AMERICANA LIBRARY

FOXFIRE

Folk Remedies

Edited by

FOXFIRE STUDENTS

Mountain Folk Remedies

The Foxfire Americana Library
Edited by Foxfire Students

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Concerning the remedies we have printed, a note of caution is appropriate: we have tested none of these remedies ourselves, and though we do not dispute their efficacy, we must warn that—due to the pressure of the interview situations, or tape noise and interference, or the failure of the human memory—essential ingredients or quantities may have been misunderstood or left out; and the names of ingredients such as plants, because they are frequently called my their common colloquial names around here, may be misleading.

In addition, several of the plants advocated (yellow ladyslipper, for example) may be on the endangered species lists.

For the above reasons, we cannot advocate or stand behind the actual use of these remedies, and we do not encourage you to employ them. We present them here purely for their historical and cultural interest, not as viable alternatives to modern medicinal products.

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Doc Brabson: An Oral History

A NOTE ABOUT THE FOXFIRE AMERICANA LIBRARY SERIES

For almost half a century, high school students in the Foxfire program in Rabun County, Georgia, have collected oral histories of their elders from the southern Appalachian region in an attempt to preserve a part of the rapidly vanishing heritage and dialect. The Foxfire Fund, Inc., has brought that philosophy of simple living to millions of readers, starting with the bestselling success of *The Foxfire Book* in the early 1970s. Their series of fifteen books and counting has taught creative self-sufficiency and has preserved the stories, crafts, and customs of the unique Appalachian culture for future generations.

Traditionally, books in the Foxfire series have included a little something for everyone in each and every volume. For the first time ever, through the creation of The Foxfire Americana Library, this forty-five-year collection of knowledge has been organized by subject. Whether down-home recipes or simple tips for both your household and garden, each book holds a wealth of tried-and-true information, all passed down by unforgettable people with unforgettable voices.

WILD PLANT USES

Some of the plants listed here are very rare, and some are even on the endangered species list. Please be respectful of future generations and use a conservative approach when you "go a-gatherin'," as Charles Thurmond does. "I prefer to go out and get my own herbs. When I go gather the herbs, I use the old Cherokee way of being conservative. I make sure that I find four of the plants before I'll take one. This way I know that I will leave three plants to reproduce. You can take part of the root of most of the plants and leave part, and it will continue to grow. Always put something back."

This reverent relationship with the land and the belief that God owns and provides all continue to be integral parts of the simple lifestyle of the people of the rural Appalachians. Having knowledge of the land and the wild plants available for consumption is still a source of pride for the mountain people, who strive to live simple, self-sufficient lives. While some cultures or geographical areas attempt to shelter their resources, the Southern Appalachian people have always been willing to share their wisdom and skill in the old ways with anyone eager to learn.

Charles Thurmond demonstrated this willingness through a recent interview. Much of his knowledge came from ancestors who shared with him. "My grandmother was a midwife and had at least one herbal cure for everything. Her having a good bit of Cherokee blood in her caused her to know a lot of the herbs. Grandma used to take me out to show me things in the woods and tell me what they were good for.

"My grandma taught me some of her herbal cures, but most of it I've picked up since then. When you are a child, you don't listen enough. I remember some of what Grandma taught me. My father and uncles have supplemented my herbal education. I go to the doctor occasionally, but I like doctors that don't go overboard with antibiotics and things like that. I don't medically treat people, but I

talk about herbs with ’em. I teach people about herbs so they can learn for themselves.

“My grandma had numerous cures for everything, usually two or three. There are many ways to prepare various herbs. Whether you want it prepared cold, warm, or hot depends on what you are treating. If it is cold, it takes longer to work, but it will work longer in your system. Most herbs can be boiled. You soak some herbs. Alcohol will take the chemicals and things inside the herbs out. It depends on how you fix them and, most importantly, how you use them.”

While the knowledge of those who graciously contributed information to this section is not questioned, we must caution readers that these are personal uses and experiences with wild plants, and we in no way guarantee accuracy, effectiveness, or safety in the identification or use of these plants. Charles Thurmond agreed, saying, “When people learn about these herbs, they must be careful. If you use them improperly, they can be really dangerous.”

Wild plants that have at least one medicinal or edible claim to fame are listed here alphabetically by the common Southern Appalachian name. The genus and, usually, species names follow.

—Teresia Gravley Thomason

WILD PLANT MEDICINAL USES

Alumroot *(Heuchera)* typically grows on rocks in open woodland areas and reaches a height of one to two feet The leaves are usually parted into three or five divisions and are cleft and toothed. Flowers from this plant are small and white or green. Roots are usually thick and two to four inches long with several stem scars on the root showing old stem growth. The plant is gathered for the roots, which should be used before the spring flowering time of April through June. As the leaves get older, they are often spotted.

ILLUSTRATION 1 Alumroot

Alumroot has several uses as medicine. A tea brewed from the leaves is used for dysentery. A mixture made from the root is used for sore throats. Powdered root is also used on wounds to stop bleeding.

Clarence Lusk shared his experience with this root. “The alumroot is a very spindly little ol’ stem that runs up out of the ground. It comes up very early in the spring, pretty much the first thing that comes up. That’s when I generally gather it. All it takes is two or three little ol’ roots as long as your finger to cure you usually. I’ve got up in the morning, especially when I was working in the woods in the forestry business, and I’d be sick with dysentery. I’d just say, ‘Well, I just ain’t gonna get to work today. That’s all there is to it!’ While my wife was getting breakfast, I’d go out and dig up some of them herbs and make a cupful of tea and drink it. Then I’d eat a

pretty good breakfast and go right on to work, and that was the end of my sickness.

"Now, my granddaughter up here calls alumroot pig medicine because we used to use it for the pigs. Pigs is bad to take dysentery. If you feed 'em too much, they'll get sick. And calves too! Even the old cattle. In the spring of the year when grass shoots come up, gets so pretty and green, and then comes a freeze and that grass freezes, if you turn your cattle out right then and let them eat a bit of that frozen grass, it'll just nearly kill 'em. I come in one evening from work, and one of the cows was just the awfullest mess of sick you ever seen from eating that ol' frozen grass. At that time, I had a big bunch of alumroot from working in the woods and finding it, just digging along as I passed by it. I made about a quart of tea and put it in a five-gallon bucket. Then I put the cow in the barn. She didn't like it, but since that was all the water she got, she'd come to it and drink it. The next day, she was well."

Balm-of-Gilead *(Populus candicans)* can be found on roadsides and small waterways. The trunk of this tree can reach six and a half feet in diameter and a height of one hundred feet. Young branches are resinous and hairy with pleasantly scented buds. Leaves can be up to six inches long, are hairy when young, and are dark green on the top side and lighter green on the underside. This tree is sought for its buds.

As a remedy for erysipelas, a feverish infectious disease characterized by deep red, spreading inflammation of the skin, make a salve of "bamagilion" buds fried in mutton tallow. Add petroleum jelly if you wish.

As an all-purpose salve, boil the buds of the "bamagilion" in water and skim the wax from the buds off the top. Mix this wax with pine resin and good mutton tallow. Keep in a container for use whenever needed. Some people like to make a large amount of the salve each year and store it in small tins to have on hand.

"I used to go to the mountains and dig up herbs," Numerous Marcus explained. "We would get roots and plants and make herb medicines out of them. There are a lot of herbs in the woods if a

feller knowed what they was. We used to get heart leaves [wild ginger] and Balm-of-Gilead buds and some hog lard and put all this together. We'd melt it down and make a salve out of it. It's good for sores. Rub it on them and it would clear them right up. It was good for cuts too."

Black-Eyed Susan *(Rudbeckia hirta)* is well known to everyone. With yellow flower heads and a black center, it is a biennial that grows to a height of one to three feet and blooms in summer. It was used to treat skin infections and does contain antibodies. Native Americans used its root for tea for worms and colds.

ILLUSTRATION 2 Black-eyed Susan

Black Walnut *(Juglans nigra)* is often a signature tree of the Southern Appalachian homeplace; a black walnut cake is a regional favorite. Charles Thurmond thought that "the black walnut is good to eat, and the bark is good for dye and rubbing on the skin for any kind of skin ailment or disease. The juice from the husk of the black walnut was very good for ringworm." (See *Foxfire 3*, page 345.)

ILLUSTRATION 3 Black walnut tree (right), Black walnut hull and bark off the tree (left)

ILLUSTRATION 4 Bloodroot

Bloodroot *(Sangunaria)* can be found in rich soil. It has a white flower that shows itself in early spring. One leaf with five to nine lobes and one flower are produced for each root. The leaves grow from approximately four inches to as much as twelve inches wide after the flowering period. The roots of this plant are collected in the fall and dried before using.

Marie Mellinger wrote, “Bloodroot is possibly the most common of the sang-sign plants, [plants that grow in the same area as ginseng], still found growing in many areas where ginseng, golden seal, and ladyslippers have been eradicated. This pretty springling has white,

star-like blossoms before the scalloped leaves appear. The stems and roots contain an orange juice. This is the ‘red-coonroot’ of the mountains, and juice on a lump of sugar was a cough drop. Known as ‘tetterwort’ of ‘sweet slumber’ or ‘she-roots,’ the dried rootstocks were ground and used in an infusion to relieve pains of burns, or for coughs and colds and chest ailments. As ‘she-roots,’ bloodroot was a remedy for female complaints.”

Charles Thurmond offered this wisdom: “Bloodroot is a neat little plant that grows in the woods. When you first break the roots, they look like they are bleeding blood-red. It is very, very bitter. If you know someone who’s got asthma, you might want to give them bloodroot. If you break those roots and touch that juice to your tongue, it opens your sinus areas. It can be fixed in teas or other fluids. It can be used on the skin sometimes. Bloodroot can also be used for bronchial problems and stimulating your circulation and appetite. [It causes] you to sweat.”

ILLUSTRATION 5 Blue Cohosh

Blue Cohosh *(Caulophyllum)* grows to be one to three feet tall and is generally found in rich, loamy soil in the shade of the woods. Marie Mellinger told us, “Blue cohosh is often found growing with ginseng and goldenseal. This plant stands stiffly erect, with many small scalloped leaves. The leaves and stems have a frosted appearance, and the yellow flowers are followed by dark blue berries. The stocky roots are collected in autumn and have some market value. The plant is sometimes collected as ‘blueberry root’ or ‘blue ginseng’ or ‘yellow ginseng.’ In home medicine, the mountain healers used the roots as medicine for lung troubles, or to stop the flow of blood. The roots contain an alkaloid, methylcytisine.”

Boneset *(Eupatorium perfoliatum)* is usually found in wet ground near swamps or streams. The unusual leaf configuration makes this

plant an easy one to spot. The leaves grow on a rough, hairy stem of one to five feet in height. They are joined at the base and sit opposite one another along the stem. Small white summer flowers are produced at the heads of each stem. Boneset is gathered in the summer for the flowers and leaves, which are stripped from the stalk. The flowers turn grayish white in late summer. This plant is closely related to the joe-pye weed and grows to about four feet tall. It was used to poultice broken bones.

As a remedy for colds, make a tea from the leaves of boneset. Boil three or four leaves in a cup of water, strain, and sweeten. Drink the tea when it has cooled because it will make you sick if taken hot. Leaves of this plant may also be cured and saved for use in teas during the winter months.

Varina Ritchie recalled, “Mother doctored with boneset tea and castor oil and turpentine. You’d drink a glass of boneset tea if you had a cold before you went to bed. It would help you to sleep. We raised it in our garden. It would grow to about two and one-half or three feet. Mother always had a patch of it in her garden. It was kinda like a weed that growed. You could take it, and even when it dried it would make good tea.”

Mrs. Laura Patton remembered that boneset was a popular plant for making remedies. She’d put pieces of the plant in a cup and pour boiling water over them and let them steep. Then she’d strain the tea into another cup, let it cool, and then use it. She said it was especially good for flu and colds. In fact, in the winter of 1976 when the drugstore medicine wasn’t helping one of her grown sons who had the flu, he used boneset instead and claims that it helped. He went to bed right after he took it, and it made him rest all night. In the morning, he was well.

One of Charles Thurmond’s memories of his grandmother involved boneset. “My grandma had numerous cures for everything, usually two or three. One of her favorites was boneset. Boneset plants grow around waterways, swamps, creeks, lakes, and whatever. It is good for fevers. It cures about twenty-five different illnesses, but it’s a natural quinine. Quinine is a medicine made from a tree in South America that kills fevers from malaria. During the Civil War, the

South didn't have quinine because of the Northern blockade, so they used boneset. It works quite well. Boneset will kill a fever in ten to twenty minutes. This year I had a cold and a fever. I took some boneset, which killed the fever immediately. I had quite a bit of it left over, and I didn't want to waste it, so I drank it. Well, in half an hour my feet were cold and wouldn't get warm!"

Butterfly Weed *(Asclepias tuberosa)* is a variety of milkweed that grows well in dry, sandy, or rocky soil. It is found in the open, in open forest, or near the banks of streams. It has hairy stems and rough leaves with a large, white, meaty root and blooms in the summer. Butterfly weed is gathered in the fall for the roots. This plant is a perennial that grows to a height of one to two feet. Its bright orange flowers make it easy to identify. Early settlers thought the root cured pleurisy and called it pleurisy root. The plant attracts several types of butterfiles. It can be toxic in large quantities. Monarch butterflies get their protective poison from this plant.

Of butterfly weed, Charles Thurmond said, "Some people call it chiggerweed. It has little orange blooms on the top of it, and butterflies go berserk over them. It has a root called the pleurisy root, which is good for anything to do with your chest or aching muscles. You must chip this root up to make it into a tea."

Catnip *(Nepeta cataria)* is strongly scented, grows in height to two or three feet, and has fine white hairs on the stems, giving it a white appearance. The almost heart-shaped leaves are also covered with fine white hairs on the underside and are about two inches long. Summer brings flowering spikes of white flowers that are dotted with purple. (For a photo and a drawing of catnip, see *Foxfire 3*, page 334.)

Catnip is gathered during the spring and summer for the leaves and flowered tops. This common plant is not native to the region but was introduced here by colonists. It grows well in dry soil.

One of Mrs. Laura Patton's favorite home remedies was catnip tea (made from the leaves), which she used when her children had the flu or were teething. She said it was good for helping them sleep.

