

# HERBOLOGY IN HARRY POTTER: GINGER, PEPPERMINT, AND VALERIAN

Herbology in Harry Potter is fantastical but grounded in science! Use herbology to explore herbs and supplements, make soap or bath bombs. The three herbs described below—ginger, peppermint, and valerian—have been used throughout the world, from ancient times to today.

Learn about the three herbal ingredients featured in the Wit-Sharpening Potion (ginger), the Elixir to Induce Euphoria (peppermint), and the Forgetfulness Potion (valerian). What are the historical uses of these herbs? How much do we know about their medicinal properties? Explore the usefulness and safety of using these herbs for medicinal purposes.

## Soap Making

Make peppermint bath bombs or glycerin-based soaps. Consider inviting local artisans or soap makers to demonstrate.

## Book Club

Re-read Harry Potter specifically looking for references to herbology and how it was used.

## RESOURCES

### Web

NNLM: Summer health programming <https://nnlm.gov/initiatives/summer-reading>

NLM exhibition: Renaissance, Science, Magic, and Medicine in Harry Potter's World <https://bit.ly/2Hwepl1>

MedlinePlus: Drugs, herbs and supplements <https://medlineplus.gov/druginformation.html>

National Center for Biotechnology Information: Free medical textbooks <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/>

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH):

The HerbList™ app <https://nccih.nih.gov/Health/>

HerbListAppNCCIH: Ginger <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/ginger>

NCCIH: Peppermint oil <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/peppermintoil>

NCCIH: Valerian <https://nccih.nih.gov/health/valerian>

WikiHow: How to make glycerin soap <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-Glycerin-Soap>

Popular Science: How to make your own bath bombs <https://bit.ly/2VW0Mzi>

Harry Potter Wikia <https://harrypotter.wikia.com>

NCCIH: Quiz on medication–supplement interactions <https://bit.ly/296yEC0>

YouTube: Herb–drug interactions (64 min) <http://bit.ly/2DKbanN>

## Fiction

Rowling, J. K. Harry Potter series.

## Nonfiction

Benzie, Iris F.F. and Sissi Wachtel-Galor, editors. Herbal Medicine: Biomolecular and Clinical Aspects. CRC Press, 2010. 978-1439807132. (Available for free at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92771/>)

## \*CREDIT AND EVALUATION

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## Potion Recipes

### Wit-Sharpening Potion with Ginger

“Some of you will benefit from today’s assignment: Wit-Sharpening Potion. Perhaps you should begin immediately.” ~Severus Snape

Ingredient: Ginger (armadillo bile; scarab beetles)

Ginger is a tropical plant with green-purple flowers and a fragrant underground stem (called a rhizome). It is widely used as a flavoring or fragrance in foods, beverages, soaps, and cosmetics. Ancient Sanskrit, Chinese, Greek, Roman and Arabic texts discussed the use of ginger for health. In Asian medicine, dried ginger has been used for thousands of years to treat stomach aches, diarrhea, and nausea. Today, ginger is used as a dietary supplement for post-surgery nausea; nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy, or pregnancy; rheumatoid arthritis; and osteoarthritis.

Not wit-sharpening?

Maybe ginger is an adjuvant.

Adjuvant [aj´ah-vant, ä-joo´vant]. 1. assisting or aiding; 2. a substance that aids another, such as an auxiliary remedy.

Adjuvants. (n.d.) Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health (2003). Retrieved December 21 2018 from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Adjuvants>

### Elixir to Induce Euphoria with Peppermint

“Euphoria, I take it? And, what’s that I smell? Mmmm... you’ve added just a sprig of peppermint, haven’t you? Unorthodox, but what a stroke of inspiration, Harry, of course, that would tend to counterbalance the occasional side effects of excessive singing and nose-tweaking...” ~Horace Slughorn

Ingredient: Peppermint (shrivelfig; porcupine quills, sopophorous beans, wormwood)

Peppermint, a natural cross between two types of mint (water mint and spearmint), grows throughout Europe and North America. Both peppermint leaves and its essential oil, have been used for health for several thousand years. It is mentioned in records from ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. However, peppermint was not recognized as a distinct type of mint until the 1700s. Peppermint is a common flavoring agent in foods, and peppermint oil is used to create a pleasant fragrance in soaps and cosmetics. Today, peppermint is used as a dietary supplement for digestive problems, the common cold, headaches, and other conditions. Peppermint oil is used topically for headaches, muscle aches, and itching.

Slughorn suggests that peppermint is an antidote to other ingredients in the elixir.

Antidote an·ti·dote (an'ti-dōt). An agent that neutralizes a poison or counteracts its effects.

[G. antidotos, fr. anti, against, + dotos, what is given, fr. didōmi, to give] antidote. (n.d.) Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions and Nursing (2012). Retrieved December 21 2018 from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/antidote>

## Forgetfulness Potion with Valerian

Hermione Granger: “What are the three most crucial ingredients in a Forgetfulness Potion?”

Ronald Weasley: “I forgot.”

Ingredient: Valerian (Lethe River water, mistletoe berries)

Valerian is a plant native to Europe and Asia. It also grows in North America. Valerian was used medicinally in ancient Greece and Rome, and Hippocrates wrote about its uses. Historically, valerian has also been to treat nervousness, trembling, headaches, and heart palpitations. Today, valerian is used as a dietary supplement for insomnia, anxiety, and other conditions such as depression and menopausal symptoms.

Is there a connection between sleepiness and forgetfulness? Maybe valerian acts as a tranquilizer in the Forgetfulness Potion.

tran·quil·iz·er (trang'kwi-lī-zēr). A drug that promotes tranquility by calming and pacifying with minimal sedation.

tranquilizer. (n.d.) Medical Dictionary for the Dental Professions (2012). Retrieved December 21 2018 from <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/tranquilizer>