



*The Many  
Paths of  
a Herbalist*

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# MARY BLUE

**The Governor of RI recognized Mary with awards for her herbal work in 2018 & 2020.**

**She was awarded:**

**~2008- "Community Herbalist Award" from the Northeast Herbal Association**

**~2009 + 2018- "Best of Rhode Island" from RI Monthly magazine.**

**~2010-"Best in Providence" by the Providence Phoenix**

**She is the of Founder & Owner of Farmacy Herbs, an Organic Farmer & Community Herbalist.**

**From 20015-20, Mary was an Associate Professor at Brown University Medical school teaching Western Herbalism.**

**She focuses on using herbs to SUPPORT HEALTH, not treat disease. Mary's healing philosophy also revolves around community, activism, education, social justice, politically compassionate herbalism/ health justice.**

**Mary advocates for personal and planetary healing through herbs, nutrition, and lifestyle.**



# **THE HERBALIST MINDSET**

"A herbalists mindset involves tenacity, ingenuity and risk taking!" ~Mary Blue

**Herbalists have think outside of the box to create a business that heals the community in a capitalist society that does not value nature as a healing modality.**

**Running an herbal business takes creativity + ingenuity.**

**Being ok with failure is part of the process**

**Using resources you have already have available.**

**Start where you are at. You will never be 100% ready to take the next step.**

**Every little bit of work will lead to a successful business (even cleaning and sweeping).**

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**RETAIL HERB SHOP**



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[@MARYBLUEHERBALIST](https://www.instagram.com/MARYBLUEHERBALIST)

# *Herb Shop*

## TYPE OF ENTITY

DBA/ SOLE PROPRIETOR/ LLC/ SCORP

## REGULATIONS/ LICENCES

Town- Business License

State- LLC incorporation, permit for retail sales

## INSURANCE

Retail store or farm stand insurance. No fancy technical language. Do not say the word medicine or technical terms Use terms like culinary or tea.

## REPORTING/ ACCOUNTING

- retail sales tax
- personal income-state and federal
- unemployment and workmans comp

## TAXABLE ITEMS

Herbs are regulated as foods and are not taxed. Books bottles and topical items are taxable. Education and consultations are not taxable.

## OVERHEAD

Rent, electric, heat, phone, staff, upkeep. Keep overhead low!

## LANGUAGE

Herbal Actions and Solvency are integral to a successful herbal business

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# ***Herb Shop***



## **FOCUS**

Herb shop: bulk herbs, teas, tea accessories, salves, creams, books, art. Consider access to herbalism and cultural appropriation when choosing items.

## **ARRANGEMENT**

Keep shelves tidy and like with like.

Place quick buy small items near register. Keep shop tidy and clean.

## **STAFF**

Hire staff from internship programs.

Clear communication, attention to detail, work ethic

## **VOLUNTEERS**

There are always a lot of folks that want to just volunteer.

Create a system of accountability.



HERBAL PRODUCTS







# ***Herbal Products***



## Town Laws

Your town will have laws regarding cottage/home businesses.

## State Laws-Health Department

Your state will have health department regulations to follow, which will be similar to restaurant regulations or farm product regulations. This will tell you what type of kitchen and equipment you will need to have.

## Federal Laws-FDA

If you are selling over state lines or on the internet, you will

## International Laws- Codex Alimentarius

This regulates all trade around herbal products and dietary supplements. Any member country of the WTO has to comply with these regulations.

## Insurance

Farm product insurance or prepared food insurance. No fancy technical language. Do not say the word medicine or technical terms Use terms like culinary or tea.

## Solvency!!!!

This is the most important concept in making effective herbal medicine.



# *Herbal Products*



## Dried + Packaged Herbal Teas

- climate controlled storage space
- water soluble herbs only
- need to taste good

## Tinctures

- ingestible- more regulations
- shelf stable
- less storage space
- make more per \$ ounce/ hard to insure

## Syrups

- ingestible- more regulations
- very short shelf life
- needs to be refrigerated

## Salves

- topical, less regulations
- solvency- make sure you are extracting correctly
- easy to start with beauty products



# ***Herbal Products***



## **LABELS MUST HAVE-**

- Ingredient list with Latin names
- Lot number documenting process
- FDA disclaimer
- Contact- website or phone number
- Name - structure and function compliant
- Branding
- Directions for use

## **GMP**

GMP refers to "Good Manufacturing Practices". This is a set of SOP (Standard Operating Procedures) that explains exactly how you make each recipe, how you clean your kitchen. These are logs that get filled out every time you make a product. Helpful link: <https://herbalista.org/resources/medicine-making/>

## **Lot #'s**

A lot number is an identification number assigned to a certain quantity or group of products from a single manufacturer.



# *Herbal Products*



## **SOP**

An SOP is a procedure specific to your operation that describes the activities necessary to complete tasks in accordance with industry regulations, provincial laws or even just your own standards for running your business. Any document that is a "how to" falls into the category of procedures. SOP's are required for cleaning and preparation of any products.

