

The
Holistic
Gardener

Beauty Treatments
from the Garden

Fiann Ó Nualláin

Illustrations by Sam Chelton



MERCIER PRESS

IRISH PUBLISHER - IRISH STORY

For Lisa – Is í an eorna nua tú a fheiceáil.

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www.mercierpress.ie

© Text: Fiann Ó Nualláin, 2015

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ISBN: 978 1 78117 351 0

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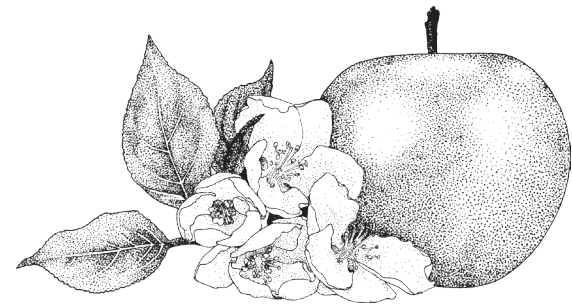
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The quicker method is to blitz the same ingredients in a blender. Then pour into jars, place on a sunny window ledge and shake daily for one week. Allow to stand for a second week and then strain away the solids and bottle up.

Dosage: Invariably 10–25 drops of the tincture three times daily for five days. Take a few days' break before beginning a second round of treatment.

VINEGAR RINSE. Vinegar is an anti-inflammatory and is also useful for safe acid-extraction of plant phytochemicals. You can add herbs to your kitchen vinegar to make medicinal washes and helpful treatments for specific complaints where the vinegar is as remedial as the herb infused in it. For example, in cleansing hair and scalp of residue, the vinegar also acts as a natural antimicrobial. Empty a bottle of vinegar, reserving the vinegar. Put as much herbage as will fit into the bottle and then pour the vinegar back in to fill the bottle. Allow to sit for two weeks and then use as required. There's no need to strain off the solids.

THE BEAUTY TREATMENTS



HAIR AND HAIR REMOVAL

HAIR

Shampoo commercials tell us that hair is made of many strands of a protein called keratin. In fact hair is more complex than that. It is actually a combination of two structures – the follicle, which is embedded in the scalp, and the hair strand, or shaft, which emerges from the scalp. The shaft is layered. Its innermost layer is called the medulla, and wrapped around that is the cortex – the moisture reservoir – which is protected by an outer layer called the cuticle. The cortex provides elasticity, integrity and strength and is responsible for both the colour and the texture of hair. Protecting the cuticle is a great way to maintain lustre and depth of colour. The natural shampoos and conditioners contained in this book will bolster rather than undermine that protective layer.

The hair follicle is the root of hair and is the truly living part. I address its care through the treatments and by selecting beneficial herbs to include in the shampoo and conditioner recipes. A single hair shaft has a normal life expectancy of two to six years. Then it separates from the follicle and falls away, to be replaced by a new hair shaft. This reminds us that scalp care is as important as maintenance of your mane. Many common hair problems arise from damage to the cuticle or issues with the scalp (e.g. sebum regulation or follicle distress).

Your hair is roughly 90 percent protein, and the remedies are formulated with this in mind. So while it may seem counter-intuitive to put dairy or food masks on your hair, these ingredients are often the best delivery method for the amino acids that make up those protein bonds. The phytochemicals in garden plants and common herbs can address many common hair issues too, so herbal rinses are a great way to boost health, body and shine. So much so, in fact, that the beauty industry is starting to appropriate the ‘botanical’ effect – for effect! But there’s no mistaking the real thing when you make it yourself.

HAIR TYPES

The three main types addressed here are normal, dry and greasy. *Type* may give the impression that it is yours to keep forever, that it is fundamentally you. Not so; rather it is what is going on with you right now. You do not have dry or greasy hair for life. Some people will genetically have sebum-regulation issues that mean they lean towards a particular type, but for many, hormonal changes or environmental stresses (sun, air pollution, dye, styling treatments, etc.) have more to do with the condition of their hair.

NORMAL HAIR

For some, normal hair is an unattainable dream; for others it is an equilibrium found and lost repeatedly throughout their lives. If you're lucky enough to have it (or just curious about how to attain it) there are several things you can try.

