



The Herbalist's Guide to Pregnancy, Childbirth and Beyond

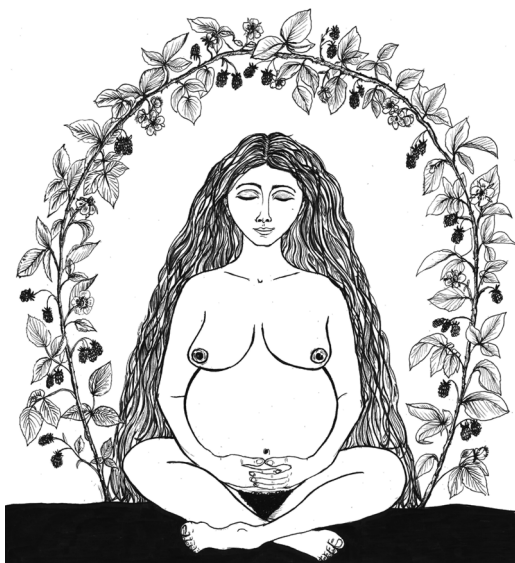
Herbal Therapeutics for the Childbearing Year

Carole Guyett

THE HERBALIST'S GUIDE TO PREGNANCY,
CHILDBIRTH AND BEYOND

THE HERBALIST'S GUIDE TO PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH AND BEYOND

Herbal Therapeutics for
the Childbearing Year



Carole Guyett

AEON

First published in 2022 by
Aeon Books

Copyright © 2022 by Carole Guyett

The right of contributors to be identified as the authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with §§ 77 and 78 of the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-1-91280-765-9

Cover illustrations by India Elyn

Cover design by Jessica Coomber

Illustrations by India Elyn and Judith Evans

Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India

Printed in Great Britain

www.aeonbooks.co.uk





Dedicated to herbalists, past, present, and future, that our work may continue to thrive for the benefit of childbearing women and the children yet to come.

In love and honour of the plants who bring so much medicine into the lives of humans.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>GUIDELINES FOR USING THIS BOOK</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>xiii</i>
1. Herbal prescribing and safety	1
2. Herbal care of the pregnant woman	19
3. Nutrition	29
4. Exercise and lifestyle	41
5. Stages of pregnancy	51
6. Herbal pharmacy	59
7. Materia medica	73
8. Conditions of pregnancy	103
9. Healing after loss	175
10. Preparation for labour and birth: week 36 onwards	189
11. The process of labour	207
12. Herbs for labour and delivery	225
13. Postpartum care	237
14. Lactation	267
15. Care of the newborn	283
16. Vibrational essences	301

<i>GLOSSARY OF HERBAL ACTIONS</i>	309
<i>RESOURCES</i>	313
<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	315
<i>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</i>	319
<i>AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY</i>	321
<i>INDEX OF GODDESS ILLUSTRATIONS</i>	323
<i>INDEX</i>	325



GUIDELINES FOR USING THIS BOOK

Chapter 1 ‘Herbal Prescribing and Safety’ contains important information on prescribing, safety, and contraindicated herbs. **This is required reading for herbal practitioners and anyone intending to prescribe or use the herbs or essential oils recommended in this book.**

Chapter 6 ‘Herbal Pharmacy’ contains instructions and quantities for the standard preparation of herbs, essential oils, and herbal applications for pregnancy, breastfeeding, and the newborn as outlined herein. These may differ from preparations made by herbalists for other purposes and should be checked before preparing any of the herbs recommended in this book.

Chapter 7 ‘Materia Medica’ describes the plants referred to in the text with particular emphasis on their use for pregnancy, lactation, and the newborn. Dosages given are the typical adult dosage range considered safe for childbearing women. Tincture dosages are for 1:4 dried herb tincture or 1:2 specific tincture unless stated otherwise. **Check this chapter to find maximum dosages, cautions, and further information about each herb. Essential oils are listed in Chapter 1.**

NOTE: Certain treatments described in this book should only be undertaken by a trained medical herbalist. Teas are generally safe for non-herbalist use when taken at the doses recommended here. For other herbal treatments, non-herbalist practitioners should consult a trained herbalist. If you are new to working with herbs, be cautious and stick to the gentlest of remedies until you gain experience. If in any doubt, consult a herbal practitioner.

