous recovery from a terminal auto-immune disease to herbal medicine. Yes. Herbs are powerful.

[00:01:19] They're accessible. And they're often growing right outside our door. Which begs the question: if herbs are so great, why aren't they more mainstream? Why do we regularly see doctors instead of herbalists? Why

isn't herbalism a recognized system of medicine. Why doesn't insurance cover herbalism? The fact that Western medicine is mainstream and herbalism isn't leads some people to mistakenly believe that Western medicine is naturally superior, that we evolved to have Western medicine because it's better than herbalism.

[00:01:51] That Western medicine went head to head with herbalism is one of the great myths of modern day medicine. When we look at the rise of Western medicine in the early 1900s, and specifically the American medical association and the vast funds of JD Rockefeller, we see that herbal medicine was deliberately sabotaged and erased.

[00:02:14] Prior to the 1900s, many physicians within North America were practicing herbalists. There were entire colleges, lecturing professors, and textbooks dedicated to learning how to use botanical medicines for help and to treat illness. Turning to herbs for everyday health was also more commonplace in the home.

[00:02:34] Within North America herbal traditions were filtered down through generations from native American traditions, African heritage, Europeans and Asians; that's because humans have been in relationship with healing plants for time immemorial. Then in 1899, aspirin was created and patented and JD Rockefeller, sometimes called the richest man to ever live, saw an opportunity to solidify his power.

[00:03:00] Along with the American medical association, the AMA, they systemically and deliberately sabotaged botanical medicine to replace it with their own for-profit schools and patented medicines. So this episode isn't really a history lesson, but if you are interested in history, then I highly recommend learning more about this time period.

[00:03:21] Suffice to say that botanical medicine didn't have a chance against all that power and money. By 1939, the last botanical medicine

college closed and Western medicine cinched its power with antibiotics and the promise of better living through a pill. And then Western medicine went on to do wondrous things, organ transplants, prosthetics, emergency surgery, and so much more.

[00:03:43] No doubt about it. Western medicine can save lives. But Western medicine is obviously limited. Better living through a pill never materialized. Today in the Western world, we face more chronic disease than any humans before us. And those promising pills don't actually cure. Instead, they manage symptoms, sometimes causing more problems along the way, which is something that is cleverly called side effects as a way to brush them aside. But let's be honest. Any effect a pharmaceutical pill has, whether positive or negative, is an effect. Western medicine is now a culture that invisibly shapes those that grow up within it.

[00:04:23] It's a system of beliefs that are commonly accepted as the truth. Anything falling outside of that truth is seen as quackery. That also shapes our expectations of what medicine is and how it works. If you have a headache, you take a pill to get rid of the pain. If you have high cholesterol, you take a pill to reduce cholesterol.

[00:04:42] If you have depression, you take a pill to balance your moods. When people approach herbal medicine for the first time they bring this viewpoint instead of expectations with them. They say, I have a headache. What is good for that? Or I have high cholesterol. What herb lowers high cholesterol? Or what herbs do I take to address my depression?

[00:05:02] Well, approaching herbalism within the viewpoints and expectations of Western medicine almost always leads to disappointment. Herbs aren't pharmaceutical drugs. To get the best results with herbs, we use them with an entirely different approach and that approach is as varied as there are humans. There is no one way to work with herbs, which at one level can make herbs seem more overwhelming or confusing.

[00:05:27] But once we look deeper, the variability within traditions of herbal medicine are also what makes herbalism so powerful. Obviously Western medicine does some things, like emergency medicine, really well. But Western medicine's fantastic ability to treat acute injuries or emergency care does not make Herbalism irrelevant.

[00:05:47] In this episode, I'm going to share three of the ways that I turn to herbs for healing. I'm going to share these within a different framework. That's a different approach than what you typically find in Western medicine. Let's begin with herbs as healing foods. Food as medicine is a favorite saying in alternative health.

[00:06:05] And it sounds so good. Of course we want our food to be supporting our health. Herbs work as healing foods in many different ways. We can simplify this by thinking of quantity, quality and desired effects. And here's what I mean by that. Some of our favorite herbs are food, like in nature. That means we eat them as we would eat vegetables in plentiful amounts and regularly.

[00:06:27] These herbs are typically high in nutrients like vitamins and minerals. Specific examples of this include a bowl full of fresh nettle soup; or Burdock, a common food in Asia eaten as a sauteed veggie. When it comes to food-like herbs, we ideally want to get food-like amounts. Just as we wouldn't expect a lot of benefits from a bite of an Apple or a bite of a carrot, we can't expect a lot from a teaspoon of nettle or a bite of chickweed.

