

Calendula Salve Recipes
JoAnne Dennee
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Dear Kindergarten Colleagues,

So many of you have recently expressed an interest in a workshop on kindergarten medicinals that I was inspired to reorganize my notes for you. Enclosed you will find Calendula Salve recipes which I have used in my kindergarten. I have included recipes for stove top preparation and a solar infusion. Each suits a particular situation better. Both require time, devotion and focused attention. Both give a wonderful, rich experience and a lovely end product.

The solar infusion requires assurance of warm, sunny weather over several weeks while the oil is imbued with qualities of the sun. The infusion method gives the children the added picture of the sun's blessing and warmth and an experience of a relationship developing over time. It invites one to witness a process of becoming. It is reminiscent of a time long ago when women actively embraced the rituals of healer. The solar-infusion can take place either indoors on a warm, sunny southern windowsill or outdoors in the garden on a large flat stone for a minimum of two weeks. Steeping longer creates a stronger infusion. The stovetop preparation might be more practical depending on the weather and the duration of your program.

Before entering into the specifics of each recipe, I offer a few thoughts with regards to a fuller experience, including planting and harvesting calendula. While I make calendula salve during Michaelmas, the process is begun in the Spring.

Planting - Children sow calendula seeds immediately after the last spring frost here in Vermont. They sow fifteen to two dozen plants per class - in the garden, container garden oak barrels, or window boxes. (Since last year's Michaelmas harvest these seeds have lain in waiting on the nature table, in marigold-dyed pouches, entrusted to Mother Earth's care.)

Care - During the summer the teacher and the families each take a week to care for the calendula plants - watering, weeding, but most importantly, dead heading (removing spent blossoms) at least twice a week. This practice insures continued blossoming. Here in Vermont the plants do well until Michaelmas and even bloom until the hardest frost. (In hot zones it might be necessary to prune back the sluggishly, blossoming calendula plants to six inches in height in August or late July. New growth will resume so they can be harvested when children return to school.)

Harvesting - Autumn brings the children back to school so that they may harvest some flowers for the nature table and even sprinkle calendula petals into the snack rice or salad. Families begin their search for the tiny recycled jar which will hold the calendula salve. I recommend ajar shallow enough in depth to allow a child's finger to scrape the bottom of the container, gathering up each precious drop of salve. A jar with a golden lid ceremoniously preserves this treasured preparation.

Seed Saving - In the garden, the dead-headed calendula blossoms are observed carefully by the children. When fully dried they appear brown and crescent moon-shaped seeds might even curl more deeply as if to begin to spiral. These moisture-free seeds are ripe for sowing into fertile ground in autumn (so they over-winter and self germinate next spring) or saving until spring. To save seeds, place thoroughly dried seeds in a lidded box or container such as a vitamin jar. Then a seed bundle must be created. Marigolds are picked to dye cotton, seed-saving pouches. When pouches have dried, seeds are tucked safely within and secured shut with a red ribbon. They are placed in Mother Earth's keeping on the nature table until spring.

Salve Making - On yet another festive autumn day on or near Michaelmas, the calendula flowers are harvested. The salve is prepared and the tiny golden capped jars are carried home in proud hands. The cycle is complete when the child or parent dabs the first bit of salve onto the scrape or chap, and the healing substance of the plant is met with the child's gesture of gratitude and awe.

I hope you find working with calendula fulfilling. Please feel free to inform me of any challenges, inspiring changes, verses, stories or songs that might more fully express this work. If you really enjoy these recipes and would like additional herbal activity recipes, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Yours for children,

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CALENDULA HEALING SALVE

A Stovetop Preparation

Uses: Regenerates tissue! Apply to chapped hands all winter. Use for burns, scrapes, or on diaper area. A wonderful salve for garden-worked hands.

2-3 cups Calendula Petals (harvest blossoms after dew dries and before noon)
1 cup Olive Oil (is antibacterial and goes rancid more slowly than other oils)
1/4 cup or 2 oz. Beeswax (chips melt more readily)

Optional:

several drops Rose or Lavender Oil (adds nice scent, calming)
1 oz. Lanolin (makes salve creamier, but some children react to this)
1/2 oz. Glycerin (makes salve creamier, compare to above recipe to see which you prefer)

* Recipe can be increased proportionately for larger quantities *

1. Use small gathering baskets to pick moisture-free calendula flowers on a sunny morning. Take time to enjoy the full rich color, form and delicate scent of the flowers. As children remove petals into the stainless pan a sticky flower residue will be their first introduction to the plant's hidden qualities.

