



# THE AROMATIC MEDICINE GARDEN

Cultivating Connection to Aromatic Plants

## Juniper Transcript

Well, hello everyone, and welcome back to the Aromatic Medicine Garden. I'm Erika Galentin with the Northwest School of Aromatic Medicine. And today we are going to be exploring the many, many potent, powerful virtues of Juniper. And I wanted to start off by sharing how confusing sometimes plants can be with their names and the things that we call them. There are so many different plants that are sort of interwoven into the names of Juniper and Cypress and Cedar, and these can all get kind of confusing.

And so when we're going to be talking about Juniper today, there is one particular species we are going to focus on intently. That is the *Juniper communis*. See, I'm already getting confused myself. *Juniper communis*.

There are a variety of other different Junipers that I also want to briefly touch on, but not necessarily focus on, as one of them is *Juniperus virginiana*, also known as Eastern redcedar, which it's not a Cedar, it's a Juniper. And that's what I've got here in this tincture bottle. And particularly the berries of that Juniper I have here from my dispensary, one that I use internally. We'll talk a little bit about Juniper berry within the context of the Common Juniper or *Juniper communis*.

I want to say also that we have the Juniper family, or, sorry, genus. The Juniper genus is. See, I'm already confused. The Juniper genus itself is in the Cupressaceae family or the Cypress family. However, even though they are closely related, Junipers are not Cypress. And the Junipers that are called Cedars, like Eastern redcedar or etc., etc. are actually not Cedars. Cedar is *Cedrus* in its genus.

So we have Junipers that are in the Cypress family that are not Cypress. When we're talking about Juniper, we're talking about Juniper, even though sometimes it might be called a Cedar and even though it is in the Cypress family, just to be clear.

So the interesting thing about *Juniper communis* and why I wanted to focus on this particular species for our chat today, even though I'm going to cross pollinate just a little bit with *Juniperus virginiana*. So I wanted to focus on *Juniperus communis* or the Common Juniper for a variety of reasons. The first reason is that it is the most common in the essential oil industry. So when we're looking at the essential oil of the fruit, which we'll talk about, or also the essential oil from the leaf, the foliar parts of the plant of the tree, these are what are most commonly traded in the essential oil industry.

The other reason why I wanted to talk about *Juniperus communis* versus talking about other types of Juniper, like *virginiana*, although we will speak a little bit about this, I'm going to dive into this a little bit more, but what's incredible about the Common Juniper is that it is a species that is referred to as circumpolar. Circumpolar, meaning that its native habitat actually surrounds the North Pole in the Arctic region, moving down into all of the continents.

And so there is a multicultural tradition of use of the species from various different pieces and parts of the world, simply because as a species it is found all, if we can imagine the top of the planet here, and we can imagine sort of a belt around it, around that sort of top part. You can find *Juniperus communis* growing in its native habitat all in these regions. So that's really, really amazing because we have a plant that, like I mentioned, sort of crosses over space and time and cultural traditions. So there is a very rich story here to tell about that particular species, which is another reason why I chose to focus on it.

## Botany

The *Juniper communis* is a very interesting plant as far as the way that it grows. It has a very highly variable form. So this can be sort of more shrub-like, you know, growing from maybe 33 feet and occasionally getting even taller up to 50 feet or so. But you can also get very low or what's considered prostrate, sort of spreading types of *Juniper communis* as well.

And a lot of this is highly variable based on where it is growing. In fact, when we see *Juniper communis* growing higher, higher up in elevation, where the wind is blowing and there's just rocks and not really a lot of soil, and it's just, you know, being taken over by the elements. We're going to have much shorter, much shorter, much more prostrate forms versus something that's growing in a little more of a protected area in a lower elevation.

The parts that are used, you know, both in aromatic medicine, herbal medicine, in the industry as essential oil, also as tinctures. We're going to talk about different ways of using Juniper as a tea, etc. We're looking at the berries, which I'm going to talk a little bit about because these are really interesting botanical phenomenon. They're not actually berries, but they look like berries and of course, then the leaves as well.

One of the things that is really, really amazing about these berries is that, so we have with the Juniper in this family, in this genus, these are evergreen, right? So they're not angiosperms, meaning they're not flowering plants in the traditional way that we think of a fruit. Instead we have these female seed cones is kind of what they are. And they're very distinctive, right? And they become very fleshy. And then the way that they kind of coalesce looks like very much like a fruit.

But we have basically the scales of the female seed cone that are fusing together to create sort of this berry-like structure which is referred to as a galbulus. And this is often

mistaken as a berry. And so we call them Juniper berries, but they're not technically berries. So I think that's kind of interesting. Being that it is also a big focus of the plant and the aromatic medicine and, you know, even for internal use.

These berries are really fascinating because it can take two or three years for them to become ripe. So they start off on the plant as a very sort of bright green looking structure. And then over the course of a couple of years they turn into this more bluish kind of color. And that bluish kind of color signifies that the berries are ripe and ready for harvest.

So again, just honing in a little bit on a different species for a second. So again we're focusing on *Juniperus communis*, but I'm just wanting to mention *Juniperus virginiana* because that's what I have here. I also have a variety of Juniperus here, which is a horticultural variety. It is another species that we often find sort of in common horticultural trade is the *Juniperus horizontalis*. And this is by nature a very sort of low growing, more shrubby looking Juniper.

And you know, the horticultural industry has, you know, definitely fallen in love with Junipers. They do great as hedgerows, they're easy to maintain, they take to pruning really, really well and generally speaking you can kind of beat them up for the most part. And they are okay. This in particular, this *horizontalis*, it might even be, interestingly enough, I'm not entirely sure what species this is. It's kind of growing out. It was planted by someone, not me.

It does have some of the features of the *Juniperus communis*, which is that these scales are much more like prickles rather than sort of nice, you know, scales that you'll see on top of each other. These are much more prickly. And *Juniper communis* has that. We'll talk a little bit more about that and I will get to *Juniperus virginiana*.

I'm a little bit all over the place. Maybe it's the Juniper. But I wanted to bring this plant material in. I also wanted to show you how. I don't know if you can see this. We have a kind of darker foliage here at the base of the plant and it goes up and becomes quite, quite bright. And the way that this looks in the landscape is almost like golden or yellow.

And this is, you know, most plants that go from green to yellow, you think are probably diseased, but this in particular, this particular variety of Juniper has been propagated or cultivated for this particular feature where it's really quite golden looking on the surface, it's quite lovely and it's definitely very, very aromatic.

And so, you know, generally speaking, when it comes to the different species of Juniper, different species of plants out there, horticultural varieties, et cetera, et cetera, I always try to encourage folks to, you know, stick with the medicinal species that has a tradition of use and to try to stay away from horticultural cultivars or varieties that may kind of sway away from some of the chemistry or energetics that the straight species has.

I think where, you know, I feel like we can kind of be a little bit more flexible about this is when we are working with aromatic medicine, you know, externally. So when we're

working with it, you know, for aroma in the emotional realm and the psyche, when we're working with, for example, with incense and these types of things. So, you know, whilst as an internal aromatic medicine, you know, *Juniper communis* is *Juniper communis* and we shouldn't be necessarily using varieties or cultivars. I think when we're working with, especially with this plant that has a very long tradition of use as an incense, using different varieties of Juniper is fine. I think it's great, especially, you know, if you've got them growing in your yard already.

