

# Tisane



*ti·sane* ti-'zan, -'zän, n.

*Etymology:* Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin *ptisana*, from Greek *ptisanē*, literally, crushed barley, from *ptissein* to crush - *Date:* 14th century : an infusion (as of dried herbs) used as a beverage or for medicinal effects

## HEADLINES

Pellitory of the Wall

Dying (with the "Y")

News from Kingdom Twelfth Night

### Mission Statement:

The goal of the Eastern Kingdom Herbalists and Apothecaries' Guild is to encourage study, teaching and practice of medieval herb uses, as well as study of medieval apothecary and pharmacy practice, in the East Kingdom. The Guild should serve as a conduit for herbalists and apothecaries in the kingdom to communicate with and learn from each other, and to disseminate knowledge about medieval herbalism and pharmacy to others.

## Report from the Agitator:

I am pleased to announce that the following people contributed items to our tithes at Twelfth Night:

- Hedwigis: a basket of herbal salves and sachets
- Carowyn Silveroak: a bag of sachets
- Johanna Le Mercer: 16 sachet sacks, which we filled with Ram's Little Dodoen Sleep Pillow mixture, confined in muslin teabags contributed by Mistress Lettice Peyton and Corwin Ravenwing.
- Mistress Lettice Peyton: two bottles of lotion
- Brianna MacBain: assorted salves and lotions
- Sulis - a basket of assorted products, including bath herbs
- Eisental Herbal Conspiracy: caraway, fennel and coriander comfits, sage tooth scrub, breath freshening chew, carminative cordial, queen of hungary water, ginger syrup, Harpestrang manuscript mustard

To get on our mailing list, e-mail to [joanne@jafath.com](mailto:joanne@jafath.com) or drop an old-fashioned note to the return address on the mailer. If you are on line, join us on the sca-herbalist mailing list (go to [www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist](http://www.yahogroups.com/subscribe/sca-herbalist) to sign up) or the East-specific EK-Herb (sign up from [www.eastkingdom.org/herb](http://www.eastkingdom.org/herb)).

While you're on line, take a look at our website at [www.eastkingdom.org/herb](http://www.eastkingdom.org/herb)

Do you have a favorite herb, gardening tip, historical tidbit, or recipe? Maybe a review of a book you think the world should share? That's perfect for this newsletter — send it to the Chronicler!

# pellitory of the wall

*Parietaria diffusa*  
Lichwort

“Pellitory of the Wall” sounds like someone’s persona name, but in fact it refers to a common weed still used in modern times. A member of the nettle family, it’s one of those tiresome plants that produce their seeds in “stickers” to go home on your clothes.

According to Culpeper,

*This riseth up with many brownish, red, tender and weak, clear, and almost transparent stalks about two foot high, upon which grow at the several Joynts, two Leavs somewhat broad and long, of a dark green colour, which afterwards turn brownish, smooth on the edges, but rough and hairy as the Stalks are also: At the Joynts with the Leavs from the middle of the Stalks upwards, wher it spreadeth into some branches, stand many smal pale, purplish Flowers, in hairy rough Heads or Husks; after which come smal black and rough Seed, which will stick to any cloth or Garment that shall touch it. The Root is somewhat long with many smal Fibres thereat, of a dark reddish colour, which abideth the Winter, although the Stalks and Leavs perish and spring afresh every yeer.*

*It groweth wild generally through this Land, about the borders of Fields, and by the sides of Walls, and among Rubbish; It will endure well being brought into Gardens, and planted on the shady side, where it will spring of its own sowing.*

Culpeper’s lists of uses is far longer than his description of its growing habit, including coughs, wheezing, kidney stones, “pains of the mother”, toothache, skin problems including sunburn, tinnitus, burns and tumors, ulcers, falling hair, gout, and bruises.

Moving forward in time, *A Modern Herbal* lists it as diuretic, laxative, refrigerant and slightly demulcent. “a most efficacious remedy for stone in the bladder, gravel, dropsy, stricture and other urinary complaints.”

The online *Herbal Materia Medica* agrees that the infusion is useful for urinary inflammation, cystitis, or other ailments involving the kidneys. And the *Herbal PDR* says it is “obsolete as a drug, but is ... used in commercial medicinal preparations.”

