

A GUIDE TO NOURISHING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM

# Herbs for Stress Relief & Relaxation



Hannah Morano  
[www.sweetbirchherbals.com](http://www.sweetbirchherbals.com)



# Table of Contents

<b>Meet Hannah</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Chapter I: What are Nervines &amp; Adaptogens?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter II: Sourcing Supplies</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter III: Storage &amp; Dosage</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter IV: Ethical Foraging</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter V: Herbs for Stress Relief &amp; Relaxation</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter VI: Recipes to Nourish the Nervous System</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Conclusion: Thank you</b>	<b>16</b>



All material provided on in this book is for informational or educational purposes only, and is not intended as a substitute for the advice provided by your physician



## MEET HANNAH

Hello! I am Hannah Morano, born and raised in Western Massachusetts where I still reside because these hills and streams are my dear friends and I can't imagine spreading my roots anywhere else. Growing up with parents who allowed me to explore the natural world shaped my interest in herbal medicine and plant based healing. I founded Sweet Birch Herbals, a community herbal wellness center in Ashfield, MA in 2014. What drives my passion for herbalism is sharing wisdom and knowledge that empowers individuals to take their health into their own hands with the support of the plants growing in our own backyards.

Tea parties with my grandmother and all my stuffed animals is one of my best memories as a child. Other than being an adult with all the responsibilities that come with running a thriving apothecary and farm, not much has changed. I still serve tea while hosting gatherings, although the attendees are real people.

Herbs have been a major part of my path since I can remember. I hope to inspire others to care for this beautiful earth the way it cares for us.

Building a relationship based in reciprocity and gratitude with the natural world is where healing begins. Sharing these experiences with family, friends and young ones ensures greater connection for future generations.



May this book remind us how to call on the support from our greatest mother of all: the earth. May we honor and respect the gift of living on this planet planet so that future generations may do the same. And, let's have some fun doing it!

*-Hannah Morano*



## CHAPTER I

# What are nervine & adaptogen herbs?

Stress is a natural response the human body has to external experiences that could be potentially harmful. Our nervous systems respond to stress to protect the body from disease, trauma, and injury. This is important for survival, however, stress over a long period of time and in excess can create imbalance, eventually leading to adrenal fatigue and other health challenges.

“Fight or Flight” is the response the sympathetic nervous system has when under stress, which is an important mechanism for staying safe if you are in serious danger. “Rest and Digest” is the action of the parasympathetic nervous system, which allows the body to repair and relax. In addition to self-care practices for relieving stress, there are many herbs, which restore the nervous system and promote relaxation.

Adaptogens are a category of herbs that increase the body's ability to resist the damaging effects of stress and restore normal physiological functioning.

Nervines are a category of herbs that calm the nervous system and promote the “rest and digest” state of being. Many herbs used in sleep formulas are nervines with sedating affects.





## CHAPTER II

# Sourcing supplies

*"Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift." –Robin Wall Kimmerer*

## Let's begin with a kitchen supply list:

- Fine mesh sieve that fits over a cup to strain herbs
- Hot water kettle
- French press which makes it easy to strain teas
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Wooden cutting board
- Glass Jars – ½ pint, pint and quart sizes



## Helpful tips for using herbs in your home:

- Create a portion of your counter and cabinets devoted to herbal projects and tea making.
- Keep your herbs visible or near your tea kettle to remember daily rituals.
- Place sleep tinctures and calming balms near your bed.
- Brew a cup of sleep tea 20 minutes before bed to sip as you read and do your nightly routine.
- Avoid screens or bright lights before bed.
- Read calming books and avoid the news before bed.
- Take breaks throughout the day from tasks to rest, recalibrate and breathe fresh air.





# Where to source quality herbs



Local, organic herbs are the best option because you can build a relationship with the farmer. If you have the space to grow your own then try it! Gardening with friends and family can be a rewarding activity. Even if you only have space for a few pots of herbs, it will give you the opportunity to see the full cycle from seed to harvest to recipe.

