
Smudging and Cleansing with Herbs

When I smell sage burning I feel something familiar, and you may too. Our very early ancestors used sage and other herbs and plants to cleanse, and bring balance back into their lives. Smudging is done in preparation for any ceremony or medicine work. Smudging daily can be an act of self-blessing and a remembrance of spiritual responsibility.

Some of the more common plants used for smudging are as follows.

- Pine: Purifies, calms, renews. The needles are used. East on the medicine wheel.
- Cedar: Clears and evokes, also brings visions. Burned in cut pieces or small branches, be careful many people are allergic. South or West on the medicine wheel.
- Sage: The purifier, disperser of unwanted energy. Uses bundled or loose. West on the medicine wheel.
- Lavender: Purifies, calms. The dried flowers are used. North on the medicine wheel.
- Sweet grass: The blessing herb, bringer of sweetness and grace. Use bundled or loose. North on the medicine wheel.

You can find many of the plants or smudge sticks easily today, either online, health food stores or better yet in your own backyard. I like to use the loose herbs best, I find that smudge sticks burn a long time, and are harder to put out making them dangerous. You can use the herbs you have in the garden, or that grows in the wild, by letting it dry completely it works just fine.

Use a small ceramic bowl, or abalone shell to place herb sage in. I find a teaspoon of a few different plants is usually enough. Using your fingers grind it till it's fine. Then shape it into a cone, and using a lighter light it. You don't need a large amount of smoke to cleanse with it's all about the intent. The way the smudge does or does not burn gives indications of the energies present, so blowing on smudge herbs to encourage their ignition is not recommended.

To cleanse with sage, start to cleanse your hands first. I like to put my bowl down, and rub my hands together in the smoke, much like it is running water and you are washing your hands. Be open to the spirits, and say out loud if you wish or to yourself, to cleanse yourself of any ill will, or anything that no longer serves you, now pick up the bowl and lift up your arm and cleanse under each arm, using a cupped hand move the smoke to cleanse your upper head, than cleanse your heart, than your abdomen, than move down and cleanse your legs, and the bottom of your feet. I like to continue and cleanse the whole body by moving the sage around my body, and cleanse my shoulders, and upper back where I tend to carry my stress. Once you're done with the body place your hands on the Earth or floor if indoors, breathe and give thanks to the Earth and all being, feel this thankfulness, this is an offering.

Such a wonderful little ceremony, I try to do this every morning. You can also cleanse other people in the same way you cleansed yourself, make sure you cleanse yourself first before cleansing anybody else, this helps rid yourself of ego allowing spirit to flow through you.

