

## Summary - Forest Gardens and their medicinal value

To bring together the various strands of my talk, I have made the following summary and noted that:

It was observed from the prisoners in Snake River state penitentiary, which just fewer than 50% of them said that they felt both calmer and uplifted by the projection of tree landscapes on to the wall of the gym during their daily work out. This shows a **visual effect** of trees to be healing.

The ingestion of aerosols from the pollen of various trees within the forest garden has a positive effect, with the pollen from Willow helping with depression; the pollen from Hawthorn helping to regulate our blood pressure; the pollen from the Hemlock tree (the conifer) helping raise our IQ just by us walking through our forest garden at the right time. This demonstrates an effect on humans at **emotional, physical and cognitive** levels.

The consumption of food plants such as Fennel leaves, flowers and seeds help digestion issues. When the flower of the Hibiscus syriacus (double flower forms) is being eaten, it is a mucilaginous herb soothing our digestive tract, and the greater variety of plant fibre we eat boosts our gut flora and our **immune system** accordingly

Drinking Stinging Nettle as a herbal infusion before they start to bolt and make flowering shoots is like having a tonic, as its compounds act as a re-mineralising agent having a positive effect on our **general energy and cognitive activity**.

The variety of bird life that I mentioned will **stimulate** and be **uplifting** for you, just by hearing their bird song around you.

Finally when people come on a course I get them to stand in certain places within the garden and just get the feel for it, the forest bathing aspect which is great for our **spirit** and **overall feel good factor**.

You can see that all 5 senses are engaged within the wellbeing and healing processes while within the forest garden. It's a holistic approach to your life to be part of nature's world. Forest gardening is an excellent way to reconnect with nature at this time!

### Which plants to use and where:

The first thing is to decide what you would like to plant, that will fulfil your needs and select plants that will lend themselves to the conditions of your location, considering shelter, size of your plot, aspect of the site, rainfall, existing vegetation and soil type. Remember you don't have to have existing trees to have a forest garden. In fact, if your plot is small, you may not have room for trees and that's fine. The important thing is to go with what you've got rather than go without. We often think of medicinal plants as small bushy plants like

Rosemary, or herbaceous perennial plants like Sage, and they are, but there are plants of medicinal value that fit all seven layers of the forest garden. See examples below

Example of plants with medicinal qualities for all 7 layers of the forest garden design structure

Large tree canopy layer	<i>Tilia cordata</i> - Small leaf lime; trees produce a flower that acts as a great sedative. In addition to that their leaves are mucilaginous when eaten
Small trees understorey layer	<b>Vitex agnus castus</b> –Chaste; has fruit that work well for women only, reducing night sweats and mood swings; has properties to balance hormones
Bush layer understorey layer	<b>Aronia prunifolia</b> – Chokeberry; the fruit of this plant has one of the highest levels of anti-oxidants of any soft fruit that we can grow in the temperate 7 climate. Will take full shade and just about any soil type.
Herbaceous layer	<b>Comfrey officinal</b> - Knit Bone; makes good oil helpful for reducing bruising and repairing broken bones. The Roman soldiers used it to heal their broken bones after a battle.
Ground cover layer	<b>Gaultheria procumbens</b> – American Wintergreen: grows to no more than 100mm high, prefers moist soil in shade and produces red berries in late summer, early autumn. These can be made into Winter-green oil, an anti-inflammatory herb which provides the foundation smell of “Deep Heat” lotion
Tubers layer	<b>Hydrastis canadensis</b> - Golden seal: contains in its tuber a lot of Berberine (the yellow colour you see when you cut into a Berberis bush and Hydrastine which have amongst their properties really good herbal anti-septic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory qualities
Climbing layer	<b>Humulus lupulus</b> - Hops: The flowers from Hops are harvested and can be used as a sedative, either dried and placed in a pillow, as a tincture (the herb preserved in alcohol) or as 16 pints of beer on a Saturday night!

References on medicinal plant aerosol courtesy of Dianne Beresford- Kroeger

## **Disclaimer**

The information provided in the talk concerning medicinal plants is for general information and not promoted for individual application without consultation with your Doctor or your herbal practitioner. This is a cover all statement which I need to state.

I accept that in reality your Doctor may not be in a position to pass judgement on herbal medicine at any great depth as he possibly trained only in prescribing pharmaceutical drugs and may therefore not be insured to sanction the consumption of herbal medicine. Please don't be disappointed by any unfavourable response you may receive as your Doctor will be working within the parameters of his or her specific professional code of practice.

Simon Miles HM Ir  
The Forest Garden  
Budock Water  
Falmouth  
Cornwall  
TR11 5ED

[www.theforestgarden.co.uk](http://www.theforestgarden.co.uk)

Tel 01326 250090



Simon Miles NCH RHS

For further information on plant sales, consultancy work, tours and courses at The Forest Garden in Falmouth go to [www.theforestgarden.co.uk](http://www.theforestgarden.co.uk)