2. Add olive oil to the pan and place over the lowest possible heat. Stir rhythmically as the oil heats to avoid "cooking" the petals in over-heated oil. Small bubbles may form on the bottom of the pan. This is as "hot" as the oil should get. Stir to distribute warmth throughout the calendula oil. Continue for a total of 1 to 2 hours. This task may be divided over two days time if cooled and covered tightly between beatings. (I often set aside a "little bit" of the petals so that each child may sprinkle some into the oil when it is their turn to stir.) Hum, sing as children take turns stirring their love into the medicine oil.

"Round and round the Earth is turning, turning round and round to morning, and from morning round to night."

3. Allow calendula oil to cool to the point where the calendula petals can be strained from the oil, pouring it through (unbleached) cheesecloth. Twist cheesecloth full of oily petals into a bundle and secure with a twist tie or string.

4. Use a wooden spoon to press oil free through the cheesecloth. I find a stainless steel mesh strainer helpful. The cheesecloth is placed in the mesh strainer over a bowl as children press oil out of calendula flowers. It takes a fair amount of pressing to remove every precious spoonful of amber-colored calendula oil. It is also a wonderful opportunity for the children to be dabbed with the oily cheesecloth and rub or massage the warm oil into their chapped hands, knees, elbows.

5. In order to blend oil with melted beeswax both must be similar temperatures. Return calendula oil to pan to be gently warmed again while beeswax is melted over a double burner, but not directly over heat as it is highly flammable. When wax is melted and close to the temperature of the oil, pour wax into oil. When completely unified remove from heat. Pour into lipped measuring cup and then into small sterilized jars. Allow children to observe salve “setting up” over the next ten minutes as they decorate/illustrate labels for their jar. After cooled and set, cap jars with lids and adhere labels. Allow to cool another 10 minutes before handling. Store in cool conditions free from direct sunlight and heat.

End with a song, verse, or gratitude blessing.

EQUIPMENT:

- harvest baskets
- stainless steel pan
- spatula
- wooden spoon
- stove top or double-burner hot plate
- double boiler for melting beeswax
- cheesecloth (unbleached, if possible)
- twist tie or string
- mesh stainless steel strainer and a bowl to fit strainer in
- lipped measuring cup for pouring oil into tiny jars
- small, lidded jars such as jelly or honey sample jars. Be sure children's fingers can reach bottom of jar to remove every precious drop of salve. Amber or cobalt jars protect salve, but do not allow children to see the true color or setting up of salve.
- tiny paper labels and colored pencils for making labels (calendula colored scraps of painting paper make nice labels too)
- clear tape for adhering labels

CALENDULA HEALING SALVE ***A Solar Infusion Preparation***

Day 1 - Harvest 3 cups moisture-free calendula blossoms after dew dries, before noon. Hull calendula petals into a harvest basket. Enjoy the sticky, healing residue. Place petals into a sterilized pint glass jar with tight sealing lid. Add 1 cup organic olive oil. Remove air pockets by poking gently with the handle of the wooden spoon or a chopstick. Cover with the lid. Place in the sun on a windowsill, or outdoors on a stone in a southern location. Sing a song, say a verse or blessing over the calendula petals.

Day 2-14 - Visit the calendula oil daily. Observe, feel warmth in the jar. Turn contents in jar. Sing a song, verse, or blessing.

Day 14 - Remove oil from its sunny resting place. Strain oil from the calendula using a wooden spoon, pressing through the unbleached cheesecloth placed in the stainless steel strainer over a bowl. (Keep some calendula oil for use after showering or going to the beach. Just pour into a tiny glass bottle. Add a drop or two of rose or lavender oil, if desired. Store oil bottle in a cool location.)

To prepare calendula salve melt 1/4 cup or 2 oz. beeswax in a double burner, gently warm calendula oil to a temperature similar to beeswax, and add wax to warm oil. When blended, stir in several drops of rose or lavender oil, 1 oz. lanolin, or 1/2 oz. glycerin, if desired.

- Pour warm calendula mixture into tiny, sterile jars.
- Prepare paper labels (using dried pressed calendula petals or colored pencil illustrations, on calendula-colored painting paper) while children observe salve “setting up” during the cooling process.
- Adhere labels.
- Cover with lids. Take care that children do not handle hot jars for 10 minutes.
- Celebrate with a verse, song, blessing.
- To insure that mold is not given birth in either infusion method it is important that calendula is **dry** when harvested. Check the infusion for a dark, cloudy formation in bottom of the jar. **Do not use cloudy oils.** Repeat process until successful. If infusing in a sunny window, use cheesecloth instead of a solid lid to cap infusion. This allows moisture to evaporate from oil.