## **COA**

"Certificate of Analysis". This is testing for mold and heavy metal contamination in bulk herbs and herbal products. These tests can be done in-house by buying special equipment or sent out to a lab. These tests are done for each individual batch.

## **Keeping Samples**

Product companies are required to keep a sample of each batch of product made, in each size for 7 years.

# *Herbal Products*

## **STRUCTURE/FUNCTION CLAIMS**

- 1. Describe the role of an herb** in affecting or maintaining normal body structure or function or general well being.
- 2. Cannot describe or imply that an herb affects** a disease or health-related condition via diagnoses, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention (a claim doing this is an unauthorized drug claim)
- 3. Are not pre-approved by FDA** but the company must have substantiation on file (clinical studies or other research) to show that the claim is truthful and not misleading.
- 4. Require that the company submit a notification** to FDA no later than 30 days after the product goes to market; the notification must include the text of the claim. They want to know what structure / function claims are being made. You don't have to prove your claims are true, but they do require that you can maintain some sort of proof on file just in case the subject should come up at a later date. Specifically the substantiation that needs to be kept on file is that your claims are truthful and not misleading. What is proof? Long-term research studies. Textbooks are suitable especially when the statements made are referenced to their source text.
- 5. Require that the label of an herbal supplement** include the following disclaimer placed adjacent to the statement with no intervening material, or enclosed in a box and linked to the statement with an asterisk or other symbol: *"This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."*



# ***Herbal Products***



## *Herbal Product Pro's*

- Products can be used as an outreach tool and an educational tool.
- Works well with an educational program that utilizes work trade. (Organizing work traders is it's whole own beast!)
- High profit margin: Tinctures, Salves

## *Herbal Product Con's*

- Labels! Labeling is the bane of herbalism.
- If you are selling in small stores, and there isn't someone educated on herbs, than products move slow.
- Complying with GMPs that are always changing and becoming harder and harder to comply with.
- Producing any product is taxing our ecosystem resources. Shipping supplies, products and raw ingredients from around the country is not the most sustainable thing.

## *Potential Outlet for Sales*

Small health food stores, gift shops, farmers markets, craft fairs, CSAs, restaurants, herb conferences, doctors offices, online sales

# *Product Pricing*

Pricing products fairly so you can make a living wage is important!

✓ Check current market prices of products

↓ Pricing Formula ↓

*Hours worked + costs incurred x 3 = price of product*

Example → Calendula Salve (28 ounce total batch)  
2 hours labor \$40 + Ingredients \$25 + labels \$15 +  
overhead \$15 x3 = \$10 per ounce



## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

"Educational programs are the backbone  
of an herbal business" ~Mary Blue







# ***ACCESSIBILITY***

## **FREE EVENTS**

Offering free events is one of the best way to build a reputation as an herbalist and spread the word about your herbal business.

## **SLIDING SCALE**

Sliding scale pricing charges a lower price to people whose income falls below a certain annual income, and charges higher price to people above a certain higher income.

## **WORK TRADE/ INTERNSHIPS**

Work trade/ Internship is an exchange of work time for educational programs and experience.

## **STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT**

Statements of support are written agreements between students and teachers to create an accessible safe space for everyone in the classroom.



# ***ACCESSIBILITY***

## Work Trade

### Pro's

- Allows for more intense experiential learning
- Allows for participants on the lower end of the sliding scale to work off tuition.
- Allows for deeper relationships with students.
- Supports an alternative business model that doesn't focus on capitalism.

### Con's

- People don't value time/work in the same sense as they do money, and can rationalize flaking out easier, since they are not actually getting paid for work.
- Holding people accountable and clear communication can be hard when you have a million other things to do on the list.
- If your work trade force gets too big, then you need a person dedicated to organizing it.

# *In Person Programs*

## Pro's

- Spread the Herb Word!
- Give people the power to use herbs confidently.
- No product needs to be produced. This is a sustainable way to make money without taxing the ecosystem.
- Build community! Shared stories that come up in classes and experiential learning brings people in the community together. It lets them get to know each other in a safe, structured, supportive healthy environment.

## Con's

- Starting off in an area where there is not much awareness around herbalism can be hard. Making money at it doesn't happen right away. Repeating yourself over and over and over again is common. (Get down a good rap to explain your class).
- Gaining the confidence to teach can be hard. That's why is is good to start small. Starting classes in your own kitchen for neighbors, friends and family is great!



# ***In Person Programs***



## TYPES OF IN PERSON PROGRAMS

### Paid Programs

These programs can last anywhere from 1 month to 3 years. Students pay for the program. Offering sliding scale and payment plans offers more accessibility, and opens up the program to a wide audience.

### One Off Classes

These can be an hour at a library or school or garden club. These are a great outreach tool to promote a longer program or individual herbal consultations.

### Internships

Internships are generally a more in depth time commitment. Interns come at least weekly for a whole day to get a hands on experience. We offer work trade for our longer programs to our interns. Once all the hours are complete, they can use the hours to pay for a program.



# ***In Person Programs***



## Pro/Con

What do you charge???

