

Diploma in Animal Sensory Enrichment

**Plant Assignment Six
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**Calendula officinalis
(Marigold)**

by

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Identification and Background Information

The marigolds botanical name is *Calendula officinalis*, derived from the Latin “*calendae*”.

“*Calendulae*” means throughout the months and the marigold blooms from June to October.

Calend refers to the moon and so the Calends were the first day of each Roman month coinciding with the New Moon. The first part of its name therefore reflects the belief that the marigold is said to bloom on the first day of the month and for a prolonged period.

In Latin “*officina*” meant workshop or store room and later came to mean herb store and latterly pharmacy, so the suffix “*officianlis*” denotes plants which are used in the practice of medicine. (www.permaculture.co.uk).

The old Saxon name for it is “*ymbglidegold*” and means “turns with the sun”.

Marigolds are also called holi gold, Mary bud, Marygolds, Chin Chan Hua, Kamisha Bahar, Maravilla Marigold, Atunjaq, Tibbi Nergis, Solis sponsa, Oculus Christi pot and garden marigolds.

Calendula belongs to the same family of plants as chrysanthemums, daisies and ragweed (www.herbwisdom.com)

In the Middle Ages marigolds symbolised jealousy and in the 12th century Macer concluded that they improved eyesight merely by looking at the plant.

It was used as a treatment for smallpox to the extent that so much of it was cultivated in the then Soviet Union that it became known as Russian penicillin, whilst the Shaker religious sect in America used it as an effective cure for gangrene.

It has a high concentration of flavinoids (the Latin flavus means yellow) and the presence of these brightly coloured plant based anti-oxidants mean it has been used to colour poultry products, cheeses, custards, sauces and butters and was consequently known as the “poor man's saffron”.

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The vibrant petals can be sprinkled on salads, incorporated in sandwiches and used to

decorate cakes, whilst the fragrant flower heads can be added to pot pourri.

Petals can also be added to impart colour and a bittersweet flavour to seafood chowders, soups, stews, rice dishes, roast meats, chicken and vegetable dishes. It is also used to flavour ice cream, soft drinks, baked goods and confectionery. (www.permaculture.co.uk).

Calendula is a useful addition to any garden as it grows quickly and is easy to cultivate acting as an effective repellent for many common garden pests, including aphids, eelworms, asparagus beetles and tomato hornworms.

It is also a companion plant for potatoes, beans and lettuce and the flowers attract beneficial insects, particularly bees. (www.complete-herbal.com)

Calendula vinegar makes a terrific cleaning agent, fabric softener and hair conditioner as the vinegar smooths hair follicles damaged by over exposure to soaps and shampoos and the calendula lightens hair colour particularly noticeable in blonde hair. As a beauty treatment calendula has been used to ease acne, lighten freckles and generally brighten the skin.

This versatile botanical can be incorporated into baths, creams, compresses, massage oils, tinctures, ointments and salves and is gentle enough for use with babies, children and animals.

Calendula has also been revered as a magical medicinal for centuries. The Ancient Egyptians used Calendula to rejuvenate their skin while the Greeks and Romans used it as a culinary garnish and in both ancient and modern times it is strung into garlands for weddings and different rituals including Wallis, the Festival of Light as celebrated by those of the Hindu faith. (www.en.wikipedia.com).

Strewing petals under your bed was said to protect you from robbers and give you prophetic dreams to identify the culprits if you had previously been robbed and carrying a calendula flower in your pocket when dealing with legal matters was said to ensure a positive outcome.

Calendula's medicinal affinity is for the movement of that which has stagnated in our defence system. It isolates and quarantines what does not belong and helps warm the entire system, promoting healthy circulation.

Calendula therefore offers us an opportunity to move that which has stagnated in our own lives.

Calendula magic offers us the opportunity to reclaim our boundaries and to make full use of the energy we already possess and to thereby recognise and utilise our own wealth.

As calendula's flowers follow the sun absorbing the energy from those fiery gentle rays so its magic coaxes us into a brighter disposition and offers us a glimpse of sunny possibility even in the midst of darkest winter.

The magic encourages us to seek similar energies in our lives and to use them to nurture our potential and to bring our life's purpose into blossom.

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“Calendula magic is the magic of wealth, its potential, its attitude and its beauty.

Blooming from early spring into late fall and even winter, Calendula has much to teach about sustaining wealth. As a mentor and companion on your journey Calendula can show you how to recognise and create the conditions within which true wealth can come into blossom repeatedly. If Calendula has come into your life look for the many beautiful ways in which wealth can blossom for you and be ready to make the adjustments necessary to maintain the conditions that best support those blossoms. Calendula magic is the magic of sustaining wealth".(www.thepracticalherbalist.com).

In astrology Calendula is considered a masculine plant and is governed by the sun and its element is Fire.(www.thepracticalherbalist.com).

Cultivated as an annual garden plant which naturalises on waste grounds and roadsides etc. it is thought to have originated in Egypt, spreading throughout the Mediterranean region, is now commonly found in all temperate regions of the world and will grow wild in cultivated fields and vineyards.