Numerous Marcus told us, “Catnip tea is good for breaking up colds. It’ll break out the hives too. You don’t need to take but just a teacup at a time. I use the leaves on catnip. I don’t use the root. I’d take the leaves and put them in a pot, then pour boiling water over them and let them set for a few minutes. Take the leaves out and pour the tea in your cup, sweeten it with sugar or honey, either one. Little fellers would smack their mouths on that. To keep catnip up through the winter, I gather the leaves, dry them out, and put them in a container where they can get a lot of air. They’ll keep a long time.”

Catnip tea is made by pouring about a pint of boiling water over a half cup of broken leaves and stems. Let this mixture stand for several minutes and then strain it.

ILLUSTRATION 6 Christmas Fern

Christmas Fern *(Polystichum)* is an evergreen that got its name because of its generous use as a decoration at Christmas-time. It was used in the winter for ills caused by cold and wet. Root tea was used for fever and chills. The toxicity of this plant is unknown.

ILLUSTRATION 7 Colic Root

Colic Root *(Alertis)* is found in dry, sandy soil and is gathered in the fall for the roots. This herb can be one to three feet tall with grass-like base leaves only. The leaves surround the stem in the form of a star. A white-yellow spike of flowers is produced from May through August. A concoction made

from the root was used for diarrhea, rheumatism, and jaundice. It was also used for colic.

Colt's Foot *(Tussilago farfara)* grows along streams in wet, clay soil and has yellow spring blooms, which are seen before the leaves. This plant has many stalks, with each producing a yellow disc-shaped flower that only opens to the sun. The leaves, shaped like horses' hooves, arrive from the roots and can be as large as seven inches wide. They are covered on the underside by thick, woolly hairs.

Colt's foot, which is not native to Southern Appalachia, is gathered for the roots and the leaves. Leaves are usually taken near full-growth size. Gertrude Mull shared that colt's foot is good for coughing. "Just take [the leaves] of colt's foot and make tea out of it."

Comfrey *(Symphytum officinale)* is found in wasteland and has rough, thick leaves in branch fashion. The plant, which was introduced to the Southern Appalachian region, stands up to three feet tall and has large lower leaves and smaller, stemless upper leaves. Summer flowers are clustered, green, and four-petaled. Comfrey is collected in early spring or fall for the root. This plant can be dangerous if overused; therefore, readers should be cautious if they attempt to gather and use it.

ILLUSTRATION 8 Comfrey

Of comfrey, Numerous Marcus said, "I've got some comfrey root growing in the garden. It's good for arthritis and for when you get the gout in your foot. It's good for your blood. It helps keep it purified. You have to boil the root and make a tea out of it. You put it in alcohol so it won't sour. Most herbs you can use the roots.

There's not many that you can use the leaves off of. But you can take comfrey root and use the roots and leaves, either that you wish."

Dogwood *(Coruns florida)* is found in well-drained soil throughout the Southern Appalachian Mountains and is used in the fall for bark from the root. This spring bloomer displays numerous showy white petals on delicate branches, followed by small leaves that turn red in the fall.

"Dogwood is easy to get," according to Charles Thurmond. "It's a stimulant; it picks you up. If you have got circulatory problems, it's supposed to be good for them. The dogwood bark and flowers are tonics."

Elderberry *(Sambucus canadensis)* likes damp, rich soil and can grow to ten feet in height. It possesses many smooth, light gray stems and large leaves on short stalks. Flowers are fragrant, five-lobed, and wheel-shaped, followed by clusters of juicy, small, round fruit. This shrub is gathered in June and July for the flowers and then from July to September for the berries, which are purplish black in color. The flowers are dried quickly. Berries must be carefully dried to avoid mold. Native Americans used a poultice of elderberry on cuts, sore limbs, and headaches. The bark, roots, leaves, and unripe berries are toxic, but the flowers and ripe berries are edible.

Ginseng *(Panax quinquefolia)* grows well in moist, rich soil in the mountains. It is usually about one foot tall and has three larger leaves at the top with thin leaflets. As many as twenty small greenish white flowers bloom in a cluster from May through August, and crimson berries appear in July and August. The root is thick and can be three inches long and one inch thick. (For a photo of ginseng, see *The Foxfire Book*, page 235.)

This increasingly rare plant is gathered in fall for the root. It is important to gather the root in the fall only, because roots gathered at other times shrink more during the drying process. But because

ILLUSTRATION 9 Ginseng root and plant

this plant is rare and endangered, readers are asked to refrain from gathering it.

Ginseng's root is revered for its strong medicinal properties. It has been used for an aphrodisiac, for coughs, and as a heart stimulant. Because it is so popular, regulations have been placed on digging it.

Numerous Marcus believed that "ginseng is good for arthritis and for sick stomachs. To use it for arthritis, you can make a tea and drink it. Just take the roots and boil them, get the strength out of them. Or you could take the liquid and rub it on your joints, and it would have the same effect. I've got ginseng growing right there in the garden. It takes ginseng about two years to come up."

Charles Thurmond said, "Another thing that is used around here [Southern Appalachians] a lot, but is very scarce, is ginseng. It is good for your stomach and has a calming effect on your nerves."

Goat's Beard *(Aruncus dioicus)* resembles a shrub and sometimes reaches a height of six feet. It has tiny, yellowish white flowers that bloom March through May. It was also called ghost breath. If you had a bad dream, you made a tea from the roots of ghost breath. Tea was also used to bathe swollen feet. The Cherokee Indians made a poultice of its root to treat bee stings.

Golden Ragwort *(Senecio)* is found in swampy areas and damp meadows. A perennial plant reaching two to four feet in height, this herb has smooth, slender stems approximately two feet long. It has two leaf types—heart-shaped or rounded and lance-shaped—which grow from the base of the plant and can be tinted purple on the underside. The flowers are yellow and found in clusters at the top of the plant. They bloom from March through July. The root and

leaves of ragwort were made into a tea traditionally used by Native Americans and settlers for childbirth complications; it was also used for lung ailments, dysentery, and difficult urination. It is primarily gathered for the entire herb and the root.

Goldenseal *(Hydrastis canadensis)* is an increasingly scarce plant found in the open woods on hillsides, where soil drainage is good. It grows in patches and has a thick yellow root. Hairy stems come directly from the root and are about one foot tall with branches near the top. Each branch houses one small leaf, one large leaf, and a flower. Leaves can reach eight inches in diameter and have five to nine lobes. In spring, an unusual flower blooms, which is greenish white in color. Flowers are followed by large heads that turn red in the fall and resemble raspberries. Fresh roots are bright yellow throughout and become brittle when dry. Goldenseal is gathered in the fall after the heads are ripe for the root and in late summer for the leaves.

Marie Mellinger wrote, "Best known as sang-sign is the 'little brother of the ginseng': the goldenseal." Other names for *Hydrastis* include turmeric-root, tonic-root, ohio cucuma, orange-root, and jaundiceroot. Its use as an eyewash gives it such names as eye-root and eye-balls.

"Goldenseal has two divided green leaves topped by a whitish fuzzy flower in early spring. The blossoms have an oddly aromatic odor that attracts small bees and the bee-like flower flies. The single fruit resembles a red raspberry, but is poisonous if eaten. The medicinal part is the thick yellow rootstock collected in the autumn. The roots are a bitter demulcent and contain three strong alkaloids: berberine, canadine, and hydrastine. They were used in medicines called 'bitters.' In 1856, S. G. Goodrich wrote, 'Bitters are esteemed as a sort of panacea, moral as well as physical, for even then morning prayer went heavily without it.' *The Herbalist* states that goldenseal is 'one of the most agreeable and expensive stomachics of the botanical kingdom, recommended for and esteemed as tonic for the liver and stomach. Weakened stomachs with enfeebled digestive powers are greatly benefited by its use. Goldenseal was used to

stimulate circulation when hands and feet were cold, and the skin turned blue. It is also a fine herb to use on exzema or minor skin irritations.'

"Any plant with yellow roots or strong yellow coloring matter was, according to the doctrine of signatures [if the plant was shaped like, or resembled, a human organ or disease characteristic, then that plant was useful for that organ or ailment], a remedy for yellow jaundice. *Hydrastis* was sometimes called yellowroot when used as jaundice medicine."

Numerous Marcus stated, "I've got some goldenseal planted up there above the barn. I ordered it. There is some of it in this country around here, but it's a very scattered plant. You find it mostly back in North Carolina. It just grows in little patches around here. You can make a tea out of the roots of goldenseal. Take a little wad of the roots and put them down in a quart or a half gallon of liquor and let that set a while. Drink a little of that at a time. You don't want to drink too much of that 'cause it'll make you tired as the dickens. I never make too much of it at a time, because I've got friends who come in to see me that like it too!"

"Take the powder out of goldenseal flowers. It's good for cuts, keeps down infection. You just break [the blossoms] off, put 'em over paper, and let 'em drop. Sift that to get all the crumbs out of it to where it'll just be pure stuff, the powder out of the blossoms," Gertrude Mull added.

Charles Thurmond said, "A true yellowroot is goldenseal. [It] has a very toxic effect if you overdose on it. [It] is good for colds and the croup."

Hemlock *(Tsuga canadensis)* grows well in moist earth and is a common sight in the mountainous areas. This tree has short needles and small cones. The needles were brewed to make a tea for coughs and colds.

Horseradish *(Cochleria armoracia)* enjoys rich soil and can reach heights of over two feet. (For a drawing of it, see *Foxfire 2*, page 77.) It is gathered and used for the root, which has a burning taste.

ILLUSTRATION 10 Hemlock tree

ILLUSTRATION 11 Horseradish

As a blood builder, use the red part of the roots of the horseradish plant and drink as a tea. It was used to aid digestion.

Indian Root *(Aralia racemosa)* is gathered in the fall for the root. The stems have many branches and can be six feet tall with very large leaves. Flowers appear in late summer to early fall and are produced in clusters. It likes moist, rich soil.

Marie Mellinger said, *"Aralia racemosa*, called spignet, false-sarsaparilla, spiceberry, shot-bush, or Indian root, is a tall, dramatic plant with huge dried leaves and a very showy panicle of fragrant flowers. Later the *Aralia* bears an abundance of juicy, garnet-red berries. The strong-smelling roots are dug in autumn. *Aralia* is a 'cure all.' Sarsaparilla compound has been sold as 'Nature's best tonic of certain organic hormones.' With ginseng it 'eases ills of old age and prolongs life,' but only for men, giving it such names as 'life-of-man' and 'old man's roots.' The cooked roots have an agreeable aromatic smell and flavor and are sometimes used as food."

Ironweed *(Vernonia or Verbena hastata)* likes moist, open places and is gathered for using the entire herb. The stem is rough, straight, and covered with fine hairs. It can stand seven feet tall and branches out above the leaves, which are broad, toothy, and lance-shaped. This herb produces small blue flowers in clustered spikes that can be six inches long.

Charles Thurmond told us, “Ironweed is very gentle. You don’t really realize it’s working. You make a concoction and use it on the surface of the skin for skin diseases and things like that.”

ILLUSTRATION 12 Ironweed

Jack-in-the-Pulpit *(Arisaema)* grows well in shady, moist, wooded areas. It has smooth leaves that can be six inches long and three inches wide. The flower, which appears from April to early July, is shaped much like a calla lily and is green or green with eggplant-colored stripes. Fall brings a cluster of shiny deep red berries. The root (or corm) is turnip-shaped and has a strong burning taste. This plant is gathered in the summer for the root. The root is cut crosswise and dried to lessen the strong taste. Native Americans used the dried root for colds and coughs and to build the blood. Dried root poultices were used externally for rheumatism, boils, and swelling from snakebites.

Jerusalem Oak Seed *(Chenopodium anthelminticum)* is a naturalized, strongly-odored weed that grows in open places and is gathered for using either the entire plant or the fruit only. It is a common plant. It has a stem of two to three feet with many branches and several lance-shaped leaves. The lower leaves are much larger than the upper leaves. In summer, flower spikes mixed with leaves appear. These are followed by small round berries that contain a small black seed. The strong odor comes from the potent oil contained in the plant. This oil is distilled from the berries alone or from the entire plant.

Gertrude Mull told a story about using this plant. “One time, my brother got sick. Just looked like he had the nervous croup [not real

croup, but the symptoms are similar]. We called the doctor, and the doctor gave him shots for the nervous croup, but [it turned out] he didn't have it. There was an old neighbor woman come, and she said, 'I believe he's wormy.' So she went out and got some peach tree bark and leaves and poured boiling water over that and made a poultice. She put that right across his belly. 'Now,' she says, 'go to the store and bring some of this Jerusalem oak seed medicine, and we'll try that on him.'

"The doctor said he was too weak to do that. He said, 'Maybe you'd better wait.'

"That woman said, 'I'm gonna put this poultice on him, and I'm going to the store and bring a bottle of worm medicine up here to give him.' She went up there [and got the medicine]. She give him a dose of that and told my mother, "Tomorrow, you give him another'un. And you give him some castor oil after that and see."

"So she did, and they got sixty-some big round worms out of that little-bitty boy. He was only about three or four years old. And that boy got well. He always was a little ol' weaselly-looking thing, and he seemed like he come out then [started growing].

"From then on, she always give us kids that medicine about twice a year. She got worms from some of 'em but never did get none from me. I'd take it, but boy! I'd go through that stuff. Nobody knows. [Mama would make us] candy out of syrup and that Jerusalem oak seed. Boil the syrup, put a little sodie in it, and stir it. Cook it just like candy. Twist it just like tobacco. Then she'd break that all up in big pieces and pass it around for us to eat. We'd eat it that a-way. And you can feed that to your chickens or anything that'd get worms."

Jewelweed *(Impatiens capensis)* grows well in wet places where shade is abundant. Stems are brown, can reach two feet tall, and hold variably sized, soft-green leaves. Charles Thurmond said, "Jewelweed grows all around the Foxfire office in Mountain City. The juice inside the jewel-weed is a natural cortisone that is good for bee stings, poison oak, and poison ivy."

ILLUSTRATION 13 Joe-Pye Weed

Joe-Pye Weed *(Eupatorium maculatum)* may grow as tall as six feet. Its cluster of several small pink flowers is slightly fragrant. Although there are several stories as to who Joe Pye really was, there is a general consensus that he was an Abenaki Indian medicine man who lived in colonial New England. He earned his fame by "curing" typhoid fever and several other diseases by using concoctions made from this plant. In the Southern Appalachian Mountains, this plant is called queen of the meadow, a fitting name for this stately herb. It blooms August through September.

