

infusion.) The water you use should be the purest you can find, *not* tap water. Rainwater, distilled water, or water from healthy wells or springs is best. Infusions should be kept only a maximum of 3 days if refrigerated, 1 or 2 days if not refrigerated.

Proportions and Steeping Time

Unless you are making a steam, hot infusions should be prepared in tightly covered jars to keep the volatile oils from rising off the infusion as steam. Herbs that have a strong essential oil or perfumey smell when the leaves are crushed are usually high in volatile oils. Quart or pint canning jars are very good, as they will not break from heat, and the screw cap allows them to be shaken if desired and keeps any volatile oils from floating off as steam. I usually like to leave infusions overnight. I prepare them before bed and then strain them out the next morning and drink them throughout the day.

The following guidelines for making hot infusions will work with most herbs.

Leaves: 1 ounce (25 g) herb per quart (l) of water. Steep 4 hours in hot water, tightly covered. Tougher leaves require longer steeping.

Flowers: 1 ounce (25 g) herb per quart (l) of water. Steep 2 hours in hot water, tightly covered. More fragile flowers require less time.

Seeds: 1 ounce (25 g) herb per pint (475 ml) of water. Steep 30 minutes in hot water, tightly covered. More fragrant seeds such as fennel need less time (15 minutes); rose hips need a longer time (3 to 4 hours).

Barks and roots: 1 ounce (25 g) herb per pint (475 ml) of water. Steep 8 hours in hot water, tightly covered. Some barks, such as slippery elm, need less time (1 to 2 hours).

Five Forms of Herbal Medicine

Infusion
Tincture
Oil
Essential Oil
Whole Plant