

The Transgender Herb Garden

An MtF guide to disconnecting
one's self from big pharma

by FlyingOtter

As anarchists, a major goal is disconnecting from the larger power structures around us to live so locally that we know our every action is not bringing harm to others and other species on this planet. As a transgender person, I have had to wrestle with the idea of purchasing pharmaceuticals and over-the-counter herbs to facilitate bodily alteration, or grow my own herbs. As I have grown my own, it has overwhelmingly been a journey of trial and error, but as anyone who has doctor prescriptions will tell you, even the stuff the doctors prescribe is pretty much trial and error and varies from individual to individual. So I put this zine together so that others won't have to go through as much trial and error as I have. As a warning, none of this should be taken as medical advice in any way. These are just my own experiences.

This zine is coming from a male to female (MtF) perspective, but if you are FtM, or even non-transgender don't let that stop you from reading this. If anything I have learned, it is that trying different plants and foods will inform you about yourself. As you take the time to sense how it makes you feel, how your body reacts, in its slightest movements and ways — as you come to know your own body, that is the key to transforming it, maintaining it, and healing it. Ask yourself what plants that you hate to eat, but others love. What we crave is often a sign of what we need (though not always). I have personally known of many female bodied people who love the taste of black licorice while most male bodied people I know can hardly stand the taste. That is just one example. Another good example is perhaps soap. When you wash your face with some soaps, it makes your skin feel different than other soaps. Some might make you smell nice, others leave your skin feeling soft, some feel like they pull *all* the oil out of your skin, while others seem to leave your skin feeling smooth and looking quite shiny. When you eat foods, it is the same. Try to sense what your body felt like before, and then what you are feeling and seeing now.

As a trans person, you *may* find that when you eat herbs for the gender you seek to live as, they don't taste very good to you, mostly perhaps because your body is not presently oriented as theirs is. I've found that as one eats more of it, it definitely becomes much more palatable. So as you try these, realize that they may not always taste absolutely fantastic to you.

The herbs discussed here have been grown successfully in a relatively sunny and dry southern California climate, so growing them where you live in a different climate, you may experience slightly different levels of success. It has taken me a while to find both plants that are

transformative *and* that I can grow easily in my own climate and soil in my yard.

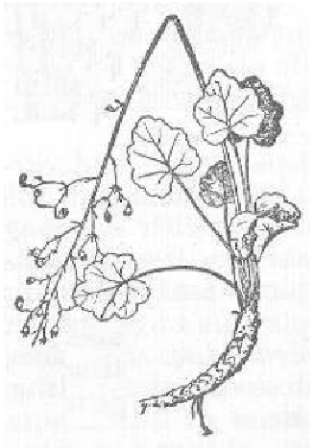
For most of these plants, I just wash the leaves off very thoroughly and eat them raw and chewed up thoroughly for better digestion. You could also make a tea of them by chopping them up rather fine, or drying them and breaking the dried leaves into pieces, then bring a pot of water to a boil. After taking it off the heat, stir the leaves in and as the tea cools, the leaves will all sink to the bottom; then just pour off the liquid. No need for tea balls or tea bags. You can make any teas this way, but I personally recommend just eating everything raw as it is more potent in its fresh, raw form.

There are some instances when you don't always have time to harvest and wash your herbs, like perhaps you are on a long journey or something, or you're away at work or at school. When you *can* harvest and wash, then do a big batch and put it in some tupperware for the road. Also, you will begin to find that several of these plants are commonly used in commercial landscaping or people will plant or pot them merely for decoration. When you discover a new helpful herb, after learning to easily identify it, it is an easy thing to simply wander your neighborhood and harvest the leaves in other people's yards while you've got seedlings or cuttings still growing and not quite ready to harvest from your own yard or porch of potted plants. It is a good idea to wash well anything you're going to eat, but if you aren't harvesting from at home (where you know you're growing everything organically), it is probably a good idea to wash such plants a little more thoroughly, simply because you really don't know if they have been sprayed with any pesticides and such.

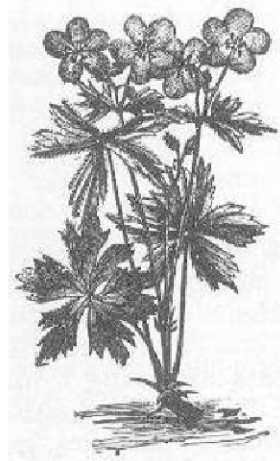
I've also found it more effective to use combinations of different herbs and to not just stick to one herb. When I find myself using just one, or not rotating occasionally, I think my body gets too adapted to it. So it can be very good to change things up every now and again. A bio-woman's biology/hormones change throughout a month, no reason to not do the same.

As far as consumption, you'll have to find the right balance for you. For me, I find that consuming some herbs 3-4 times throughout the day is the best, but some days you'll space out and not eat any herbs for a whole day, but return to your routine the following day. The thing to remember is that bodily changes don't happen overnight.

Okay, let's go over some transgender herbs!



rounded leaves



maple-like leaves

You can grow them from seed or from cuttings, or probably purchase a plant from your local hardware store's garden department. If you do find a marjoram or oregano plant, you can easily grow it from a cutting. Break off a young, green branch (maybe 6 inches), pick off all the leaves the first 3 inches from the bottom and put it in the ground as you would the geranium. The top leaves won't die like the geranium, but it may look a bit wilted for a few weeks while the roots get established. Otherwise, keep plenty of water on it til it starts looking pretty strong. Both of these are fairly drought tolerant.

- Sage. There are a lot of varieties of sage out there and I've tried several of them and personally prefer a variety called Blue chichuahuan sage (*Salvia chamaedryoides*) but any will probably do. Some of the varieties have a bumpy texture about them such that when they get dirty they're less easy to wash clean, for the blue sage mentioned, the leaves are smaller than other varieties, but the texture makes them easy to clean. If adding it to your dietary mix, about 2, 8 inch, green sprigs of leaves a couple of times a day are probably good.