Throughout the text 🌿 indicates a **Schedule 20 herb**.

Schedule 20 herbs are toxic at high dosages and are restricted to herbal practitioner use only in the UK with a maximum permitted dosage. These herbs are not available for prescribing in the Republic of Ireland.

Practitioners should check their own country's legislation for all herbal prescribing.

Herbs are predominately prescribed in combination.

Herbal medicine is not prescribed in the first trimester of pregnancy unless specifically indicated.

The remaining chapters can be read sequentially or dipped into depending on requirements. Chapter 2 starts by describing herbal care of the pregnant woman, followed in Chapters 3 and 4 by advice on nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle for pregnancy. Chapter 5 describes what happens at the various stages of pregnancy. This is followed by Herbal Pharmacy and Materia Medica as described above. Next is an A–Z of conditions that may be encountered during pregnancy. This is the place to go for a quick reference to particular conditions of pregnancy, appropriate herbal medicines, and other treatments. Healing after loss has its own chapter, as does the preparation for birth, including preparatory herbs, herbal induction, and a suggested birthing kit. Chapter 11 describes the process and stages of labour, followed by a chapter on herbs for labour and delivery. Chapters 13 and 14 outline herbal therapeutics for postpartum care and lactation, while Chapter 15 describes the herbal treatment of common conditions of the newborn. The final chapter gives information on vibrational essences. The glossary contains an explanatory list of plant actions used throughout the book.

Pregnancy does not fit neatly into boxes and many issues may occur at several stages of pregnancy or postpartum. Inevitably there may be some cross-referencing needed. Please refer to the index.

I am using the terms “woman/women” throughout this book. Some mothers may identify differently. The text includes all mothers, regardless of their chosen terminology.

I have taken the decision to capitalise all plant names in honour of their status.

Standard abbreviations used in the text

aa	of each
bd	twice daily
mane	in the morning
nocte	at night
qds	to be taken four times daily
tds	to be taken three times daily
ac	before food
pc	after food
sig	let it be labeled
aq cal	warm water
gtt	drops

Cort	Cortex, bark
EO	Essential oil
Fl	Flos, Flowers
Fol	Folia, Leaves
Fr	Fruct, Fruit
Rad	Radix, Root
Rx	Prescription
Tr	Tincture

Notice to health professionals and disclaimer

Health professionals should use clinical knowledge and judgement in applying the principles and recommendations contained in this book. These recommendations may not be appropriate in all circumstances. Practitioners without appropriate herbal training should consult an experienced medical herbalist for professional advice. New research and clinical experience of herbal medicine may reveal new safety precautions necessitating changes in prescribing practice. It is the responsibility of individual health practitioners, relying on experience and knowledge of the patient, to determine the best treatment and dosages for each individual patient. Neither the publisher nor the author assumes any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property arising from this publication.



White Shell Woman. Creator and sustainer of life, enabler of beauty.
Corn (*Zea mays*). The abundant one who nourishes all and promotes alignment with the Earth.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, medicinal plants have played a significant role during pregnancy, birth, and postpartum. This is still true today in many rural areas of the world. Since ancient times, midwives have attended women in childbirth and very often these midwives were also herbalists, relying on the food and medicine of the plants around them to assist the women in their care. Midwifery and herbalism have traditionally been woven together, with herbs bringing their abundant gifts to support women and their babies throughout all stages of childbearing, promoting optimum health while treating any problems that might arise. This precious herbal wisdom is a legacy for the herbalists of today to preserve for the well-being of women and future generations.