Native Americans had several uses for this plant. The one we found most interesting: a brave who was courting a young woman was assured of success if he stuck a wad of this plant in his mouth before he went visiting.

Charles Thurmond described his experience with this plant by saying, "Joe-Pye weed is very close to boneset, and because of this, it can be used for fevers and such. I have found that a tablespoon for a child and two tablespoons for an adult is usually enough. Once, my grandmother saved one of my older uncles' lives by breaking his fever."

Lily-of-the-Valley *(Convallaria majalis)* grows in clumps in wooded, damp places. Now rare, this plant was used for headaches—you could sniff it or put it on the back of your neck. It has two green leaves with a white stalk of bell-shaped flowers. The flowers are very fragrant. This plant is dangerous and should not be used internally.

Linden Tree *(Tilia americana)* enjoys rich forestland in the mountains. It can grow to 125 feet tall, with a trunk diameter of 5 feet. Leathery leaves are pointed, toothy, and have one- or two-inch stems. Spring brings abundant flowers, which are yellowish in color, clustered, and fragrant. Collected from this tree are the bark and the flowers, which should be dried in the shade.

ILLUSTRATION 14 Lily-of-the-Valley

As a remedy for "risings" [boils], use the inside surface of the bark to draw them to a head. A tea made from the flowers is used as a remedy for a stomachache.

Liverwort *(Hepatica americana)* likes wooded areas and blooms in early spring. Its flowers, which arrive in April, stand on stems four to six inches tall. There are no petals, only five to nine sepals that protect the reproductive parts of the plant. The sepals of the *Hepatica* are delicate and usually pink, white, or lilac. Hairy, soft stalks of the plant spread along the ground. The leaves are leathery, thick, and round or kidney-shaped.

Liverwort is gathered in April for the leaves. It is believed to be medicine for the liver.

Maidenhair Fern *(Adiantum pedatum)* has wiry black stems with light green foliage and reaches a height of two feet. It is rarely found in poor soil. It was used mainly as a medicine for women.

Marie Mellinger wrote, "The soft fern is maidenhair. This dainty wildling is found growing near mountain trees and waterfalls with slender black stems and horseshoe-shaped fronds of palest green. Maidenhair has been a fever medicine, and the shiny black roots are sold under the name 'Capillaire.' It was also used for rheumatism. With agrimony and broomstraw *(Andropogon)* and ground ivy,

maidenhair could give one vision to see witches. Called 'dudder-grass,' this fern made a mucilage for stiffening hair—or, as Gerard, an English botanist, said, 'It maketh the hairs of the head to grow that is fallen or pulled off.' "

Mustard *(Brassica)* has several different plants in the mustard family. Although not native to the Southern Appalachian region, some of those that grow in the area are winter cress, spring cress, tansy, black mustard, field mustard, and charlock. Some varieties enjoy damp areas, while others like drier soil. Most have clusters of green leaves near the base of the plant with a single, long stem rising to two feet in height. Most varieties have small flowers in varying shades of yellow. (For photos of this plant, see *Foxfire 2*, pages 74 and 80, and *Foxfire 3*, page 344.)

As a remedy for headache, pour hot water over mustard leaves to arouse their odor and strength. Bind these leaves in a cheesecloth poultice to the head.

ILLUSTRATION 15 New Jersey Tea

New Jersey Tea *(Geanothus)* reaches two feet in height. The flowers are showy, puffy clusters. A tea made from the leaves was once a popular beverage. Native Americans used the root tea for colds, fevers, snakebites, stomachaches, and lung ailments.

Partridgeberry *(Mitchella repens)* enjoys damp, cool woods and sandy soil. The small branches produced from a tender underground stem are usually no taller than six inches. Leaves are near the top of the branch and are evergreen and leathery. The partridgeberry blooms May through July. The flowers, which occur in pairs, are followed by berries that are red in the fall and can stay on the plant until the next blooming season.

ILLUSTRATION 16 Partridgeberry

The flowers are united at the base and smell a bit like lilac. After the blossoms wilt, the two flowers fuse together to form one berry.

This aromatic evergreen is gathered for the entire herb or for the leaves in fall. Cherokee Indian women made a tea from this plant and drank it for weeks before having a baby. It was believed to make childbirth much easier. The tea was also used to treat coughs and colds.

Pennyroyal *(Hedeoma pulegioides)* is very aromatic and enjoys dry soil. Its height is usually only one foot, and it possesses a slim, hairy stem with several branches. In summer, pale blue flowers among small narrow leaves appear in clusters. The entire plant has a strong minty odor and taste. (For a drawing of pennyroyal, see *Foxfire 3*, page 337.)

This cultivated herb is gathered in summer for the leaves and flowers. Gertrude Mull said that pennyroyal's leaves are really good for treating a cold and that it's prepared in the same way as boneset tea.

Persimmon *(Diospyros virginiana)* has gray bark and leaves that are ovate and multiveined. Fruits arrive after the flowers and ripen to an orange color. The fruits are generally sweeter after the first frost of the season. (For a drawing of persimmon fruit, see *Foxfire 3*, page 320.)

Clarence Lusk told us, "Sometimes, persimmon bark's good for that sore mouth. Just chew it, get the juice out of it. You'll get it all in your mouth, and it's just about [as bitter as yellowroot], but not quite." Minnie Dailey recalled, "Sometimes we'd put a persimmon stick in the fire and let it get hot enough for the sap [or juice] to run

out. It looks like soapsuds. We'd catch that in a spoon and pour it in the ear for earaches."

Pine *(Pinus)* is abundant throughout the Southern Appalachian region. Most common are the white pine, the yellow pine, and the Virginia pine.

These evergreen trees are large and have horizontal branches. They can grow to two hundred feet tall and have slender green needles that can be up to five inches long. The white pine has cones that are one inch thick and five inches long. In fall, seeds fall from the mature cones. The Virginia pine has three to five needles in a cluster and can live about fifty years.

Information was not available concerning the type or types of pine trees that were used for the remedies below. A few people felt that any of these three—white, yellow, and Virginia—could be used, but this has not been confirmed.

Pine bark—A cough medicine can be concocted using pine bark and wild cherry bark.

Pine bud—Clarence Lusk said, "Pine bud tea's what you use for a bad cold. Go around and pick the little buds in the pine bushes that you can reach the tops of. Just pull that little ol' bud off the top of the little twig. We'd break the little buds out and make a tea out of that for a bad cold."

Pine oil—As a remedy for a nail puncture, pour pine oil over the wound.

Pine needles—As a remedy for colds, boil pine needles to make a strong tea.

Pine resin—Pine resin can be used as a remedy for cuts and bleeding.

Pink Lady Slipper *(Cypripedium acaule)* blooms from May through June. It is very rare. This plant was widely used in nineteenth-century America as a sedative for nervous headaches, hysteria, insomnia, and nervous irritability. Because this plant is rare and endangered, readers are asked to refrain from gathering it.

Poke *(Phytolacca americana)* is dangerous and can be toxic. Pokeweed's root is poisonous. The plant must be picked in the early spring when the leaves are still yellow-green and the asparagus-like stalks are no longer than four to six inches. This plant is most often gathered for its leaves. Bernice Taylor warned, "You've got to gather the leaves before they get about six inches high. Don't mess with them after that. When we was little and comin' up on hard times, the kids, we'd all gather up some berries and mash 'em up and use 'em for ink."

As a remedy for rheumatism, roast a poke root in ashes in the same manner as you would roast a potato. While it is still hot, apply it to the inflamed joint. This eases the pain and reduces the swelling. You may choose to drink a mixture of pokeberry wine and whiskey instead. The leaves are also said to be good blood builders. Take the young leaves of the poke plant, parboil them, season, fry, and then eat several helpings.

Purple Coneflower *(Echinacea)* grows in patches in rich or sandy soil. It has a coarse, hairy stem and thick hairy leaves that can be eight inches long. The root, which is thick and black, is gathered in the fall. This perennial herb grows from three to five feet tall. The center of the flower head is cone-shaped. It flowers from June to September. Its extracts are used to stimulate the body's defense to infections and chronic inflammations.

Puttyroot *(Aplectrum)* has yellow to greenish white flowers that bloom from May until June. Also known as Adam-and-Eve root, the roots of this orchid were used by Native Americans to make a poultice for boils. Root tea was used for bronchial troubles. A preparation of the root was also used to mend broken dishes, hence the name. Because this plant is rare and endangered, readers are asked to refrain from gathering it.

Quince *(Prunus)* is used by many in the Southern Appalachian region. It is a shrubby bush that can reach approximately eight feet in height and five feet in width. This bush is thorny and has solitary

leaves. It blooms in early spring with reddish flowers that resemble old-fashioned roses. The fruits are a little larger than a nectarine and have a hard core. This fruit was often used for making jelly, while the entire shrub itself was planted in rows and used as a fence line.

Of quince, Clarence Lusk recalled, “Another thing that we keep all the time is quince jelly. It’s good for hiccups. I was told to put quince in regular sweet jelly. I don’t know whether the sweet has something to do with it or not, but it stops the hiccups, even in the hospital. My mother-in-law sent some to a friend of hers in the hospital with stomach trouble because he had the hiccups. He took some of that jelly, and the hiccups went away. The doctor hadn’t been able to stop those hiccups!”

Ratsbane *(Chimaphila umbellata)* enjoys shady, wooded areas of pine forests in dry soil. It gets no taller than one foot and has dark evergreen leaves that are positioned close to the top of the stem. In summer, sweet-smelling white to pink flowers arrive in clusters. It is gathered for the leaves only or for the entire plant.

Also called rat’s vein, a tea could be made from it for coughs, backaches, bladder, kidney, and stomach problems. To make this remedy, boil two or three whole plants for several minutes in about a pint of water. Strain and sweeten.

Rattlesnake Fern *(Botrychium virginianum)*. Marie Mellinger wrote, “Two ferns mark the site of ginseng and are found in close association with the other sang-sign plants. The rattlesnake fern is known as the ‘hope of ginseng.’ This is a lacy-leaved fern with spikes of yellow-brown spore cases in early spring. These supposedly resemble the rattles of a rattlesnake. The bright yellow spore powder is applied to insect bites or snakebites. It may be called rattlesnake fern because it grows in the often rocky woods that are the haunt of the timbler rattler. Gerard wrote of this plant, ‘Of the colonies, [North America] has berries given for twenty days against poison, or administered with great success unto such as are become peevish.’ ”

ILLUSTRATION 17 Rattlesnake Master

Rattlesnake Master *(Eryngium yuccifolium)* likes swampy, wet ground in low areas. The leaves are like thick grass and can be two feet in length. A stout two- to six-foot stem remains unbranched until it nears the top. It bears dense small flowers in summer and has a thick knobby to straight rootstock. This rootstock is the reason for fall gathering of the plant. This perennial grows from one and one-half to four feet tall. Its flowers are white and appear in September. Native Americans used the root as a poultice for snakebites.

Redbud *(Cercis canadensis)* is a small tree with a rounded crown that reaches heights of forty feet. The flowers are red-purple, pea-like, and on long stalks. They bloom from March through May. The inner-bark tea is highly astringent, and Native Americans ate the edible flowers like candy. In order for the flowers to be edible, they must be picked from green stems.

Red Clover *(Trifolium pratense)* grows wild in most open places and along roadsides. It has a hairy stem and narrow, pointed leaves with a white mark near the fullest part of the leaf. This thriving plant is not native to the region. (For a photo of this clover, see *Foxfire 3*, page 332.)

Charles Thurmond said to “use the blossoms and leaves from clover. Not only does clover have a lot of vitamins and things like that, but it is a sedative. If you have trouble sleeping at night, get some clover tea. It improves your circulation and digestion. It helps thicken or thin your blood, depending on which way it is used. If you use too much to thicken or thin your blood, a good tonic of

boneset will get it straight. Clover can also be used for bronchial problems and stimulating your circulation and appetite."

Red Trillium *(Trillium erectum)* likes damp, shady woods with rich soil. This low-growing plant has a stout stem with three stemless leaves (three to seven inches long and wide), arranged in a circular pattern at the top. In spring, a single flower, with petals arranged in threes, is produced. This foul-smelling flower is dull red and blooms from April to June. It is followed by a red berry. The plant is gathered at the end of the summer for its root. Native Americans used the root tea for menstrual disorders, to induce childbirth, to aid in labor, and for the "change of life." Because this plant is rare and endangered, readers are asked to refrain from gathering it.

ILLUSTRATION 18 Red Trillium

Sassafras *(Sassafras albidum)* grows in wooded areas with rich soil and can reach one hundred feet in height. The leaves, which can have three different shapes, are long, toothless, and ovate. They can be oval, three-lobed, or mitten-shaped. In early spring, fragrant yellow-green flowers appear in clusters. The fruit, which is pea-sized and dark blue, ripens in September on a red stalk. (For a photo of sassafras, see *Foxfire 2*, page 49.)

This tree's inner root bark layer is used and gathered in spring or fall. Its roots are used to make tea and was a favorite spring tonic of settlers and Native Americans. As a blood builder, make sassafras tea using the roots of the plant.

"Sassafras is not real strong if the sap's not up," Charles Thurmond told us. "It's an ointment. It stimulates your system like a tonic, but it makes you sweat. If you've got something in your system, and you want to sweat it out, this is a good herb to take."

To make sassafras tea, gather the roots and tender twigs of red sassafras in the spring. Pound the roots to a pulp if they are very big, and wash them with the twigs. Boil them, strain, and sweeten.

Smooth Sumac *(Rhus hirta)* is most likely found in dry soil and open areas. It usually ranges from three to twenty feet in height with a smooth brown-gray bark. Leaves can be up to three feet long with as many as thirty-one pointed leaflets. Clusters of green-yellow flowers arrive in summer and are followed in the winter by large cone-shaped, crimson-haired berries. (For a photo of this shrub, see *Foxfire 3*, page 286.)

Smooth sumac is used for the berries, bark, and leaves. Berries are gathered while the hair is on them to produce a sour taste. The juice was supposed to be good for you because it contained malic acid. Native Americans used the bark to make a tea as a wash for blisters. The berries were chewed to treat bed-wetting. It was also used as a wash for poison ivy. Charles Thurmond said, “Sumac is a plant you must be careful with. If you get it at the wrong time, you have problems. Most sumacs are not poisonous. It is an astringent, so it’ll cleanse the skin.”