- Making herbalism accessible is important, but making a living is important as well. Starting off with your first class for free or \$5-\$10 donation is a good idea. This helps you work out the kinks without the pressure of high tuition and expectations that come along with that.
- People value things that cost money and seem to take programs more seriously when payments are involved. After gaining experience and confidence teaching, work with sliding scale and payment plans to make it work for you and the student.

## Potential Outlet for Services

Plant nurseries, holistic centers, schools, garden clubs, senior centers, community centers. Participate in larger organized events. Festivals, wedding showers, baby showers, herbal “tupperware” parties.



# *Online Programs*



## Pro's

- Reach more people
- No physical space to manage

## Con's

- Takes a lot of work to create, edit and manage
- Takes a lot of work to market/ sell online
- There is a lot of competition online

## STEPS

1. Create and edit a informative herbal video
2. Find an online host
3. Create a website
4. Create a marketing plan
5. Plan to spend at least 1-3 hour per day on planning and implementing marketing plan



# CONSULTATIONS



# ***Herbal Consultations***

## **Things to consider:**

- Your states individual laws- Health Freedom Act
- Your experience level
- Your time to work with clients
- Where you will find clients from
- The language you use- Structure and Function
- Herbalists Scope of practice- educators, not doctors or therapists.

## **Pro's**

- The role of the practitioner is to educate. Herbalists are not doctors
- Empower people to heal themselves naturally. Put the medicine back into the hands of the people!!
- If you make your own product, you can sell it to your clients. This is a good way to support yourself making a living and mutually support the health of your community. This is also one of the loopholes in the GMP laws. Individualized formulas are not subject to the same GMP laws that the herbal product industry is.
- Working to help support someone who does not feel good can be extremely rewarding when they comply to a protocol and get better.

## **Con's**

- This can tend to be like a role of a therapist. This can be emotionally draining. Make sure you have enough time for follow ups and enough energy to take on someone's health.
- Your state might not have the Health Freedom law enacted. This doesn't mean it is illegal, it means that it is not stated that an herbal practice is protected legally.
- It is best to check your local laws.





**FARMING**





# *Farmer*



## Pro's

- The life of a farmer is a beautiful fulfilling one!
- Providing healthy, local herbs for your community reduces dependence on large companies, petroleum, etc.
- Goes well with an educational work trade model
- Working in the dirt, connecting with the plants is fulfilling.

## Con's

- Farming is hard work. It takes alot of plant matter to actually make any money selling dried herbs.
- The time and energy it takes to grow and process herb is not cost effective without a mechanized process.
- Selling herbs at a high price is inevitable. Consider how large you want your operation to be. If you only have a small amount of land to grow, then dried herbs are not the way to go. Tinctures and salves make more money per square foot than dried herbs and are less work intensive.
- It takes a lot of hands to produce high quality, potent herbs.

This can be a wonderful community building experience (requires additional organizational time in addition to growing time.)

- Growing herbs can be expensive and time consuming.



# *Farmer*



## Climate Change

Droughts, floods and fires effect crops.

This is increasingly a problem for many farmers. Consider the effect that are happening in your area.

## Potential Outlet for Services

CSA model, Farmers markets, practitioners, product companies, herb conferences, retail stores

## Things to Consider:

- Consider the physical space needed! All bulk herbs need to be stored in a climate controlled room. Drying racks also take up a large amount of space (climate controlled space).
- Consider the energy utilized. Drying herbs involves alot of electricy, fans dehumidifiers and processing equipment.
- Once you grow the herbs, you have to sell them, which is another full time job.



6



**MARKETING**



**~Register Today~**  
**Herbal Foundations**  
**50% DISCOUNT!**

# *Marketing*

Most marketing happens online through social media, Youtube and email campaigns.

## ***Types of Marketing Campaigns***

*(without paying for ads)*

*Sales Funnels-* email drip campaign, customer experiences, free class leading to campaign

*Direct Sales-* through DMs

*Discounts-* limited time offer

*Giveaways-* free item giveaway in exchange for shares

*In Person Events-* Free class promoting a longer program

## ***Tips for Marketing on Social Media***

Educate + Inspire + Humor + Relate + Authentic

Take a class

Be consistent

They call it "social media" because it is social. Commenting and engaging with people daily is what builds an account, and give you more exposure.

# *Next Steps*

*Learn*

# HERBAL ACTIONS + SOLVENCY

**50%  
OFF**

**HERBAL  
FOUNDATIONS  
ONLINE**

# *Next Steps*

What herbal business path do I see myself taking?

Is there a need for this type of herbalism in my community? Why?

Do I have support?

Financially? How much start up capitol do you have?

Community? Friends? Families?

Networks: If so, what type of already existing networks would support this?

What are my potential outlets for services?

Specific organizations:

People:

Places:

Is there anyone doing this work already in my area?

If so, how to collaborate with them?

What laws might I need to consider?

What is the fist step I can take to move towards my goal?

Homework- Create a 5 year timeline of your herbal business



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**"BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD!  
IT ALL STARTS WITH YOUR HEALTH!"**

**~MARY BLUE~**

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and video is not legal advice.**

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