In modern times, more and more women are looking for natural ways to care for their health during pregnancy, seeking to reclaim this ancient knowledge for themselves and their families. Pregnancy is a unique moment of time for a woman, an opportunity for joy and celebration as she prepares for the arrival of a new being, as well as the transformation of her own life. Herbal medicine is a natural choice for many women at this time, offering valuable support for both mother and child.

While public interest in herbs increases, there is also a considerable amount of misinformation and fear surrounding the use of herbs in pregnancy. The media and the internet are full of unsubstantiated scare stories about herbs, as well as some recklessly dangerous advice. In the medical model, pregnancy is sometimes seen as an illness that needs managing rather than a natural state, and herbal medicine may be considered 'too risky' by health care professionals and members of the public alike. Certain herbs are contraindicated in pregnancy for very good reasons, others are safe

but discredited due to ignorance or theory rather than evidence. Still, others have reasonable but unproven question marks hanging over them, indicating the need for caution and appropriate targeted research. The entire area can feel like a minefield, with some herbalists fearing to prescribe any herbs in pregnancy as a consequence. The knock-on effect can be that student herbalists receive less experience of treating pregnant women during their training and may enter herbal practice without sufficient confidence or skill to undertake this work. In turn, this means that our knowledge and expertise may dwindle and disappear.

Such a decline in our herbalist repertoire would be a tragic loss. What we do have is a safety record based on the time-tested foundation of empirical evidence from centuries of traditional use. This book is written as a way of recording and sharing a tiny piece of that massive body of knowledge, born from the generous teachings of so many plants, herbalists, and midwives before me, and of course, not forgetting the pregnant women and their babies. It offers an account of herbs and therapeutic methods found to be helpful from experience in clinical practice, both mine and some of my colleagues. This is an undoubtedly personal account, backed up by whatever meaningful studies, literature, and surveys I have found. This book comes in response to requests by students and other herbalists, as well as my desire to preserve and promote the continued safe practice of herbal medicine for pregnancy and childbirth.

Herbs have a wealth of virtues to offer throughout the time of childbearing and it is important that women and their babies are not denied these benefits. My hope is that the material in this book may in some way contribute to ensuring that practitioners of the future are equipped with the information, skill, and confidence to continue this respected tradition.

I am a medical herbalist (not a midwife), with a passion for herbal medicine and women's health, particularly the areas of fertility, pregnancy, and birthing. These have been particular interests of mine over my thirty-five years of herbal practice and I have been privileged to work with many women at this unique stage of their lives, witnessing the profound gifts that herbal medicine has to offer.

I undertook my herbal training with the School of Phytotherapy in England in the 1980s. With a keen interest in women's health, I was fortunate to do much of my clinical training with Janet Hicks, an inspirational herbal practitioner who herself had been taught by a herbalist/gynaecologist. Janet ran a busy practice from her home in Winchester, which she generously opened to students and shared her expertise with enthusiasm. Working at her clinic provided an opportunity to see a large number of women with gynaecological and obstetric conditions, while receiving expert tuition in clinical care and examination. I was deeply impressed by Janet's integrity and respect for patients and plants, combined with her skilful, thorough, and gentle care. The healing virtues of the plants themselves have never ceased to amaze and impress me!

At the end of my herbalist training, I became pregnant with my first child who was born during my initial year of practice. This immersed me in a world of pregnancy, birth, and babies, attracting many pregnant women to my clinic and offering me the opportunity to attend births as a birth assistant. Attending births is something

I love and have continued to do. In 1995, I moved to rural Ireland and have been in practice here ever since. For more than thirty years, my work has included teaching students and herbalists on the subject of herbal therapeutics for fertility, pregnancy, and childbirth.

This book describes my personal therapeutic approach and reflects what I have learned and found useful from experience in practice over the years. It is primarily a practical, hands-on manual of tried and tested herbal therapeutics and does not set out to provide a fully referenced compendium of possible herbs for pregnancy. Herbal medicine treats the whole person. Therefore, as well as prescribing herbs, a herbalist's remit includes providing information and guiding patients in areas of diet and lifestyle, stress management, and simple self-help strategies. In holistic herbal medicine, the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of an individual are recognised as being intimately entwined. Plants work on all these levels and my therapeutic approach may include advocating a number of different ways to access plant medicine, whether it is drinking an infusion, spending time in nature, working with living plants, taking a flower essence, or performing a simple ceremony.