It is a hardy garden herb and acts as a biennial or annual dependent on the climate, but prefers full sun and can flourish in sandy soils.

Calendula seeds should be sown in early spring, or if transplanting starter plants these should be planted after the danger of first frost has passed.

As long as the soil is not too acidic or too alkaline in nature the calendula plant will thrive and once established plants will self-sow from their prolific seed production.

The seedlings which emerge each spring should be thinned out, leaving approximately six inches between plants, but this is the only real intervention required to ensure a continuous supply of calendula.

The flowers should be harvested when in full bloom, after the first dew has dried, and they can be made into herbal supplements either while fresh or following indoor drying.

To dry they should be placed on newspaper, spaced well apart, left out of direct sunlight and turned occasionally until completely dry when they will take on a papery texture.

They should then be stored in air tight jars for future use.(www.theanimalherbalist.com).

Calendula has pale green, long, fleshy and hairy leaves which are sticky and resinous and the plant produces bright yellow or orange flowers, with petals arranged like a mini-sunflower and open sepals growing in a ring around the flower's centre, which bloom from June until October.(www.thepracticalherbalist.com).

The petals have a slightly spicy salty taste, whilst the leaves have an oddly bittersweet flavour and the plant has a slightly sweet, fresh scent with a musky odour.

All parts are highly scented and therefore attract bees and hover flies which enjoy eating the aphids which are also attracted to this plant.

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The flowers only open during the day and folklore claims that it is a sign of rain if the

flowers remain closed after 7am. ([Herbs; Roger Philips & Nicky Foy; Pan Books Ltd; 1990](#)).

Medicinal Properties, Actions and Common Uses

Calendula has the following properties **anti-bacterial** (kills/inhibits bacterial growth), **anti-fungal** (kills/suppresses fungi growth), **anti-inflammatory** (reduces inflammation), **anti-infective** (kill/prevent the spread of infection), **anti-microbial** (kills/inhibits growth of micro-organisms, such as streptococcus), **anti-oxidant** (prevents cell damage), **anti-phlogistic**,(reducing inflammation and fever) **anti-septic**, **anti-spasmodic**, **anti-viral**, **aperient** (relieves constipation), **astringent**(shrinks and constricts body tissue), **cholagogue** (stimulates gallbladder contraction to promote bile flow), **detoxifier**, **diaphoretic**(induces perspiration), **emmenagogue** (the ability to promote menstruation), **haemostatic**(retards or stops blood flow), **immunostimulant and vulnerary** (promotes wound healing).(www.en.wikipedia.org), (www.herbwisdom.com).

Calendula's greatest affinities are therefore with the skin and mucous membranes. For medicinal purposes the leaves, whole flower head or petals can be used, with only the deep orange varieties containing the carotenid lutein which provides the antioxidant and tissue forming medicinal properties. (www.theanimalherbalist.com)

“**Other constituents of calendula including different carotenids**(colourful plant pigments some of which can be turned into Vitamin A/powerful antioxidants) **are, flavoxanthin, auroxanthin and zeaxanthin, beta-carotene, polyphenols**(micronutrient with antioxidant properties), **flavonoids**,(plant pigments reducing heart disease,stroke,cancer and asthma), **triterpenes** (the precursor of steroids in plants and animals with anti-inflammatory, anti-tumour and anti-allergy propeties), **saponins** (prevent degeneration of DNA, prevent damage of cell protein by free radicals, fight infection and lower cholesterol), **polysaccharides** (complex carbohydrates), **resins** (plant protection) **and volatile oils** (produce scent whih is attractive to certain animals and insects aiding poliination and repeallant to predators).”(www.naturallybytrisha.com).

Due to the range of constituents and healing properties calendula has a diversity of uses but is above all a remedy for various skin complaints.

These include leg ulcers, sores, abscesses, infected and inflamed skin, cuts, abrasions, wounds, healthy scar tissue formation, dry skin, nappy rash, cradle cap, nipples which are painful through breast-feeding, acne, impetigo, insect bites, first, second and third degree burns, liver spots, varicose veins, haemorrhoids and external fungal infections such as athletes foot and ringworm.

It can be used as a vaginal douche to effectively treat vaginal thrush, and if taken internally calendula tincture or teas successfully combat inflammatory conditions of the digestive system such as gastritis, peptic ulcers and colitis

Calendula is cleansing to the gallbladder and liver, thereby acting as an effective detoxifier to treat the underlying toxicity responsible for many fevers, infections and systemic skin disorders such as eczema.

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It can also be put to good use in the treatment of fever, jaundice, cirrhosis and hepatitis,

enlarged and inflamed lymph glands whilst being an effective uterine tonic, easing menstrual cramping and acting as a menstruation regulator.

Recent studies have also indicated that it has proved significant in the treatment of HIV and cancer patients.(Assaz,N.A.et al; 2008, Waseem.S.et al; 2010).
(www.globalherbalsupplies.com).

