



4

MAKING AND USING HERBAL MEDICINES

In general, plants are used as medicines or made into medicines in five traditional ways: by infusing the herb in water (as teas, infusions, decoctions, washes, beers, or steams), by infusing the herb in alcohol or an alcohol-and-water combination (tinctures, fluid extracts, and, when diluted, as washes or sprays), by transferring the power of the herb to an oil base (salves and oils), by using the plant itself (eaten whole, wound powders, in capsules, smoking, or smudging), or by distilling and using the essential oil of the plant.

There are, of course, other media in which herbs can be extracted for use as medicine; vinegar, glycerine, and honey are three very good ones. They all will extract the medicinal qualities of a plant to differing degrees. The whole herb, water, and alcohol are the strongest; glycerin and honey are next; and vinegar and oil are next. Glycerine and honey extractions are extremely useful for children because of the sweet taste.

MAKING INFUSIONS

An infusion is made by immersing an herb in either cold or hot, not boiling, water for an extended time. (Basically, a tea is a weak

Each tree, each shrub,
and herb, down even to
the grasses and mosses,
agreed to furnish a remedy
for some one of the dis-
eases [of humankind] and
each said: "I shall appear
to help man whenever he
calls upon me in his need."

*THE TEACHINGS OF THE
CHEROKEE NATION*