



## Making a Skin Salve for Your Everyday Scratches and Bruises

By Aisha Mansour

What you put *on* your body should be just as natural and clean as what you put *in* your body for nourishment. Topical creams and ointments should be made in the kitchen and not in a laboratory where foul-smelling, hard-to-pronounce chemicals are mixed with perfume-reeking substances to create a concoction for your skin or hair. We are lucky in Palestine as there are a variety of wild indigenous plants that thrive without any needed support from human interventions. Many of these local floras continue to thrive (thank God) despite the constant manmade obstructions. And after this winter's continuous rainfall, spring appeared with greener mountains and more colorful wild flowers and herbs.

Last March I ventured out to forage for beneficial weeds in my neighborhood's hillside, which is slowly evaporating into a project complex of apartments and villas. While there are thousands of types of weeds growing in our country, I have only managed to learn about a handful of them. On this outing, I collected *tayyun*, calendula, and comfrey. All three are good for the skin. I dried the leaves of the *tayyun* and comfrey, and the flowers of the calendula. I then placed each dried weed into a small glass jar, which was filled with olive oil. I tucked each jar safely into a cabinet that stays closed and cool most of the time. While the dried herbs only need to sit in olive oil for a couple weeks, I ended up leaving them in the jars for several months until



I finally got around to making the skin salve on one quiet Friday night this past Ramadan.

I chose these three herbs since they are known to be good for the skin. My friend had used comfrey to make a salve. A few years ago, when I fell on my face as I was running on the crooked streets of Ramallah, she gave me the ointment for the scratches and red and blue and eventually purple bruises on my face. My face healed and there are no remaining scars. And while I have decided to stop running in the streets of Ramallah, I have continued to forage for these wonderful herbs in order to be prepared whenever the need arises.

### A bit of information on each herb

Medicinal herbs are often beneficial for multiple areas. These herbs have many benefits, but I use them topically with a focus on their skin-healing traits.

a. *Tayyun* (*inula viscosa*) – *Tayyun* is known to heal external skin irritations and wounds. My favorite farmer from Deir Ammar told

me to place a leaf over any skin wound. This herb grows all over my neighborhood, including in the cracks and edges of the sidewalks and pavement. The plant gives off a camphor scent that my dog loves, and the roots are so strong that it is impossible to permanently remove this plant. My mom hacked at the *tayyun* in our garden, but the bush reemerged the following spring.

- b. Comfrey (*symphytum officinale*) – This is a perennial with large hairy leaves and a bell-shaped flower. In my neighborhood, the comfrey has a white flower. It grows in damp areas under bushes and trees. I found the comfrey under the large old fig trees and wild almond trees. Comfrey should only be used topically. The literature shows that comfrey has a poisonous substance that is harmful to the liver. It is used for various skin conditions and contains elements that help skin regrow.
- c. Calendula (*calendula officinalis*) – The flowers are used to treat bruises and cuts. It is thought that this flower helps wounds heal faster. The calendula flower can be found in Palestine's mountains and hillsides in the West Bank area in the spring. The flowers consist of white petals and a yellow/orange center. Each petal contains a slight indentation.

It is important to note that I am merely an amateur trying to learn about the natural wealth of resources that exist in my homeland. Medicinal herbs should be used with caution. Folks using other medications for other health conditions should consult their doctors before adding medicinal herbs to their regimen.

### Recipe

Dried leaves in olive oil – calendula flower, comfrey leaves, *tayyun* leaves

Coconut oil

Beeswax

Glass jar

Old dirty pot designated for messy experiments

In an old dirty pot, place two tablespoons of each of the oils: calendula-infused olive oil, comfrey-infused olive oil, and *tayyun*-infused olive oil. Add two tablespoons of beeswax and one tablespoon of coconut oil. Heat contents of pot over low heat, mixing periodically, until the beeswax has melted. Remove the pot from heat and pour ingredients into a glass jar. Allow it to cool before closing with a lid. Store in a dry cool place.

You can play around with this recipe, adding more beeswax or less, or more coconut oil or less to obtain the texture and consistency of the balm that you desire.

I replicated this process using dried lavender leaves to create a light perfume.

You can make a larger batch and give out small jars of this lotion to your colleagues at work and your friends and family.

Designate one old pot for processing these mixtures. You will save yourself the headache of trying to clean up that hard-to-remove beeswax.

What do you have growing in your neighborhood and in the cracks of the sidewalks on your street?

*Aisha Mansour spends her free time growing food and caring for her chickens and baladi dog, Sam. She blogs at [www.seasonalpalestinian.wordpress.com](http://www.seasonalpalestinian.wordpress.com).*

### References

Source: Comfrey | University of Maryland Medical Center <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/herb/comfrey#ixzz3j6HnpaKs>

University of Maryland Medical Center

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Source: Calendula | University of Maryland Medical Center <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/herb/calendula#ixzz3j6JKYtYj>

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