## Places that offer organic herbs:

Sweet Birch Herbals, Ashfield MA  
 Foxtrot Herb Farm, Ashfield MA  
 Sawmill Herb Farm, Montague, MA  
 Foster Farm Botanicals, VT  
 Mountain Rose Herbs  
 Starwest Botanicals  
 Frontier Herbs  
 Your local Food Co-op's bulk section

## Dried Herbs for Making Teas to have in your Medicine Cabinet:

- Ashwagandha (aids sleep, adaptogen)
- Catnip (for irritability, fevers, calm)
- Chamomile (relives bloating, restlessness, sleep aid)
- Eleuthero (builds energy & resiliency)
- Linden (grief support during hard times)
- Motherwort (anxiety & facing fears)
- Lavender (for calming irritability, sleep)
- Lemon Balm (opens the heart to joy)
- Milky Oat Tops (repairs damaged nerves)
- Passionflower (calms the mind)
- Peppermint (calms the nerves)
- Rose (soothes a broken heart, despair)
- Tulsi Holy Basil (softens harsh thoughts)

*Source local and organic ingredients when possible.*



## CHAPTER III

# Storage & Dosage

## How long do herbs last?

- Dried powders and herbs last about 1-2 years if stored in an airtight container out of sunlight.
- Tinctures made with alcohol last 3-5 years if stored out of sunlight and 1-2 years if made with vegetable glycerine or apple cider vinegar.
- Syrups made with honey last about a month in the fridge and up to 6 months if there is a preservative added such as apple cider vinegar or alcohol.
- Herbal honeys last 3-5 years if made with dried herbs.
- When in doubt, toss it out.

## What are tinctures?

Tinctures or extracts are herbal concentrates usually made in alcohol or vegetable glycerin. They are quick acting, convenient and small bottles which makes them easier for travel. They have a long shelf life and only a small amount is needed because they are so concentrated. Tinctures are also a great option for parents who don't have time to make tea infusions each day.



## Dosages:

*Tinctures* – 1 drop per 2 lbs of body weight, so a 50 pound child would get 25 drops every 2-4 hours depending on the severity of the issue. Adult recommended dose is 2-3 dropperfuls up to 4 x daily. It can be given diluted in ¼ cup of water, juice, or tea.

*Teas* – Children: 1-2 cups every 2-4 hours. Adult dose is 2-3 cups every 2-4 hours. Be sure to also drink plenty of water as well.

*Syrups* – Children: 1-2 teaspoons every 2-4 hours. Adults: 1-2 tablespoons every 2-4 hours.





## CHAPTER IV

# Ethical foraging & harvesting



Taking a walk in the woods or field to ID plants and learn which ones are safe is an enriching activity. Here are some tips on ethical harvesting and foraging.

- Be 100% sure a plant is edible before consuming it.
- I.D. poisonous and irritation causing plants such as poison ivy so you learn what not to touch.
- Ask the plant's permission, listen, and wait patiently. You may hear or feel a “yes” or “no.” This skill takes time, but slowing down in this busy culture also aids stress relief.
- Give back with a song, gift, thank you, or anything from your heart to show gratitude.
- Only take what you need and leave the rest for others so the plant can flourish.
- Never take more than 10% of what is growing so the plants and mushrooms can reproduce.



