

Grindelia

Respiratory Elixir

BY LISA GANORA

Grindelia (Gumweed) is an abundant and powerful herb and a great substitute for Oshá, a Sacred Bear Medicine which has been overharvested and just might be better off left in the forest for the Bears. Both herbs are warming, aromatic, antiseptic expectorants that really help with respiratory congestion.

Over the years I've tried a number of different ways to make syrups, but this is the one preparation I've finally settled on as being strong, long-lasting, and easy to make. It contains a wide variety of herbal constituents, too – those soluble in water, honey, AND alcohol.

ingredients

- One part fresh Grindelia buds (by volume)
- 1 ½ to 2 parts honey (by volume)
- 75% (150 proof) ethanol (enough to cover)

This elixir combines a honey extract of fresh Grindelia flower buds with a tincture (hydroethanolic extract) of the same (or you can substitute other warming aromatic tinctures). The final product contains 25% alcohol (enough to preserve it). Note that you will first extract your Grindelia buds with honey, which will be ready in a day. Then you'll

take those same buds & tincture them, which will take about a month. So your elixir will be ready a month after you start. If you need it sooner, you can always mix your infused honey with some pre-made tincture/s (details below).

First, make a honey infusion of fresh (or frozen) Grindelia buds:

1. In my experience the fresh buds are considerably stronger than the dried ones. I plan ahead to harvest when the buds are oozing their sticky white “gum” in late Summer – but you can also harvest and freeze them for later use!
2. In general, the proportions I use are 1 part fresh Grindelia buds to 1 ½ - 2 parts honey (by volume). For example, one cup of buds to 1 ½ - 2 cups of honey. After straining, you’ll end up with 1 to 1 ½ cups honey. This will yield 2 to 3 cups of elixir once you add the tinctures in.
3. Sanitation is important to prevent mold. Wash your hands and all your equipment well with unscented natural dish soap!
4. The best vessel I’ve found for making honey infusions is Visions cookware by Corning (it’s a type of transparent, heat-tempered ceramic). Good stainless steel is next best. Do it in a water-bath if possible, so that you don’t scorch the honey on the bottom.
5. Honey infusion temperature is, ideally, 130 °F. If you can hold onto the vessel for about 3 seconds, you’re near 130°F. The top limit is about 140 °F. Infusion time: 4-6 hours, once the honey is up to temperature – much longer than that (or too high a temperature) will drive off the aromatics. Infuse with the lid on, but periodically open & shake off the water. Stir frequently!
6. The honey will be very fragrant. It picks up the aromatics / essential oil constituents in the buds.
7. Once the buds are finished infusing, strain the honey through a fine-mesh kitchen strainer, into a sanitized fruit jar, while it’s still warm. If you let it cool down before straining, it will be too hard to get the little bits out. Save the buds for the next step!
8. Store the honey in the refrigerator. I’ve actually had Grindelia honey grow mold if left out on the shelf, but it will keep for ages in the fridge. You are next going to tincture the buds you just honey-extracted, which will take several weeks.

Next, tincture the marc, then make the elixir:

1. Now that you’ve made the infused honey, the next step is to tincture the marc (the strained-out buds). The water- and honey-soluble constituents will mostly come out in the honey infusion, but the more alcohol-soluble constituents will still be in that marc & will come out during the tincturing process.
2. You want this final tincture to be close to 50% alcohol/ethanol (EtOH). Now these buds still contain some water (but not as much as they did when they were new, because a lot of it has just gone out into the honey) and the buds are also still coated in honey. It would be hard to measure exactly how much honey + water is still in/on them; this unknown amount of honey + water will dilute the alcohol somewhat. So my educated guesstimate is to start the tincture with 75% alcohol and it will end up being close to 50% alcohol when finished because the remaining water + honey in the buds will dilute it somewhat.
3. Put the Grindelia buds honey-marc in a fruit jar and just cover it with the 75% alcohol. Check it in a few minutes, as it might initially absorb some of the solution and you’ll need to add a little bit more to re-cover it. Cover and shake twice a day.
4. After this tincture has macerated for a month, strain it and mix it together with an equal volume of (pre-warmed) infused Grindelia honey – half tincture & half honey. In other words, 1:1 or 1 part honey to 1 part tincture, by volume. Your elixir will then have ~ 25% alcohol overall, which is enough to preserve it. Even so, I always keep it in the fridge when I can. It usually gets used up before it has a chance to spoil anyway!

Notes:

- You don't have to tincture the honey-marc if you're in a hurry. You can substitute a pre-made tincture of fresh Grindelia buds & add that to your honey instead. Make sure the tincture contains at least 75% alcohol. But I like tincturing the honey-marc whenever possible, because you can tell that those buds aren't totally exhausted yet – they're still fragrant & have a lot of flavor. It seems like a waste to just put them in the compost.
- If you can't have alcohol, just use the infused honey alone. It still makes a potent syrup. Dose: one teaspoon as needed.
- You can also turn your elixir into a formula by mixing different tinctures together (e.g., Sage, Elderberry, Elecampane, Lovage, Thyme, any respiratory herb you like). Just make sure they are close to 50% alcohol or more, so that your elixir ends up being at least 25% alcohol at the end.
- Elixir dose, 1 teaspoon to 1 Tablespoon taken several times throughout the day. You can stir this into a cup of hot water for an enjoyable tea, or buck up & take it straight from the bottle!

LISA GANORA

Lisa Ganora began studying herbal medicine in the early '80s. After practicing as a Wise Woman tradition community herbalist, wildcrafter, and medicine-maker for a decade, Lisa returned to school at UNCA and graduated summa cum laude with multiple awards in biology and chemistry. After graduation she focused on exploring herbal constituents (pharmacognosy and phytochemistry) in the context of Western clinical herbalism and Vitalist therapeutics.

In addition to founding and directing the Colorado School of Clinical Herbalism from 2012-2020 and managing Elderberry's Farm (a Rocky Mountain Herbal Education Center in Paonia, CO), Lisa has also served as Adjunct Professor of Pharmacognosy at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, and has lectured and taught classes at numerous schools and conferences around the world.

She is the author of *Herbal Constituents*, 2nd Ed., a popular textbook on herbal phytochemistry for natural health practitioners, which is used by schools and universities worldwide. Lisa also teaches distance learning courses on herbal constituents and pharmacy, and formulates botanical and CBD products for the dietary supplements industry.

You can find more from Lisa at her websites: HerbalConstituents.com and [Elderberry's Herbal Education and Retreat Center](https://Elderberry'sHerbalEducationandRetreatCenter.com). You can also find Lisa on [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/lisaganora) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/lisaganora).