



What about using dried herbs in sprays?

Posted by [Debbie Lienhart](#)

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[Debbie Lienhart](#)

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January 10, 2013 07:34AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 3

I was in Michael's CSFA workshops last fall and am excited to use the holistic sprays in my orchards and nursery this year. I think some of our nursery customers will be interested in them as well, but most don't have comfrey, nettles, and horsetail already growing in their yards.

Would decoctions of dried herbs work in the sprays if fresh plant material isn't available?

Thanks,

Debbie

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[Michael Phillips](#)

[Re: What about using dried herbs in sprays?](#)

January 10, 2013 04:47PM

Moderator

Registered: 11 years ago

Posts: 621

An herbal infusion of nettles, comfrey, and horsetail -- whether using dried or fresh plant material -- will draw out the water-soluble constituents in those herbs. That word *infusion* implies pouring very hot water over the herb to initiate the extraction and then letting things sit, which in the case of an orchard spray should be a 7 to 10 day fermentation period in order to make the constituents more bioavailable for plant uptake. Biodynamic growers indeed do use dried horsetail when applying an equisetum tea in early spring (BD #508, its said, is used to *reduce the effects of excessive water around plants that would lead to fungus*) as this wetland plant at this early point in the season at hand has not yet reached the necessary growth stage for medicinal harvest .

Which brings us to a very important herbal tenet. The right stage to harvest an herb for medicinal (and thus basically nutritional) purpose is when the desired constituents are at optimal levels. Nettle offers numerous virtues for garden and orchard use both in its green lush stage and in its seed stage. My desire to have a silica-rich tea in the month following petal fall ties perfectly to nettle coming into seed (when silica levels in nettle rise appreciably) at that same point in the growing season and thus I use fresh plant material. Similarly, with *Equisetum arvense*, silica levels in horsetail skyrocket up when the fronds flatten to a horizontal position, and yes, that happens in that same month (plus) following petal fall when I'm looking to up the "cuticle defense" by increasing silica levels in the exudate covering on both leaf and fruitlets. And thus I use fresh plant material. Garlic scapes are removed about this same time, and these too go in the tea bucket to facilitate plant cell absorption. Comfrey's moment in the sun could almost be described as a continuous green lush stage, with the flowering point perhaps the most ideal for available calcium content. I scythe this plant at random times so it's a fair bet I can find optimal nutritional potency anytime from late spring on. And thus again I use fresh plant material.

So yes, Debbie, you can certainly use dried herbs, noting that often what we need in the growing season is there when it's actually needed.

Edited 2 time(s). Last edit at 01/14/2013 03:25AM by Michael Phillips.

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[Debbie Lienhart](#)

[Re: What about using dried herbs in sprays?](#)

January 11, 2013 06:24AM

Registered: 10 years ago

Posts: 3

Thank you for the extensive reply; that answers my question completely! And it's nice to find a good use for nettles that have gone too long to eat :-)

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