Periodontal diseases respond well to calendula's healing properties as it strengthens bleeding gums and promotes beneficial bacterial growth in sore mouths. Calendula vinegar makes a soothing treatment for sunburn as does calendula tea and should be applied with a soft cloth, soaked in the liquid and gently dabbed onto the affected area to provide speedy relief and faster healing.

Conjunctivitis responds well to treatment with a few drops of sterilised calendula tea and other eye ailments such as puffy eyelids or black eyes react beneficially to compresses of cool to lukewarm tea.(www.thepracticalherbalist.com)

In The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Cat and Dog by Juliette de Bairacli, she states that the calendula flowers possess the important restorative power over the arteries and veins and because of this they are regularly fed to Arabian race horses and are also given to fretting and miserable animals to uplift their spirits.(www.en.wikipedia.org).

Other uses with animals include the treatment of candidosis which is a fungal infection of the mucous membranes in the mouths and digestive tracts of birds, cats horses and sometimes although rarely, dogs.

Calendula's anti-fungal properties also make use of a topical application in the treatment of chromomycosis, which is a fungal infection of the skin that occurs in cattle, equines, dogs, cats and amphibians.

Entomophthoromycosis a fungal infection in the lips, mouth and nostrils of horses also responds well to treatment with calendula.

Calendula preparations have worked effectively on colitis and recent animal studies have confirmed that the saponin content of calendula possesses anti-tumour properties.
(www.theanimalherbalist.com).

Calendula also contains chemicals which have been shown to facilitate rapid wound healing in animal studies by increasing blood flow to the affected area and by promoting the production of collagen proteins.
(www.herbwisdom.com).

The essential oils contained in calendula and pro-vitamin A make it a traditional blood tonic and internal remedy for gastric ulcers inflammation in dogs and horses and also because of its sulphur content it is recognised as a blood cleanser vital for healthy skin and hair. Combined with cleavers it is an excellent herb for the glandular, lymphatic and urinary system of equines and an immunostimulant as it activates white cell production and thereby the overall strengthening of the immune system in all animals.

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Similarly to humans animals with gritty, inflamed or sore eyes will benefit from the

application of cool calendula tincture while calendula oil with added tea tree will treat infection of the frog in horses, particularly thrush, while the anti-fungal properties of calendula make it a useful addition to ointments used to treat mud fever.

The fresh flower head or leaf juice can be rubbed directly onto midge bites and bee stings for instant relief.

Chickens enjoy nibbling on calendula and the carotene in the petals turns their egg yolks a deep orange and increase the nutritional value, whilst wild birds thrive on the calendula seed during the winter months.

One of the most common causes of itchy skin in dogs is contact dermatitis which is the result of the dog coming into contact with various chemicals including harsh shampoos and conditioners, and household cleaning products.

Other frequent causes of itching include fungal, bacterial and parasitic infections such as mange, scabies, flea or tick infestations, food allergies, particularly to commercial dog foods and yeast infections.

All these conditions respond beneficially to the application of calendula in conditioner, topical ointment or tincture form, dependant on the most appropriate medium for a specific condition.(www.naturalproductsfordogs.com).

Calendula is also effective in helping animals to deal with emotional trauma, boosting their self-confidence and raising their self-esteem and to assist with any skin condition in both cats and dogs with dull eyes and poor coats.([Elizabeth Whiter; Certificate in Natural Food Animal Remedies; 2013; Page 9 of 28](#)).

**Honour the Earth.
Give Glory to the Creator.
Cherish that sweet connection with the plants.
And your medicine power will be deep and strong.**

(Nancy & Michael Phillips; *The Herbalist's Way*; Chelsea Green Publishing Company 2005).

Learning Outcomes

- 1. Identify and harvest local culinary herbs specific to this course.**
- 2. How to use fresh and dry herbs for simple remedies.**
- 3. Equipment needed, drying and storage of herbs.**
4. How to create a herb garden.
- 5. How to use specific culinary Macerated Oils; Nettle, Marigold, Rose-hip, Mint, Catnip, Chickweed, and Seaweed infused oils and cold pressed Linseed Oil.**
- 6. Create delicious, culinary, herbal pet treats specific to this course.**

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- 7. Make simple animal topical preparations such as insect repellent and cooling gel**

using plants, herbs, clays and honey.

8. **Have a clear understanding of what animal self-selection is and how animals can benefit from an enhanced, nutritional, healthy, balanced diet, containing plant material.**
9. Able to work and communicate with pet owners vets and other healthcare professionals.
10. How to keep professional standard records of all animal self-selection sessions undertaken.
11. Be aware of the importance of personal and animal safety as well as the relevant insurance, the law and vet liaison.
12. **Be able to observe and understand why animals self-select culinary macerated oils/herbs/clays/honey specific to this course at animal rescue centres and with private clients.**
13. Be aware of when not to conduct an animal self-selection session.
14. **Be more aware of yourself as an animal healer and consider how and when you will use your training and experience from this course.**

Bibliography

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