Those with normal hair may have genetics on their side. For the most part it is a combination of good diet, a good haircare routine (no over-styling with products or heated equipment) and of course a balance of environmental/lifestyle factors too. Let's face it, it's hard to maintain normal hair with coastal salt spray or urban air pollution or spin class sweats or running your fingers through your hair in a traffic jam.

Garden spa

Beneficial phytonutrients for the maintenance of normal hair can be found in basil, parsley, rosemary, sage, calendula, chamomile, lavender, linden flowers, watercress, horsetail and nettle. All of these can be used in teas, but they are also great as cooled infusions in home-made shampoos or used at room temperature as a hair rinse.

Kitchen spa

Eating healthily will keep hair healthy. That means less salt, less sugar, less processed food and more fresh phytonutrient-rich vegetables and antioxidant-rich fruits. The beta-carotene in carrots and sweet potatoes helps protect the skin of the scalp and also the health of the follicle and the pores that produce the natural oils that support your hair's defence and natural cleansing mechanisms.

Pamper day essential-oil soak

To a medium-sized bowl add ½ cup of geranium hydrosol (see page 35). Add ½ cup of apple cider vinegar and four shakes each of rosemary and sandalwood essential oils. Mix well before applying to hair. Can be allowed to dry naturally or used before shampooing and conditioning. Or you can add this to any of the hair masks in this book.

Basil, juniper and wheatgerm shampoo

Make a cup of basil tea (add ½ cup of chopped basil to ½ cup of boiled water, steep for 30 minutes and then strain off the solids). To a medium-sized bowl add the tea, 1 cup of liquid castile soap and stir in 2 tablespoons of wheatgerm oil and 4 shakes of essential oil of juniper. Decant into a clean container. Shake well before use.

Ylang ylang and geranium conditioner

Make ⅓ cup of geranium leaf tea (take a handful of chopped foliage, cover with boiling water and steep for 30 minutes). Put the tea in a blender with 1 tablespoon of vegetable glycerine, 3 tablespoons of natural yoghurt and 3 shakes of ylang ylang essential oil. Use as a 15–30-minute conditioning treatment and then rinse as normal.

DRY HAIR

Many factors can have an impact on the development of dry hair. Sometimes your scalp just does not naturally produce sufficient sebum to keep your hair hydrated. Sometimes your hair can't hold on to moisture due to environmental stress (sun exposure, drying winds, etc.). But mostly dry hair is caused by hair products, dyes and styling equipment that strip or 'heat out' the moisture/sebum or damage the cuticle that protects the hair strand and its ability to retain moisture.

Garden spa

Burdock root, calendula petals and comfrey leaves are excellent botanicals for dry-hair treatments, as are marshmallow root, rose, lavender, chamomile, geranium, elderflower, horsetail and nettle.

It is not so hard today to pick up jasmine oil or rose oil in your local grocery store; both will keep hair moisturised. Furthermore, both can be used in a treatment pomade, gel or conditioning oil with a little shea butter or a slice of garden-grown aloe vera or pulped *Sempervivum*.

Kitchen spa

Keeping hydrated internally is vital to preventing hair from dehydrating, so keep water or herbal teas to hand. Your body cannot produce its own supply of omega 3 and 6, both of which are beneficial to hair, so include pumpkin seeds, flaxseed/oil, nuts and plenty of dark-green vegetables in your diet. Also choose foods rich in vitamins A, E and K. Avocado contains all those vitamins and it can be used externally as a hair mask too. Simply

pulp the flesh and rub it through your hair and scalp, leave it for 20 minutes and then rinse with a cooled green tea for extra shine.

Rose oil champo

What we know today as shampoo is actually Anglo-Indian for a technique rather than a product. It comes from the Hindi *champo*, meaning *to knead*. Treat yourself to a rose-infused oil hair soak to hydrate dry hair and promote scalp health. Just pour a glug into the palm of your hand and run it through your hair, massage your scalp and then comb through to distribute the oil to the ends and coat the cuticles. Alternatively you can use small amounts as a regular scalp rub. Remember that massaging will improve the blood flow to the scalp, bringing vital nutrients to the follicle and also stimulating sebum secretion, which will naturally help dry hair.