[00:06:55] So in the case of food-like herbs, the amount of a particular herb matters. We want to be intentionally getting a plentiful amount. But nutrient-dense herbs aren't the only way that they can play a role in healing foods. Another way we can turn to foods and herbs as medicine is to diversify our meals.

[00:07:14] My husband and I have a little game that we play. It's called how many sources of phytonutrients are in this meal? I promise it's more fun than it sounds. We started this game many years ago after seeing a lecture by herbalist Dr. Kevin Spellman on the importance of eating lots of different plants in our daily diets.

[00:07:30] In this lecture, he talks about how the diversity of plants in our diet positively impacts our health in many ways, and how humans have co-evolved with plants that our bodies are coded to recognize this wide variety of nutrients. You've probably heard that our pre-agricultural ancestors most likely are hundreds more species of plants than we currently do.

[00:07:50] Dr. Spellman hypothesizes that our rise in chronic illness is being caused by this lack of plant diversity within our modern diets. In fact, the average US diet is pretty dismal when it comes to plants, both in quantity and diversity.

[00:08:05] According to a 2018 CDC report, only 9.3% of adults meet the daily vegetable intake recommendation. That's less than 10% of adults and only 12.2% of adults meet the daily fruit intake recommendation. That's pretty dismal. Not only does this mean that most people are not getting the micronutrients they need, they also are lacking in phytonutrients.

[00:08:27] Both are important. But what I want to highlight right now is phytonutrients. So first let's back up a bit. What are micronutrients? Well, that's a fancy word for vitamins and minerals. So for example, vitamins A, B, C, D, magnesium, calcium. All of those are micronutrients. Phytonutrients, sometimes called phytochemicals are the natural chemicals found in plants.

[00:08:53] While we could quickly list most of the micronutrients, there are over 10,000 known phytonutrients and probably just as many that we don't yet know about. When thinking about micronutrients, we need to think about getting enough of one food to give us an adequate amount of each

nutrient. For example, as mentioned, we know that taking a bite of a carrot isn't going to do a lot for our health, but getting a cup of carrots regularly will likely provide enough beta carotene to our diet.

[00:09:21] When thinking about getting enough phytonutrients in our diet, it's often less about getting enough of one plant and more about getting a little bit of a wide diversity of plants. Dr. Kevin Spelman says he doubts that herbalists even get as many as 10 sources of phytonutrients per day. I hope he's wrong, but I fear he's right.

[00:09:41] It's worth taking a moment to count. How many different plants do you generally consume in a day? Do you get over 10? Spelman says our ancestors got anywhere from 80 to 200 different types of plants in their diets regularly. And while some of us may be getting more than 10 I'm sure, many of us fall short of the diversity that was seen in our ancestral diets.

[00:10:03] Herbs are loaded with beneficial phytonutrients, like antioxidants polyphenols, flavanoids lignans, and many more. In the show notes found @ [herbswithroseleepodcast.com](https://herbswithroseleepodcast.com) I'm sharing what my husband and I call 'regular breakfast' because we eat a variation of this breakfast most days of the week. This breakfast is so delicious.

[00:10:23] I think that's why we can eat it almost every day of the week. And it's nutritious. When we have overnight guests, they often laugh that we eat such a delicious meal and that we call it regular breakfast. As written it has over 15 sources of plants within it. This recipe is easy to make your own. You can substitute your favorite veggies, herbs, spices, et cetera.

[00:10:42] again, you can find that recipe in the show notes found @ [herbswithrosaleepodcasts.com](https://herbswithrosaleepodcasts.com).

[00:10:48] To summarize this section on herbs as food, a rich diversity of phytochemicals is often missing from our diets. And as Dr. Kevin Spelman

says, it's a lack of these nutrients that could be adding to our current uptick in chronic diseases.

[00:11:02] Sitting down to an entire meal of healing foods filled with lots of herbs and spices is powerful medicine, and often can be more effective than simply taking a dropper full of a tincture. So let herbs and food be your medicine by eating lots of nutrient-dense foods in good quantities. And by getting lots of different herbs and spices within each meal to increase your phytonutrient intake as well.

[00:11:25] Next I want to share my thoughts on herbs. As medicine, herbs are powerful medicine. As I shared earlier, how we turn to them as medicine really matters. Herbs aren't a great substitute for pharmaceutical drugs. If we turn to herbs expecting the same outcomes as we do with pharmaceutical drugs, then we'll likely be disappointed.

[00:11:45] All over the world plants are used as medicine in vastly different ways, which is all to say that there's no one way to practice herbal medicine. In this podcast I want to share two ways that herbalism is vastly different from Western medicine. And as you'll see, these two aspects are also at the root of what makes herbalism so powerful.