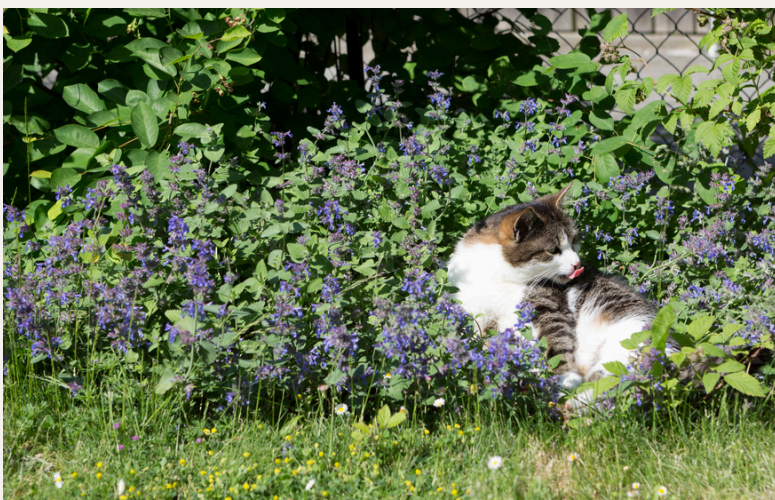
## CHAPTER V

# Herbs for Stress Relief & Relaxation



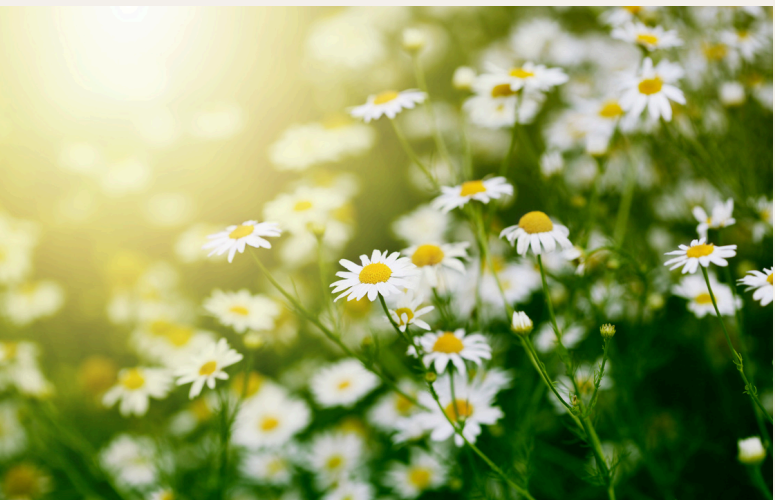
## ASHWAGANDHA ROOT

Calming and strengthening the nervous system without over-stimulating. Effective for nervousness and depleted conditions: anxiety, nervous exhaustion, impaired memory, insomnia, ADHD, and chronic debilitation due to physical and mental over-work. Calms the mind and promotes a deep, restful sleep. Use as tincture or powder. Caution: pregnancy and allergies to nightshades.



## CATNIP

Calming mint family herb not only for cats! Connects the digestive system to the nervous system for tummy troubles due to stress. Safe for kids especially when teething pair with chamomile. Drink as tea or tincture. Can be bitter if steeped more than 8 minutes.



## CHAMOMILE

Soothes digestive upset, bloating, and irritability overall. Grounding due to its mildly bitter taste. Pair with lavender and catnip for a calming cup of tea. Sip after dinner and before bed. Can be bitter if steeped more than 8 minutes.



## ELEUTHERO ROOT

Another adaptogenic root to tone the nervous system and build energy from within. It is in the ginseng family, but not stimulating. Take as tincture or powder daily for at least 3 months to build up adrenals and kidney yin reserves.



## LINDEN

Eases anxiety, soothes irritation in digestive tract, dilates blood vessels, relieves headaches, stimulates circulatory system and removes excess heat from body. There are stories of grieving women climbing into the trees because the sweet smell of a flowering linden is very soothing to a broken heart.

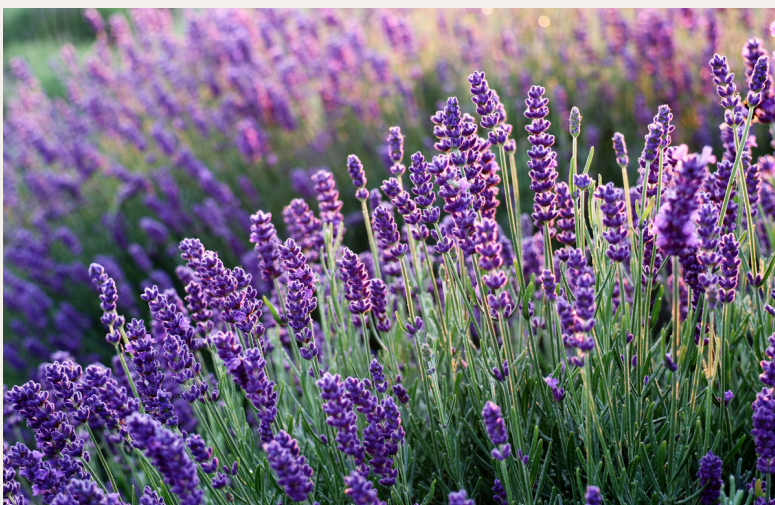


# Herbs for Stress Relief & Relaxation cont.



## MOTHERWORT

Excellent connector herb between nervous system, heart, and reproductive system. Anti-anxiety, calmative. Resolves stress. Relives liver constraint. Relieves PMS and moves blood. Motherwort is cooling and bitter, which delivers us out of our minds and into our hearts. Take as tincture. Do not take when pregnant.



