

MOUNTAIN REMEDIES

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It is now four years since my retirement, and at long last I can take part in the Thursday outings of the Club. Everybody has a subject to discuss as we enjoy our walks. I have an interest in what can be gathered freely from the countryside and used as remedies. During my childhood in Austria, collecting nature's bounties took up a large part of our summer holidays, and home-made potions and lotions were widely used. Here are two which you may like to try for yourselves.

Spruce cough syrup:

Pick dry, pale green, new tips from spruce branches towards the end of May when they are 2-4cm long. (Gather these from well-established trees and not young plantations where this could affect their growth). Put the tips in a large jar (a sweet jar is ideal), and sprinkle three tablespoons of granulated sugar on each 3cm layer of spruce tips. I use 500g sugar for every 2kg of tips. Continue the alternating layers of sugar and tips until the jar is full, then carefully seal it with cling film as well as the lid. Place the jar in a sunny position on a window sill until early August, or when the needles are brown and float on top of the liquid produced. Sieve into small bottles and use as required. If any mould develops in the jar, add a crushed Campden tablet. The jar should not be opened otherwise. Visiting grandchildren tend to pretend that they have sore throats, as they like this so much!

Elderflower juice:

Ingredients

- 1.5 kg sugar
- 10-15 large heads of elderflower blossom
- 100g citric acid
- 1 litre cold water
- 4 diced lemons



Mix together in a large bowl, cover and leave in a cool place for four days, stirring occasionally. Sieve and bottle, adding one crushed Campden tablet to each bottle.

To use, dilute with water or soda water to taste. It makes a comforting hot drink for colds, and well diluted with aerated water, an excellent lemonade.