From my own experience, sage does not often transplant well, and I haven't tried cuttings of it yet since I've had some in the yard for some time, but I know seeds and small plants are available to start with in your yard at many local garden stores. Most varieties seem to be very drought tolerant.



- Fennel. Unlike the other plants here, the seeds of this plant are where the powers are. The whole plant is edible though. Fennel takes about two seasons to put out seeds, and fully grown, I've seen them anywhere from 4 to 7 feet tall. Once established, if you keep cutting it back it will continue to produce seeds during most warm weather months. The seeds are about the size of a large grain of rice and sit at the top of the plant in groups of large and small bursts. Also, the seeds don't typically fall on the ground, you pick them off the large and subsequent smaller bursts. I like to pick the seeds when they're plump and green, and they taste like black licorice, but they aren't actually licorice. If adding it to your dietary mix, 1-2 small bursts of seeds a couple of times a day is probably good. Honestly though, even though one plant produces tons of seeds this will not be a major source plant for you unless you have a lot of them.

This is an extremely easy plant to grow from seed. It's not a plant you'll make cuttings of and replant since the seeds grow so easily. If you get some seed, plant them wherever you want a patch of them and add water regularly. Some sources say that this is an invasive plant, but I've personally not had a problem with them spreading, though I know of some who have. So, beware of that.

- Clover. I am only including this one since there is a proliferation of literature out there about the flowers having positive powers, especially red clover. I have had great success in growing these in the yard, but they don't flower all that often and they seem to die out seasonally. Maybe you'll have better success where you live. You can order large quantities of seed from most larger seed distributors. This is also generally a good to plant to grow in your yard – even if you don't harvest from them – since most varieties of the seed come coated with a bacteria that works with the plant to put additional nitrogen into your soil when areas of your yard are lying fallow.

Okay, I've only gone over 5-6 herbs you can use, but these are easy to grow, and will shape you into a womanly shape in no time at all (well, not in no time, but you know what I mean). Actually, the herbs above don't really seem to egg on breast growth all that much, but definitely shrink up muscles and add fullness and roundness to one's face, give your waist an hourglass shape and sprout you womanly thighs. I have only consumed herbs, and especially after going onto exclusively yard herbs, I typically go several months before telling a housemate about my transgender status unless another housemate happens to tell them first and usually they tell me that they had no idea. So these herbs definitely in my own experience work fantastically.

When establishing an herb garden, since you'll be using the herbs daily, if you're planting in your yard, follow the permaculture principle that 'the more you use it, the closer it should be planted to the house/kitchen.' So find a place nearby to your back porch, or only a little out of the way. Also, let your herbs get pretty big in the yard before you take to regularly harvesting from them. It's also good to plant several of the same plant, in case one gets accidentally chopped up by a, of course, well meaning housemate who was just tidying up the yard and cut things back a little more than expected.

Also consider making your herb garden a community resource. Whether you are a biological-female or a trans-female, coordinating the growing of your herb garden with potential other users of it is

absolutely a great idea. As you begin to learn to understand what fresh herbs work and in what ways for your own body, talk about what really works for you with other female bodied individuals. If you are male bodied people, there are also herbs you can grow and use to fortify and strengthen the beautiful maleness of your own body. I hope there will be perhaps trans-men out there who will write zines about herbs for male-bodies. Such knowledge has been greatly lost from much of western culture, but I know that a new day has come and people are awakening and seeking now to disconnect themselves from the machine of capitalism and civilization which keep us from really knowing ourselves and our world around us.

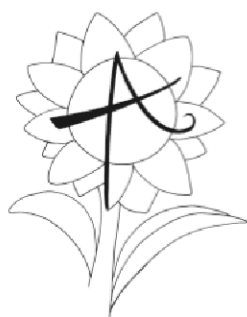
Further commentary on gender

I must admit, that I transitioned to female *before* I became an anarchist, but I've always done only herbs throughout my transition. The thing that anarchism has taught me is that gender is irrelevant. When I lived and passed as male, *part* of what I saw in becoming a female was living on a higher moral ground than being a male. The male seemed to embody everything that was wrong to me raised in a conservative christian home: exploitation of others, competition, uninhibited sex drive, while female seemed to embody all that is moral: compassion, love, giving without expectation of return, passiveness. Now I see that they are both made-up constructs which are part of the same coin and function as opposites in a world of ownership, capital, and authoritarianism. The moral concept of charity and its embodiment in femininity is dependant on the existence of a world of haves and have nots—a world of ownership, an ownership system, which is often called capitalism.

As this writer pens this, ze recommends to the reader that they consider, as stated, that the construct of gender itself is a result of capitalism, and that if they alter their bodies that they do so not out of some reaction to capitalism but simply because it pleases themselves, because you feel more comfortable in a different form of body, or because you are exploring life in its many forms, but not because of guilt or shame.

Male bodies and female are both so beautiful in so many ways. They each smell and taste different too. And there are infinite variations of gender found in between. Male bodied, female bodied, and everyone in between need to not get caught up in their gender and norms associated with definitions, for when they do, teasing, laughing, guilting, and shaming often occur — all forms of exercising social authority and control over others — when really, we don't want a world with *any* rulers. If a male bodied person wears a flowery dress, there should be no manipulation to bend them otherwise. When a female bodied person shaves their head there should be no shaming, ostracism, or even surprise. They come as they are, without shame, and without ruling.

I look forward to the day, when there is no more gender, when ze and ze and we all find nothing wrong, and all things right, about the every gender, every colored skin, and every other way of life that rules not and brings harm to none.



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