## LAVENDER

Softens a busy mind, calms the spirit and aids digestion. The essential oil can be used as a room spray, near the bed, and in headache relief balms. Pair the tea with chamomile, catnip and lemon balm. Tincture is delicious in glycerine. Place a bundle above your bed for restful sleep.



## LEMON BALM

A heart gladdener, restores and balances nervous system, chronic fatigue, shock, brightens and clears the mind, anxiety, depression, irritability, restlessness, nervous palpitations, ADD, ADHD, spirit sickness, hyperthyroidism, shingles, neuralgia. Useful for recovering alcoholics, smokers, PTSD.



## MILKY OAT TOPS

These immature oat tops are food for the nervous system. Best if used for a long period of time to see results. Calms and strengthens nerves that have been exhausted due to long periods of stress. Simmer 10 minutes, then steep tea for 4-8 hours. Pairs well with nettles, red clover, alfalfa and red raspberry leaf for a mineral rich tonic.



## PASSIONFLOWER

Gorgeous purple flower that vines upward, growing widely in the tropics but will grow in the northeast as an annual. Mildly sedating, super calming and washes troubles away. Take as tincture or tea for sleep or during day to soothe anxiety. The bees love the flowers so sit by them to feel the calming hum.

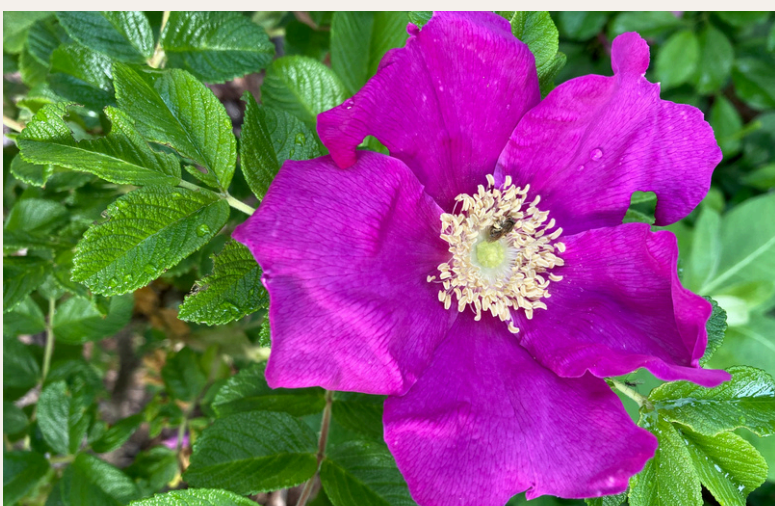


# Herbs for Stress Relief & Relaxation cont.



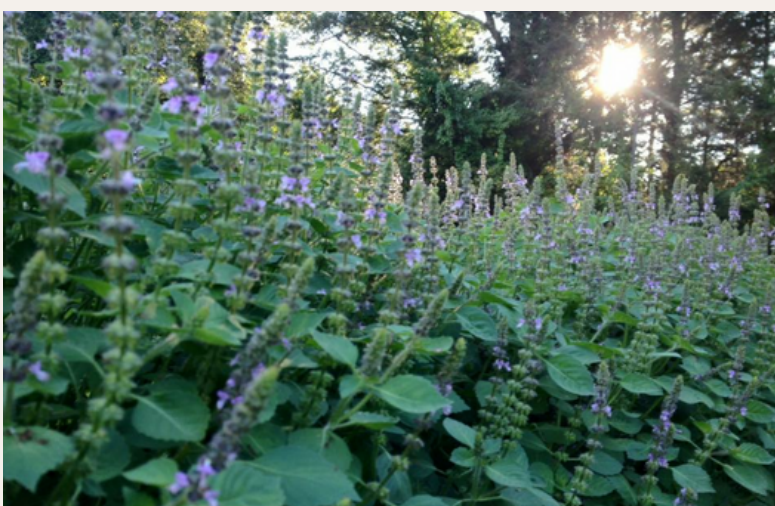
## PEPPERMINT

The mint family has an affinity for our nervous systems and aids digestion. They are easy to grow and have been with humans for thousands of years. Mint relieves bloating, calms the mind, and clears stagnant energy. Pair with lavender, lemon balm and chamomile.