Snakeroot *(Prenanthes)* likes rich soil and can be found along river-banks or in richly wooded areas. It has a slender wavy stem and grows six to eighteen inches high. It has heart-shaped base leaves that end in a point. Brown flowers bear near the base from May until July and are followed by a round, seedy berry. Roots are thin and fibrous and possess a camphor-like taste and smell.

Snakeroot is gathered in fall for the root. It was used as an expectorant and diuretic, for snakebites, and for swelling. As a remedy for colic, drink Sampson snakeroot tea.

Sourwood *(Oxydendrum arboreum)* is easily found in wooded areas, can be sixty feet tall, has a trunk diameter of up to fifteen inches, and has smooth bark. Its leaves are up to six inches long, three inches wide, and toothed. In early summer, small waxy white flower clusters appear. The inner wood of the tree is hard, heavy, and red-

ILLUSTRATION 19 Sourwood tree

brown in color. The leaves can be chewed to quench thirst. It is also used as a diuretic.

Spicebush *(Lindera)* grows four to fifteen feet high. It produces aromatic leaves and tiny yellow flowers from March to April. Its red berries are also aromatic. (For a drawing of this plant, see *Foxfire 2*, page 50.)

Spicebush is gathered for the twigs and berries. The twigs are used for tea and the berries for seasoning. Native Americans used the berry tea for coughs, croup, and measles. Pioneers used the berry as a substitute for allspice. They also used it for colic, fevers, worms, and gas.

Star Chickweed *(Silene stellata)* reaches six to fifteen inches in height. The leaves are oval and smooth, and the flowers are small and white. It blooms from March through September. (For a drawing of this plant, see *Foxfire 2*, page 70.)

Tea from this common herb is traditionally used as an expectorant for coughs and for skin diseases. Star chickweed was said to be planted by the Cherokee Moon and Star Maiden. It was sacred to the Cherokee women.

Stonecrop *(Sedum ternatum)* has many thick, waxy leaves with a dense stem and can grow with almost no water. Stems are long and can be erect to prone. The young leaves were used in salads and as a poultice for wounds.

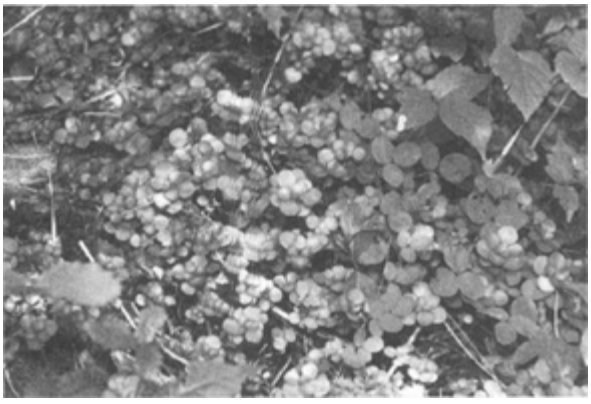

ILLUSTRATION 20 Stonecrop

Sweet Birch or Spicewood *(Betula lenta)* enjoys rich

wooded areas and grows along branch banks. This aromatic tree can reach eighty feet in height and has red-brown bark on the young branches and a thick, rough trunk. Male and female flowers are borne in April and May. (For a drawing of sweet birch, see *Foxfire 2*, page 52.)

This tree is sought for its bark because it contains oils that are similar to wintergreen oil. It is sometimes also called spicewood, and the bark was used as a substitute for chewing gum.

Spicewood tea is said to be good as a blood builder. To make it, gather the twigs in early spring when the bark "slips" or peels off easily. Break the twigs, place them in a pot, cover with water, and boil until the water is dark. Strain and sweeten. You can also use the bark, as Mrs. Laura Patton recalled. "The bark from the [birch] spicewood tree is good to drink as a tea. It is good for the whole system. Use about a half cup bark to a quart of water. Boil about twenty minutes, let cool, and drink three times a day for good health."

Mrs. Hershel Keener Claimed the tea is especially good with pork and cracklin' bread.

ILLUSTRATION 21 Sweet Fern

Sweet Fern *(Comptonia peregrina)* grows two to five feet high on dry hillsides and has red-brown bark and spreading branches. The thin leaves of this deciduous shrub are three or more inches long and are shaped much like the leaves of a fern. Its flowers do not attract attention. It produces burr-like berries from September through October. The entire plant has a spicy scent that heightens when the leaves are scarred.

Sweet fern is gathered for the entire leaves and tops. It was used as a remedy for vomiting, diarrhea, and rheumatism. It was also used for Cherokee Indian ceremonies and medicinal tea.

Sweet Gum *(Liquidambar styraciflua)* is commonly found in low areas near waterways. The leaves are pointed, serrated, and smooth, and the fruits are round, prickly balls. The bark of this tree was used to make a sedative. Gertrude Mull said, “You get sweet gum bark for nerve trouble.”

Trailing Arbutus *(Epigaea repens)* spreads along the ground in sandy soil and has stems of more than six inches. Leaves are evergreen and stem from rusty, hairy twigs. Flowers are pink, waxy, and fragrant and bloom in the spring. This plant is gathered during spring for its leaves.

ILLUSTRATION 22 Trailing Arbutus

“This trailing arbutus is the best [medicine] I’ve ever seen for [treating] kidney stones,” Clarence Lusk recalled. “Trailing arbutus is a little vine that grows right on the ground. Just pull it up and wash it and take enough leaves and roots [about a handful] to make a half gallon of tea. Boil it at least an hour [in water]. Then drink about two or three cups a day if you have a kidney stone bothering you. If you have had them and are afraid you might have ’em again—Well, me and my boy—we’ve both had kidney stones—make tea about once a month, and he’ll take a quart, and I’ll take a quart, and we’ll drink that up. Maybe in about a month, I’ll make another half a gallon. We ain’t never had no more kidney stones since we’ve been doing that.

“The [tea from trailing arbutus] enlarges the tubes from your kidney to the bladder. It lets those little ol’ stones pass through. I don’t reckon there’s anything that dissolves one of ’em totally. But a [stone] you can hardly see will just nearly kill you. I don’t know how many people I’ve recommended that to [who] stayed out of the

hospital. They said they was gonna have to go in [the hospital and have the stones surgically removed], and when they drank that tea, they didn't have to go. It's a herb that I [really believe in] as a medicine.

"It grows wild in the woods. You could find it right now [in December], but a little later on when the leaves settle down in the winter, it'll be hard to find. Next spring, it'll have a sweet-smelling flower on it, and that's a good time to gather it. I can find it, break the leaves off, and pull it out of the ground. I can get plenty of it up on the mountain. It looks different from most other plants. Anybody that's seen it [would know it]. It has green leaves, and it's very easy [to get confused] with poison ivy. You want to be very careful when you're gathering it to not get ivy."

Turtlehead *(Chelone)* grows in swampy areas and along water banks. It can grow up to four feet tall and has a stem that is angled four ways at the base. Toothy leaves are about four or five inches long with flower clusters that bloom in late summer to early fall. Rarely do more than two or three flowers open at once. The blooms are almost always white, very rarely pink. It gets the name "turtlehead" from the shape of its flower.

This herb is gathered either in its entirety or for the leaves while flowering. If a turtle bit you, you used this plant for a poultice.

ILLUSTRATION 23 Umbrella Leaf

Umbrella Leaf *(Diphylleia cymosa)* grows from eight to thirty-six inches tall. Its leaves are umbrella-like. A perennial, it produces white flowers, followed by blue berries, from May through August.

The Cherokees used the root of this plant to induce sweating. It was also considered useful for smallpox.

Violet *(Viola)* plants come in many varieties of violets. Some of these are the common blue violet, the bird's-foot violet, the eastern dog violet, the downy yellow violet, and the green violet. These small plants have flowers that are singular and symmetrical. Most grow well in moist, shady places and bloom in the spring and summer. Flowers have five petals and are bearded. (For a drawing of the violet, see *Foxfire 2*, page 82.)

Ada Crone says, "And when we had a fever back then, they'd go out and get blue violet roots and make a tea out of that, and that'd take your fever down."

White Ash *(Fraxinus americanus)* often grows to one hundred feet tall in rich wooded areas. It flowers from April until June. The seeds are winged, flat, and about two inches long.

This tree is used for the bark from the root and the trunk. Native Americans used inner-bark tea as a strong laxative. The seeds are thought to be an aphrodisiac.

White Baneberry *(Actaea)* "is another sang-sign plant of the rich, humusy mountain slopes, the 'doll's-eyes' of the mountain healers," according to Marie Mellinger. "This is a handsome plant with finely cut foliage and aromatic yellow-green flowers, followed by a cluster of waxy-white berries with red eyes and pink stems. The berries are very poisonous. The roots are potent and dangerous if used in quantity as they contain a substance that can cause marked irritation to the stomach and intestines. It is a violent purgative. It can affect the heart of increase the pulse rate. The roots have a strong aromatic odor, and a small pinch of *Actaea* supposedly adds potency to other medicines. It is also called the 'herb Christopher,' and the ground-up roots are used to poultice snakebite."

Wild Garlic *(Allium canadense)* is not native to the Southern Appalachian region. It grows well in sheltered meadows and wooded areas. The leaves resemble blades of grass. The flowers are small and sit on green stems above several small bulbs. (For a drawing of wild garlic, see *Foxfire 2*, page 57.) The entire plant has

the smell and taste of onion. Numerous Marcus said, “Garlic is good to eat. It’s similar to an onion. You can eat it raw if you want to or you can fry it. It’s good to put on your chest if you’ve got a bad cold or are choked up with the croup. That’ll break it up.”

Wild garlic can be used fresh. It is sliced and put in with food, especially meats, while they are cooking. To preserve it for later use, just dry it, powder it, and store it in a closed container.

Wild Geranium *(Geranium maculatum)* blooms from April through June. The stem is hairy and grows one to two feet tall. The flowers have five pink or purplish petals. As the leaves get older they are often spotted with white.

The wild geranium was much treasured for its medicinal values. A treatment for sore throats and mouth ulcers was made from the boiled roots. A tea made from the leaves was used as a treatment for dysentery. Native Americans used it as a tonic and as an astringent.

Wild Ginger *(Asarum canadense)* is found in rich soil in wooded areas and reaches a height of four to five inches. It creeps along the ground. It has only two kidney-shaped leaves on soft hairy stems. The leaves are dark green on top and lighter green underneath. A single brown flower is produced between the leaves. The root is yellow and has a spicy taste and scent. The entire plant, especially the root, smells like ginger.

ILLUSTRATION 24 Wild Ginger

In fall, the root is gathered. People make an aromatic tea from it for crying babies and for stomachaches. As a remedy for colds, make a tea from powdered ginger or ground-up ginger roots. Do not boil the tea, but add the powdered root to a cup of hot water and drink. Add honey and whiskey if desired.

ILLUSTRATION 25 Wild Hydrangea

Wild Hydrangea *(Hydrangea arborescens)* is a shrub reaching up to five feet in height and has green-white flowers in round flat clusters in summer. Its common name is sevenbark, and it grows in rocky areas and valleys. It has slim stems and heart-shaped, toothy leaves. The bark sometimes peels back several times to reveal different colors. Native Americans chewed the bark for stomach problems or heart trouble. However, this plant has caused painful gastroenteritis and cyanide-like poisoning. Because this plant is dangerous, readers are asked not to gather it.

The fresh root is juicy, yet very tough when dry. This shrub is collected for the root which can be used as a diuretic, for kidney stones, or for bladder problems. It is cut into small pieces before drying.

ILLUSTRATION 26 Witch-Hazel

Witch-Hazel *(Hamamelis)* grows in damp, woody areas and can be twenty-five feet tall. It has smooth brown bark and produces four-inch leaves. The yellow thready flowers do not bloom until late fall or early winter. The seed nut does not mature and open until the next season.

This shrub is gathered in the fall for the leaves, sticks, and bark, which contain a potent oil. Native Americans took leaf tea for colds and sore throats. Twig tea was rubbed on athletes' legs to keep

muscles limber and relieve lameness. The twigs were favored for dowsing-searching with a divining rod-for water.

Yarrow *(Achillea)* is common to the Appalachians and is easily found in open areas such as fields, pastures, roadsides, and meadows. It can be almost two feet tall. Yarrow is a soft, fragrant perennial with lacy leaves. The flowers are white or, less frequently, pink. Flat clusters bloom from May through October. (For a photo of yarrow, see *Foxfire 3*, page 341.)

This naturalized weed is gathered in summer for its flowering tops. Herbal tea from this plant was used for colds, fevers, indigestion, anorexia, and internal bleeding.

ILLUSTRATION 27 Buckeye tree with fruit

Yellow Buckeye *(Aesculus octandra)* is not edible, but carrying the fruit, or buckeye, of this poisonous tree was thought to be good luck. Buckeyes were also thought to keep rheumatism away.

Yellow Lady Slipper *(Cypripedium calceolarus)* grows well in wet, shady places deep in wooded areas. It is easily identified by the showy flower, which looks like a small air-filled bag. It blooms in the spring, and the flowers can be varying shades of yellow to striped or grossly spotted with shades of purple. This plant grows to two feet in height and can have leaves as large as six inches in length. The root runs horizontal and is fleshy with a foul odor and bittersweet taste. This unusual flower is gathered in the fall for its root.

Marie Mellinger wrote, “The yellow ladyslipper is a rare beauty of the mountains that once grew with ginseng but has been gathered too extensively by both herbalists and ’flower lovers.’ The yellow blossoms appear only after the plants are seven years old, and digging the roots destroys the plants. Ladyslipper roots were used by

pioneer doctors such as Samuel Thomson and Dr. Hales of Troy, New York, and Dr. Tully of Albany. It was sold under the name 'nervine-root' or 'umbil-root,' and roots were gathered in late autumn. The roots have a barbiturate effect, and powdered root was used in a teaspoon of sugar-water or added to chamomile or basswood blossom tea. The roots were also a favorite medicine for female troubles."

You can make a tea from the leaves as a remedy for headache, and Gertrude Mull told us to use the root for "nerve trouble," but we ask readers not to gather this plant due to its rarity.

