Mixing Your Own Herbal Creams from a Base Cream

What is A Herbal Cream?

A cream or lotion is simply a mixture of water and oils held together with an emulsifying agent. Lotions tend to be runnier in consistency than creams, but their composition is essentially the same. Creams are easily absorbed and are used to soothe, moisturise and nourish the skin. Their individual properties will vary depending on what you add to them. You can make your own creams from scratch by blending your chosen plant oils and water extracts, or you can add your chosen herbs to an existing base cream.

When mixing herbs into a base cream you first have to prepare your herbs into either a water-based or oil-based preparation to then add them to the cream:

Water Based Ingredients

Water based ingredients include herbal infusions, herbal tinctures, gels like aloe vera or seaweed gels, glycerin and glycerites. (See our separate sheets on Infusions & Herbal Tinctures for instructions on how to make these).

Oil Based Ingredients

To enhance the moisturising properties of the cream, you can add more oil based products. Oils can be easily infused with herbs to bring further medicinal qualities to your cream. Below is a list of commonly used oils which can be added either on their own, or after they have been infused with herbs. (See our separate sheet on Herbal Infused Oils for instructions on how to make theses).

- **Sunflower Oil:** a light, inexpensive and readily available oil that makes a good carrier for herbs. Odourless and fairly colourless. Softening & moisturising
- **Olive Oil:** thicker, stickier, with more colour and odour to it which can override the scent of herbs. Very nutritive
- **Sweet Almond Oil:** a very common carrier which moistens, soothes and conditions the skin. Bland odour and light in colour. Very versatile. May be an issue for nut allergy sufferers.
- **Wheatgerm Oil:** very high in vitamin E, and great for healing scar tissues and tightening stretch marks

How to Make A Herbal Cream from a Base Cream

Mixing herbal creams using a base cream is incredibly easy! You simply choose your base cream, choose the herbs you'd like to incorporate into them and prepare them into infused oils, tinctures, infusions, gels or whatever else you have chosen ready to mix in. You can also buy base creams which are already infused with herbs to increase their medicinal prowess. Then simply mix in the oil based &/or water based preparations slowly, stirring all the time. Be careful to stop stirring once everything is mixed in as if handled too much the cream might split.

As a general rule:
You can add a quarter of the weight of the cream in oil or water products without compromising the base cream. Some base creams will allow more than this, but it is advisable to start with a little bit and then increase, stirring often. If adding essential oils, add up to one drop of essential oil per 5g of cream.

Herbs Commonly added to Creams

- **Calendula:** (*Calendula officinalis)* an excellent skin herb - soothing, moisturising, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, tissue-healing.
- **Chili:** *(Capsicum spp.)* stimulating, pain relieving, good for aching muscles, sprains and poor circulation
- **Comfrey:** *(Symphytum spp.)* slippery and soothing, good for broken bones, damaged or weakened tissues including scar tissues and wrinkles
- **St John's Wort:** (*Hypericum perforatum)* an excellent nerve tonic for damaged, inflamed or worn out nerves e.g. sciatica, neuralgia or chronic pain
- **Rose:** *(Rosa spp.)* a calming, cooling and skin toning herb with a delicate scent
- **Daisy:** *(Bellis perennis)* an excellent and abundant herb for bruises & sprains as an alternative to Arnica which is endangered in the wild.
- **Horse Chestnut:** *(Aesculus hippocastanum)* a traditional vein tonic, supports and tones varicose veins or weakened veins and improves circulation to the feet
- **Sea Buckthorn** (*Hippophae rhamnoides)* unusually for a fruit, Sea Buckthorn is full of essential fatty acids that are great for the skin & healing for sun damage, burns and radiation

Preservation and Storage

Oils & lotions can remain unchanged for long periods of time if they are kept in cool, airtight containers. Many base creams will contain preservatives of some sort, but if not you can add a herbal preservative such as benzoin essential oil, vitamin E, or ascorbic acid. Exposure to air or water will encourage rancidity. Keep them in a cool place in tightly sealed bottles. Amber jars will minimise light exposure.