So that's the plant material there... I think this might be a *communis* simply because of the prickles. I'd have to key it out, obviously, but find who planted it. Just really briefly, we'll talk a little bit about the *Juniperus virginiana*. I do use, this is the tincture of the berry. We're going to talk about preparations a little bit later on. I do use the berry of this plant internally, as I would *Juniperus communis*.

So for me, these two are relatively interchangeable and have very similar properties to them. So, you know, whilst I say a Juniper is a Juniper is a Juniper, this is one case where I have gone ahead and in my practice and in my knowledge of aromatic medicine and herbal medicine have brought, you know, this into my dispensary to use because it is so abundant where I live and easy to get to.

So, with that I will say that the Eastern redcedar, right, which is the *Juniperus virginiana*, is quite common here in the eastern areas of North America. It is much more tree-like than it is shrubby and it is again not a Cedar, it's a Juniper, even though it's called Eastern redcedar.

And one of the things that's really interesting about this plant is that it also carries a fungus called the apple rust. And so, there's this whole adage cider over Cedar, meaning that basically if you plant the Eastern redcedar anywhere near an apple orchard, the apples will get this fungus and it kills the trees. So Eastern redcedar is a host plant for this fungus and it spreads very easily to the malice or the apples. So you know, interesting, interesting little thing there. These galls that form and you may have heard it as apple rust, I think that's quite common.

You know, again with the Junipers, I did just kind of mention the fact that they have different leaf forms. Some Junipers like *Juniperus virginiana* actually have two different leaf forms. So you have the juvenile, which looks much more like needles, which might be what's going on here. These are sort of more needle-like scales and that would be the sort of immature, and this is a young shrub, so who knows, but the younger parts or the younger aspects of the plant are going to have much more of these sort of needle like in the virginiana. And as the tree matures and leaf forms mature, these become much more like scales.

With that, the *Juniperus communis*, which is the species we're really going to be focusing on from here on out, have only needle-like, which are actually very, very prickly. I have to say. You know, there's a *Juniperus communis* growing in a garden area that I used to tend to in a former lifetime, in a former place. And I remember, you'd come across the needles, the leaves that had fallen down and, you know, I'd be digging in the dirt or

weeding or something like that with bare hands, because I kind of tend to use bare hands when I'm gardening. And man, they would just, they would bite you. It was just so painful. And they could even pierce the skin. So they're really sharp. And there's an interesting tradition of use or a folkloric use for those sharp needles that I will be telling you about in a little while.

But sometimes if you're trying to work and figure out what type of Juniper you might have around, the leaf form might be helpful indicators. So if you're seeing much more scale like leaves, it could be more like the *Juniperus virginiana* or *horizontalis* or something like that.

That being said, the Junipers are very, very common in cultivation. They are used, again, in the landscaping industry, horticulture industry. They're very, very common. And different varieties are planted, you know, depending on the needs of the landscape. So if you're wanting more of a prostrate form or you're wanting more of a shrub form. So they are quite ubiquitous, the Junipers.

And there are other native species to the United States other than *Juniperus virginiana* and *Juniperus communis*. There's species that are native to the Southwest, to the Rocky Mountain area. So you will come across, depending on where you live, you will come across different species of Juniper as well. So learning how to key them out, you know, looking at leaf form and things like that and also seed cones is really going to be very helpful for you. Depending on who you talk to, across the world, there are roughly about 50, between 50 and 65, 66, 67 ish, different species of Juniper.

## Native Habitat & Distribution

As I mentioned, they are sort of a Northern Hemisphere phenomenon. And you will find different species of Juniper as far south as tropical Africa, but we're looking mostly at sort of the Arctic regions in the Northern Hemisphere, parts of Asia. You may even find some in Central America as well.

And then of course, they grow in a variety of different altitudes. So they are, even though there's not a lot of different species on the planet, they are quite widespread and also are able to live in a variety of different habitats. So what this says to me, kind of as a broad sweeping statement, is that the cultural traditions of working with Juniper as an aromatic medicine are going to be very rich and diverse across the world. And that's really quite exciting when you think about it. This is a plant that has been in relation with humanity from many different cultural traditions and times and regions. So I love that.

So with *Juniperus communis*, or the Common Juniper, again, you know, we're kind of looking at this beautiful sort of crowning of the Earth around the North Pole. And it kind of goes down. There is a gap in kind of Bering Strait area, but generally speaking, it comes down off that pole and into, you know, the United States.

We have it growing in... Let's see, what have I got here? So widespread North America beyond the northern limits of trees, occurs in western Alaska, British Columbia, Newfoundland, and then Greenland and Iceland. So you're kind of getting this belt around the North Pole, and then in the United States, it extends southwards into New England, into the Carolinas, especially higher elevations, and westward through Illinois, Indiana, northern Ohio, Minnesota, Nebraska, and then we have the mountains of Washington, California. We can even find it down into Arizona and New Mexico. So that's just giving you sort of a stretch of where the *communis* grows sort of native here in the United States.

There's some other cool facts about *Juniperus communis*. For example, it is considered to be one of Ireland's longest established plants. So it has got a very rich, deep history in the kind of Celtic traditions of the British Isles as well. Yeah, there's going to be a lot of, I'm really going to be relying quite a lot on some of the folklore that I picked up from my sources in sort of the Western European and Celtic traditions, because there are many and it's quite interesting.

So with that, that was sort of an interesting way of trying to introduce *Juniper communis* or the Common Juniper to you. It is, especially with the names and all of that, it can get a little confusing. I definitely can get a little confused, clearly.

## Introductory Themes

So as far as introductory themes go, I've got quite a few listed here that I wanted to share with. One of them has to do with how fixated that we can become sometimes on this idea that stronger and more potent is better. And there has been such a significant focus on the essential oil of Juniper that it really, I feel like very much bypasses not only the safety of working with the species, but also its efficacy and its capacity to really help humanity. So the stronger and more potent we become in the extracts we produce from plants like essential oils, you know, the more difficult and the more specific they become as far as their safety margins and their use.

And so, you know, for me, oftentimes, the value of the whole plant and the more gentle forms of extracts can easily get ignored when we become very, very fixated on these concentrated aromatics. So I think Juniper tells this story. So this idea of stronger and more concentrated is not always better. So just want to challenge that sort of psychology a little bit.

Some other interesting introductory themes. One has to do with, you know, kind of the spirit of death. So we're going to talk about that. It's for me, very much a boundary creator and enforcer. And this is not just about, you know, boundaries with other people, but creating boundaries and enforcing boundaries within ourselves. Okay. So when we're working with that, for sure, when we're working with boundaries with other people, we also have to understand where our boundaries lie.

It is, as I mentioned, sacred. Around the world, there are incense traditions from so many different cultures. So for those of you who are incense makers, or for those of you who are wanting to be incense makers, you should totally check out the [incense course with the Northwest School of Aromatic Medicine](#), because it's stellar.

This is an incredible herb, or incredible plant, I should say, tree species or shrub species, to bring into your incense making. And there are so many different recipes out there, especially from these different cultural traditions. So it would definitely be worth exploring.

Another introductory theme. So, like many strong, very strong scented herbs like the Juniper is, there is a lot of narrative and a lot of folklore surrounding protection and warding off demons. You know, I also think about with *Juniper communis*, there's, you know, as well with the needles that it has. It's just like these needles, which are like, protective, stay away, kind of energetic. And there are also traditions.