[www.botanical.com](http://www.botanical.com), (*A Modern Herbal* online)

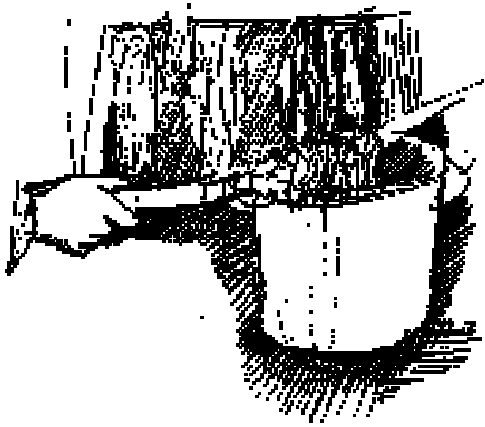
<http://info.med.yale.edu/library/historical/culpeper/culpeper.htm> (Culpeper on line, Yale University)

*PDR for Herbal Medicine*

[www.healthy.net](http://www.healthy.net) (Online Herbal Materia Medica)



## DYEING (WITH THE "Y") - WHERE AND HOW TO START?



So, you've always wanted to experiment with those lovely natural dyes, but you don't know where to start? Dying to Dye? Straining to stain something? Have a yearning for yellow yarn? Have the urge to have me get to my point and move on?

So, learning to dye is easy! Here's the basic recipe: put something that dyes into a liquid, heat gently, then add the thing you want dyed, keep heating till you like the color. Sound too easy? Nope! But the thing that kept me from dyeing for years was the fear that I'd mess it all up. But,

really, what can I mess up? If I experiment, what will I ruin? Test swatches? A mason jar?

Here's the basic equipment you'll need:

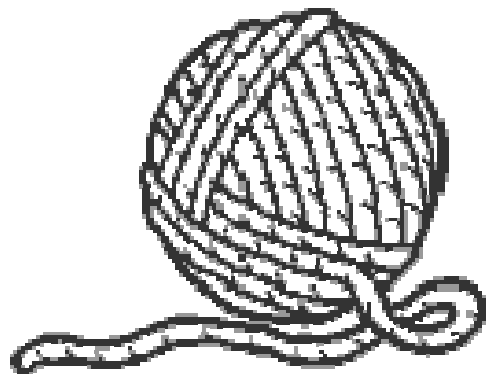
- 1) a pot that you only use for dyes (I bought mine for a buck at the local Dollar store, and marked it "Do Not Use For Food" with paint pens)
- 2) A spoon that I only use for dyeing (I've marked that too)
- 3) Something to dye with (I like to use "safe" dyes that can be used around children, see my list below)
- 4) A liquid to dye in (see my comments below)
- 5) Something you want to dye (I use test swatches of many different fabrics - my standards are as follows: cotton muslin, wool cloth, silk cloth, silk thread, wool thread, cotton thread, hemp cord, bone beads, wood beads, and stone beads (I use howlite))
- 6) A heat source (see my comments below)

That's all you need! Really! And when I'm experimenting, I throw everything together in a pot, put it on simmer on the stove, and let it do its thing!

OK, that's a still a bit simplistic, so let me break down each one!

1) A pot. There are those who only use stainless steel or glass, but I say use what you have available as long as you document it! Copper pots will change the color a bit (it "saddens", or darkens, the colors) as does cast iron (saddens), and so will aluminum (it "brightens", or lightens, the colors). Some only use enamel-coated ware, but those can develop holes which then allow iron into the pot. To me, it doesn't matter what you choose, as long as you're happy with your colors! If I only have a bit of dyestuff, I'll use mason jars or even used and cleaned Snaple bottles (just a happy customer! Yummmmy peach iced tea....)

