

# Tisane



## 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.

*ti·sane* ti-'zan, -'zän, n.

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

## An Herbal Event

June 25, 2005

Ukrainian American Citizens Club,  
Pulaski Ave. Cohoes, NY 12047

Come join the Barony of Concordia of the Snows in celebrating all things herbal. We will have classes, discussions, a plant sale/swap?, a tasting, a sideboard, a field trip to an area herb garden and a feast to end the day in the best fashion.

The site is the Ukrainian-American Citizens Club, 1 Pulaski Ave. Cohoes, NY. The site is open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Although the site is technically damp, there is a bar on site and all alcohol must be purchased there. Fees are: \$14 on-board adult members, \$17 on-board adult non-members, \$8 adult member off-board, and \$11 adult non-member off-board. Kids 7-12 fees are: \$7 on-board, \$3 off-board. Kids under 7 are free. Enclosed flames are allowed at the feast. Please make reservation checks out to SCA, Inc. Barony of Concordia of the Snows and mail to Baroness eLeri Nefyn (Robin Hackett) 1017 Parkwood Blvd. Schenectady, NY 12308. Contact the cook with questions about the menu: Lady Deirdre O'Rourke (Deb Dorsey) (518) 372-9195 before 10 p.m. All other questions, contact the

*Please turn to page 2*

## HEADLINES

An Herbal Event

Angelica

Meet the Sambucus family

A Royal Thank-You

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](http://www.sca-herbalist.com) mailing list (go to [www.yahoo.com/groups/subscribe/sca-herbalist](http://www.yahoo.com/groups/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!

# An Herbal Event

Continued from Page 1

autocrat: Baroness eLeri Nefyn (Robin Hackett) (518) 377-0449 before 10 p.m.

Directions: From the south and west: Take your best route to the NYS Thruway (I-87) exit 23, Albany. From the toll booth drive straight ahead onto I-787N about 11 miles to Cohoes, Rte 470.

\*\*\*Take a right onto Rte 470, go about ½ mile to Pulaski Ave. Turn right onto Pulaski Ave. The site is at the end of the road.

From the north: Take your best route to the Adirondack Northway (I-87) exit 7. Head east on Rte. 7 for approximately 4 miles. Look for signs to 787N to Cohoes. Be careful of the lane changes to get onto 787N. Take 787N about 2 miles into Cohoes to Rte. 470. Follow from \*\*\*.

From the east: Take your best route to I-90 West to Albany. Look for the signs to Rte 787 as you cross the bridge over the Hudson River. Take Rte. 787N to Cohoes. Head north for about 6 miles, look for Rte. 470. Follow from \*\*\*.

## ANGELICA

*Angelica archangelica*, *Archangelica officinalis*  
*Angelica sylvestris*, *Angelica heterocarpa*

Angelica is a member of the Umbelliferae, that often-dangerous tribe. But Angelica is not only edible, it is sweet and is most often met with these days in candy. The original Angelica, *A. sylvestris*, grew wild in northern European woodlands and was also used as a dye plant. Today's plant, primarily grown in gardens, is *A. archangelica*. Wildcrafting for Angelica (especially in Alaska, where it grows wild) is generally discouraged because of the occasional difficulty in telling it from its lethal cousins. (There is some disagreement whether Angelica can or does hybridize with its relatives, which, if true, has something to do with the difficulty.)

### HISTORY OF ANGELICA

According to Culpeper,

*"To write a Description of that which is so well known to be growing in almost every Garden, I suppose is altogether needless: yet for its Vertues it is of admirable use." Vertues and Uses.*

*It resists Poyson, by defending and comforting the Heart, Bleed, and Spirits, it doth the like against the Plague, and all Epidemical Diseases if the Root be taken in powder to the waight of half a dram at a time with some good Triacle in Cardus Water, and the party therupon laid to sweat in his Bed. If Treacle be not at hand, take it alone in Cardus or Angelica Water. The Stalks or Roots candied and eaten fasting are good Preservatives in time of Infection; and at other times to warm and comfort a cold Stomach. The Root also steeped in Vinegar, and a little of that Vinegar taken somtimes fasting, and the Root smelled unto is good for the same purpose. A water distilled from the Root simply, or steeped in Wine and distilled in Glass, is much more effectual than the Water of the Leaves; and this Water drunk two or three spoonfuls at a time, easeth all Pains and Torments coming of Cold and Wind, so as the Body be not bound: and taken with some of the Root in Powder at the beginning helpeth the Pluresy, as also all other Diseases of the Lungues and Breast, as Coughs, Phthisick, and shortness of Breath; and a Syrup of the Stalks doth the like: It helps pains of the Colick, the*



