HERBOLOGY IN HARRY POTTER: GINGER, PEPPERMINT, AND VALERIAN

CREDIT AND EVALUATION
This health program was developed in partnership with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NNLM). Your feedback is encouraged. https://nnlm.gov/Zkj

AGES
Teens or adults

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
Herbology in Harry Potter is fantastical but grounded in science! Use herbology as a platform to explore herbs and supplements, make soap or bath bombs, or focus book club discussions. The three herbs described below—ginger, peppermint, and valerian—have been used throughout the world, from ancient times to today. As always, approach the topic with your audience and community in mind. Below are some examples of how you might host a program exploring herbology in Harry Potter to promote community and individual health.

Discussion
Facilitate discussions on the three herbal ingredients featured in the Wit-Sharpening Potion (ginger), the Elixir to Induce Euphoria (peppermint), and the Forgetfulness Potion (valerian). What are the historical uses of these herbs? How much do we know about their medicinal properties? Even if you do not concoct magic potions as part of this program, explore the usefulness and safety of using these herbs for medicinal purposes.

Soap Making
Make peppermint bath bombs or glycerin-based soaps. Consider inviting local artisans or soap makers to demonstrate.

Book Club
If your patrons like Harry Potter, they probably LOVE Harry Potter. Host an “already read” Harry Potter book club for those who reread the series regularly, but use herbology as the basis for the program.

TIP:
Remember to share information resources about supplement–drug interactions!

TIP:
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MATERIALS
- A tablet with the HerbList app (or printed materials)
- Handouts on herbs and recipes, and, if possible, samples
- Ingredients for aromatherapy bath bombs or essential oil soaps
- Ginger snaps and peppermint tea (optional)
- A microwave (for essential oil soaps or bath bombs)
- A laptop and projector (optional)

SPACE
Meeting room

PERSONNEL
Two to three staff members or volunteers

RESOURCES
Web
NNLM: Summer health programming
https://nnlm.gov/initiatives/summer-reading

NLM exhibition: Renaissance, Science, Magic, and Medicine in Harry Potter’s World
https://bit.ly/2Hwepl1

MedlinePlus: Drugs, herbs and supplements
https://medlineplus.gov/druginformation.html

National Center for Biotechnology Information: Free medical textbooks

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH): The HerbList™ app
https://nccih.nih.gov/Health/HerbListApp

NCCIH: Ginger
https://nccih.nih.gov/health/ginger

NCCIH: Peppermint oil
https://nccih.nih.gov/health/peppermintoil

NCCIH: Valerian
https://nccih.nih.gov/health/valerian

WikiHow: How to make glycerin soap
https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Glycerin-Soap
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Popular Science: How to make your own bath bombs
https://bit.ly/2VW0Mzl

Harry Potter Wikia
https://harrypotter.wikia.com

NCCIH: Quiz on medication–supplement interactions
https://bit.ly/296yEC0

YouTube: Herb–drug interactions (64 min)
http://bit.ly/2DKbanN

Fiction
Rowling, J. K. Harry Potter series.

Nonfiction

Program Documents

Potion Recipes
Print these potion recipes on index cards, or integrate them into your program as labels or bookmarks.

Wit-Sharpening Potion with Ginger
“Some of you will benefit from today’s assignment: Wit-Sharpening Potion. Perhaps you should begin immediately.” ~Severus Snape

Ingredient: Ginger (armadillo bile; scarab beetles)

Ginger is a tropical plant with green-purple flowers and a fragrant underground stem (called a rhizome). It is widely used as a flavoring or fragrance in foods, beverages, soaps, and cosmetics. Ancient Sanskrit, Chinese, Greek, Roman and Arabic texts discussed the use of ginger for health. In Asian medicine, dried ginger has been used for thousands of years to treat stomach aches, diarrhea, and nausea. Today, ginger is used as a dietary supplement for post-surgery nausea; nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy, or pregnancy; rheumatoid arthritis; and osteoarthritis.

Not wit-sharpening? Maybe ginger is an adjuvant.

Adjuvant [aj´ah-vant, ā-joo´vant]. 1. assisting or aiding; 2. a substance that aids another, such as an auxiliary remedy.

Elixir to Induce Euphoria with Peppermint

“Euphoria, I take it? And, what’s that I smell? Mmmm... you’ve added just a sprig of peppermint, haven’t you? Unorthodox, buy what a stroke of inspiration, Harry, of course, that would tend to counterbalance the occasional side effects of excessive singing and nose-tweaking...”

~Horace Slughorn

Ingredient: Peppermint (shrivelfig; porcupine quills, sopophorous beans, wormwood)

Peppermint, a natural cross between two types of mint (water mint and spearmint), grows throughout Europe and North America. Both peppermint leaves and its essential oil, have been used for health for several thousand years. It is mentioned in records from ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. However, peppermint was not recognized as a distinct type of mint until the 1700s. Peppermint is a common flavoring agent in foods, and peppermint oil is used to create a pleasant fragrance in soaps and cosmetics. Today, peppermint is used as a dietary supplement for digestive problems, the common cold, headaches, and other conditions. Peppermint oil is used topically for headaches, muscle aches, and itching.

Slughorn suggests that peppermint is an antidote to other ingredients in the elixir.

Antidote an·ti·dote (an’ti-dōt). An agent that neutralizes a poison or counteracts its effects.


Forgetfulness Potion with Valerian

Hermione Granger: “What are the three most crucial ingredients in a Forgetfulness Potion?”
Ronald Weasley: “I forgot.”

Ingredient: Valerian (Lethe River water, mistletoe berries)

Valerian is a plant native to Europe and Asia. It also grows in North America. Valerian was used medicinally in ancient Greece and Rome, and Hippocrates wrote about its uses. Historically, valerian has also been to treat nervousness, trembling, headaches, and heart palpitations. Today, valerian is used as a dietary supplement for insomnia, anxiety, and other
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conditions such as depression and menopausal symptoms.

Is there a connection between sleepiness and forgetfulness? Maybe valerian acts as a tranquilizer in the Forgetfulness Potion.

tran-quil·iz·er (trang’kwə-lə-zi-ər). A drug that promotes tranquility by calming and pacifying with minimal sedation.