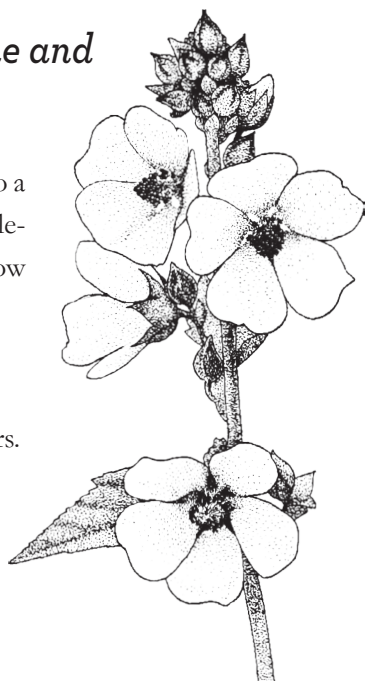
Honey, green tea and luxurious oil reconditioner

Honey is naturally absorbent and has been utilised as a hair reviver for thousands of years. Mix 1/3 cup of runny honey with 3 tablespoons of green tea and 3 tablespoons of your favourite infused oil (chamomile, calendula, basil, rose, or you can use one beneficial to your hair colour; see pages 67–75). The oil and honey mixture provides moisture, while the phytochemicals in

the tea and the infused or extracted oils rejuvenate the scalp and follicles. Leave the conditioner in for at least 15 minutes. Rinse as normal.

Marshmallow, jasmine and rose shampoo

Put 1 cup of liquid castile soap into a medium-sized bowl and add 1 tablespoon of powdered marshmallow root (dry and grind your own or buy it from a health-food store) and 1 tablespoon of olive oil infused with marshmallow flowers. Stir in 1 cup of rose water (see page 143). Add 4 shakes of jasmine essential oil and decant into a clean storage bottle. Shake well before use.



Marshmallow flower

GREASY HAIR

Greasy generally refers to hair that is lank, flat or oily-looking. The hair shaft/strand sits in a follicle embedded in the scalp, situated at a sebaceous (oil) gland. The gland's secretions help hydrate the hair and also cleanse it by inhibiting the growth of micro-organisms on both the scalp and the hair shaft. In normal proportions sebum makes your hair shiny and healthy, but if it accumulates, it can make hair look less attractive and harder to style.

Sebum accumulation is not always caused by poor haircare. Hormonal changes during puberty or menopause can trigger higher sebum production, as can skin problems such as acne. Genetics can also play a part in supplying you with glands that like to secrete a lot. No matter the cause, the secret to finding a better balance lies in nutrition and also in the products you use and haircare regime you employ. Changing your diet or shampoo won't reverse genetics but it can help to regulate your sebum production, and for many that does the trick.

Greasy hair is sometimes considered to come in two different strains: one where the hair is greasy from roots to ends, with the presence of an oily scalp; the other with oily scalp and roots but with dry hair from beyond the roots to the ends. The shampoo and conditioner below are beneficial to both types, while the scalp rub is targeted at the latter.

Garden spa

Phytochemicals beneficial to an oily scalp and greasy hair can be found in bay leaves, burdock root, yarrow, chamomile, calendula,

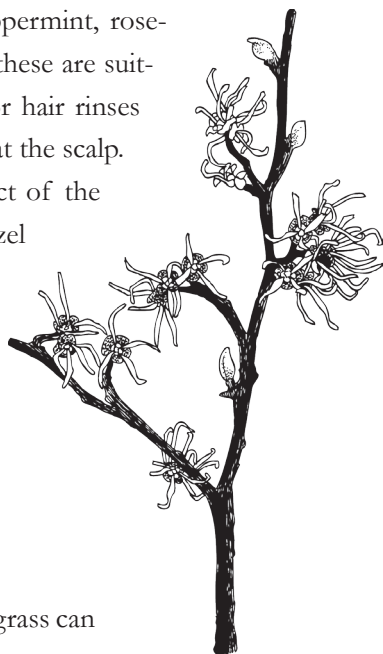
lemon balm, lavender, horsetail, peppermint, rosemary, sage, thyme and nettle. All of these are suitable for decoctions and infusions for hair rinses and also for pastes and lotions to treat the scalp.

The astringent benefits of the extract of the bark, leaf or flower of witch hazel should not be overlooked either.