[00:12:03] The first idea is that you are unique. I realized that may not be a huge revelation for you, but it's a concept often forgotten in the current medical system. Western medicine often has a one-size-fits-all solution for health problems.

[00:12:17] In other words, if 10 people walked into a doctor's office, complaining of eczema, those 10 people will most likely walk out with the same prescription. That's not how it works in herbal medicine. Instead, we recognize that, because you are unique, your path to wellness will also be unique. That's not to say that radically different herbs are used to treat

every case of a skin rash but, assuredly, if 10 people with rashes went to see an herbalist, they would not all walk out with the same herbs.

[00:12:45] Some of the ways we are unique are lifestyle based. Someone could have a skin rash because they tried a new laundry detergent that's causing irritation. Someone else may have a skin rash because of a food intolerance. Obviously those people need dramatically different solutions to address the same complaint.

[00:13:02] Beyond lifestyle there's other ways that make us unique. There's the obvious ones, like age, weight, gender, and sensitivities, but there's also another way we can assess our unique qualities. Herbalists often refer to this as your constitution. The practice of assessing this is called herbal energetics.

[00:13:21] Herbal energetics looks at the four qualities of hot, cold, damp, and dry. You contain a unique blend of these four qualities. Oftentimes people tend to be either more hot or cold and more damp or more dry. You've probably witnessed this countless times in your life. For example, people with more heat often wear less clothing; they're in t-shirts when others around them are in sweaters.

[00:13:44] They like the air conditioner set to a lower temperature and are probably offering a cooler climate in general. People with more coldness are those folks wearing sweaters and are sneaking over to the thermostat to raise up the heat.

[00:13:57] Someone's propensity to hot or cold can change, especially in acute or short-term situations.

[00:14:03] Take a moment with me to imagine it's a blistering hot summer day. The sun is beating down on the earth and the air is permeated with that hot intensity. You can feel the sweat dripping down your back. Your face

feels hot and flushed, your throat's parched. Now in front of you appear two different beverages.

[00:14:24] One beverage is an iced lemonade. The other is a thick and creamy cup of hot steaming cocoa. Which do you choose?

[00:14:32] Okay. I know there are some hardcore chocolate lovers out there that may choose the hot cocoa, but most of us are going to instinctively reach for something cooling and thirst-quenching when we're hot, because that's exactly what we need in that moment to help our body come back into balance.

[00:14:47] The same concept is how we can look at herbal medicine. We evaluate who the person is and their unique energetic qualities of hot, cold, damp, and dry. Then we turn to herbs to help them find balance. If their digestion is running hot, we can work with herbs to cool it down. If the fluids in their body are cold and stagnant, we can reach for herbs that are warming and stimulating.

[00:15:08] I know from my personal experience as an herbal clinician that the approach of choosing herbs for the person, the unique individual, is far more effective than choosing herbs for the disease. It's as simple as shifting from asking, "What herb is good for eczema?" to asking the question, "What herb is good for Erin?"

[00:15:25] If you're interested in learning more about herbal energetics and how to choose the best herbs for you then I have a couple of resources for you. One is my first book, *Alchemy of Herbs*. The beginning chapters go into these concepts more in depth. And that book is filled with herbal chapters to help you put the concepts into practice.

[00:15:43] The other is my free herbal jumpstart program, which helps you choose the best herbs for you. I'll put a link to that in the course show notes, which can be found @ [herbswithroseleepodcast.com](https://herbswithroseleepodcast.com).

[00:15:54] To summarize, using herbs as medicine within herbalism is different than Western medicine in a couple of ways.

[00:16:01] One, we are looking at the individual and the lifestyle they lead and seeing what changes might be needed there. The other is looking at these unique, energetic qualities of hot, cold, damp, and dry, and then using herbs to help balance that person. Okay, lastly, but perhaps most importantly, I want to share about plants as a gateway to nature connection.

[00:16:21] One of the greatest joys and healing abilities of herbs is that it allows us to strengthen our connection to nature. Too often, our modern medicines are pills or artificially colored serums, things that are manufactured in labs, packaged in factories, and then shipped across the world in plastic containers.

[00:16:39] When we turn to herbal medicine, we're working with flowers, seeds, leaves, roots, and barks. These are the healing entities that we can have a direct relationship with from start to finish. The other day, I was having some nerve pain in my right hand. And so of course I turned to herbs, specifically St. John's wort, which is renowned for helping to soothe nerve pain.

[00:17:01] As I reached for my deep ruby red St. John's wort infused oil I'm reminded of the sunny day I ventured out into my garden to harvest those bright yellow buds and flowers. It was a beautiful day.

