

Garden of love

Plants possess the powers of Cupid

BY DANIELLE KUEHNEL
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The Hindus have their Tantra. Indians, the Kama Sutra. The Greeks called it “Eros.” The Catholics used Monk’s Pepper to “cool the fire,” and began to put hops in beer in order to do the same.

The list goes on.

But what of Oregon’s East Valley?

They’ve got plants.

And during Saturday’s Home Herbalist course entitled “Botanica Erotica,” attendees got what they came for — backyard remedies for life’s, well, desires.

“Our world is full of medicinal plants,” said Randi Embree, the class’ instructor and long-time herbalist. “Many of these plants can be found in our very yards, but we’re so reliant upon Western technology, that we don’t know how to use them.”

But the class at the historic Geer Crest Farm wasn’t merely about locally found medicinal plants. Saturday’s course focused upon the aphrodisiac properties in various herbs and buds.

Embree explained that some of the cheapest and most common herbs are not only aphrodisiacs that stimulate the urinary tract, but also carry with them several other beneficial effects.

The Damiana plant, for example, may be purchased in the form of tea at any Food 4 Less for a surprisingly low 80 cents for eight tea bags. When steeped, the tea produces a delightful concoction, similar to Chinese green teas. And, of course, being in line with the Botanica Erotica theme, the plant is indeed an aphrodisiac. Damiana plant can also be used as an antidepressant or a urinary antiseptic, as a mild laxative or as a way to treat impotence.



Kathleen Ellyn / Appeal Tribune

Herbalist Randi Embree shows her class how to harvest cottonwood tree buds that will be used to create a healing salve. Herbal mixes featured promoted good general health and relaxation — the secret to a good intimate life, Embree said.

Miriah Stuart of Canby came to the workshop in search of similar natural remedies and voraciously took notes during the entire four-hour hands-on seminar.

“I’ve only use herbal remedies on my horses,” she said. “One of my horses broke its leg, and the only way it was repaired completely in nine months was through natural, herbal supplements.”

“I’ve only used lavender on my face, though, because it smells good,” Stuart smiled.

Prior to the course, Stuart had only done herbal research in relation to her equines. She now has the tools to help fight her winter blues, and a way to add “vitality and a boost to life,” she said.

And despite the constant drizzle, Embree encouraged all participants to venture outside to the famous Riding Whip Tree, a cottonwood. The sticky yellow buds contain antimicrobial and analgesic properties, making the plant a perfect ingredient for a healing salve, which, as she demonstrated, can be made by infusing the bud essence with oil and melted beeswax—the result being a soothing cream the consistency of petroleum jelly.

Beware of seeking out aphrodisiacs, though, said Embree.

“Quality is everything,” she said. “Know your source. If it doesn’t have the energy of the actual plant, then it’s probably not good for medicinal use.”