Bergamot, geranium, juniper, cypress and eucalyptus can all be used to enhance decoctions, and in their essential-oil form too.

Kitchen spa

Lemon juice and peel and also lemongrass can strip the oils from hair. Use sparingly so as not to damage the cuticle. It's best to use these in a shampoo or a conditioner to extract the full benefit while minimising the risk of damage. Apple cider vinegar is great to tone the scalp and remove some oil from hair strands. What you eat can help too: zinc-rich foods help to control sebum production, but note that zinc requires vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) for proper absorption. Both are found in oats. As well as vitamin B6, vitamin B2 is involved in regulating sebum production. Cereals are a good source of these vitamins, and if you switch to soya or non-dairy milk it can help to reduce the hormones that activate sebum. Read more about this in the section on greasy skin (see page 111).



Witch hazel

Witch hazel extract

Traditionally witch hazel extract was obtained by steaming the twigs of the *hamamelis* shrub, but its leaves and flowers can also be used to extract gallic acid, kaempferol, quercetin, catechins, proanthocyanidins and eugenol, as well as the plant's tannin content. These are effective as tonics, anti-inflammatories, antiseptics and astringents.

Ingredients

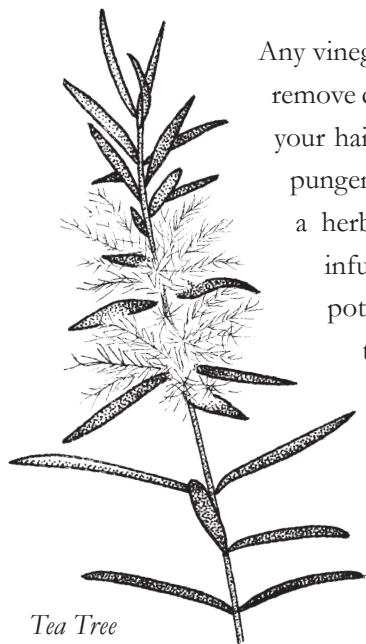
- Water
- Witch hazel plant (*Hamamelis virginiana* and varieties)

Method

Gather some sprigs and twigs of witch hazel. They are more potent when flowering and just after flowering. Chop sprigs and twigs up into rough sections and then slice lengthways. Put the plant parts in a saucepan with a tight lid, cover with plenty of water and bring to a boil. Cover the saucepan and then simmer for a good 6 hours. You may need to add water occasionally if steam is escaping. Remove from the heat and allow to cool for 1 hour. Strain to remove the solids and decant the liquid into clean bottles or containers with tops. Pure extract will keep for one week at room temperature or several months if kept refrigerated.

Witch hazel extract can also be used as a skin toner, to soothe rashes and itching, to treat pimples, reduce eye bags and bruises and in treatments for varicose veins and haemorrhoids.

Tea tree and peppermint-infused apple cider scalp rub



Tea Tree

Any vinegar (malt, wine or apple cider) will help remove dirt, mineral and product build-up from your hair, but apple cider vinegar is often less pungent and sometimes more potent. Adding a herb like peppermint and allowing it to infuse in the vinegar will boost cleansing potential and add extra phytochemicals to counter the greasy condition. The addition of 10 shakes of tea tree essential oil to every cup of infused vinegar will improve scalp circulation and cleanse follicles and sebum glands. The peppermint adds a pleasant vitality to the experience.

Yarrow and lemon shampoo

Brew a strong cup of yarrow tea (steep the aerial parts for 20 minutes and then strain to remove the solids) and pour it into a medium-sized bowl. Squeeze in the juice of half a small lemon and add 1 cup of castile soap. Stir well. Decant into a clean storage bottle. Shake well before each application. Rinse well after shampooing.

Bay leaf and burdock root conditioner

In a blender, blitz ½ cup of apple cider vinegar, 3 tablespoons of castile soap, 1 tablespoon of vegetable glycerine, ½ cup of chopped burdock root and ⅓ cup of whole bay leaves. Massage in and leave for 25 minutes. Rinse with a cooled herbal tea that works with your hair colour (see page 67).



Burdock

HAIR PROBLEMS

UNRULY HAIR

Unruly is a term used to describe hair that cannot be easily styled, generally relating to frizziness or tangling but sometimes referring to coarse hair or extremely fine hair. Often such hair needs intense conditioning to nourish it, and oil or protein treatments to repair structural damage.