So I mentioned to you sort of the spirit of death, and we're going to talk a little bit about what I mean by the spirit of death. But there are also traditions about this plant being used to help people see the devil or to see evil. So to not only be protected, but also to be able to witness it. And for me, this is also about boundaries and being able to create boundaries and observe boundaries and enforce boundaries.

And then we also have, you know, coming from First Nations traditions here in the United States, there is this idea of this cleansing energetic and specifically cleansing to the blood, but also cleansing to space. And we'll see that again with the incense traditions, this idea of protection, warding off evil, cleansing space. And when we're looking at sort of the internal, traditional internal use, cleansing the blood and cleansing the waters of the body. So it does have that sort of impact as well.

## History & Folklore

I wanted to dive into the folklore that I was able to find about Juniper because, again, you know, I've mentioned this before. I guess I'll just mention it again here that, you know, I think that when we're exploring the use of aromatics and aromatic medicine for the emotional realm, there is so much that we can gather from the stories of the plants themselves.

And those stories can bring in meaning and metaphor into the emotional realm. It can carry that meaning and that metaphor with the aromatic. So we can oftentimes find really, really rich medicine in the stories themselves of the plant. So I like exploring the folklore when we're looking at, and when I'm also trying to connect with when to use a particular aromatic, sometimes the folklore of that plant can tell us.

And so one of the first pieces that I found that I thought was really quite interesting actually comes from the Old Testament in the Bible or the Old Testament, and in Psalms, it's 124. And there's a verse there that describes the actual burning of a deceitful person

with ill intentions. So setting this person on fire with the coals of what is sometimes referred to as the broom tree, which is a cousin of Juniper, but is also sort of translated as Juniper.

So one of the many interpretations of this passage is that the burning of the person is a metaphor for sort of a cleansing or purifying and eliminating of sort of false or negative energies. In that writing, in that verse, the psalmist is referring to his prayers of protection from liars and people that are sort of kind of, you know, talking deceitfully about him.

So, again, this is sort of just the beginning of the folklore story about how, you know, Juniper is kind of employed to ward off the negative energy of others and to not be impacted by it. So this is, again, with the burning of the incense. This is one of those first stories of creating that boundary in the emotional realm and in the psyche and creating that safe space for ourselves.

Interestingly enough, I love this. I'm going to have to read a lot. I have so much information here I want to share with you. And of course, I don't have it all memorized. I want to make sure I don't miss any of these details. But moving over to the Greek tradition, Erinyes were also known as the Furies. The Furies. So Juniper was dedicated to the Erinyes. These are sort of thought to be goddesses of vengeance, the goddesses of vengeance in Greek religion and mythology.

So, you know, the Erinyes, or Furies, also known as *furiae*, so they were female. So there's sort of this divine female deity of vengeance and the also sort of considered supernatural personifications of the anger of the dead. And so when I spoke about, you know, spirit of death, this is kind of one of those traditions, the anger of the dead, this idea of, you know, folks rolling over in their grave.

You know, there's something about this, to me, that was really what it invoked in me is, so this is a plant that was dedicated to these mythical creatures, the Furies. And they were supposed to represent that fury and that vengeance from the dead, the dead that are disturbed by the happenings of the common day. And so I think a lot about honoring the memory of our ancestors and folks who had worked very hard to make the world a better place and to see the world change in ways that would have been really heartbreaking or detrimental to their work.

And bringing Juniper in as sort of a way of honoring the good work that they did do. And also, again, that purification of and cleansing of, you know, the bad or the difficult that is currently happening in modern times. So I thought that was really super interesting.

I mean, the other side of the Furies in this Greek tradition, so, you know, anger, vengeance, etc. But on the other side, there is this idea of also being, representing regeneration and the potency of creation as well. So in many ways, it's this sort of metaphor of being...how shall I say... something that which, you know, like death is all consuming, but it's also a beginning, right? It's an ending, but also a beginning. So we have both consuming and empowering here. And so, you know, I think there are



traditions of use that might, especially as an incense and as an offering to a spiritual practice, where some of these energies might come in.

Interestingly enough, also in the Greek tradition, there are documented ancient incantations that are about warding off dragons from the underworld. And so I thought, again, this is sort of interesting, this sort of spirit of death and the vengeance from the underworld.

And also there's a relationship there between burning Juniper and honoring the Greek goddess Hecate. And Hecate was considered the goddess of magic, witchcraft, the night, the moon. She is sort of the dark goddess, also spirits or ghosts and bringing the dead back to life. She also was worshiped in ancient Athens as a protector of the household as well. So, you know, there are a lot of these deities in these traditions, have sort of multiple incarnations of their metaphorical power. But for those of you who are interested, you know, Juniper was also offered and burned to honor Hecate.

Moving over to the European traditions, Western European traditions, for example, there's a lot I was able to find about Germany, kind of partially my ancestry, where there's a tradition of burning Juniper branches in cremations and as incense, again, just as this sort of purification of the spirit of the person, you know, so the Juniper was used in the crematory process for that cleansing.

There's a tradition of use as well, for, you know, the berries and the branches being burned to ward off demons. And so again, looking at that, warding off evil and offering that sort of boundary and that protection. And in fact, there was a tradition I discovered about hanging, they would hang Juniper branches at the door of the house to prevent witches from entering during the night.

And what would happen is that the thought was that, especially with *Juniperus communis*, that the witches would come to the door and they would have to count all of the needles on the hanging Juniper before they could enter. And it would take them so long that by the time they were getting close to being finished, the sun would be rising and they would have to go back and hide in the dark.

So a lot of these folkloric stories, I think, are rich with metaphor and meaning. And, you know, again, I think that really speaks to this idea of protection and creating boundary, both when we talk about the home, not just our physical space, but also our internal space.

It is also from Germany where there's some folkloric traditions around Juniper helping people to actually see the devil. So, you know, the devil hides in plain sight. But if you are burning Juniper, working with Juniper, that you are able to see people's true nature much more easily. You know, sort of it clarifies your capacity to interpret when you have a boundary crosser, I'll say that, boundary crosser.

And in fact, there's also a tradition of use in Germany for smoking Juniper in order to exercise demons or, you know, hexes that have been placed upon you. So you would

smoke Juniper to internally cleanse oneself. Now, I don't personally have any experience with smoking of Juniper or using Juniper in smoking blends. I try to not encourage inhalation of plant material into the lungs because carbon is carbon and it can hurt those tissues. But it is an interesting one to consider or to research on your own if you are interested in, you know, ceremonial smoking blends and things like that. I wouldn't go too crazy with it though. It is a very potent aromatic and we don't want to, again cause any harm.

But if you're working in that level of, you know, and I think that we could even argue with the incense and also with the essential oil, when we're just inhaling it via our sensory perception rather than smoking it, that it's an interesting thing, an idea to me, this idea of bringing that aromatic in to the body so that you can cleanse yourself of, you know, here it's demons, but your own inner demons when you're working with that.

So I'm thinking about shadow work. I'm thinking about when you're doing sort of self accountability work that you're using Juniper to help sort of eliminate and process and move through some of these harder aspects of yourself that need work, need attention.