This book is primarily aimed at students and practitioners of herbal medicine or other medical disciplines that use medicinal herbs. It may also be of interest to midwives, doulas, and other health practitioners who work with women during child-bearing. In fact, anyone with an interest in pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care, can dip into the relevant sections, and find information that I hope may be useful. Some of the conditions described are not suitable for herbal treatment by those without adequate training in herbal medicine. If in any doubt, consult a herbal practitioner. Other therapeutic methods described are completely safe for non-herbalists.

I am repeatedly struck by the sheer miracle of pregnancy and birth. Witnessing a baby being born into the world or feeling a child kicking inside her mother's belly, I am constantly reminded of the wonder of life and creation. As such common occurrences, it is easy to take pregnancy and birth for granted but these everyday miracles continue to fill me with awe. Pregnancy itself is a mystery and birth is a sacred act that I am always honoured to be part of.

Likewise, the plant world offers magnificent and sometimes miraculous medicines with which to assist pregnancy and childbirth. We should never underestimate the capacity of herbal medicine to support, heal, and regenerate the human being at all stages of life. As practitioners we are in a position to facilitate this exceptional process. We can also empower women, encouraging them to take responsibility for their lives and make their own choices. We can help build a woman's confidence and self-esteem, assisting her to view childbirth with excitement and helping to make her experience as healthy, rewarding, and pleasurable as possible.



Morgan Le Fay. Lady of healing, herbs and magic, midwife.
Apple (*Malus spp.*) Purveyor of beauty, abundance, love, and magic.



Herbal Therapeutics for the Childbearing Year

This book is a comprehensive manual of holistic herbal therapeutics for pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period, written for herbalists and herbal students, as well as birth keepers, midwives, doulas and other health professionals.

Packed with practical examples, the book describes the author's personal approach, reflecting how herbs and a holistic perspective can support women and their babies from the time of conception until the months following childbirth. Throughout history, medicinal plants have played a significant role during childbearing, and the accessible and extensive material in this book aims to equip practitioners with the skills and confidence to continue this valuable age-old tradition.

Carole Guyett MNIMH trained at the School of Herbal Medicine in Tunbridge Wells, UK and has been a practising medical herbalist for more than 35 years. She has worked extensively in the areas of fertility, pregnancy, and birthing, and has experience of teaching obstetrics and gynaecology to herbal students and practitioners. Carole lives in Ireland where she runs apprenticeships, workshops, and sacred ceremony. She is also the author of *Sacred Plant Initiations*.

“What a wonderful and comprehensive guide to herbal healthcare for women during pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and caring for their newborn. Carole has covered so many essential subjects related to this special time in a woman's life. This is a book to educate us, to engender confidence in practitioners and students alike and dispel many of the fears and misconceptions that herbalists may have when treating women during pregnancy and their offspring. A treasure trove of information and support and a tribute to the amazing world of healing herbs!”

Anne McIntyre, medical herbalist and author of *The Complete Herbal Tutor and Healing with Flowers*

“A highly recommended guide for every woman considering pregnancy and motherhood. Carole's book provides a thorough, informative and extremely thoughtful approach for using herbs throughout the stages of pregnancy. Woven into the text are beautiful visualizations, meditations and ceremonies to help the mother connect with the various stages of her pregnancy. While excellent for anyone interested in pregnancy, childbirth and postnatal care, this guide book is of special value for the clinical herbalist as well as other medical professionals as it provides detailed information on prescribing, possible side effects, and an entire section on herbal preparation and pharmacy.”

Rosemary Gladstar, herbalist and author

All Aeon titles are available as eBooks from aeonbooks.co.uk and other eBook vendors.