2) A spoon - well, I use something that doesn't react with the dye color (no iron, copper / brass, or aluminum spoons). Glass, stainless steel, enamel-coated, plastic, or pewter is good - I use pewter or plastic depending on the size of



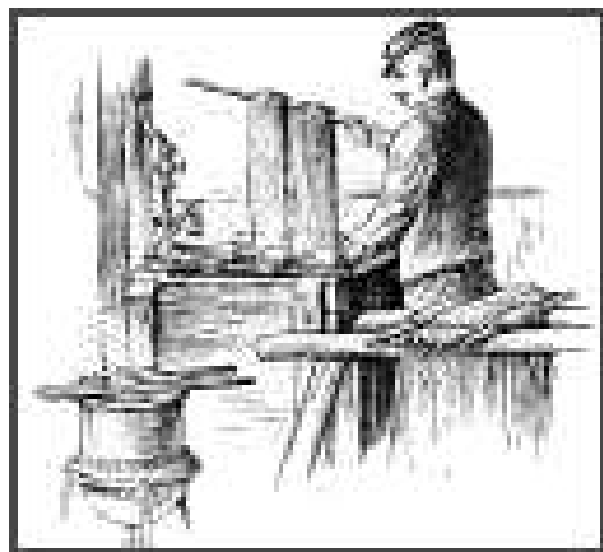
my test pot.

3) Dyestuffs - what fun! To start with, take a peek at your old spice larder. Turmeric, cinnamon, saffron, coffee, tea, saunders / sandalwood, and dried roses all give color. Fresh basil, mullein, weld (fresh or dried), and madder all give good colors. All are safe around kids - since you eat half of them, cooking them won't hurt! (I keep my dye tools separate, though, because the deeper you get into dyeing, the less palatable the stuff gets - it's good practice for beginners, and it keeps nosy spouses from slurping the contents...) Some more relatively safe dyes are cochineal, kool-aid, lavender, and dyer's broom. Some not-so-safe that I still like to use are alkanet, brazilwood, osage orange, and cutch, I just take precautions (like latex gloves - some will say use a mask as well, but I'm assuming you're all adults and can take what precautions you feel secure with).

4) A liquid to dye in - what water you use (and, more importantly, what minerals it has!) will affect the color of your dye. My standard is tap water (which is municipal, with chlorine, so that affects it as well), but I also have used spring water (and documented its source), deionized water, Pennsic water (gives everything a purple cast!), rubbing alcohol, and vodka. I also plan to use wood and grain alcohol, when I get them. Sometimes alcohol will change colors, or give you a better extraction of color from the dye to the fabric. Sometimes even olive oil will work best! It's up to you to experiment whichever way you wish!

5) What do you want to dye? If you have a fabric in mind, use test swatches before committing your whole length of fabric. (Wash it first, too, to take out any sizing that might get in the way of the dye.) Animal fabrics (like wool and silk) like a more basic environment, while plant fabrics (cotton, linen, hemp, raime) like acid baths to take up their dye. If you start testing the pH of the water, start with weak acids and bases (I use vinegar and ammonia).

6) How do you heat your dyebath? You can simmer it on the stove, but that can become difficult if you want to do a loooong dye bath - you have to sleep sometime! (Please turn off your dyepots when you go to bed - I had one catch fire when I



\*thought\* I turned it off, and our smoke detector saved us!) Putting everything in a pot and setting it in the sun is good, especially in the summer. Gentle constant heat is best (have an extra crock pot?), but I've been known to put plastic Gladware and Snapple bottles on the porch for months as they slowly cook. Longer is better - and if you have the luxury and patience to let it sit for months, you get better colors.

More tips:

1) What are mordants, and do I need them? Mordants are modifiers, which shift your dye color. Iron, alum, copper, chrome (and its ongoing safety argument), and other metal salts are good mordants. So is tannin, which is found in tea and tree

leaves, is another good one. Do some research before you delve into them, because there are those who have issues with one or another mordant. I don't use them simply because I don't want to, not because I'm afraid to. 'Sides, I can get copper / beryllium / chrome / iron / you name it powders from slabbing rocks at work....