Another thing that comes from Germany, in Middle High German, I'm going to pronounce it wrong probably, but *Juniperus communis* with the long needles. It's very, very spiky. Queckhalter, that was what it was called in Middle High German. And it was used for the ritual beating of people, which I think is sort of intense. I guess we don't do ritual beatings anymore in most sort of, you know, Western societies, in that sort of public way. But again, the idea was that it would purge that person of the elements of themselves that led them to getting beaten in the first place.

There's another, the last tradition I thought was kind of interesting. It's just a fun little antidote. I don't really know what it means, but there's a tradition in Germany about using Juniper to help punish a thief or to catch a thief, someone who's stolen property from you. So you would basically, in order to get the thief to return all your property to you, you would go out to a Juniper and you would bend one of its branches down to the ground and that you would then cover it with a stone.

And while you were doing that, calling out the name of the thief, so bending down the branch, you're putting a stone on top of that, you're calling out the name of the thief, and as that happens, he's going to be forced to bring back the goods to you. And that once he does, you release that branch and you return the stone to where you found it. And it's the idea that with its numerous prickles, it was going to hold the thief in place and so he would be able to get caught. So I think that's kind of interesting. You know, using Juniper to help undo wrong that has been done to you is kind of the metaphor that I like to take into the psyche with this.

Another thing that I think was kind of cool that I found sort of in another European tradition, I couldn't really nail down exactly where this was from, but the idea of this protection and creating boundaries, you know, purging oneself from difficult aspects of our personality or, you know, protecting ourselves from the difficult aspects of others personalities, et cetera, et cetera, right?

Boundaries within ourselves, boundaries for ourselves, boundaries between us and others. There is a tradition of actually wearing the berries around your neck in a necklace. And I really, really love this idea. I am all about talismanic aromatic medicine, meaning that you create a talisman, something sacred that you carry with you that invokes that meaning to you. And so I really love the idea of, you know, harvesting Juniper berries and then, you know, basically stringing them together and wearing them as a necklace as a source of protection. I think that's really beautiful. So I wanted to share that with you. I love that idea.

I will say also that in the British Isles and in particular, I'm going to just hone in on Scotland for a second because again, that's the other part of my heritage. There is sort of a tradition of use in Scottish folklore for saining rights. So saining is also, you know, burning incense. It's referred to as saining or cleansing. And there is a tradition of doing that with Juniper around Hogmanay, which is the New Year, and that there's traditional prayers and other rites around that time that was sort of used to kind of cleanse and bless and protect the household and its inhabitants into the new year. So Juniper was kind of used in that sort of smoke and that incense cleansing.

And interestingly enough, in Scotland, Juniper is a part of the coat of arms of a couple of clans. For those of you who perhaps have the last name of Gunn or McLeod, Murray or Ross, your coat of arms from Scotland includes the Juniper. Again, that protection right. So Gunn, McLeod, Murray and Ross.

Also coming to us from the Western European tradition is the Language of Flowers. And I've mentioned the Language of Flowers in a few other Plant Talks before. And so I'm not going to go into too much detail about what the Language of Flowers is all about. But you were, you know, you were to give somebody a flower and it was going to say something, basically. And so in the Language of Flowers, Juniper represents protection and help. And so you would pass this to a person who you were offering your assistance and your protection to. It was quite the gesture there.

I also wanted to share. There's an author by the name of Elisabeth Brooke. She's from the UK. She's a modern author. She has a really wonderful series of books. One of them in particular is "A Woman's Book of Herbs." I should have brought it with me so I could share it with you. I think I've shared it before. But she talks about Juniper.

So Juniper being an herb of the sun. Again, looking at, you know, this from an astrological medicine standpoint or medical astrology standpoint, sun representing, you know, physiological processes in the body, but in the emotional realm and in the psyche, the sun is very much a representation of self or the one's identity, true identity. And the sun has this capacity to warm and to brighten, bring light to that which is dark.

So you can see some of these themes with protecting against evil and darkness, exploring the darkness within us that, you know, bringing light to these aspects of ourselves. Protection, the sun and its warmth and its light and that protection and creating those boundaries.

We can see the sun really shining through in a lot of these other sort of traditions and folklore. So, Elisabeth Brooke and "A Woman's Book of Herbs" has Juniper and talks about Juniper as being able to counteract, this is some emotional realm stuff as well that I really like, counteract the fearfulness of the Phlegmatic.

So again, looking back at some of our Core Teachings, you can kind of go back to the Phlegmatic and what those Watery emotions can be like, but that they're, you know, the counteracting of fearfulness. So looking at the sun and that strengthening of that solar light and that solar self as an antidote to fear. And so, you know, again, and when we have, when we're stepping into our place of courage, which is also a word for a place of heart, and we are able to then, with fearlessness, defend our boundaries or defend our sense of self or just our identities as well. So I really love this idea about bringing Juniper in for that.

And also with the sun and that solar energy, Elisabeth Brooke talks about how Juniper can be used to sort of counteract the very cold and dry, the Melancholic, the hard and cold, almost bitter way of looking at the world and so bringing a little bit more joy and light. We could say that sort of dark, bitter attitude, you know, similar to fearfulness being sort of the root of darker impulses or like an overtaking of darker impulses. And when we're wanting to sort of counteract that and really bring ourselves forward into the world.

So she says here, I'll also read out, "for people looking for a more spiritual life." I think that the story of Juniper across its circumpolar existence, there is a, because of its aromatics, there's such a long standing use of working with this plant as an incense and especially in religious and spiritual capacities. And so if you are wanting to step into a more spiritual life, Juniper can be an invitation to do that, just to open, use it as a door opener into spiritual practices with aromatics and you know, even honoring perhaps your religious beliefs with incense and bringing that into those practices as well.

"For those wanting to embrace fire," I think that's great. We all know how much I love fire. She also talks about for folks who are emotionally dysregulated and needing to move on from, again, some of these darker psychological influences like obsession, resentment, anger, violence, and these tendencies within us, thinking about purging the demons, right? Purging the demons.

She also mentions for those who get stuck, we're going to smell the Juniper... It's bright, it's potent, it's stimulating, it's moving. We're going to look at a lot of these energetics. So for folks who are sort of stuck in these heavier, thicker, more watery emotions like fear and worry, for folks who have trouble initiating action, again, this is some of that Fire, sun energy, you know, that Juniper can be a really big ally as an aromatic.

One of the things that she suggests, Elisabeth Brooke, in her writings, you know, for those seeking a more spiritual or religious life and are wanting to do, you know, to move on and move through some of these more stuck or more stagnant or more kind of dual emotions or psychological states, she suggests burning five, specifically five Juniper berries every new moon and every full moon every month for three months.

And she says do that. Burn five Juniper berries every new moon and every full moon for three months and see what changes happen in your life. I'm bringing whatever sort of, you know, whatever sort of prayer or incantation or whatever you might want to call it, in with that burning of the berries and just see how your life shifts. That would be an interesting experiment for you all to try.

And the Juniper berries, which we all know now are not actually berries, but they look like berries. They can actually be, they can be crushed. They're very oily, very greasy and oily. So they can be crushed and placed on a charcoal for this purpose. They're very easy to work with that way.

So I guess the last piece, you know, about some of the, you know, Juniper in the emotional realm, Juniper in the psyche is kind of looking more at my sort of personal take on all of this. And I've talked a lot about boundaries, but I really believe, you know, Juniper to be a very, very potent ally in helping us to identify and clarify boundaries and again, between us and others, but also within ourselves.