ILLUSTRATION 28 Yellowroot

Yellowroot *(Xanthorhiza simplicissima)* grows well in wooded areas in the mountains. It is usually between one foot and two feet tall with a short basal stem topped with a cluster of slender leaves approximately six inches in length. These leaves have five sharp, unevenly toothed leaflets. In spring, purple to brown flowers grow either individually or in small clusters. The roots, which are fairly long, and the bark are bright yellow and are bitter to the taste. This plant is gathered for its roots.

Marie Mellinger wrote, "True yellowroot, or shrub yellowroot, was also a jaundice medicine and a sang-sign plant. This is a small shrubby plant growing in colonies along streams-usually in valleys or coves. It was grown for medicine. It has finely divided leaves, and lacy racemes of yellow or pinkish-purple flowers in early spring. (For a photo of yellowroot, see *The Fofire Book*, page 233.) The long, stringy yellow roots are very bitter tasting. These roots are used in a strong tea for sore throats or stomach disorders, or to lower high blood pressure. It is a favorite mouthwash said to cure sores or cankers of the mouth."

Ada Crone recalled, “For kidney ailments we’d go out and get rattleroot or yellowroot. Sometimes they’d be mixed up together or sometimes they’d make just a yellowroot tea. They’d make you drink that instead of water. Whenever you drank anything, it had to be that tea.”

Gertrude Mull told us, “Yellowroot is good for infection too. That’s the best thing in the world for ulcerated stomach. A lot of people used to come to Grandpa, wanted him to fix them up a tea [of yellowroot].”

Clarence Lusk said, “I can go down here on the creek and hunt me up some yellowroot. I use it when I get a little ol’ ulcer on my tongue or on my lips sometimes. I generally just chew it. It’s bitter! It’s got the right name—it’s yellow.”

Charles Thurmond added, “The yellowroot here has roots that are really good for dyeing things. It is also good for any kind of sores.”

REMEDIES

Aching Feet

ILLUSTRATION 29 Maude Houk gathering herbs for a remedy.

Bathe feet before bedtime in a strong solution made from white oak bark.

DIANE FORBES

Make a real hot tea out of burdock. Soak feet in the tea just before going to bed. To make the tea, use the whole plant, including roots. Pull it up, wash it, chop it up and put in a pot of water, and boil and steam. Burdock may also be dried and the tea made during the winter.

FLORA YOUNGBLOOD

Arthritis

Make a tea by boiling the roots of ginseng. That gets the strength out of them. Drink the tea or rub it on the joints, and either will have the same effect.

Numerous Marcus

You can mix the roots of ginseng and goldenseal together in liquor.

Numerous Marcus

Eat lots of raw vegetables and fruits.

Dorothy Beck

Take a buckeye and put it in your pocket and carry it around with you.

Elizabeth Endler

My daddy used barbell. It has a yellow bloom. The little flowers are shaped like little bells and hang on the underside of the leaves. Cut the barbell plant down to the ground. Use the stems. Chop them up and put in a pot and boil them about twenty-five minutes. Strain the tea and drink it. It'll limber you up just right now.

Flora Youngblood

Asthma

Use the inner bark of wild yellow plum trees. Knock the old bark off and scrape down next to the wood and use these scrapings along with mullein leaves. Boil these together with sage leaves for about twenty minutes. Add alum to the tea after it is strained—one level teaspoon of alum to a quart of tea. Drink about two big tablespoonfuls of the tea every morning and every night, about twelve hours apart on the doses. It'll cure asthma.

Flora Youngblood

Bedbugs

We'd tote our bed frames and the slats outside and scald them every month or two in boiling water and lye soap. The bedbugs laid

their eggs in that wood. Then we would change the straw in the ticks every fall. Whenever they would start threshing the wheat, we'd take them empty bed ticks and boil them real good. Then when they got dry, we'd stuff them with that fresh wheat straw.

Flora Youngblood

Apply kerosene liberally to all parts of the beds.

Diane Forbes

Bleeding

Bandage the cut real tight. Tie a cord below and above the cut and repeat Ezekiel 16:6. The blood will stop immediately. Take the cords off and cleanse the wound with warm salty water. Use just enough salt to purify the water. Then bandage.

Flora Youngblood

Put kerosene oil on the cut.

Annie Mae Henry

To stop bleeding, take soot from the back of a fireplace in an old chimney and press against cut. Wash the soot out when blood clots or it will leave a scar.

Amy Trammell

Blood Pressure

Sarsaparilla, or "sasparilla tea," is good to correct blood pressure.

Amy Trammell

Blood Purifier

When you hit your hand or cut your arm or anything, and it gets infected instead of healing up, you need a blood purifier. Mix just a tiny bit of alum and saltpeter together in water and drink it. That purifies the blood.

Flora Youngblood

Make a tea of either burdock roots, or spice wood in the spring.

Amy Trammell

Blood Tonic

Buy a box of sulfur at the store and mix a small amount (about the size of a pinto bean) in a teaspoonful of honey. Take that teaspoonful and then drink a glass of water. We would do that every spring. Mama would fix it up and we'd all get purified up for summertime. That's a tonic to purify your blood.

Flora Youngblood

Buy a box of sulfur at the store and mix a small amount (about the size of a pinto bean) in a teaspoonful of molasses. Take that teaspoonful and then drink a glass of water.

Amanda Turpin

Make a tea of bloodroot.

Amy Trammell

Soak rusty nails in water and drink the water.

Amanda Turpin

Boils / Risings / Sores

For boils, grind up green walnut leaves or the hull of walnuts (the big green outside hull) with table salt, using one teaspoon of salt to a half cup of ground-up leaves or walnut hulls. Make a poultice. It will draw the boils out.

Flora Youngblood

Make a poultice of the houseleek plant and apply to boil.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

Mash up a rotten apple, place on the rising and tie a cloth around it.

Florence Carpenter

This recipe for "Green Salve" is good for boils or any kind of sore.

One ounce beeswax
Two ounces mutton tallow
One ounce olive or sweet oil
One ounce oil of amber
One ounce verdegrease [verdigris]
One ounce resin
One ounce oil of spike

Simmer first four ingredients together; add verdegrease and resin, well powdered; then add oil of spike.

Mrs. Albert Eckstein

Make a mixture of kerosene, turpentine, Vaseline and old-time soap.

Connie Mitchell

Make a salve made of heart leaves gotten out of the ground in the woods. Boil the leaves. Add lard and turpentine. Continue to boil until the mixture gets thick. Put the salve on sores as needed.

Florence Carpenter

Peel down outer bark of slippery elm sapling. Scrape off the inner bark and put those scrapings on a cloth and bind that on the risin'; or put piece of fat pork on it; or put a poultice on it made from bread and milk.

Hazel Luzier

To pull the core out of a risin', fill a bottle with very hot water. Let it sit a minute, then empty. Put the mouth of the hot bottle over risin' and hold it there.

Elizabeth Endler

Buy some flaxseed meal. Make a poultice and put on risin'.

Elizabeth Endler

This salve is good for anything that you want to draw, or any kind of sore. If you stick a nail in your foot or cut yourself or stump your

toe, it's to draw out the infection.

The main ingredient in the salve is beef tallow. Make this by taking the fat off the beef just as you would a hog. Then put a little water in a pan or pot to keep the fat from sticking as it cooks, add the fat and cook it, stirring it so it doesn't burn. After all the fat has melted out, strain out all the cracklings and set the tallow aside to harden. The tallow will keep for years in a jar.

When ready to make salve, take out a palmful of the tallow and add a level teaspoon of brown sugar, a level teaspoon of salt, and a few drops of turpentine. Mix all ingredients thoroughly together and then add a few drops of camphor oil.

ILLUSTRATION 30 After Amanda Turpin had gathered the ingredients she needed to make her salve for us …

ILLUSTRATION 31 … she mixed them in the palm of her hand.

Make the camphor oil by getting two blocks of camphor gum at the drugstore and chipping it up in a pint of moonshine whiskey. I think that the camphor is the medicine. Whiskey just keeps the camphor gum. You know, camphor gum will evaporate just by itself.

After the salve is mixed up, apply it directly to the wound and cover it with a bandage. If you put it on at night, let it stay all night. If it's not done enough work by morning, put on another application and let it stay all day.

AMANDA TURPIN

Burns

Mix two tablespoons soda with one and one-half tablespoons water, put that on a rag and wrap the rag around the burn.

SAMANTHA SPEED

Use castor oil on burns.

Annie Mae Henry

Put baking soda on the burn.

Florence Carpenter

The white of an egg and castor oil stirred up together is just as good a thing as you can put on a burn. Stops the pain and makes it heal up right quick.

Annie Mae Henry

I can cure a burn in just a few minutes. Cut an Irish potato in two at the middle and lay the cut part of the potato against the burn. Bind that potato to the burned place with a handkerchief. In ten minutes, you can't even tell you've been burned. That's the truth. I've doctored myself. I know. The heat is gone. Let that potato stay there until it turns black. Then the place where the burn was will be as white as cotton. If you get that potato on there fast enough, it won't even blister.

Kenny Runion

Apple vinegar on minor burns will take out the fire. Or blow your nose and wipe the mucus on the burn.

Anonymous

Sulfur will heal a burn after the fire is drawn out.

Gladys Nichols

I blow out fire using a Bible verse. You blow right direct on the burn and just talk the fire out of the burn. If you get it when it first happens it won't blister, but if you have to wait it will make a water blister. Then I would put sewing machine oil on it. Just bind it up in sewing machine oil and that would take care of it.

It is the seventh child that can blow fire out, my daddy learned me. I haven't told my seventh child. I'd better do that. I should write those verses off and leave 'em with somebody. [See *The Foxfire Book*, page 367.]

Flora Youngblood

Chapped Hands

Rub hands in a mixture of homemade soap and cornmeal. Bring the soap and meal to a good lather.

Beulah Forester

My father made an ointment for that out of persimmon bark. Scrape persimmon bark down and cook it down to where it would be good and strong. Then put sweet milk or cream in it. Keep it rubbed on your hands and lips. I don't make it like I used to. When my children were all at home and the Depression was on I made lots of it.

Flora Youngblood

Use warm mutton tallow. When the sheep are killed, the fat is taken out and fried. The tallow is made from the grease.

Anonymous

Chewing Gum Out of Hair

Take a half a teaspoon of peanut butter and smear it together with the chewing gum until the gum dissolves. Then wash out.

Helen Wall

Just wet a cloth with kerosene and strip it down the hair (from the roots to the ends) and it'll take every bit of that out. Kerosene won't hurt the hair and it won't hurt the scalp if it gets on it.

Flora Youngblood

Chills

Drink a strong tea made from the leaves of pennyroyal.

Amy Trammell

You would buy quinine from the drugstore. You would put just what would lay on the point of a knife blade in a teaspoon of water and stir it up. Take that and it would break the chills just like that.

Flora Youngblood

Colds

Make an onion poultice and put on your chest to break up a cold. To make the poultice, fry chopped onions in grease until well done. Put on a cloth and lay on the chest while still warm.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

When making tar, the flow of pine tar itself is preceded by some white smoke, then water. (See *Foxfire 4*, page 252.) A swallow of this water is good for a cold. The pine tar itself, rubbed on the chest, will loosen up a cold.

Dan Hawkes

Chew the leaves and stems of peppermint.

Laura Patton

Mix mutton tallow and alum together. That's good for colds. When you kill your sheep, cut the fat off and render it out. Put some alum in with it and mix it up. Then you put it in a jar and let it harden and make a grease cakelike patty out of it. Then when you get a cold or something you just rub it on your chest and neck. It will break a cold up.

Numerous Marcus

Put ginger and sugar in hot water. Drink this and go to bed.

Gladys Queen

ILLUSTRATION 32 Maude Houk.

For bad colds, make a tea of the leaves and stems of boneset, goldenrod, and wild rosemary. Boil these together until the water turns to a brownish tea color. If large bunches of the herbs are used in a small amount of water, the tea will turn very dark, like strong coffee. Strain and serve warm at bedtime. This should sweat the cold out of the patient. The goldenrod should be picked when it is in bloom, but do not use the blossoms.

In the fall before first frost, I would gather bunches of all three of these herbs. I'd tie each bunch up and hang it on the porch to dry. Then I had the herbs as I needed them.

MAUDE HOUK

We would make a tea out of the roots of butterfly weed. If it's just a runny nose and coughing we would make it weak. We would make it strong if we came down with a heavy cold.

Flora Youngblood

Colic

Stew down some calamus root and mix a few drops with catnip tea. It's good for colic in babies or in a grown person, either one.

Numerous Marcus

[Editor's note: calamus is now a suspected carcinogen.]

Beat up a bulb of garlic. Make a poultice of bulb and juice and lay on the stomach.

Samantha Speed

Chest Congestion

Mutton tallow salve is good for relieving chest cold congestion. Spread it on chest and back between the shoulder blades and cover with flannel.

Mrs. Ed Norton

Mix some lard and turpentine together, put it on a cloth, and put that on your chest.

Amy Trammell

Make a tea from just the leaves of catnip. Pour boiling water over the leaves and sweeten it. To keep catnip through the winter, gather the leaves, dry them out, and keep them in a container where they can get a lot of air. They'll keep a long time.

Numerous Marcus

Take mustard seeds and beat 'em up and mix a little flour with enough warm water to make a kind of paste. Smear it on a cloth and make a little poultice and place it right across the chest. It'd be warm and it would just turn the skin red.

Flora Youngblood

Constipation

Make a tea from senna leaves.

Amy Trammell

Take about two teaspoonfuls of turpentine.

Gladys Queen

Buy croton oil at the drugstore. Put one drop of the croton oil in a glass of water and drink that.

Flora Youngblood

Give kids two teaspoons of castor oil and give adults two teaspoons of Epsom salts.

Samantha Speed

Cooties/Lice

Shave head and wash with apple vinegar.

Billy Joe Stiles

Make a tea from the stems and leaves of the larkspur. Wash your hair twice in that tea and you won't have any more lice.

Flora Youngblood

Corns

Tie five little flint rocks up in a rag. Throw them away at the forks of a road. When someone picks up the rag to see what's in it, your corns will go away and they'll get them.

Annie Mae Henry

Take aspirin tablets worked in with a little bit of lard or Vaseline or anything to make a kind of salve. Bind the corn up with the salve and it'll just come right out in a day or two.