## ROSE

Notice how roses have thorns to protect themselves? Well, we need boundaries, too. Rose models beauty, love and heart opening, while also setting healthy boundaries. Rose soothes the emotional heart, lifts the mood, relieves pelvic congestion, PMS, irregular menses, protects the liver, relieves heartburn, and purifies the blood. Visit the beach in the summer to sit with the roses and come home to yourself.



## TULSI HOLY BASIL

Heart supportive adaptogen, harmonizer, balancing "elixir of life" promotes longevity according to Ayurveda. If you are a gardener and have space, I strongly suggest growing Tulsi to attract pollinators. Tulsi tea takes the edge off immediately. Tea, tincture, syrup, glycerite, really any way you prepare tulsi is divine.

Always check with a medical professional  
and herbalist before taking herbs.



## CHAPTER VI

# Relaxing Recipes



## Heart Soothing Syrup

Hawthorn Berries (4 oz. dried)  
Rose Hips (1 oz. dried)  
Linden Leaf & Flower (1 oz. dried)  
Rose Petals (1 oz. dried)  
Cinnamon (4 sticks)  
Ginger (2 inch root fresh)  
Raw honey 2 Cups  
2 Quarts of Spring or Well Water (non chlorinated)  
Apple Cider Vinegar or Brandy (optional) for preservation 1 Cup



Kitchen Equipment: 2 pots, strainer, pitcher and funnel. Labels and ribbon to decorate your jars. 12 bottles

Makes roughly (12) 4 oz. bottles

To make: Combine all spices and herbs into water in a saucepan and bring to a boil with the lid on, then remove the lid, reduce heat, simmer on low for about 30–45 minutes until some of the water has evaporated. Strain the berries and herbs through a fine mesh sieve into another pot. Let cool below 140 degrees and add honey, to avoid killing any of the natural enzymes. Stir well. If you prefer sweeter, add more honey. Add brandy or apple cider vinegar to preserve the syrup for up to 3 months (optional). Without a preservative it will last about one month in the fridge. Bottle the syrup and decorate with ribbons and handmade labels if you're giving them away as gifts (which is so fun!).

Uses: Take 2–3 per day mixed in water, tea, or by the spoonful. I like adding it into warm water and sipping it when my heart feels heavy. Or in the summer add to seltzer for making mocktails.





## RECIPES CONT.

### Lavender Rose Honey

3 T lavender buds (organic)  
 3 T red rose petals (organic)  
 1 pint Local Raw Honey

To Make: Fill a pint jar loosely with the lavender and rose– do not pack them in tight. Pour honey over the herbs to cover entirely– it's fine if some plant material floats to the top, just make sure they are coated in honey. Let the mixture sit for 2 weeks minimum out of direct sunlight. Strain by gently warming the honey until it is viscous enough to strain, but do not boil it! An herbal honey lasts at least 2 years, or longer if kept in the fridge. Spread on toast, apples, or in your tea for a calming addition!

Uses: Roses lift the spirit and bring tranquility. Lavender calms the mind and is a digestive aid Raw honey is naturally antimicrobial and prevents seasonal allergies. I recommend adding the herbal honey to your bedtime tea or anytime you need a lift to your spirit!

Other herbs commonly infused in honey include: Sage, Tulsi Holy Basil, Thyme, Bee Balm, and Rosemary.



### Tulsi Rose Sipping Cordial

Tulsi Holy Basil (leaf & flower)  
 Wild Rose or Rosa rugosa (flowers)  
 Raw Honey  
 Apple Cider Vinegar or Brandy



To make: Harvest your herbs on a sunny day and do not wash. We want to limit the amount of moisture going into the preparation. If using dried herbs, only fill the jar 1/4 of the way.

