

HERBCLIP

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· Curanderismo
· Ethnobotany

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Arellano, Anselm. New Mexico's Healing Tradition: Curanderismo Survives 400 Years. *Herbs for Health*, March/April 1997, pp. 46-52.

This article describes the Hispanic healing tradition of curanderismo, as practiced by the descendants of Hispanic settlers in New Mexico's Mora Valley. The author describes an encounter with Gabrielita Pino, "one of New Mexico's best-known curanderas," and at 91, perhaps the oldest.

Gabrielita's curandera mentor was her grandmother. She learned massage from her father-in-law and became a folk chiropractor, and later a licensed midwife. In fact, Curanderismo includes four specialties: *yerbera* (herbalist), *partera* (midwife), *sobadora* (folk chiropractor), and *curandera espiritual* (spiritual healer). With her broad range of knowledge, Gabrielita is considered a *curandera total*.

Gabrielita's curandera kit is filled with the 23 herbs and roots she most commonly uses, along with a grinding stone. Every year she begins gathering them on August 12, which she believes is consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. She charges between \$1 and \$5 for her treatments; poor patients pay nothing, or in kind if they choose. Herbal cures are administered as teas, salves, powders, douches and even baths. The author lists several of the herbs, including *Alhucema* or lavender (*Lavandula* spp.) for childbirth pains and infant colic; *Altamisa* or mountain mugwort (*Artemisia franserioides*) for colds and flu, unsettled stomach, and fever; *Anil del muerto* or goldweed (*Verbesina encelioides*) for hemorrhoids, ulcers, and digestive disorders; *Cota* or Hopi tea (*Thelesperma megapotamicum*) for stomach, kidney, and urinary tract maladies; *Coyaya/Escoba de la vibora* or rattlesnake broom (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), for the skin and arthritis, infant colic, and menstrual and menopause problems; *inmortal* or antelope horns (*Asclepias asperula*) for labor pains and respiratory and heart conditions; *malvas* or mallow (*Malva neglecta*) for skin irritations and sore throat; *maravilla* or wild four-o'clock (*Mirabilis multiflora*) to promote weight loss and treat inflamed joints; and *ruda* or rue (*Ruta graveolens*) for earache and tinnitus, and a condition Gabrielita calls *mal aire*.

For the past several years she has been serving as curandera mentor to Virginia Alaniz, a licensed psychotherapist and an acupuncturist and herbalist in-training. "Since no one in my family has expressed an interest in becoming a curandera, I am happy that Virginia has expressed the desire. If I was a good medica, she will be even better." —*Betsy Levy*

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