*Strangury, and stopping of the Urin, procureth Womens Courses, and expelleth the After-birth, openeth the stoppings of the Liver and Spleen, and briefly easeth and discusseth al windiness and inward swellings. The Decoction drunk before the fit of an Ague, that they may sweat (if possible) before the fit come, wil in two or three times taking rid it quite away: It helps digestion, and is a remedy for a Surfet. The Juyce or the Water being dropped into the Eyes or Ears, helps dimness of sight and deafness: The Juyce put into the hollow Teeth, easeth their pains. The Roots in Pouder made up into a Plaister with a little Pitch; and laid on the biting of a mad-Dog, or any other venemous creature, doth wonderfully help: The Juyce or the Water dropped, or tents wet therin, and put into old filthy deep Ulcers, Or the Pouder of the Root (in want of either) doth clen and cause them to heal quickly, by covering the naked Bones with Flesh. The distilled Water applied to places pained with the Gout or Sciatica, doth give a great deal of ease.*

Culpeper really liked it, okay? So did Parkinson

Mrs. Grieve, more recently, says

*it is good for colds, coughs, pleurisy, wind, colic, rheumatism and diseases of the urinary organs, though it should not be given to patients who have a tendency towards diabetes.*

## GROWING ANGELICA

Classed as a “short-lived perennial,” it dies after setting seed. The answer to this, of course, is not to allow the plant to flower. Angelica likes damp and shade and endures cold well. Propagation is recommended to be by fresh seed, although a fully mature plant will set offsets that can be transplanted. The stems can grow four to six feet high, so consider your site carefully.

## USING ANGELICA

A handful of Angelica root simmered in a quart of water for three hours, strained and added to “enough honey to make a syrup” is quoted by Mrs. Grieve as a cough medicine. Chewing the stems is supposed to be good against flatulence. Angelica is one of the flavorings in several liqueurs, including vermouth. Several northern cultures use Angelica shoots, leaves, or stems in their traditional cuisine.

## CANDIED ANGELICA

There are several recipes available, but this one turns up the most often.

*Choose young stems, cut them into suitable lengths, then boil until tender. When this stage is reached, remove from the water, and strip off the outer skin, then return to the water and simmer slowly until the whole has become very green. Dry the stems and weigh them, allowing one pound of white sugar to every pound of Angelica. The boiled stalks should be laid in an earthenware pan and the sugar sprinkled over them, allowing the whole to stand for a couple of days- then boil all together. When well boiling, remove from the fire and turn into a colander to drain off the superfluous syrup. Take a little more sugar and boil to a syrup again, then throw in the Angelica, and allow it to remain for a few minutes, and finally spread on plates in a cool oven to dry.*



Angelica  
flowering stem and cross-section of cremoc  
a, the seed; f, the 2-ribbed wings (mericar)

The *Herbal PDR* approves preparations of the seed for fevers, colds, urinary infections, dyspeptic complaints, and loss of appetite, the root for syspepsia and loss of appetite. It lists no health hazards or side effects, although some people may become photosensitive, and use during pregnancy is not advised.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

[www.altnature.com/gallery/angelica.htm](http://www.altnature.com/gallery/angelica.htm)  
[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*

# Meet the SAMBUCUS family

The Brown Wanderer of Rhosgobel. Aiwendil servant of Yavanna  
(Elfstone LARP - Atlanta, GA)  
AKA John M. Ostrander, RPh, PhD, PhD (Pharmacognosy)



Sambucus or Elder Flowers, listed in American drug compendia - mid 19th – 20th centuries, is described as the dried flowers of *Sambucus canadensis* (American Elder) or of *Sambucus nigra* (European Elder). Sambucus is from the Latin *sambuca*, meaning a stringed instrument made from elder-wood.

The American Elder is a large shrub found in rich moist soil throughout the eastern and central US. The European variety may reach 30 feet while its American cousin is shorter. The plants have odd pinnate leaves, small white flowers in flat cymes, and deep purple to black

drupes (Elderberries.) The berries are edible and sometimes used in making wine. The flowers are gathered in early summer during the dry hot weather, carefully air-dried and preserved. These flowers were used principally for distilling to make a fragrant perfume and flavor. A sterilized clear infusion of elder flowers was also used in collyria (eye wash.)

Elder Berries (the fruit of *S. canadensis*) themselves under the name Sambuci Baccae were also listed as a drug in the U.S. from the early 1800s. The juice expressed from the berries contains a mucilage, sugar and malic acid. It has been used for making Elder Berry Wine. The freshly expressed, clarified juice, evaporated to a soft extract, has been recognized in European pharmacopoeias as the base of a refrigerant, diuretic drink. The raw berries consumed or uncooked juice may produce disagreeable gastrointestinal effects. The cooked berry is apparently safe, as are the wines that, I have heard, are produced from both the juice of the ripe fruit and from the flower, though I am unsure how the flower might be used for a wine other than for the flavoring principle. Elderberry wine may be made by usual and customary methods for a fruit wine and perhaps a nice cordial might be made from either the cooked juice or elderflower water.

Elder Bark and Elder Leaves have reportedly been used as a purgative and diuretic, especially in dropsy (a form of heart failure.) CAUTION these parts of the plant, unlike the berry or flower, may contain substantial amounts of toxic principles called cyanogenic glycosides (see comment below.)