You know, sometimes, I have clients that have a lot of difficulty saying no to themselves, to, you know, acknowledge when they are surrendering their boundaries in order to, you know, for example, for the sake of connection and belonging, they may surrender their own personal boundaries to another person, for that sake of connection and belonging, which when you think about it, you know, when we are sacrificing our own boundaries and our own sense of self in order to connect and to feel like we belong, that's not really connection or belonging because we have to leave ourselves in order for that connection to happen.

And a lot of us can get stuck in these sorts of relationships and, you know, even in our day to day lives with all different kinds of things, we can cross our own boundaries or relinquish our own boundaries and in so doing lose trust in ourselves and lose trust in that relationship that we're building with ourselves or trying to build with ourselves. So, I will bring Juniper aromatics in to help with this sort of boundary enforcement, you know, especially when a person is feeling like they're wavering in their tenacity.

So by and large, helping us to also really acknowledge toxic influences in our lives and often when we are also our own toxic influence. And so if I have a client who's, you know, working on trying to discern, you know, what is nurturing, what is feeding me, what is good for me, what is detracting from me, what is poisons to me, what is not good for me?

And it's sort of trying to do that work of accepting those things, especially those things that are not good for us that we tend to maybe be addicted to or have difficulty, like we have deep habits with that we have difficulty letting go of. And maybe these are substances or foods or people. And when they're working with some of these clarifications in themselves, and also when they're working to acknowledge their own orientation towards that toxicity and wanting to again, strengthen that sense of self and not relinquish those boundaries, this is definitely where I would be bringing Juniper in as an aromatic.

And I do occasionally use the essential oil for this, you know, sometimes in a blend that I'll have a person diffuse in the air for short periods of time, because the essential oil is very potent and can be irritating. And I don't necessarily encourage its use around young children or people who are very sensitive, you know, to smells or who are perhaps, you know, for example, our pets, things like that. Because it is quite potent, Juniper.

Oftentimes I'll have them work with it as an incense. Sometimes I will have them do drop doses of the tincture, and I'll talk to you a little bit about that as well. And I think there's many different ways you could bring Juniper in this way, including in that beautiful way of wearing the necklace, carrying a few berries around in your pocket, you know, even putting some in your lapel. Maybe not this much, but, you know, oh, it's stuck. So lots of really interesting ways to bring this plant in.

## **Aromatic Medicine**

So with that, I'm going to go ahead and share with you some of just the energetics of the aromatic and the essential oil in particular. And then we're really going to dive into the essential oil quite significantly because there is a really long tradition of use of the essential oil where the whole plant medicine has been bypassed completely and everyone's just focused on the most potent thing. So I want to share all of that with you so that we can then circle back to some of the more holistic preparations that exist out there as well.

Honing in on the energetics of Juniper, both as an essential oil but also as a whole plant. Right. These, this plant, Juniper, again, herb of the sun. Right. So it just gives us an idea. We are dealing with heat and dryness here. So Juniper is considered quite hot, so very heating and as a result, also very drying. Right. Okay. So this is sort of the general genre of where we're at.

And because of that, we have a stimulating, motivating, energizing impact, which in, you know, cases where there is a lot of damp stagnation, excess moisture, excess phlegm, a lot of cold, like the cold and damp manifestations of the body, this is when Juniper may be appropriate.

And we're going to see a lot of tradition of use, specifically coming from Western European aromatic medicine and herbalism into colonial medicine here in the United States and the traditions of the eclectics and physiomedicalists that we're really using Juniper for congested Phlegmatic, mucous states. So cold, damp, stagnation in the genitourinary system.

And that there's also a tradition of use in Indigenous cultures here in the United States for using the leaves as well for that idea of cold and damp in the lungs. So we have a respiratory system and the genitourinary system where the highest tradition of use exists. There are other implications as well, digestive, etc.

But working forward into modern times and how I tend to work with Juniper, we are looking at sort of, most often, for me, I'm using it when it comes to the genitourinary system. So the eclectic tradition speaks a lot about the essential oil of Juniper coming from the berries in particular. And they speak to both the berries and the oil of the berries as being stimulating, carminative, meaning that it helps expel excess wind from the digestion as well as, and this is an important one, diuretic. The traditions of use there were really based on what they would perceive as copious mucus discharges from the urethra from the genitourinary system.

So this is oftentimes indicative of infection also where there was, you know, where there is diuresis. So when you are pushing the kidneys to filter the blood more quickly, there's something in the blood that the kidneys wants to get rid of. The kidneys are going to process blood much more quickly. You're going to have urine buildup much more quickly, and you're going to have diuresis or the expulsion of urine from the body in much larger amounts.

And because of this, Juniper can be incredibly irritating to the kidneys, right? It can be very irritating to the body. Um, this is definitely going to be the case with the essential oil. And even though there is a tradition of use of, you know, the essential oil being used internally. For me, this is an absolute no-no. Like absolute no-no to use it internally. It is that hard on the kidneys, it's that hard on the tissues. It's hot and it's stimulating and it's drying.

And, you know, for me, this is where I want to just zoom back out and work with the whole plant. In cases, for example, the most common form that I'm going to be using Juniper in internally, and we'll get to this, is going to be the berry and it's going to be an alcoholic extract of the berry. This also does really well as a glycerin. I will mention as well, just for a little bit more gentle experience, but I digress.

So going back to the essential oil from both the berry and the leaf, there definitely is a tradition of use here. Oh, I will also mention. I don't know why I didn't already say this, but as far as aromatic preparations are concerned, we've got incense and there's lots of traditions of incense there. But I definitely, definitely, definitely highly recommend trying to do an infused oil with the Juniper, with the berries and with the leaf. It's a really beautiful preparation. And again, it can be used, you know, ceremoniously, but can also be used topically, and we'll talk a little bit more about that.

## Essential Oil

So, the essential oil from the berry and the leaf, it takes about 100 kilos of berries to produce about one kilo, which is approximately 1,000 milliliters or a liter of essential oil. It is believed that, and when you go to buy the essential oil of Juniper, you can see, and its *Juniperus communis*, you will see that they offer the leaf essential oil as well as the berry essential oil.

The berry is thought to be a sort of, I don't know, higher quality oil. It's very, very different. It's a bit more... It's woody, it's spicy, it's a little bit camphorous. But it is also sort of... There's a bit more sweetness to it. It's a little less sharp, I'm going to say a little less sharp than the leaves.

There is a tradition of use in aromatherapy for Juniper, it being quite grounding, thought to be quite grounding and calming. And again, sort of, as we talked about before, balancing to emotional dysregulation, it is also used, or has been used traditionally in very, very dilute amounts for skin care purposes.

So there is a tradition of use for supporting the skin that's, you know, congested with acne, where there might be a bit of eczema or dermatitis. I will be honest with you that it's not for me, the essential oil of Juniper is not what I would reach for if I have a client who's got an inflammatory irritated condition on the skin. Not necessarily what I would go for because it is heating and it is stimulating and it can be irritating as well. So that feels very counterintuitive to me. But you might read about this, you might hear about Juniper being used topically for these types of things and we need to be very prudent about what we read and think it through and also, you know, do our own experimentation.

But that being said, when it comes to sort of congested skin, like really like oily skin, acne prone skin, that is not, you know, sort of the dry, hot, angry, irritated, but more just sort of the congested, oily and congested, Juniper might be useful in that case. Again, so just drying things up a little bit.