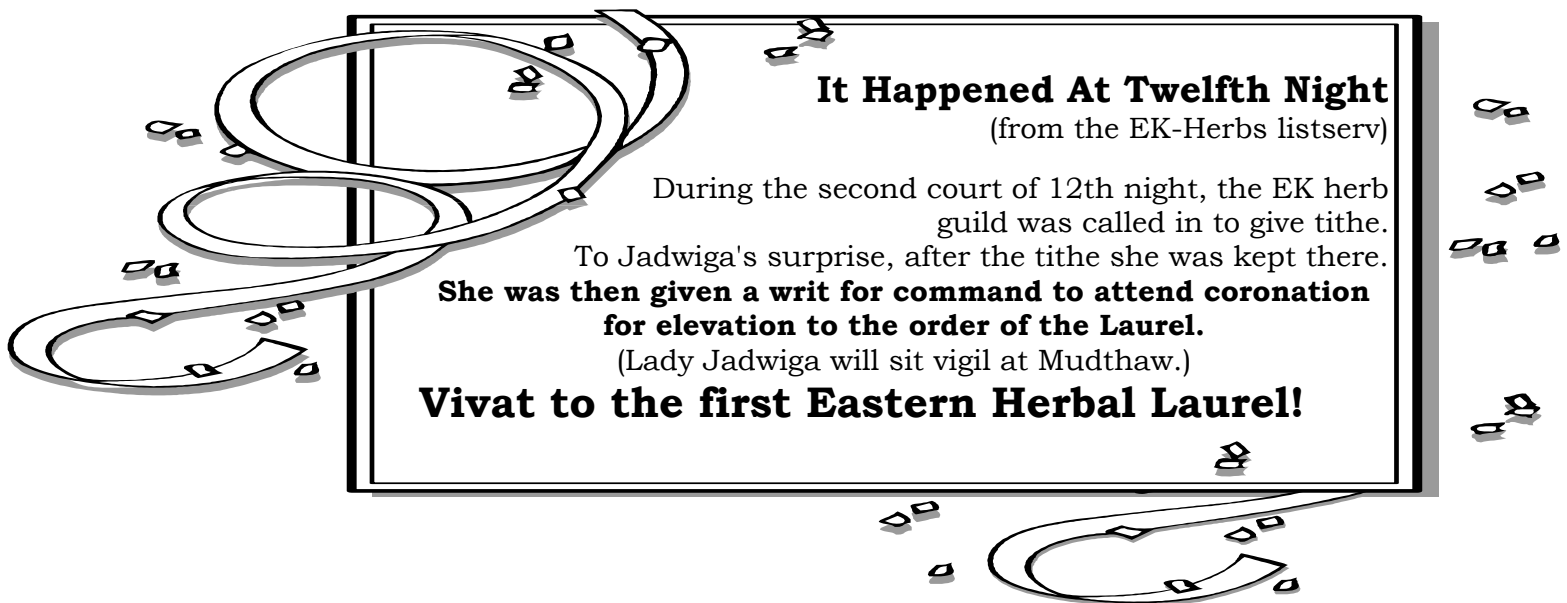
2) Document! I keep a journal with all the things I changed with each experiment (what pot, what kind of liquid, what spoon, how long I simmered, about how much dyestuff I used, etc.) so that if I get a really cool color, I can duplicate it! One note in an old journal led people to believe that some part of dandelion gave pink (it usually gives yellow), which modern dyers debunked...only to have it proved two years ago! So documentation is *very* important - and I usually put abbreviated notes right onto my plastic bags that I put my samples into, so that others can scribble and do the same!

This is the point where I'd put the books I'd recommend, but a local shire member is giggling gleefully over them right now, so I can't.....

Two good email lists are the SCA dyes list (SCA\_NaturalDyes) and the Natural Dyes (NaturalDyes) list, both of which are Yahoo groups. I'm on both, and they're both *very* good for just reading or for asking questions, no matter where you are in your dyeing adventure!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at <OakenRaven@juno.com>! Questions are good!

Happy Dyeing! Don't forget the "Y"!!  
— Carowyn Silveroak



**It Happened At Twelfth Night**  
(from the EK-Herbs listserv)

During the second court of 12th night, the EK herb guild was called in to give tithe. To Jadwiga's surprise, after the tithe she was kept there. **She was then given a writ for command to attend coronation for elevation to the order of the Laurel.** (Lady Jadwiga will sit vigil at Mudthaw.)

**Vivat to the first Eastern Herbal Laurel!**

**Calling all teachers ...**

We need you to add your name and classes to our growing list of teachers. Help us be more visible in the Kingdom and get more herbal classes added to scholas and universities, maybe even, an herbal track? Send your information to

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Thanks,  
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