From personal experience when harvesting the berry heads take large plastic garbage bags and cut the whole heads off (light pruning shears.) At home the job of separating the small berries is onerous, you will have blue stained everything if you are not careful. Make sure to discard any green or obviously unripe fruits. The stain does wash out with time and persistence. The fruit makes an awesome pie, grandmother made this when the fruit came on in New York. The last pie eaten was made from fruit gathered from the roadside outside Campti, Louisiana. A friend called this a weed pie at while it was in the oven but later consumed seconds and thirds while it was still hot, with gobs of vanilla ice cream. I am sure if the fruit were known to Hobbits it would have been a favorite.

For information regarding the use of strange food stuffs I like the *Conran Cookbook* by Terence & Caroline Conran (ISBN 0-517-47324-0). This book contains a short paragraph of uses for elderberries commenting that they are a good addition for blackberry pudding, that the syrup made of berries can add a delicious flavor to apple pies all winter long and that the battered and fried flower heads are edible. For older English/European medicinal uses all should avail themselves of the excellent book *From Agar to Zenry* by Ron Freethy published by Tanager Books of Dover, NH (ISBN 0-88072-772-7)

Again, here it is assumed that we are all professional enough to heed the usual cautions about the medicinal use of any products we are investigating. To this end, the following comments are of interest.



*The Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database* (2005) reports on the safety of American Elder indicating that the flowers have Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS) status in the US and may be used in amounts found in food, whatever that means. It is also reported that the cooked ripe fruit have few if any adverse effects. A caution is given regarding the unripe fruit, leaves, stems to the effect that they contain cyanogenic glycosides. This CAUTION

cannot be overstated, of all things to be avoided by the untrained amateur any plant parts that contain cyanogenic (cyanide gas generating) glycosides are at the top of the list. These glycosides, as most secondary metabolites of plants, are produced in varying quantities under differing climactic conditions, plant parts considered safe in one area of the country might be toxic if not deadly in other areas. There are methods to neutralize cyanogenic glycosides but to this author the risk to the uninitiated may not be worth any fancied benefit. (More on this topic may be given if I write about wild cherry later.)

More information about elder toxicity, or lack thereof may be found in *Kingsburys Poisonous plants of the U.S. and Canada* (1964) which states, in part, after cautioning about the toxic nature of other parts of the plant; the fresh berries used for various purposes by some appear the least toxic part of the plant and harmless when cooked. Uncooked berries may produce nausea.

*The Botanical Safety Handbook* – Ed. McGuffin et.al. CRC press places the plant *S. canadensis* (flowers and ripe fruit) into what they refer to as Class I — Herbs which can be safely consumed when used appropriately. They do state, however, that the unripe fruit contains cyanogenic glycoside, which may cause vomiting. As for *S. niger* or European elder, this too is placed in Class I with an added caveat that the raw and unripe fruit, the seeds, the bark and the leaves of *S. nigra* and related species *S. racemosa* contain the cyanogenic glycoside sambunigrin, ingestion of which may cause vomiting or sever diarrhea.

**About Poke Berries** - All of this being said one must be careful not to mistake or harvest Poke Berries (a much larger berry found on an annual plant) for elderberries. Of the Poke plant, *Phytolacca americana* L. *Phytolacaceae*, medicinally the root is the part harvested. The root is the most toxic part but the berries also are considered toxic. The Botanical Safety Handbook states that it contain lectins, an amorphous group of dangerous substances at best, and places it into their Class 3 – Herbs for which significant data exist to recommend the following labeling: “to be used only under the supervision of an expert qualified in the appropriate use of this substance”

*Sadwiga,*  
 I just wanted to thank you personally for all the work you have been doing for the herbalist guild. while we could not possibly have used all of your gifts ourselves, we have heavily beefed up the gift baskets for Estrella war and we will easily be the Kingdom known for its Largesse. This is in a good part your fault, and I would be remiss if I did not thank you. Please pass on my gratitude to the rest of the guild. You are a life saver. Thank you.

*In Service,*  
 Thorson

*Dangerous Garden: the quest for plants to change our lives*  
David Stuart  
Harvard Univ. Press, 2004

Stuart is a botanist who has owned a nursery and now writes a column for the London *Sunday Times*. This nicely-illustrated book, billed as a history of man's exploration and experimentation with plants, actually is an analysis of what Stuart calls "Janus plants" — plants that present both benefits and threats for humankind.

Each chapter deals with another area of therapeutic plant use: "The Great Afflictions" covers plagues, "The Flight from Pain" with analgesics, "Chasing Venus" with aphrodisiacs, for instance. In each case he covers the history of Eastern and Western medicine as they tried to cope with each problem, with period illustrations. But each plant whose use and benefits he describes has a downside, which is included — even quinine, which made malaria survivable, has bad side-effects.

Necessarily, there is quite a bit about patent medicines as well. You probably know that the original Coca-Cola contained cocaine — but did you realize how many over-the-counter preparations used to contain foxglove and/or henbane?

—Johanna le Mercer



Jo Anne Fatherly  
249R Powell Avenue  
Newburgh, New York 12550