[00:17:13] I remember harvesting tenderly, being careful not to upset the many foraging bees. I remember watching a hummingbird visit the

honeysuckle growing close by, and I remember how purple my fingers were after harvesting those magical yellow flowers.

[00:17:30] When I pull my bottle of St. John's wort oil off the shelf it's not a commodity or a thing that I simply take as prescribed. It's a reminder of the gifts of the natural world and my place as a caretaker within it. In other words, herbal medicine can be a very different experience than going to the drug store and pulling a bottle of who-knows-what off the shelf.

[00:17:46] Even if you don't make your own herbal medicine, you can still have a relationship to those plants. It can be as simple as spending time with a dandelion or enjoying solitude while nested against your favorite tree.

[00:17:57] Every time I'm with plants, I have the opportunity to feel the awe and wonder of the intricate world around me. As I tend to these plants and work with them as healing foods and medicines, I'm erasing the cultural lie that I grew up with, which is that I'm separate from nature.

[00:18:15] Instead, working directly with plants, I see myself rooted in nature as much as the plants, the insects, the microbes, and even the weather; that line of separation becomes increasingly faint. So much of the travesties of today can be traced to the false narrative that humans are separate from nature, that we can do what we want to the earth without dire consequences.

[00:18:33] I believe that the more people who are connected to the earth, the better chance we have at turning things around. I have a joke that my college major was activism, copying and posting flyers, attending organizational meetings and protests. Those often took higher priority than classes and homework. It was an exhilarating time.

[00:18:51] I was a part of a group of smart, dedicated folks, and we were part of successful campaigns to support indigenous rights, migrant workers, and many environmental causes. But after a while, I began to see that my role was more about putting out fires. As soon as we finished one campaign, there was another travesty starting.

[00:19:08] I was sitting in a jail cell when I realized how I was doing things needed to change. On the one hand, I knew that I'd just been part of a successful protest. We had staged a publicity event. The news crew had arrived. And while I was in the holding cell, I could actually see that our demonstration had made it on the evening news.

[00:19:27] It was good coverage too. In addition to the video shots of us locked down in front of a financial building, they also shared a video clip of the U'wa, the people of Columbia who are asking for solidarity around the world to bring awareness to their plight. The Colombian government and other financial interests wanted to drill for oil on their sacred lands, which would irrevocably harm, not only the land, but also their entire way of life.

[00:19:52] But even as we cheered to see this cause getting the media attention we had hoped for, I also noticed that no one seemed to care. This heart-rending story, which had motivated me and others to take dramatic action, was just a news blip. Moments later, it was over and no one else in that crowded space even glanced at the TV.

[00:20:11] Okay. We were in jail. You could rightfully argue that people had their own problems to deal with in that moment. But I had to wonder, was it any different in other places across the city? How many people were stopping what they were doing to stand with the U'wa? As a young activist, I was already acquainted with apathy.

[00:20:27] I attended lots of protests, marching down the streets, banging drums, singing songs. I passed out flyers. I gave speeches and, ultimately,

always felt like I was preaching to the choir. Most people passing by ignored us while a few would take the initiative to yell insults like “get a job!”. Or “if you don't like it here, then leave.”

[00:20:47] But I could already see I was headed to burnout. As much as I honored and respected activism and still believe in its importance today I knew that I needed to find another way. After college I attended a nature-based school and my life was forever transformed as I strengthened my own connection to the world around me.

[00:21:05] I realized that this is what was missing from so many people's lives. You can tell people that they should care about preserving a wetland, but if that area remains an abstract idea in their minds, it's hard to get people to really care enough to take a stand. But if people are connected to the land, regularly visiting with the plants and birds and insects, and they deeply love that place, they will do everything they can to protect it.

[00:21:30] This podcast will be examining the many ways that plants can heal through nature connection. And if you're interested in strengthening your own nature connection, then you'll enjoy the book I co-authored with Emily Han, *Wild Remedies, how to forage healing foods and craft your own herbal medicine*.

[00:21:45] Plants are powerful beings that can transform our health, our lives, and even expand our minds to see the world in a whole new way. I'm so thrilled that you're listening to the herbs with Rosalee podcast as a way to welcome plants and their healing gifts into your life. Please visit the show notes @ [herbswithrosaleepodcast.com](https://herbswithrosaleepodcast.com) for each episode to get the exclusive community gifts.

[00:22:07] The best way to stay in touch with me is to get my weekly newsletter where I keep you updated on all my herbal offerings. You can join by visiting [herbswithrosaleepodcast.com](https://herbswithrosaleepodcast.com).

[00:22:17]The world needs more people who are connected to the earth and the healing gifts of plants. I'm so glad that you're here for this adventure.

[00:22:24] Thanks for listening.