Flora Youngblood

Cough

We would go up and down Sautee Creek and get the bark from red alder. We'd boil that and make tea. Add a lot of honey to it. That

was our cough syrup.

Flora Youngblood

Drink ginger tea. Make it by mixing one tablespoon whiskey and one teaspoon honey and a dash of ginger mixed in one fourth cup hot water.

Samantha Speed

Mix honey and soda together. Take a teaspoonful before you go to bed and a teaspoonful when you get up.

Florence Carpenter

Boil five lemons in a small amount of water. Slice them while hot into a clean enamel pan. Add one pound sugar. Return to fire. Add one tablespoon of oil of sweet almond, stirring constantly. Take one teaspoonful at the first onset of coughing.

Diane Forbes

Gather holly bush limbs and boil them to make tea. Drink one cup.

Beulah Forester

Wrap an onion in wet paper and bury it in hot ashes. Let it roast about thirty minutes and then squeeze out the juice. Add an equal amount of honey to the juice, mix well and take by the teaspoon as you would any cough syrup.

Or take the fat from a skinned 'possum, cook the grease out of it and keep it in a jar. As needed, take the grease and rub it on your chest to loosen cough.

Bob Mashburn

Heat together two tablespoons kerosene oil, one tablespoon turpentine, one tablespoon camphor (if available) and one cup of pure lard. Rub the salve on temples and the upper lip for head colds and on the Adam's apple and chest for coughs and chest colds. Cover salve on the chest with a flannel cloth.

Stella Wall

Use one part olive oil to one part whiskey and take two tablespoons every four hours until the cough is gone.

Mrs. Verlan Whitley

Mix one cup liquor to one half cup of honey and the juice of one lemon.

Dorothy Beck

Add a pinch of soda to a spoonful of sorghum syrup (just enough to make it turn white) and stir and take.

Ethel Owens

Make tea by putting pine needles and boneset in boiling water. Sweeten with honey.

Or put some ground ginger from the store in a saucer and add a little sugar. Put a little of this mixture on the tongue just before bedtime. It burns the throat and will stop a cough most of the time.

Anonymous

Croup

To prevent croup in children, make a bib from a piece of chamois skin. Melt together some pine pitch and tallow and rub it into bib. Have the child wear it all the time.

Diane Forbes

Make a little ball up of a half teaspoon of sugar, a drop of kerosene oil, and about a half teaspoon of Vicks salve. Swallow this.

Annie Mae Henry

Mix groundhog grease, turpentine, and a little lamp oil together. Dip a rag into the mixture and saturate it. Then lay that on your chest.

Wilma Beasley

Dip the hot ashes right up from a fireplace. Put enough ashes in a half glass of cold water to raise the level of water to the top of the

glass. Let it settle until every bit of the ashes settles to the bottom. It'll be just as clear on top and you take a spoon and spoon off some of the water. That cold water will cool the ashes down by the time it's ready, so it will be cool enough to drink. I still use that for the grandchildren when I can find the ashes. It'll knock the croup out just like that.

Flora Youngblood

Cuts and Sores

Pound a dock root until it's soft and juice comes out of it. Put enough sweet cream on it to cover it. Rub the mixture on a cut or sore.

Lottie Shillingburg

Bathe the sores off real good in warm salty water. Then you get Vaseline or something where the cloth wouldn't stick and wrap it.

But if a sore got infected then they'd use the walnut poultice (ground walnut leaves and table salt).

Flora Youngblood

Diarrhea

Boil a lady-slipper plant in water. Strain the water and drink.

Gladys Queen

Get some soot off the back of the chimney. Put a teaspoon of that soot in a glass of water. Let the soot settle out and drink the clear water.

Flora Youngblood

Pull up some blackberry roots and clean them and boil them. Strain and drink the water.

Florence Carpenter

Diphtheria

Make a little mop to mop the throat by getting three long chicken feathers and stripping most of the little feathers off the quills. Leave a few up on the end. Tie the quills together with thread with those three little bunches of feathers up on one end.

Then take some copperas and put it in a little metal lid (like a snuff can top) and set it on the hot stove. Let that copperas burn till it makes ashes. Pour honey into the copperas and work that up together. Dip that feather mop into that mixture and mop out the throat; three moppings and the diphtheria was gone. I had diphtheria and they used it on me. I have used it on my kids for real bad tonsillitis or any kind of tonsil trouble.

Flora Youngblood

Diphtheria, Prevention of

Put a lump of asafetida in a small muslin bag. Put a string on the bag and tie it around your neck so that the bag rests against chest.

Elizabeth Endler

Dysentery

Boil plantain leaves (*not* the roots) and drink the tea often. This will cure dysentery.

Also, a tea made from dried strawberry or blackberry leaves will stop dysentery.

Amy Trammell

Drink strong, sweetened tea; then eat five ounces of any good solid cheese with bread. Everyone knows that cheese is binding.

Diane Forbes

Daddy used soot off the back of the chimney for dysentery (just as for diarrhea). Put it in a glass of water and stir it up good. Then let it set until the soot settles, and then just drink the water.

Flora Youngblood

Earache

Blow smoke from rabbit tobacco in the ear.

Amy Trammell

Take the good meat out of a walnut. Put it into a rag and beat it up. Then dip this into warm water. Afterwards, squeeze the excess water and walnut oil into the ear.

Wilma Beasley

Boil pennyroyal. Pour the tea into a pitcher and put a cloth over the pitcher. Put your ear on the cloth.

Von Watts

Put one block of camphor gum into a half pint to a pint of whiskey. Let it dissolve and add more camphor gum and let the mixture set idle. Rub it into the ear thoroughly. Use a lot. It will draw the poison out.

Cleland Owens

Use warm Vicks salve. Put it on a cotton ball and place that in the ear.

Genelia Singleton

Put a drop or two of warm castor oil in the ear.

Anonymous

Eye Trouble

Take a medicine dropper and drop warm salty water right in the corner of the eye. Hold your eye wide open and just let that salty water drain down through it. It burned a little bit. That's good for something in your eye, or the sore eye or a scratched place on the eye.

Flora Youngblood

Fever

Teas made from boneset, or from the roots of butterfly weed, or from wild horsemint, or from feverweed are all good for colds, flu,

and fevers.

Amy Trammell

Boil half a cup of wall ink vine leaves to a quart of water. Give two teaspoons three times a day.

Laura Patton

A tea made of rabbit tobacco will break a fever.

Amanda Turpin

Pull up poor john (feverweed), making sure to get roots. Put roots, leaves and all in pan with water and boil. Strain. Add sugar to taste and drink.

Dorothy Beck

Take several bulbs of garlic and wrap them in a cloth. Take a hammer and just beat them up. Tie the cloth around both wrists right where the pulse is. The fever will come down in maybe thirty-five or forty minutes. Back when the kids was all little I did things like that.

Flora Youngblood

Fingernail—Puncture

Dampen a wool rag with turpentine. Heat the rag and tie around the puncture.

Anonymous

Fingernail—Smashed

If we got our fingernail smashed or cracked, or you know, torn in any way, we would take a little elm tree bark. We'd peel off the inside of the bark and bind it to the fingernail.

Flora Youngblood

Put wet chewing tobacco on it.

Anonymous

Fretful Child

For a baby that's squalling, take some 'sang root [ginseng] and put it in a saucer. Pour a little hot water on it and give the baby two teaspoons of that. In a few minutes it is all over.

Harv Reid

Take a level teaspoonful of sugar and a drop of turpentine according to the age. If it is a little bitty baby, use about one drop of turpentine. Make that up in a little bit of water and give to him. It'll just quieten down. I've done that many, many, many of a time.

Flora Youngblood

Frostbite

Just go to the spring and get that water—it takes spring water, not well water. Just warm it and soak the affected area in it and it'll draw every bit of that frostbite out.

Flora Youngblood

Men would pour whiskey in their boots as a protection against frostbite. It was said to keep their feet warm for a long long time and didn't even wet their boots or shoes.

Amy Trammell

Headache

Find some lady-slipper with a yellow bloom on it. Dig the roots and make some tea and drink that about once a week and it'll cure a sick headache.

Mrs. E. H. Brown

Soak strips of brown paper in warm vinegar. Bind them onto the forehead with a white cloth, or bind warm fried potatoes to the forehead with a rag.

Elizabeth Endler

A headache is an inner fever in the stomach. You've got a fever in your stomach and it don't show up anywhere else but up here in your head. You take something for the stomach, like a wee dose of Epsom salt. You take a teaspoonful to a half a glass of water. Stir it up real good and drink it down. That cures the headache.

Flora Youngblood

Heart

Dandelion tea is a heart stimulant.

Amy Trammell

Hiccups

Putting vinegar on sugar in a spoon and taking that is said to stop them.

Amy Trammell

Wet a leaf of tobacco and put it on your stomach.

Von Watts

Take nine sups of water and you will quit hiccupping.

Annie Mae Henry

If you could remember the last place you seen a frog that had been run over by a car on the road, it would cure the hiccups.

Kenny Runion

Swallow three swallows of cold water without getting your breath, no more or no less. They'll just go away. It still works. I've done it.

Flora Youngblood

Hives

Boil a bunch of catnip in water. Strain and drink.

Gladys Queen

Hivey Babies

Get ground ivy and make a tea of the leaves and stems. Give some of this to a baby and it'll just break them hives out. When they laugh in their sleep and wall their eyes, it's because they're not broke out. After they break out in a kind of a rash, they'll rest from there on out.

Flora Youngblood

Inflammation

Boil a beet leaf and put it on the inflamed spot and tie a cloth around it.

Florence Carpenter

Itch

Make ointment out of one teaspoon of sulfur and four teaspoons of lard.

Elizabeth Endler

Kidney Trouble

Make a tea from boiling mullein roots.

Amy Trammell

Gather a large amount of peach tree leaves, boil in water to make tea, and drink.

Beulah Forester

Get the dead silks off an ear of corn. Boil in water, strain and drink.

Gladys Queen

Make tea either from the whole spearmint plant, or put three or four leaves into a cup and pour boiling water over them and cover until cool. Then drink.

Laura Patton

Measles

Drink diluted sheep manure to ensure that the measles will “pop out.” Sheep manure has a high temperature quotient.

Diane Forbes

Drink a cup of hot lemonade, then a cup of cold lemonade.

Anonymous

Mumps

To keep mumps from going down into breasts and privates, tie a silk ribbon around a girl’s neck (snug, but not too tight), or a silk tie around a boy’s neck.

Lottie Shillingburg

Nerves

Use the root of a yellow lady-slipper. Boil the root a long time, until the water turns a brownish tea color. Strain and drink.

Maude Houk

Make a tea of elder flowers by steeping them in boiling water only a few minutes, then strain off. Tea may be sweetened or taken plain.

Diane Forbes

Nosebleed

Take a small piece of a brown paper sack and fold it into a square and put it under lip and press.

Lester J. Wall

Pull the hair on top of your head straight up until bleeding stops.

Beulah Forester

Let your nose bleed on a knife blade and stick the knife in the ground. Your nose will stop bleeding.

Or take a pair of scissors and run them down the back of your neck.

Annie Mae Henry

Stopped-up Nose

Use two teaspoons of salt to one pint of water. Pour three or four drops in each nostril every three to four hours.

Helen Wall

Inhale the steam from boiling salt water.

Agnes Bradley

Pain

Apply a poultice of comfrey roots to ease pain. To make the poultice, boil the comfrey roots in a small amount of water. Take roots out and add about a cupful of cornmeal to about a pint of the water. Cook the meal until it thickens and then put it on a cloth. Cover with another cloth and place on painful area. This is also good for a sore throat, for which you apply the poultice to the neck.

Amy Trammell

Pimples

Put about a half teaspoon of alum in about a tablespoon of water and make it real strong. Keep the pimple rubbed and it'll go away.

Flora Youngblood

Try rubbing your face with a wet baby diaper. Works every time if you can stand the smell.

Diane Forbes

Poison Ivy

Take a bath in table salt water, then grease in Vaseline. That salt will kill out every bit of that poison and the Vaseline will keep it from itching and you won't scratch it.

Flora Youngblood

Boil milkweed leaves in water. Rub this water on the poisoned skin.

Florence Carpenter

Use gunpowder and buttermilk mixed together to put on poison ivy.

Nellie Turpin

Rub some leaves from a touch-me-not plant on the place where you've got it. It'll cure it.

Kenny Runion

Make a mixture of vinegar and salt and put that on it. Or wet skin with water and then put baking soda on it. Diluted bleach will work, too.

Deborah Wilburn

Rheumatic Fever

Heat apple vinegar and wet a cloth in it. Apply the cloth, as hot as you can stand it, to ease the pain.

Or apply a poultice of mullein roots to ease the pain in the legs caused by rheumatic fever. Follow my recipe for comfrey poultice [under **Pain**] but use mullein roots instead.

Amy Trammell

Rheumatism

Chew ginseng root or make a tea from the roots or drink a celery tea made by boiling a handful of celery stalks in a pint of water until the celery is limp.

Amy Trammell

He did the same thing for that that he did for arthritis. Just make the barbell tea a little bit stronger.

Flora Youngblood

Gather a pokeroot about an inch long. Put this along with some yellow ivy in a quart of whiskey. Drink a teaspoonful a day.

Beulah Forester

Make a tea out of the bark of the witch-hazel tree, and drink it.

Annie Mae Henry

Let snakeroot sit in white liquor for one month. Then take one tablespoonful every twelve hours for up to three months.

Lester J. Wall

Ringworm

You take turpentine and work it in pure hog's lard. Put that on the ringworm and pop it right out.

Flora Youngblood

Put the juice from a green walnut hull on the spot to stop the ringworm.

Amy Trammell

To Make a Baby Sleep

Bore a small hole in a raw onion, put sulfur in the hole, wrap the onion in wet rags and put it on the hot coals of a fire and roast it. When roasted, take it out and squeeze the juice out of it and give about a teaspoon to the baby.

Melba Dotson

Snakebite

I heard Daddy say a lot of times if you got snakebit take a knife and cut a cross place on the bit place. Then cut the hollow neck of a gourd where you could suck through that gourd. Cap it over the snakebite and draw that poison out that way.

Flora Youngblood

As soon as bitten, spread some ammonia over the bite and then swallow a few drops of the ammonia mixed with water.