There's also a tradition of use for Juniper essential oil topically and as well historically, a long time ago, using it internally for its sort of anti rheumatic effects. So for people who were struggling with rheumatism and inflammation in the joints, it would be something that may have been employed topically but also internally. I will say that I can, sometimes I will add Juniper essential oil of the leaf or the berry to massage balms and things like that for when there's, you know, sort of tension and spasm and you're needing to really kind of support circulation and movement in that area. So topically it can be really, really lovely.

When we're looking at it from an internal use perspective. And again, I'm just not a fan of using essential oils internally at all. But when I am thinking about, for example, the tincture of the berry and its impact on the urinary system, oftentimes we can find that, you know, herbs that are, you know, that help us flush heat out of the body via the urinary system the way that Juniper can, we can often sometimes see implications for it helping with chronic inflammation as well. So again, it's kind of an energetic concept of encouraging heat to leave the body via the urinary system.

But again, too much of this internally is also very irritating and the opposite can happen. So this is not a plant that I would jump to. If you're not used to working with herbs internally, there are other more gentle options that you would want to maybe try first before you get to this one.



I mentioned that the berry is thought to be smoother and sweeter and a little bit more rounded than the leaf. The leaf is, you know, when you go to smell the essential oil of the leaf, it's pretty... It's a little bit sharper, a little bit greener. And I think pretty much that's it.

You have to kind of experiment and see if you're wanting to work with the berry essential oil versus the leaf essential oil. They are very different in quality, although they do have some similarities as well. So try it out for yourself and see what you think.

In my research, when I was looking at some of the historical uses for the essential oil in colonial medicine in the United States, of course, I turned to the physiomedicalist tradition as well as the eclectic tradition. The physiomedical tradition is the tradition that I was trained in.

And there is from William Cook, 1869, the "Physiomedical Dispensatory," he actually talks about using the essential oil of Juniper as well externally. And he's got a really interesting recipe that he shares, which I thought was like, oh, that's pretty cool. I think I'd like to try this. And so I'm just going to read this to you, so you have some information about it.

So he says here, and this is 1869, when he's writing: "The oil has lately come into much repute in Europe as a local application," so here we go, "a local application for eczema, herpes, lichen, and similar cutaneous maladies." Okay, so here we have these expressions of heat on the skin. Some of them are infective, like the herpes. Some of them are, you know, we know now as autoimmune, like the lichen. And some are, you know, sort of histamine oriented, like eczema. But we have these expressions of heat on the skin.

And he says here, "And there seems to be good reason to believe it is of much service. It is sometimes applied in the form of a weak alcoholic solution, but oftener in an ointment." So what this is is basically putting the essential oil into alcohol and using it sort of as a topical that way, but the alcohol was much diluted as well. So again, we're not talking about just putting the essential oil on the skin.

He says also as an ointment. So this would be as an ingredient in a formula, for example, that would be used on particular skin conditions. But this is where I got really excited because it was the first time I really paid attention to what he had said about Juniper, to be honest, regarding this particular topical use.

And he says, "A recent favorite method of application," this seems very gentle to me and something that might be interesting to try. "A recent favorite method of application is by adding the oil to some mild soap, a soap formed on glycerin in the company with tar water and using this in washing." So this is just adding a drop or two into a regular liquid soap like a glycerin, vegetable glycerin based soap. Again, very gentle, not like tons of essential oil, but just a very gentle application.

And then he finishes off by saying this, this is also very cool. "Probably a better way would be to combine the oil with vegetable glycerin and use this several times, washing the parts well with suds of castile soap before each application." So he's saying to wash

the skin, the affected area, and then add the glycerin that has the essential oil in it as a topical and that prevents the irritating qualities from really manifesting and helping much more with the toning and the astringing and the decongesting aspects.

## Safety & Precautions

Moral of the story is here, if you're going to use the essential oil of Juniper, you know, whether it's the leaf or the berry, this is a very potent oil. You need to be careful with it. It does have some pretty significant safety considerations. One of them is that when it becomes oxidized, and this is basically when it's aged. So essential oils can kind of go off by becoming oxidized and when they do, they can cause sensitization reactions on the skin.

It's definitely not recommended for, because it is so potent and so intense, it's definitely not recommended for use in small children, the elderly, who are perhaps not robust. Definitely contraindicated, apparently with those who are suffering with epilepsy. And definitely a no-no in pregnant and nursing women. So again, it's just one of those more potent oils, more potent oils.

And that if you wanted to buy the essential oil of the berry or the leaf and you wanted to keep it longer, like its shelf stability is limited and like I said, it becomes oxidized. So you can end up with more and more irritation if you're using it. If you wanted to sort of prolong its shelf life and reduce the speed by which it oxidizes, you can always keep it in the refrigerator. That can help.

## Traditional Medicinal Uses

So as far as traditional internal use of Juniper, I'll take you through some traditions we're going to focus on. There's definitely Indigenous traditions here in the United States. I've also mentioned colonial medicine. So the eclectic and physiomedical traditions here in the United States. And then also looking at the British tradition as well. And there's some crossover. There's a lot of crossover. But it is interesting.

For those of you who are interested, by the way, in a good starting place to learn more about First Nation uses of plants native to North America, you can look up the [Native American Ethnobotany Database](#), and there is, you know, you can search by species, and you know, it's relying on ethnography. So you have to kind of take everything with a grain of salt because a lot gets lost in translation there. But it is a really good way of just kind of beginning that process of honoring Indigenous knowledge about plants.

So there were some documentation regarding *Juniperus communis* in the Cheyenne Nation; the Cree Nation; Inuit, also known as Eskimo Nation; and the Navajo that I wanted to mention. And so the Cheyenne, this is an incense thing, and I love this because it kind of coincides with something that Elisabeth Brooke wrote about regarding fear. But in the Cheyenne Nation, Juniper was burned for people who were afraid of thunder.

And then, of course, there was use for coughs and colds as an infusion. So the leaves were used, and you would make a tea out of that. You would drink that when you had sort of cold and congestion in the chest, and that the leaves were burned. Again, here's an incense tradition burned at childbirth to promote delivery and the safe passage of the child.

The Cree Nation also has a tradition of using Juniper in the birthing process and in the birthing of children. So there's also a tradition of use for women's troubles. So I'm assuming a lot of times this probably means in ethnography, women's troubles, you know, painful, congested periods. So being used for that as well. Similar to the Cheyenne Nation infusion for the lungs, you know, if there were kind of coughs and colds.

And interestingly enough, the berries with the Cree, the berries were smoked for asthma. Now, I always get confused sometimes about how smoking things can help asthma. I'm not saying that we should do this. I'm just sharing with you these traditional uses. I don't personally believe that smoking things is helpful for lung tissue, just in my sort of medical understanding of things, but I do think it's quite interesting.

In the Inuit or Eskimo tradition, berries were eaten as a cold and flu preventative. Again, that sort of pungent heat and dryness helping to, thinking about where the Inuit live, helping to counteract cold and damp in the body. So it was also employed for respiratory ailments. And they would do a decoction of the leaves and twigs and berries there for that.

And a decoction, as some of you may know from the preparations videos, is kind of a gentle simmering of the plant material for a period of time. And so this was drank as a tea. And I love this. This is like, this is not the essential oil, right? We're talking about whole plant medicine here.