Chop up the fresh herb and fill your jar loosely to the top, do not pack it. Cover the herbs half in Apple Cider Vinegar or Brandy and ½ raw honey so that it is a 50:50 mixture. Place the lid on with wax paper in between jar and lid. Shake well to fully immerse the herbs. Label with date, name, and location. Let the elixir sit for 2–4 weeks minimum out of sunlight, shaking it once/ week. When it's ready, strain the herbs out through a sieve or cheesecloth. Enjoy!

Uses: Take 1 tablespoon of Tulsi Rose Elixir up to 3 X/day when you feel like relaxing or if you're coming down with a cold. Tulsi and Rose calm the nervous system, open the heart, and support the immune system.



## RECIPES CONT.

### Rest & Digest Tea

Lavender 2 parts  
Lemon Balm 2 parts  
Tusi Holy Basil 1 part  
Mint 1 part



Combine herbs into a bowl and mix well. Store in an airtight container. Use 1 tsp. of herbs per cup of boiling water. Steep covered 5 minutes, strain and let cool to room temperature. Add honey to taste. I like to make tea time a ritual for slowing down and being present. Read a book, stare out the window, journal, whatever it takes to ground and center yourself.



### Sleep Deep Tincture

Choose the plants that call to you for aiding sleep. If fresh, chop them up finely and loosely pack them into a jar. If using dried herbs, fill the jar 1/3 of the way with the herbs.

Cover your herbs with an alcohol that is at least 30%. Or use vegetable glycerine.

Stir well to be sure the plant material is covered in your liquid.

Label with name, date, when ready, where the herbs are from and what it is for: Sleep Tincture.

Let the tincture infuse in a dark place for 6 weeks. If using glycerine, warm the tincture in a double boiler on low for 6-12 hours before letting it sit for 6 weeks.

#### Plants I suggest using in a sleep tincture:

California Poppy  
Catnip  
Chamomile  
Hops  
Passionflower  
Skullcap  
Wild Lettuce



# RECIPES CONT.

## Adaptogenic Energy Bites

According to Ayurveda, there is a nourishing substance in the body that governs vitality. Ojas (“oh-jas”), which translates literally as “vigor,” provides support for immunity, digestion, mood, and sleep. These truffles are packed with foods that replenish the body’s supply of ojas. Here are my two favorite kinds.

### Coconut Spice

Ingredients: 1 lb raw almonds, sprouted and peeled, 4 oz medjool dates, pitted, 2 Tbsp ghee, 1 Tbsp maple syrup, ½ cup dried unsweetened shredded coconut + extra for rolling, 1 vanilla bean – insides scraped out ¼ tsp salt, 1 TBL eleuthero powder, 2 tsp powdered ginger, 2 tsp cardamom, 1 tsp cinnamon

### Cacao

Ingredients: 1 lb raw almonds, sprouted and peeled, 4 oz medjool dates, pitted, ¼ cup raw cacao + extra for dusting, 2 Tbsp ghee, 1 Tbsp maple syrup, 1 vanilla bean – insides scraped out, ¼ tsp salt, 1 TBL ashwagandha powder. Directions: Soak almonds 8 hours to sprout, slip off the skins, and rinse.

Directions: place ingredients in a food processor and pulse until the mixture has an even consistency. If it does not hold together, add more ghee. Roll into balls 1 inch in diameter. For Coconut Spice truffles: roll balls in extra coconut. For Cacao truffles: dust with extra cacao powder.





## CONCLUSION

# Thank you for reading

The plants are so generous. When I am with them, I feel they are boasting with joy. They want to help! That is how I feel in writing this e-book for you.

I hope it offers inspiration for finding more balance and calm in your life. With all the heart ache in the world, we can always turn to the plants for insight. They are our ancestors and have been with us since the beginning.

Be present with them while brewing your teas and blending formulas. Breathe into your abdomen. Fill your heart with gratitude. Ask the plants for support in whatever way you need in this moment. Let the tears flow if they rise. Each sip of tea is a new beginning, a “yes” to your inner well-being.

Please reach out with any questions.

I make a variety of small batch organic products for sale on my website that are geared toward stress relief, sleep, relaxation and replenishing the adrenals. I also offer consultations in person and virtually.

May your journey with the plants be filled with wonder, joy, awe and curiosity.