FRIZZY HAIR

There are several factors that can contribute to the development of frizzy hair, the weather being the prime culprit. Both summer humidity and dry winter air can easily cause frizz. Vigorous towel drying after shampooing can cause static, which leads to frizz too. Hairdryers and heated hairstyling equipment diminish hair's natural moisture, as do central heating and indoor environments. Commercial anti-frizz shampoos contain oils and proteins with the aim of coating individual hair strands and sealing the cuticle (outer layer of hair) against further damage.

FLY-AWAY HAIR

Those rogue strands are also often a result of heated indoor air, hairstyling equipment and other contributing factors mentioned above as causes of frizz. But for the most part fly-away hair is the result of static cling. A spritz of witch hazel extract can often solve this. It also helps to hydrate hair shafts and reduce excess sebum at the follicle.

Jasmine oil

Commercially available jasmine hair oil is simply a flower-infused oil. It can tame frizz and prevent fly-away hair. It protects hair from heat styling and the worst of the elements. It also helps scalp health and strengthens the roots of your hair. It is traditionally used to make hair stronger, less prone to static and breakage and generally more manageable, with the bonus of adding shine and fragrance too. To make a home-made jasmine-infused oil, simply infuse the flowers in oil for a week on a sunny window ledge, or chop the jasmine finely and add to hot oil 1 hour before treatment.

The biz overnight anti-frizz serum

Coconut oil is renowned in natural beauty for its ability to lubricate the hair shaft and replenish the cuticle. Mix 1 tablespoon of coconut oil with 1 tablespoon of jasmine-infused oil. Add 2 shakes of jasmine essential oil. Comb through and leave overnight. A shower cap will save the pillow. Rinse well in the morning.

The anti-frizz spritz

Add 2 shakes each of geranium, jasmine and rose essential oils to 100ml of witch hazel extract in a spray bottle. This will help knock the static out of fly-away hair and balance the hydration of frizzy hair. It smells so nice that even the bride of Frankenstein would get a second date.

BRITTLE HAIR

When the cuticle is damaged (generally by heat or harsh products but sometimes because of a vitamin deficiency, oxygen deprivation or natural ageing) the moisture from the cortex can evaporate, leaving a dried-out shaft prone to breakage because it lacks that subtle elasticity. All the natural treatments for unmanageable hair will help restore the elasticity and help seal the cortex. Eating foods that contain calcium, iron, zinc, copper and iodine can help to maintain cuticle health, but when it comes to your eating habits, do remember that a diet high in saturated fats and trans-fatty acids can inhibit oxygenation of the scalp and contribute to hair problems, including breakage.

Vitamin C fizzy shampoo

Vitamin C helps our bodies and the blood vessels in our scalps to process non-heme iron (the sort derived from vegetables) and also to form structural fibres, including hair. A crushed fizzy vitamin C tablet in 1 tablespoon of liquid castile soap and 2 tablespoons of green tea, massaged into the scalp and combed through your hair, will boost the vitality of your hair. Rinse with lukewarm water after 5–10 minutes.

TANGLES AND KNOTS

Sometimes this is down to not combing after activity that causes sweat and friction in the hair (such as a hike by the ocean, a gym workout or great sex). Other times it can be down to the water you wash and rinse your hair with. Hard water, the type with a lot of mineral deposits in it (you will know if your area is affected by how much limescale is on your kettle element), can dehydrate hair and diminish its elasticity, while also making it more prone to retaining dirt and product residue. Such hair will tangle easily and is hard to brush. Boiling water and letting it sit overnight can soften it. Sometimes mineral particles will float to the top or drop to the bottom, you can scoop those out, or siphon off the good stuff. Filter jugs are useful for this too.

Tangle-not conditioner

In a medium saucepan, put 1/3 cup of marshmallow root, 1/3 cup of soapwort and 2 cups of water. Cover and bring to the boil for 10 minutes. In a separate saucepan, warm together 1/3 cup each of olive oil, coconut oil and emulsifying wax. Strain the decoction to remove the solids, then whisk the oil and decoction together to get a lotion consistency. Use as a detangle soak and conditioning treatment.