There is also, I thought this was super fun, as far as incense is concerned. From the Navajo, there's a tradition of burning it as a good luck smoke for hunters that they may bring the hunt home. So it's kind of more of an aromatic use. But I just thought I'd mention it.

Moving into sort of colonial medicine. And you know, there's a rich tradition of using plants in colonial medicine here in the United States. And some of these traditions were brought over from Europe as part of the colonization of the United States and North America. Some of these traditions in the colonial medicine were also appropriated from Indigenous knowledge as well. So there's kind of the vectors of information.

That being said, with the eclectic and physiomedical tradition, internal use of Juniper was really about, like I've mentioned with the essential oil. Damp stagnation and infection, these were kind of the two main areas, and damp stagnation and infection can happen together and damp stagnation can lead to an environment where infection can more easily take over. And so we're looking at a particular affinity for the urinary system and the reproductive tracts.

And coming from the colonial medical tradition here in the United States. And so the berries were specific and they still are in many ways in Western practice, modern practice, the berries employed principally for sort of helping to clear this damp stagnation and this infection in cases of gonorrhea, gleet, leukorrhea, which is excess sort of mucous excretions from the vaginal canal and also similarly excess mucus secretions from the urethra. So again, this is usually, this is a sign of infection when it happens.

There's also a tradition of use for kidney infection as well. So in this colonial medical period, they were using Juniper berries for different, you know, sort of manifestations of nephritis or inflammation of the kidneys and cystitis. And specifically when we're kind of working with older people.

And it's interesting because I think one of the main indications for me with working with Juniper, and again, I use very small amounts, this is never more than 5 or 10% of a tincture blend. I tend to focus on the tincture. I don't really do the tea very often. This seems to be the most efficient way for me to work with this plant is in the tincture form. And also you can do, it does really well as a glycerin.

But for this idea of recurrent cystitis, where, you know, I'm not trying to treat infection, that's not what I do. Herbs don't treat problems. If you all have heard me talk about this before... Herbs support the body. So I'm looking at bringing in Juniper berries to help support the clearing of infection out of the urinary system. And when we talk about things like chronic cystitis, in many cases, I have observed that really it's just the imbalance or that ecosystem within the urinary system, within that urinary tract, the ecosystem there of microbial populations can be knocked out of whack.

And so, you know, as you should, take antibiotics, you have a urinary tract infection, you take antibiotics, and then it seems to come right back. And so you're kind of stuck in the cycle of infection. I mean, if that is part of the narrative, part of the story, I might use Juniper internally for small periods of time. The key being here that it is always blended with other herbs. I never use Juniper on its own. And again, like I said, never more than 5 or 10% of a blend.

In that physiomedical tradition I mentioned with William Cook, I'm just going to read what he wrote about using the berries for the urinary system. And he says here, "Juniper berries are a mild stimulant, chiefly influencing the kidneys and the bladder. They are a pleasant and somewhat prompt diuretic.

Right. So again, that's just speeding up the elimination of urine and filtering the blood. Increasing the filtering of blood. So somewhat prompt diuretic. Not usable. This is super important. Not usable in acute inflammation of any proportion. So because Juniper can be irritating, you do not necessarily want to use it when you are acutely irritated. Right. This is what William Cook is saying to us. This is something about getting ahead of it when the infection has cleared and helping to restore what I consider to be the ecosystem of that route.

He also makes suggestions for its use in supporting the reproductive tract. And there is quite a focus on the biologically female reproductive tract here, but there may be indications as well for the biologically male reproductive tract.

So, again, looking at the sort of damp stagnation. It can be very, very helpful with congested, painful periods. And I may bring Juniper berry in in cases of dysmenorrhea. And perhaps again, looking at that pelvic stagnation, there may be a story of endometriosis in the case where there's a lot of bleeding and a lot of pain and just that heavy dragging feeling that some folks can get with the menstrual cycle. So Juniper might be involved in that sort of as a stimulant to help with that blood flow and to help with that decongestion.

Interestingly enough, William Cook talks about a couple preparations that I thought were quite interesting. Of course, I'm talking personally about using the tincture as my favorite because it's just efficient. He talks about crushing some of the berries with sugar and giving that in doses of half a dram to a dram three to four times a day. So that's kind of an interesting way of working with Juniper. We will know, by the way, that Juniper berries are a flavoring of gin. So I will get to that in a second.

But he says a better method of using them is to crush an ounce of the berries and macerate them in a pint of water, warm water, for an hour in a covered vessel. So this is like an infusion, basically. You crush it and you do an infusion of the berries and you drink two fluid ounces every two to three hours. And that this is a very effective and especially when you blend it with other sort of relaxing and soothing diuretics.

So this is where we can look at... There's a big difference between the essential oil of Juniper and using the essential oil of Juniper versus crushing some of the berries and letting it sit in hot water for a couple of hours and sipping on it. There's a big difference there about the potency. So it's just an interesting point to make.

I think before I get into the British tradition, which is, you know, I wanted to just list off some of the things that it was traditionally used for over in the British Isles. I did mention earlier how I would often use, I will often use drop doses of the tincture of Juniper when I'm helping support a person in the emotional realm regarding acknowledging sort of toxicity in their lives, you know, toxicity with themselves, toxicity in others, for the boundaries that I was talking about and enforcing, one owns boundaries, you know, really identifying the, you know, working with that process of not relinquishing one's boundaries.

So when I'm talking about working with drop dosing, this basically is what it says where, you know, you're taking one drop of the tincture and you're using it intentionally. There's a thing that happens for me because with the flavor, with the taste of it, the Juniper, you're also getting the aromatics as well. And sometimes it can be, you know, looking at that from much more, and this might be a little bit ethereal for some, but this idea of, you know, in some of the traditions of use for, you know, cleansing the body of demons or cleansing the person of evil influences or any of those things that I mentioned before, there's something interesting about the internalization of Juniper in these sort of psycho spiritual realms where you are really initiating that from the internal world out.

And so sometimes, you know, it's wonderful as an incense... obviously huge tradition of use across the planet as an incense. The essential oil is really lovely if you want to just, you know, smell it occasionally.

But this idea of using a drop dose of the tincture, you could also use a drop dose of the glycerite and just a little bit of water. Some people will do the drop dose right on the tongue, just one drop. Some people will put like a drop on their hand, you know, just a drop, and then kind of lick it off. And this, for me, it's just taking the aromatic one step further.

And then in doses of one drop, you know, one drop, maybe you do that once a day. The doses are so small that, you know, it is very unlikely to be problematic for folks. And then at that level, it's very gentle. It's just sort of a hint of Juniper. It's just a suggestion of Juniper, a little nudge. So I did bring in drop dosing and I just wanted to mention that, you know, with the internal use of Juniper, sometimes I will use it that way rather than, you know, straight up in a blend, working with damp stagnation in the pelvic region or the urinary system or etc.

So again, just looking at the British tradition, moving over to Nicholas Culpeper and his work, again, famous medical astrologer. He, as I said, talks about Juniper as being an herb of the sun and being hot in third degree. So that's quite hot. There's only four degrees of heat in traditional pharmacy. So being in the third degree means that it's very hot, very stimulating, very cutting, very clarifying, and that too much will burn, too much will irritate very, very quickly.

In his writings on Juniper, there's a tradition of use against venomous bites from animals. So, you get a lot in his kind of the first part of his writing on Juniper about venomous beasts and being good for that. I, honestly, you know, I can't say that I would reach for Juniper if I got bit by a snake. I might want to go to the hospital personally.

