

## September Highlight

### Smudging



Using the smoke smoldering purifying and known since the history. People cultures and from specific

and scent from aromatic plants for its healing powers has been beginning of human from many different religions use the smoke burning herbs, roots,

resins and barks to cleanse, neutralize, or to positively change the atmosphere, especially in places where a lot of people gather together. That is why so many religious services include the burning of plants, particularly in temples, churches and other holy places. My first experience with the healing powers of smoke was when I was about four years old. It was Christmas day and my grand-mother broke off a small twig off our Christmas tree. She lit the twig and blew out the flames immediately. Everyone took a deep breath and I could see how this smoke communicated feelings of joy and peace. It was without a doubt that the smoke from our Christmas tree touched everyone's heart. Native American healers have always burned specific plants to purify a space of toxic energy, feelings and thoughts, to create a fragrant atmosphere that attracts healing and helping powers.

### When To Smudge

Smudging can be practiced everyday to cleanse the atmosphere in a home and work-space. Have you ever entered a room and can almost immediately sense that the air is thick? The smell of fear, of arguments, of grief, and so forth seems to linger in space, but so do these vibrations of these emotions. Nothing neutralizes and changes these vibrations better than a good smudge. You can use the transforming power of smoke in a place where there are a lot of arguments or much grief, before moving into a new apartment or house, inside every type of public place, sick rooms and rooms where people are dying or have died. Smudging can also be performed for healing and well-being, to reduce anxiety, stress, fear, to help with insomnia, to stimulate creativity, for problem solving and meditations.

You can also smudge objects to neutralize negative and burdensome energies, for example old antiques or pieces of jewelry. I always smudge myself whenever I feel upset or after an unpleasant encounter with another person or situation. A good smudge with sage "washes" away any negative feelings and I feel re-balanced.

### Most Common Plants Used For Smudging

Sage is a purifier, a healer, used to banish all trouble and negativity. California (broad leaves) and desert (smaller leaves) sage has been used by Native Americans to smudge places, people and objects, to heal and cleanse away negativity, and any bad feelings or thoughts. Sage is a symbol of cleanliness and purity. Burning sage supports the path to wisdom, brings mental clarity and emotional balance.

Cedar provides protection, balance and harmony. Cedar symbolizes abundance and spiritual strength, and can help during times of overwhelm. Cedar is used as a name for a number of different genres of trees and shrubs. The primary ones are cedrus, thuja, libocedrus and juniperus. The junipers are not truly cedars (scientifically) but are used as such by many Native American tribes in the southwest. (Keep in mind that these scientific names have little meaning to the people using them as medicine in traditional ways.) The smoke of juniper leaves creates a sweet, warm fragrance. Juniper smoke helps to clear away feelings of fear, failure and stagnation. Fresh or dried leaves are tossed onto the hot rocks in the purifying sweat lodge ceremony. Medicine men brush away the disease with a burning/smoking juniper twig on patients recovering from illness. Use the smoke of juniper and pray for its assistance in overcoming worry and defeatism.

Sweet grass is often braided because it signifies the hair of Mother Earth. Sweet Grass' sacred protective smoke is said to carry prayers and wishes to the heavens to be heard. Sweet grass has purifying properties and encourages positive energies to enter an area.

### How To Smudge

For smudging you will need the following items that represent the four elements, water, earth, air and fire. A shell (abalone shell is best) to burn the herbs in. The abalone shell represents the element of water and the herbs the element of earth. You will also need matches and a feather or fan of feathers. The feather represents the element of air. The element of fire is introduced when you light the herbs. Wave the smoke over your body with the feather, not forgetting the arms and legs. After you have smudged yourself you can smudge other people or places. When you are done, let the ashes cool down and give them back to the Earth with care.