

[Page 52 - A Little Taste of Living with Herbs](#)ISSUE : [Issue 72](#)

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Gradually, virtually every growing thing came under my scrutiny, even the most humble pasture weed. I trod on creeping self-heal (*Pru? nella vulgaris*) for many summers when I walked back and forth with the cows to the ridge pasture, before I stooped, one day, to examine its purple-velvet-flowered, upright hoods. I learned that this was once a famous healing herb, one of those invaluable astringents for both in? ternal and external application for treating diarrhea and healing wounds. Today, hybrid forms are grown as elegant garden flowers. As my interest in wildflowers developed, my need for using plants expanded with the establishment of my little herb business. I was on the lookout for scented plants that could be harvested in quantity to use in herb and flower potpourris. Sweet white clover was certainly available, growing so thickly along the edges of the main road that the highway department cuts it to the ground in midsummer, because it obstructs the view for those driving there. After I cut it, I was astonished by the sweet vanilla-like scent that floated throughout the whole house from its drying branches, spread out upstairs on every available surface (this was before Jigs built the great drying racks). Although it contains the same substance found in drying hay, the aroma is more powerful; it is also long lasting. After a year in storage, the same scent wafts out of a container when I lift the lid. Just as hay must be cut at the right time to preserve its sweet? ness (before the plants are overripe), so sweet white clover should be in full, fresh bloom for drying. The advantage of using sweet white clover in potpourri is that, besides being scented itself, it blends other scents together and functions as a fixative, preserving them. Gathering sufficient quantities of sweet white clover from along the highway is not easily arranged since we don't have a vehicle. One summer during a drought we were hard pressed to find a source; woodland plants behind the farm were stunted and sparse. So one day, when our neighbour was at the farm on business, we persuaded him to take his old pickup and cruise the back roads with us, hunting for the sweet wildflower. Lauchie, our neighbour, is a rough-and-ready sort, though very kind, who cuts wood pulp, milks a few cows, and lives as we do, in the backlands. Hunting for sweet flowers is not one of his usual pas? times. In fact, he pays no heed to them. We had already questioned him closely about sweet white clover, trying to find out if it was in bloom along the highway (we seldom travel, so we wouldn't know). He claimed he'd never seen such a plant as we described. Off we went, rattling and bumping down the lane, onto the network

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of back roads in Lauchie's old green Chevy, its body rusted, its doors broken, the floor of the cab practically nonexistent. Lauchie loves it, though, and doesn't see its deficiencies, and all who ride in it must swear it beats anything new: "They don't make them Uke this any? more...." Jigs was in the back of the pickup, looking for the thickest stands along the road. When he spotted one, he banged on the hood of the cab and Lauchie stopped abruptly. Jigs and I hastened to the spot, cut back the plants, then

jumped back in the truck. As we proceeded, Lauchie became very sharp eyed, identifying every stand, large or small, in the backlands area, determined that we should not miss any. Many times we stopped, climbed down, hastily cut a bunch of stems, then, with increasing weariness, returned to the truck. As we pointed out to Lauchie other wild plants and told him their uses, he was thrilled, insisting that we harvest some of them, too; so we cut some Queen Anne's lace for their showy pods, a few handfuls of pearly everlasting still in bud, and some green glossy leaves of the nutmeg-scented shrub, northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*). At last Lauchie was satisfied, and we returned to the farm with our treasures.

Harvesting: Cut stems when the flower heads are open, but still fresh (no need to cut the whole plant down, just some stems from each plant). Lay them out away from light to dry; they are thin, so they dry quickly. When the leaves and flowers feel crispy dry, strip them from the stem • this will considerably reduce the quantity of material • and store them as you would any dried herb, in labeled jars or containers stored in a cool, dark place.

Using: I use dried sweet white clover in my Rose Potpourri (regular and spiced), and in Orange Blossom Potpourri.... I also use it in simmering potpourri tea bags for a room freshener.

Simmering Sweet White Clover Room Freshener Put 2 tablespoons of dried sweet white clover in each large tea bag (4 inches by 4 3/4 inches), add a teaspoon of prescented cellulose, and seal the bags by ironing with the setting at COTTON or lower. Any scent can be used, but a sweet, vanilla-like scent, close to the natural one of the sweet white clover, works best.

To use: Bring 2 cups of water to a boil in a saucepan, and drop in a sealed tea bag. You should soon be aware of the aroma throughout the area; its intensity will depend on the size of the room. You can also use dried sweet white clover in sachets by itself to scent linens. Cms h the bags occasionally to release their fragrance.

The above selection is taken from *Living with Herbs • A Treasury of Useful Plants for the Home & Garden* by Jo Ann Gardner, with illustrations by Elayne Sears. The book, 288 pages for \$19.95, is available in stores across Canada, from the publisher Nimbus Publishing Ltd., or directly from Jo Ann Gardner by writing her at R.R. 1, Orangedale, Nova Scotia B0E 2K0.

YOUTHSMOKING: DIOVOUKNOVIHAL:

- twenty nine per cent of 15 to 19 year olds and 14% of 10 to 14 year olds smoke;
- smoking among teens 15 to 19 years of age has increased 25% since 1991;
- of all of the 15-year-olds smoking today, about half will die from tobacco-related diseases; and that
- about 85% of smokers began before they were 16 years of age.

NC Source: Health Canada

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