Diane Forbes

Salt has been used to draw the poison out of a rattlesnake bite. People used to use gunpowder, too.

Prudence Swanson

Never take whiskey when snakebit. Pour a little turpentine on the bite. Or put the bark of the lino tree (some call it basswood) on it. It draws the poison.

Or cut the fang mark and put turpentine and sugar on it. Some use kerosene.

Anonymous

Mix together two thirds pint of vinegar and one third pint of camphor and apply. This will draw the swelling out.

Gladys Nichols

Put the entrails of a freshly killed chicken on the affected area.

Anonymous

Take a meat tenderizer and make a paste with water. Put it on the bite. Occasionally replace it with new paste.

Elizabeth Endler

Salt and onions was good for snakebites. You'd beat the onions up and put in a lot of salt and apply that to the place and that would draw out the poison.

Amanda Turpin

Sore Throat

Boil the inner part of some red oak bark. Strain and gargle with it.

Florence Carpenter

We'd use the honey and copperas for any kind of sore throat. For a plain sore throat you would make it real weak and thin enough where you could gargle it and spit it out.

Flora Youngblood

Boil onions in molasses and eat it to relieve pain of sore throat. Or make a comfrey root poultice (see directions in **Pain** remedy).

Take a silk stocking and saturate it with lard or cream. Place spirit of turpentine and Vicks salve in the stocking and tie around neck.

Dorothy Beck

Boil cottonseeds until soft. Beat them up and make a poultice. Apply it to sore throat.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

To swab throat, use a peach tree stick with a rag wrapped around it.

Gladys Queen

Sprains

Take three or four mullein leaves. Dip them in vinegar. Put them on the sprain and bind.

Lottie Shillingburg

Take mullein leaves. Pound them just a little. Put on sprain.

Elizabeth Endler

Take cornmeal and table salt and work it together. Mix it with warm water and make a poultice. It just draws out all the soreness. My kids, jumping rope, would sprain their ankles, legs and knees. I'd just make that salt poultice and wrap it around and it would be all right.

Flora Youngblood

Spring Tonic

Make a good tea from sassafras roots or the limbs of a spicewood bush for a fine spring tonic.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

Stings

Lay a cloth down and put about four tablespoons of wet salt on there. Then pull it tight around the sting and in ten minutes you can't even tell you've been stung.

Kenny Runion

Make a paste of one half teaspoon of baking soda and one half teaspoon of honey and apply to sting.

Dorothy Beck

Put tobacco or snuff on a sting. Homemade tobacco is the best of all. Take a leaf of homemade tobacco and wrap it around anything to take the swelling out.

Annie Mae Henry

Stomachache

Boil some yellowroot and strain it. Add honey to it and take two tablespoons before meals.

Florence Carpenter

Sick stomach: Cut a peach tree limb and scrape the bark off into a glass of water. Let this sit a little while. Then strain and drink this water often.

A tea made from black snakeroot is also good for the stomach.

Amy Trammell

Castor oil is good for stomachache. Just drink a dose. It heals as it goes down.

Annie Mae Henry

Drink a tea from ginseng roots.

Or drink a tea made from the lining of a chicken gizzard.

Or eat some garlic.

Anonymous

Put a few drops of British oil in a tablespoon of milk. For a baby, use one drop of oil.

Make tea of four teaspoons of anise seed to one pint water. Add sugar to taste. Take three times daily.

Anonymous

Sunburn

Make a strong tea with sage leaves and rub on sunburn.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

Swellings and Inflammations

Prepare a poultice of stewed pumpkin. Renew every fifteen minutes.

Diane Forbes

For a swollen breast, make a poultice of the roots of boneset grass by drying them, powdering them and adding a little water. Rub on breast.

Anonymous

Bind that swelling with a salt poultice.

Flora Youngblood

Teething Babies

Steep one teaspoon of chamomile flowers in a cup of boiling water for three or four minutes. Then strain. Sweeten slightly and give the baby two or three teaspoons of the warm liquid.

Diane Forbes

Take a mole's foot (his left front paw) and tie that around the baby's neck and you won't hear a sound out of it.

Or take a dime with a hole in it and hang it by a chain around his neck.

Annie Mae Henry

Thrash (Thrush)

Can be cured in the spring by drinking water from a creek bed just after it has rained.

Anonymous

Drink sage tea made from the leaves of a sage plant.

Thrash [thrush] is caused by a regurgitating stomach. The formula, if they are put on a bottle, and sometimes the mother's milk don't suit 'em [the babies], they'll regurge it back. When they spit it up it irritates their mouth. The acid in it blisters their mouth. There's a yellow and a white blister, but you doctor them just alike. It takes a little longer to cure the yellow than it does the white if they let it run on a long time.

Well now there is a verse you repeat and you repeat this verse in your mind three times as you blow your breath into their mouth. You have to see 'em every morning for three days in a row that first time. Then I would make a mouthwash and let them start washing their mouth. I'd take persimmon tree bark, scrape it and make a strong tea. Then we'd put a small, little pinch of alum down in that and stir that up. Strap a white cloth around your finger and scrub all around in their mouth with it. Why we make that tea is to get that white out and not let 'em swallow it. The mouth will be just as white and it'll start shedding off. Looks like they got a mouth full of cornmeal. Then the second morning, you give them something to work their stomach out, a laxative like castor oil or Castoria. They'll swallow some of that down in their stomach and [what you give them for their stomach] keeps it [the thrush] from setting in their stomach. Then by the time they come back the third time it's all gone, but you do it [say the verses] the third time.

I've cured so many—oh, you wouldn't believe. The doctors send 'em to me, they don't know what to do with 'em. I was in the hospital and they brought the babies in to me in there in my room. I've had three in one day, especially in the spring of the year. I don't know how many little young babies [I've cured] just right here lately.

One brought their baby here and it [the thrush] had run on so long that I didn't know if I could even bring it through or not. I did, but they had to bring it more times because it was so bad. Of course I didn't blow in its mouth but the three times, but I had to help 'em wash its mouth out. I finally got on ahead and got it over it.

Some will bring 'em and after the second time they're so much better they don't even bring it back. But I tell 'em, "Now, if you ain't gonna bring it three times they ain't no need in trying." 'Cause in maybe two or three days it'll come right back up and get worse. It's embedded in the locks of the jaws, where your jaws come together, and it'll start spreading back out. I had to doctor some of 'em twice like that.

You boil everything that the baby has anything to do with in sody water [use one teaspoon of baking soda], its nipples, bottles, bibs, anything it has about its mouth. Be sure you don't kiss 'em around the mouth or you can get it, it's catching. Now one [time] a grown man come. He said, "I've caught that thrash sure as a world." I'd doctored his grandbaby with it, I got it well. He said he'd been a-kissing his little grandbaby. I said, "Don't be kissing on 'em around the mouth." I said, "Kiss 'em on the back of the neck or somewhere." I doctored him like I doctored babies.

Flora Youngblood

Toothache

Make a peach tree poultice from peach tree leaves boiled until soft, mixed with cornmeal and salt. Place on the outside of the jaw for abscessed tooth.

Flora Youngblood

Put some burnt soda on the tooth.

Florence Carpenter

Smoke rabbit tobacco.

Amy Trammell

Pick around the ailing tooth with a pine toothpick until it bleeds.

Lola Cannon

Pound some horseradish leaves fine. Put them in a cloth and hold it against your tooth.

Anonymous

Ulcerated Stomach

Make a weak tea from yellowroot and drink it.

Flora Youngblood

To Induce Vomiting

Beat the white of an egg and add a pinch of alum. Give it to a child to make him vomit.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

Warts

Well, Daddy conjured the warts with a piece of fat hog meat. You cut off three little chips of fat meat. Take a little chip and rub the wart. Then you accidentally lose the little piece of fat meat. You don't go put it in no certain place, you just kind of walk around with it and after while you look down and that little piece of fat meat is gone. Then you do it the next day and the next day, for three days, and the warts will go away.

Flora Youngblood

Get nine unbroken green beans. Rub them on each wart nine times (with each bean). Bury the beans and the warts will go away.

Mrs. Buck Carver

Sell the wart for a penny. Then throw the penny away.

Lottie Shillingburg

Put some cow manure on them.

Anonymous

When the sap is rising in trees, make a cross on the wart with a knife.

Oakley Justice

You count the number of warts you want removed and write that number on a piece of paper. Give that to the person who is going to take them off. They'll go away.

Annie Mae Henry

Take a small Irish potato and rub it over all the warts. Don't let nobody know much about your business. Go out of the house and buy that potato where the water runs off from the cave of the house. When the potato rots, the warts will be gone.

Take a stick about a foot long and rub it over all your warts. Cut a notch for every wart and go to where there is a swamp branch. Walk backwards and stick it in the ground and don't look where you put it.

Kenny Runion

Whooping Cough

Mix alum powder and honey together in a bowl. Take a teaspoonful when you start coughing.

Florence Carpenter

Make a chestnut leaf tea. Add enough brown sugar to make into a syrup. Take four times weekly.

Elizabeth Endler

Mix honey with lemon juice or alum.

Or mix olive oil with laudanum.

Or make a tea from holly tree berries, adding honey and sweet oil.

Or boil a hornet's nest to make a tea, adding lemon juice and honey.

Or mix lemon juice, salt, brown sugar and olive oil; give one teaspoon several times a day.

Or boil together one pound brown sugar, one ounce paregoric, and one cup water. Let cool and add one pint whiskey [Mrs. Pinson recommended the "good old kind"]. This is good for any kind of cough.

Mrs. C. E. Pinson

Gargle with warm salty water. If the baby is too little to gargle, just give it a little bit and just let it slide down.

Flora Youngblood

Worms

Drop turpentine on a teaspoonful of sugar. Mix together. Give it according to age. If they're one year, give 'em one drop and it's a drop for every year till he gets on up pretty good size. Give that for three mornings. Also run turpentine on the child's navel. That's where the worms come up to and they'll hang there. They'll bite down on the child and that makes the child grumble with a stomachache. That turpentine will make them turn loose and the child will pass 'em. This remedy is used mostly for pinworms.

Anonymous

Use the root of samson snakeroot. The roots are pink and measure six to eight inches long. Use three to four roots for each dose. Boil the roots in a small amount of water until the water turns a yellowish brown color. The tea can then be sweetened with syrup.

Samantha Speed

Get the seeds out of a Jerusalem oak and boil them in syrup until it makes a candy. Give the person with worms a piece of the candy every other day.

Florence Carpenter

Gather red sassafras bush roots. Boil about a half a cup to a quart of water and drink the tea.

Laura Patton

Yellowroot tea will get rid of worms in children. Boil about one half cup of small roots to one and a half quarts of water. Let boil until about one quart of water is left. Strain and drink about a half a cup every day.

Laura Patton

Eat gourd seeds for worms.

Barnard Dillard

Dampen a wool rag with turpentine. Heat the rag and lay it on the navel and rub it on the neck.

Samantha Speed

Yellow Jaundice

Drink apple cider often.

Von Watts

Make a tea from yellowroot or soak the roots in whiskey. (Whiskey is good because it draws the strength from root and it won't go bad if you set back for a while.) Then drink some.

Anonymous

You make a little cross with a razor blade right between the shoulders. You put a little funnel or any little suction cup over that and draw out the blood. Then you get the blood up in a spoon and weaken it down with a bit of water. Some babies you can give a teaspoonful and some babies it'll be a half. That'll cure the jaundice. I've seen it done, but I never did do it. Mine never did have it.

Flora Youngblood

DOC BRABSON

So far in this section, we have shown you different types of herb remedies that were used, and are still being used, in the southern Appalachians. However, these people did not always depend solely on home remedies. By the mid 1800s there were also a few qualified physicians in their area.

On an earlier visit with two of our frequent contacts, Mr. and Mrs. John Bulgin, they mentioned to us that Mr. Bulgin's grandfather, Alexander Crutchfield Brabson, had been a doctor. The Bulgins have a collection of operating tools that Dr. Brabson actually used and a ledger of accounts from his practice. One interesting point about the ledger is the manner in which many patients paid Dr. Brabson for his services. The payments to him were often made not in money, but in things such as animals and produce from his patients' farms and gardens, homemade quilts, or services. To get a more detailed account of Dr. Brabson and his practice, during July of 1984 Cheryl Wall and I went to the Bulgins' home in Franklin, North Carolina, about thirty minutes from Rabun Gap.

The Bulgins' home is a large, modern two-story house built on top of a hill. It is surrounded by several barns, workshops, and a small greenhouse. Mrs. Bulgin has filled the house with antiques—especially clocks. On the hour, the house almost seems to quake with the chiming of the many clocks in the living room.

We sat in the Bulgins' large, sunny kitchen during the interview. As we talked at the oak breakfast table, Mrs. Bulgin would occasionally wipe the counters of the clean, bright-colored cooking area. The windows from the kitchen look out upon the backyard where several birds pecked at the seed thrown out for them.

When we settled down to the interview, Mr. Bulgin surprised us with some new information: not only was his grandfather a doctor, but so was Dr. Brabson's father-in-law, Dr. G. N. Rush. Dr. Brabson studied medicine under Dr. Rush and later attended Emory University, and they

both served in the Civil War. Together, they perfected a cure for a usually fatal disease called milk sickness.

Mr. Bulgin said that Dr. Brabson was devoted to his work. No matter how bad the weather or what other obstacle stood in his way, it seemed that he was always able to get to his patients to treat them.

Mr. Bulgin is a tall, lean man in his early eighties. On the day we visited with him, he had been working in his metal shop, so he was wearing a baggy pair of army-green workpants and a matching workshirt. His large, knobby hands are strong and skillful-looking. His ruddy face is oblong and wrinkled from a combination of sun and age. Behind thick, black-rimmed glasses is a pair of eyes that are full of life and laughter and he grins impishly.

Mr. and Mrs. Bulgin, as always, were enthusiastic and eager to talk to us, and the following is the result of our most recent visit.

ALLISON ADAMS

John Bulgin: My great-granddad's name was G. N. Rush. [He became a doctor when he graduated from] the University of Nashville in the Republic of Tennessee before it became a state. The date was 1854 the best I can make it out on his diploma. That diploma is actually on the skin of a sheep, and it's all in Latin. He was an ordained elder in the Ebenezer Presbyterian Church and later at Morrison Presbyterian Church (which still exists) from which he retired.

