

# Solidarity Apothecary

## What is the Solidarity Apothecary?

The Solidarity Apothecary is a project that makes and distributes plant medicines to people experiencing state violence and repression. This may include people being arrested, on trial, imprisoned, detained or recovering from these experiences. Or it may include people bereaved due to state violence, such as police shootings or deaths in prison. I also make medicines for the people doing the support and solidarity work during these times, such as organising intense support campaigns, doing prison visits, court support and so forth.

Anarchists have always organised mutual aid - from smuggling food to prisoners to providing safe houses for people on the run. The Solidarity Apothecary is herbal medicine as mutual aid. As the state tries to destroy our movements for liberation, they also harm our bodies as individuals. Trauma, tension, fear - all of these affect our tissues and plants can be allies in mitigating some of these effects, providing nourishment and tonic support for our bodies.



## How can herbal medicines help during times of repression?

An often neglected conversation around repression is the impact on our bodies. Even for those not directly being in prison, the chronic stress involved in the process of being arrested, under surveillance, being raided by police, court cases and so on - it's absolutely huge. Likewise, for those doing the support work, this level of stress is so demanding for the body. For those in prison or recovering from prison, our bodies have experienced the chronic trauma of captivity. I know from personal experience that prison and repression can have long-term health impacts.



For people experiencing these challenges, so many plants can help to mitigate the harm and nourish our bodies to help them survive and develop resilience. Nervines - a

group of plants that affect the nervous system - can help support our bodies to relax and gain respite from the intensity of fight-flight-freeze response we feel when experiencing or re-experiencing trauma and stress. Digestive herbs can help soothe anxious stomachs or reduce nausea. Herbs can even help with nightmares we may experience after prison.

For people experiencing repression, I often try to encourage the use of nourishing plants such as nettle infusions and mineral-rich vinegars, because in times of stress our nutrition is not always optimum, especially if we are living underground for example. Leaving prison, we may also have severe nutritional deficiencies, such as anaemia and so nutritive herbs can be very important.

Finally, by using plant medicines we can feel more connected to the world around us. Even in prison, there can be plants breaking through the concrete. They can bring us comfort and strength and by experimenting with plant medicines we can learn more about our own bodies and health, which can be really empowering!



### **Why do you not accept payment for herbs?**

While I need to cover my costs and donations help, I do not want these expenses to be tied to a financial exchange. I do not want to reproduce the consumer-producer capitalist relationship. For me, giving medicine for free is more about mutual aid and people feeling nourished by this solidarity. This project is small-scale and not my livelihood and so I am able to gift these medicines, the way that plants gift their medicines to us without a financial dynamic. I want to make herbal medicine accessible and recognise the power and privilege I have to do this and so I do not ask for payment for anything I make at this time.

### **What do you make?**

I make a huge diversity of medicine. This includes dried plants for tea and infusions, tinctures, glycerites, syrups, vinegars and oils. I prefer making tinctures because they last longer, are easy to use and can travel easily. I will make a lot of different individual tinctures and sometimes combine them for people. For vinegars, I mostly make

nourishing mineral mixes that can be taken daily. I make a deep immune syrup with elderberries, rosehips and other herbs. In terms of oils, I will make nourishing supportive mixes that are good for aching muscles during times of stress.

### **Where are the plants from?**

All the plants are harvested from where I live, which is on a smallholding in the south west of England. We manage the land agroecologically by working with nature. We do not use pesticides or any inputs from farmed animals. I grow many plants in a large herb garden but also harvest and forage from the abundant wild plants living within the site. I am a very careful forager and never take more than a sustainable amount. I will accept donations of plant material or medicines from herbalists that I trust, otherwise, I prefer to make my own so I know the quality. I tend to only give plant medicines that I have already used myself.



### **How can I support the project?**

Donations are very welcome to the project! Buying ingredients such as vodka or carrier oils can be expensive, as well as the cost of postage. You can donate via PayPal to [nicole@emptycagesdesign.org](mailto:nicole@emptycagesdesign.org) or contact me for alternative methods. You can also support the project by raising awareness about it and encouraging people to contact me who are experiencing repression and who would like some plant medicines.

### **How can I access some medicines?**

Please email [nicole@emptycagesdesign.org](mailto:nicole@emptycagesdesign.org) - I use PGP encryption if people prefer it (I always do). If you know something already that you would like, please ask for it. If I don't have the plants I can always find an alternative or experiment with cultivation. If you don't know what you'd like/need or don't know so much about herbal medicine, please just email me with a bit about your situation and how you are feeling and what you feel you would benefit from. It would be useful to know if you are pregnant or taking any other medication in case of contraindications.

I can also prepare certain things in advance of trials or other potentially stressful situations. The more notice the better, so I can craft some really great things and dry out enough plants for teas etc.

It is easier for me to give medicines face-to-face or by 'punk post' (friends of friends) to save money, however, I can post them to the UK and Europe fairly affordably. I am not

able at this time to distribute them to further than this without donations or some alternative means (like a friend flying to the US or something). However, there are lots of bad-ass herbalists around the world so if your ABC group have a particular need, I may be able to find someone to offer support.



Please note this is a part-time project for me with some limits. I will always do my best. I will aim to reply to your email within 2 weeks and depending on what I have in my apothecary, send things out to you as soon as possible. It may be the case I have run out and will need to wait for the plants to be ready again. I have quite a demanding life of also coping with prisoner support so please be gentle with me in communication.

***Disclaimer*** - *I am not a medical herbalist. I cannot diagnose health conditions or give advice or 'treat' anyone. I simply make and share nourishing and safe tonic medicines in solidarity with others based on the last decade of learning about plants, growing them and experimenting with my own body.*