He also talks about the berries being a diuretic and helping to, you know, back in the day, before they had, you know, modern medicine and medical devices and, you know, pharmaceutical medications, you know, the plants is what they had. I mean, Nicholas Culpeper is writing in the 1600s, so when there were cases of accumulation of fluid in the body as a result of heart failure, and also in cases where there was something referred to as strangury, which is a condition caused by blockage or irritation in the urethra. And so the urine is just building up and building up and building up and can't come out. This is when he would bring in Juniper. So it's really quite a profound diuretic that way, really helping to move out fluids.

And it's interesting, you know, I think it makes me think of one more indication that I might bring a little bit of Juniper into a blend if someone has got really poor circulation, especially venous return. And so maybe there's a history of varicose veins or a diagnosis of venous insufficiency. And there's a tendency towards swelling and accumulating fluids in the legs. I might suggest a little bit of Juniper for a short period of time just to help kind of get ahead of some of that.

But other things that Nicholas Culpeper talked about, provoking the terms so the menstrual cycles, so helping bring on a period and also helping to give a safe and speedy delivery of a child in childbirth. He says it strengthens the stomach and expels wind and that they also strengthen the brain and help with memory, which I think is kind of interesting. You know, when you... We go to smell Juniper, it is quite bright, it is quite fresh, it is quite cleansing. It has, you know, and again that heavy headedness and the emotional realm with the heavy dampness or that cold and that earthen way of being in the world, that freshness and that brightness can kind of stimulate clarity.

And there's also, I thought this was kind of interesting. Not sure exactly where to go with it, but he would use the ashes of Juniper wood for kind of boggy, infected gums as well. And so I think that's kind of interesting. It's not one that I've thought of, but I know that some people are sort of into making their own tooth powders. And so if you were to somehow figure out a way to burn Juniper and create a little bit of a powder from the burnt wood of the Juniper, you might, you know, it might help with gums, I don't know. Obviously you'd want to spit it out and not swallow it, etc. But potentially if you're into making your own tooth powders, you give that a try.

## **Safety & Contraindications**

I will say that I just want to end on some safety issues with Juniper. I've mentioned many, many times now this is a very potent herb and small amounts is often all you need. Okay. More is not better. More concentrated and more potent is not always better. And you know, in large doses, even with the tincture, maybe even with the tea, in large doses, we are going to start really irritating the kidneys. We also have the chance, run the risk of really irritating the mucous membranes as well. And that can be in the gastrointestinal system, et cetera. So small amounts for short periods of time is really the MO with Juniper.

But because it is so potent, it's not generally used for folks who are super weak and debilitated. So again, and looking at acute infection and acute inflammation, we were told by William Cook not to use it. So when you're in that sort of acute stage and you're weakened and you're debilitated, Juniper's not necessarily, it's going to push you too hard.

This is something that, you know, I would bring in the recovery stage, I'm really kind of clearing out the garbage and the baggage from the process that the body had to go through. You need to build yourself up. There needs to be sort of a built up constitution or capacity before you bring in a potent herb like Juniper.

It's also not used internally at all during pregnancy again because it is thought to have sort of an emmenagogue or abortifacient effect and we don't want to trigger labor early. It's often considered to be too strong for children. And so I've not ever in myself, in my clinical practice ever used Juniper in anyone under the age of 18 that I can remember. There are other herbs that are effective, that are also more gentle, that seem more appropriate for under 18 year olds, maybe under 16.

And because of its capacity to encourage the kidneys to produce more urine, there are ways that can be very, very helpful. But if you have serious kidney disease or someone has serious kidney disease or kidney failure, it's too much, like it's a no-no. So if there is a history of kidney problems, I was taught and I stand by this, to not use Juniper internally because, yeah, it's going to demand a lot on those organs and you just have to be very careful with these things.

And generally speaking, you only take it for a few weeks at a time, you take a break for several weeks and then you bring it back for a few weeks and then you're done. So it's just a reminder that you have to be knowledgeable in your internal use of herbs and that some herbs really require a lot of hesitation and some herbs like Juniper, Juniper berries are lovely.

They do really great externally for a lot of things, but when it comes to working with them internally, it's going to take a little bit more time, a little bit more research and, you know, just a lot of caution because it can be quite potent.

So I think the last things that I'll say about Juniper, and I'm just, I've been sitting here petting it this whole time and it is quite fantastic, really enjoying its aroma here. The thing is about Juniper, I mean, you're likely to find species of Juniper growing horticulturally in parks and other people's gardens. You know, it is going to be important that you key them out because a lot of these horticultural varieties are difficult to identify just by looking at the branches alone. It can take some time to get used to it.

But I'll say that if you're working with it externally, so as an incense, for example, it doesn't really matter. I don't think the species really matters as much. It's just when we start to get into working with aromatic medicines internally that we need to be very, very careful of the species that we're working with.

## **Cultivation & Harvesting**

What I'll say though, with Juniper is that it really very much likes dry, well drained soil. It does not tend to like clay, wet soils, anything like that. It can deal with really cold temperatures. So that's really great for those of us who live in sort of the more northerly ranges. But, you know, it does want full sun, does not do well in the shade. It gets kind of leggy and it loses a lot of its aromatics.

And so when you're harvesting, I really feel like the branches can be harvested pretty much any time of year. But I generally tend to recommend that you do it during the growing season in the Northern Hemisphere when the sun has kind of risen up a little bit more to its kind of high point in the sky. So anywhere, you know, May, June, June is ideal. June, July, August is kind of ideal time because when that hot sun is really beaming down, this is when the Juniper really produces a lot of its oils.



And so if you're harvesting for incense and producing incense, this is when you really would love. This is where you're going to get the most out of that harvest as far as, you know, your aromatics are concerned and with the berries as well.

You know, if you are working with Juniper berries and incense, you'll notice that the plant will have little green berries on it and blue berries on it, and the green ones are immature. And like I mentioned, it can take a couple of years for those to mature. Now, that doesn't mean that you can't use them for incense or sort of, you know, making infused oils or things like that. You can for sure, but the blue mature berries are thought to be kind of the ideal. So, you know, if you see green berries, maybe leave them and, you know, just collect the blue ones instead.

But again, I would definitely suggest really focusing on that high summertime, you know, when it's the hottest of the season and you're going to get a lot more of the oils out of your harvest from that.

## Conclusion

So I think with that, it's a lot. There was a lot to talk about with Juniper. I hope that you enjoyed this talk as much as I did and, yeah, I don't know. I think. I don't know. I feel like there's so much that we can do when we dive into the folklore of plants.

I really would love to encourage you to explore, you know, your own cultural traditions from wherever you may hail and just, you know, especially if you're in the northern, you know, traditionally from the Northern Hemisphere, you know, see if there's a tradition of use of Juniper from your lineage, from your ancestry, and also what other types of Junipers are out there in the world that, maybe you're from the Southern Hemisphere and you've got traditions of use of Juniper in your traditions there as well.

Just to have a look. It is quite deeply embedded with humanity, this plant. And I think that there's a lot that we can gain from the folklore of the plants around us for their sort of support in the psyche, in the emotional realm.

So with that, I think I'll leave you with that. I really enjoyed today. I hope you did, too. And I look forward to seeing you here in the Aromatic Medicine Garden again very, very soon.

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