ILLUSTRATION 33 John Bulgin showed Cheryl Wall Dr. Rush's medical kit:
"[These medical tools] were Dr. Rush's graduation present. He graduated in 1854, so they're at least that old. I've found one set [of medical tools] like this in a museum in Raleigh [North Carolina], but it's not as complete as this one. There's even a tourniquet and one of the needles in here. I don't know how they kept [the tools] clean. Doctors have told me they used carbonic acid.
"Dr. Rush gave this [medical equipment] to my uncle in Cornelia. Then my mother said, seeing that I was the oldest grandson, she wanted me to have [the kit]. So some of 'em gave it to me."

Dr. Rush was in the Civil War. He had his degree then. I still have his watch. It has a hunting case and a key, and it still runs and is in good shape. He would carry it in his vest pocket with the key on it.

My grandfather's name was Alexander Crutchfield Brabson—Dr. A. C. Brabson. I wish I had been old enough to remember him, but I was about four years old when he died in 1916. He was in the Civil War, too. Of course he was quite a bit younger than Dr. Rush. They were both medical aides for the South. After the war, when they came to this area from Washtown, Tennessee, they settled about eight miles from Franklin in what they used to call Riverside.

Grandpa Brabson read medicine and studied it under Dr. Rush. He then went to Emory University [before it was named Emory]. He

lived where Bryant McClure's restaurant is in Otto, North Carolina. He lived right across the ridge from [where the restaurant is now] within hollering distance, nearly. That old house is still standing.

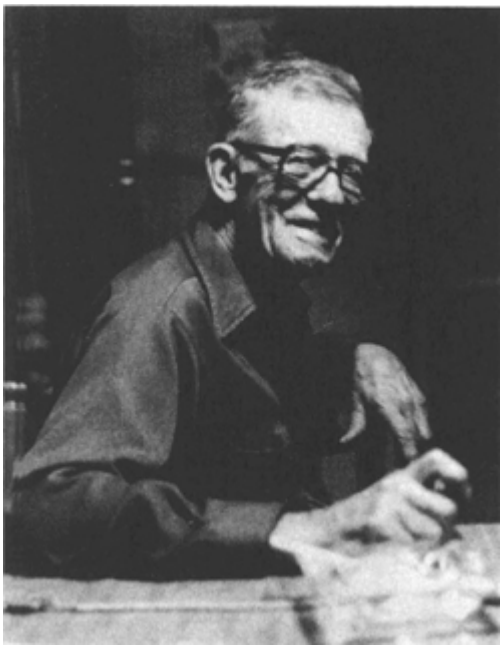

ILLUSTRATION 34

Mrs. Bulgin: John's grandfather and grandmother were considered to be the affluent society. They had a nice home, they had plenty of food, and they had house servants, but how they got the money to pay for them, I don't know. He didn't get any fee, hardly, for what he did. He didn't question whether [patients] had money or didn't. I'm sure he knew that if they had money, they would pay him, and if they didn't have money [it didn't matter]. They still needed something done for them.

John's grandmother used to have one woman that came and moved in during the wintertime. She'd come right after Christmas or around the first of January and stay with them through the winter months. I'm not sure whether she was an old maid or whether she was a widow, but she didn't have a family. She'd sew, quilt, card wool, spin, and weave. John's grandparents had seven children—a big family—so his grandmother didn't have time to do all the

mending and all the darning of socks and all of that. John's mother, Blanche Brabson, was second to the oldest of the children.

I've heard her talk about some of the remedies [Dr. Brabson used], but I never used them except one for yellowjacket stings. When my kids would get stung in the yard, I'd make a poultice with three or four plantain leaves—wet them and tie them on the sting with a cloth. It'd take the sting and the swelling out.

We cannot conceive of the hardships [they faced back then]. Diphtheria was a big killer in those days. If that hit, there wasn't a thing anybody could do about it. They usually didn't live long after they contracted diphtheria. [Dr. Brabson had a lot of cases of] that as well as scarlet fever and typhoid fever. They also used to have a disease called milk sickness. People got it from using the milk of [infected cows]. Cures were rare, but Dr. Rush and Dr. Brabson perfected a treatment for it, and Dr. Brabson taught the cure to Dr. Neville from Dillard, Georgia, and he taught it to two or three other doctors around here. But the actual remedy they used has been lost now. [It died with those doctors.]*

John Bulgin: Grandpa Brabson worked mostly out of his house. He had a horse and buggy that he went to Hayesville in. He probably had to stay the night somewhere before he got to Hayesville because it's about forty miles from here. During a childbirth, he'd have to maybe spend the night or a couple of days at the home according to how the patient got along.

His favorite words were, "Ye old son of a bitch." He would tell them, "Ye old son of a bitch, you ain't gonna die! They ain't no use of you coming to see me."

ILLUSTRATION 35 An old photo of Dr. and Mrs. Brabson which was hanging in Mr. and Mrs. Bulgin's home.

But I don't reckon he ever turned anybody down. He didn't think of it. I remember a story about a guy somebody shot. He was stealing stuff out of a man's garden. I don't know the particulars, but it was dark and he ran and got caught in a cockleburr patch. The [owner] shot him with a shotgun. It was pouring down rain and a guy come in the middle of the night after Grandpa. He told the guy he wasn't gonna go see that old son of a bitch [because] he wasn't worth saving. But Mama said that all the time [he was saying that], he was getting up and putting on his clothes. He told the man to go over to the barn and "catch Alec and put the saddle on," and he rode over there and scooped out the cockleburrs and sewed that man up, and he lived.

And I remember Mama telling about him coming home from Hayesville late at night or in the early morning hours when it was real cold and raining. His feet would be frozen to the stirrups and he couldn't get off. He'd ride up right in front of the house and she would take a kettle of water out and pour on his shoes to loosen them so he could get them out of the stirrups. If he was lucky, he got two dollars for that call, wherever it was.

I imagine there were lots of [debts] in that ledger that was never collected. Most of the patients would pay something, though. Maybe they'd just have fifty cents to pay him, and he'd mark it down and give them credit. When he delivered a child, it was two dollars and a half or three dollars. He always carried medicine with him, and the medicine charge would be fifty cents.

The ones that couldn't pay cash bartered. One old guy made a bunch of those split rails—I believe it was a hundred—for [credit of] seven dollars and a half. In [the ledger] you'll see where people cradled wheat for fifty cents a day. They'd give him dried apples, a bushel of peaches, syrup, maybe a quarter of beef. Sometimes just a day's work [would pay the bill], maybe hoeing his corn or working in his garden. He was quite a watermelon raiser. Mama said he would always plant his watermelon seed down on the creek bottoms on the seventh of May whether it was Sunday or not.

Actually, I still barter some myself, but the Internal Revenue frowns on it. But I do some work for the dentist and I do some work for the eye man and we swap out a lot.

Following is a list recorded in Dr. Brabson's ledger of items that he accepted from patients as payment for his services:

Payment to Dr. Brabson for services	*amount*
2 pigs	[$]5.50
1 day rock hauling	2.00
gallon kerosene	.25
36 lbs. beef	2.22
mowing	7.50
10 bushel turnips	2.25
1 stack fodder	2.00
buffalo horns	3.00
½ bushel dried grapes	.75
pasturing	8.00
plowing 5 acres	4.00
pulling corn	.50

work in meadow	4.50
patching roof	.50
churning	1.00
photographs	2.50
dehorning cattle	.50
ranging cattle	4.50
1 lb. tobacco	.20
beef skin	2.00

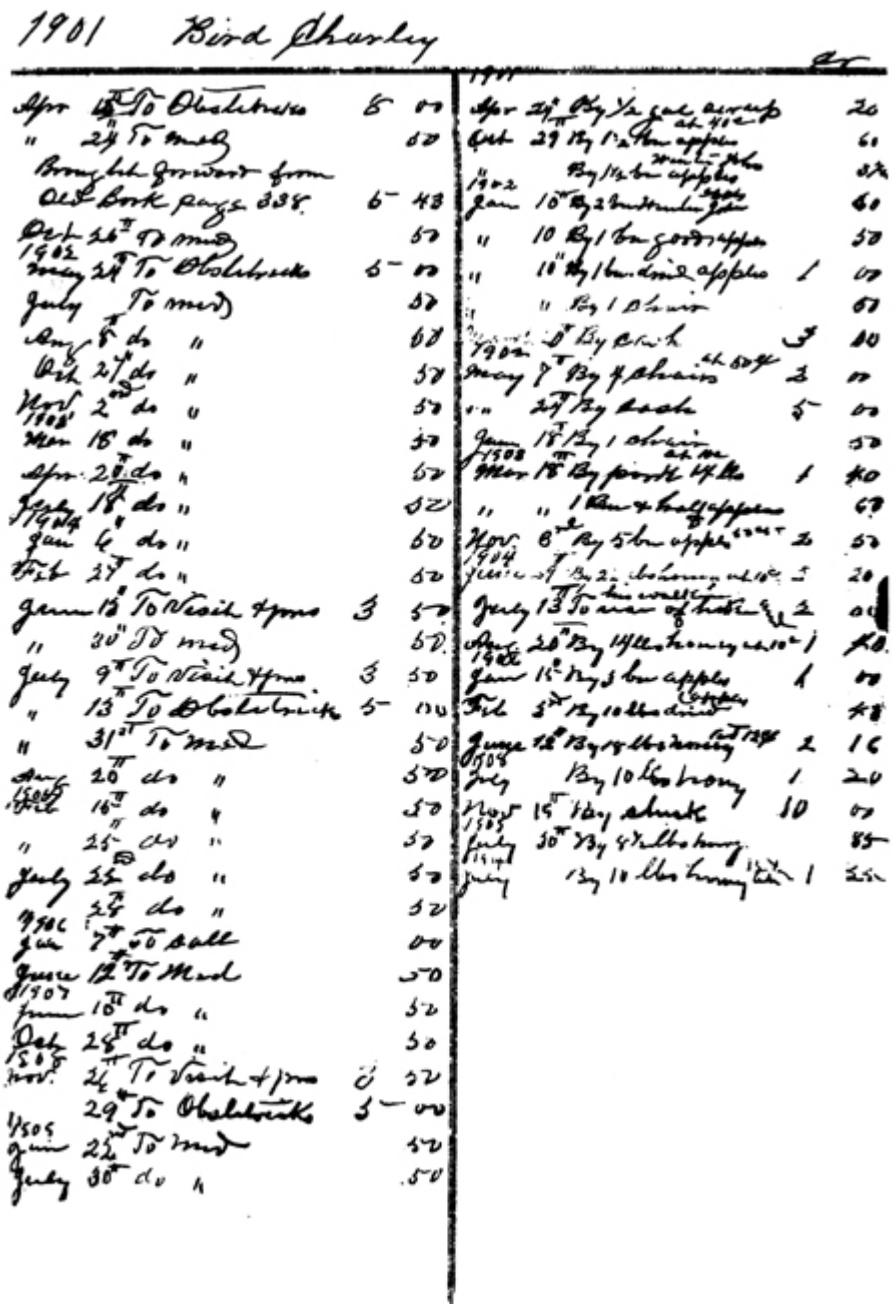

ILLUSTRATION 36 A sheet from Dr. Brabson's ledger.

Payment to Dr. Brabson for services	*amount*
chimney work	[$]2.50
1 blanket	2.50
fly brush	.75

saw	1.85
3 pecks onions	.37 ½
3 days foddering	1.50
160 feet lumber	1.60
1 gallon syrup	.40
cutting wood	.50
cotton	.25
fruit jars	.90
4 days harvesting	6.00
sack of salt	1.00
hauling 274 lb. wire	1.37
25 lb. flour	.75
2 days planting	2.00
quilting	2.00
1 sheep	1.65
½ lb. yarn	.30
soup recipe	1.50
12 socks	.30
soap	.25
1 bushel dried apples	.50
¾ days cradling	.75
1 ½ bushel peaches	.75
350 rails	7.00
2 days hauling	3.00
haying	2.25
2 bushel potatoes	1.25
2 days sawing wood	1.50
eggs	.60
coffee	1.00
splitting wood	.30

25 lb. sugar	1.25
7 ½ bushels wheat	7.50
blackberries	.50
chair	.50
12 ½ lbs. pork	1.00
lumber	1.75
180 ft. culls	1.25
shotgun	7.00
spinning	.50
12 lbs. honey	1.50
1 day wagon and team	1.25
8 gal. ware	[$] .75
knives and forks	1.25
pair of cards	.37
1300 shingles	2.60
1 bushel oats	.40
7 brooms	.70
shoeing 2 horses	.80
24 lbs. bacon	2.40
1 barrel	.50
lard	1.20
1 pair shoes	1.25
drill 1 days work	.50
making gate	1.00
32 stakes	2.06
1 peck chestnuts	.25

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* Milk sickness was a common and greatly feared disease not only in the Appalachians, but also in the Midwest. Doctors that were able to treat it were widely respected and greatly valued members of any community. Dr. Neville, for example, in our community, was often

described to us on interviews as “the only doctor around here that could cure the milk sick.”

Gerald W. Sanders, the lead technician at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial in Lincoln City, Indiana, was kind enough to send us several materials regarding the disease. One was a booklet entitled “Milk Sickness Caused by White Snakeroot” written by Edwin Lincoln Moseley (professor emeritus of biology for the State University at Bowling Green, Ohio) and published in 1941 jointly by the Ohio Academy of Science in Bowling Green and the author. Another was a handout for visitors to the Memorial entitled. “The Plant That Killed Abraham Lincoln’s Mother: White Snakeroot.” (No author given.) The latter reads, in part, “By definition, milk sickness is poisoning by milk from cows that have eaten white snakeroot. Many early settlers in the Midwest came into contact with the sickness.

“In the Fall of 1818. Nancy Lincoln died as milk sickness struck the Little Pigeon Creek settlement. The sickness has been called pucking */sic/* fever, sick stomach, the slows and the trembles. The illness was most common in dry years when cows wandered from poor pasture to the woods in search of food. In man, the symptoms are loss of appetite, listlessness, weakness, vague pains, muscle stiffness, vomiting, abdominal discomfort, severe constipation, bad breath, and finally coma. Recovery is slow and may never be complete. But more often an attack is fatal. And so it was for Nancy Hanks Lincoln. She died on October 5, 1818.”