DAMAGED HAIR

Hair is easily damaged by the heat of a hairdryer, the sun, the harsh chemicals in some products or even by the simple act of combing. Damaged hair looks dull, tangles easily, is difficult to style, becomes brittle and breaks. Many of the other treatments in this chapter will also benefit and nourish damaged hair. The treatments for frizzy or fly-away hair will repair hair too. In general, hot-oil and food masks tend to work best as dedicated treatments.

Garden spa

Phytochemicals that nourish the hair shaft, stimulate the follicle and encourage fresh growth and repair are found in comfrey leaf and root, burdock root, the foliage of lavender and rosemary, and the ever-helpful flowers of chamomile and calendula. Any of these, fresh or dried, can be infused in oil, brewed as a tea-rinse or used in a home conditioner, shampoo or vinegar rinse. A tablespoon or two of any of these will boost any hair mask.

Kitchen spa

Foods rich in vitamins A, C and E can accelerate the hair-repair process, as can those containing biotin, choline, pantothenic acid, inositol and zinc. But your kitchen can yield real treasure for damage limitation and nourishing repair. Why not make a hair mask from the healing foodstuffs in your fridge and pantry? The best ingredients for hair masks have traditionally been eggs, mayonnaise, banana, avocado, yoghurt and coconut milk. Apply a single serving or combine two to form a consistency that will coat

your hair. Leave on for at least 10 minutes, then rinse and pat dry with a towel. Boost the treatment with a beer, apple cider vinegar or a herbal-tea rinse.

Hot-oil treatments for damaged hair

Many standard kitchen oils are easily infused with herbs beneficial to hair health. Simply warm to above room temperature or to a temperature you prefer (the term hot can be misleading, as it is more therapeutically warm than scalding). 15–30 minutes is a good timescale for a home treatment, but hot oils can be left in even after the ‘heat’ goes out, for a more intense treatment – for several hours or even overnight. Oils particularly good for damaged hair and suitable for hot-oil treatments include:

- avocado oil
- coconut oil
- sweet almond oil
- extra virgin olive oil

Quick-fix styling-heat damage mask

Apply a banana and coconut milk hair mask (mash the banana with a little milk to a mask consistency or purée to a lotion consistency). Rinse after 20 minutes with cooled jasmine tea/infusion or beer.

Sun-damage mask

Make an aloe vera and avocado hair mask (in a mortar and pestle combine the fruit pulp and squeezed-out aloe sap) and leave on for at least 20 minutes. Rinse with chamomile tea for light hair and sage tea for darker hair.

Product-damage hair oil

Prepare a comfrey and hibiscus flower-infused hot-oil treatment (infuse the plant parts for a week on a sunny window ledge or finely chop the comfrey foliage and hibiscus flowers and add them to hot oil 1 hour before treatment). You can leave this in overnight (a shower cap will save the pillow), or wash it out with a shampoo suited to your hair colour. Rinse with lavender and green tea.



Comfrey

Post-dye hair treatment

Enjoy a 15-minute coconut hot-oil treatment (the oil can be infused with a herb that works with your hair colour: see individual hair colour entries). Rinse with beer or apple cider vinegar.

SPLIT ENDS/TRICHOPTILOSIS

Trichoptilosis, aka split ends, is a condition where the protective cuticle at the end of an individual hair strand is damaged, causing the hair to split into two or more strands. It is not self-limiting; there is no agent of repair other than triggering regeneration by trimming the hair above the point to which the damage extends.

Split ends are often a consequence of conventional haircare treatments – the heat from hairdryers, curling tongs and straighteners can damage the cuticle and cause splitting. Hair dyes can do similar damage. Some shampoos can strip hair of its protective oils and, with repeated use, can undermine hair health.

SOME HELPFUL HAIRSTYLING RECIPES

Flax hair gel

The word *flax* comes from the Old English *flax*, via Indo-European roots that mean to plait or to twist, hinting at the plant's connection to linen/fibre, but the boiled-up seeds make a great gloop or gel that can stop hair twisting out of place. Simply boil 3 tablespoons of flaxseed in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water and allow to sit for 30 minutes before straining to remove the seeds. This keeps well in an airtight jar for several days. Flaxseed is often sold under the name linseed. (Never use linseed oil from a hardware store – it's treated for polishing furniture!)