The Power of Plants
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Introduction
Plants have been used as medicine almost as long as they have been used as nourishment. The oldest written evidence of plants being used medicinally is approximately 5000 years old (Petrovska, 2012). Up until the early 16th century plants were the only source of treatment or prophylaxis against disease and illness (Petrovska, 2012). The popularity of botanical medicine declined in the early 1900 with the advent of newer, more profitable, synthetic drugs (Blumenthal, 2003). Today there has been quite a modern resurgence in the popularity of herbal medicine, natural treatments, and homeopathic solutions. The objective of my project was to learn about herbal medicine and unearth the roots of a practice as old as time.

Common Forms of Herbal Products

- **Infusion:** a tea prepared by mixing plant parts in hot water for a short time.
- **Decoction:** a tea preparation where plant part simmers in hot water for a long period of time.
- **Syrup:** Plant parts mixed with sugar or honey-water.
- **Powder:** Dried plant parts that have been pulverized. Often used in capsules as supplements.
- **Tincture:** Plant components dissolved in a water and alcohol solution.
- **Essential oil:** A very concentrated oil that has been extracted or distilled from plant parts.
- **Ointment:** Plant parts that have been combined with an oily substance. Often mixed with other ingredients like beeswax.
- **Poultice:** Plant parts applied to skin with moist heat.

(Blumenthal, 2003; Johnson, 2014; Schnaubelt, 2011)

Experiment: Rosemary isolation

The experimentation portion of my project involved creating a rosemary isolation. I used two different methods commonly described in books, articles, and blogs about herbal medicine and homeopathic remedies.

**Method 1: Oil extraction**

This method involved 2 - 32 oz jars filled with chopped, ground rosemary. The jars were then each filled with 24 oz of grapeseed oil, completely covering the rosemary. The roughly chopped herb and oil was then processed into a finer mixture with a blender. The mixture was shaken vigorously 5 times a day for a week. Then the mixture was strained with cheesecloth. The resulting liquid was stored in an amber bottle for use at a later date.

**Method 2: Alcohol extraction**

The second method involved a 64 oz jar filled with chopped, ground rosemary. The jar was then filled with 58 oz of equal parts water and 200 proof alcohol until it completely covered the rosemary. The alcohol and rosemary was blended into a finer, paste-like mixture. The mixture was shaken vigorously 5 times a day for a week. This mixture was strained with cheesecloth. The jar was then left uncapped for a week to allow some of the alcohol to evaporate. The resulting liquid was stored in an amber bottle for use at a later date.

Essential Oil Workshop

The workshop was a free event open to the public. The workshop included two different activities. The participants could make a clay-based essential oil diffuser or a salt-based essential oil diffuser. All participants were invited to try both activities. There were nine different essential oils and three essential oil blends available for the participants to choose from. Over the course of two hours approximately 25 people participated in the workshop.