



# Catnip

(*Nepeta cataria*)

**Common + Folk Names :** Catmint, catnep, nep, catswort, fieldbalm balm, menta del gato

**Planet :** Venus, Moon

**Element :** Water, Air

**Sign :** Libra, Cancer

**Moon Phase :** Dark of the Moon

**Parts used :** Leaf

**Habitat :** Native to Eurasia. Prefers wet, disturbed sites including roadside ditches and stream beds.

**Growing conditions :** Damp soil and full sun.

**Collection :** Collect leaf in the spring before flowering.

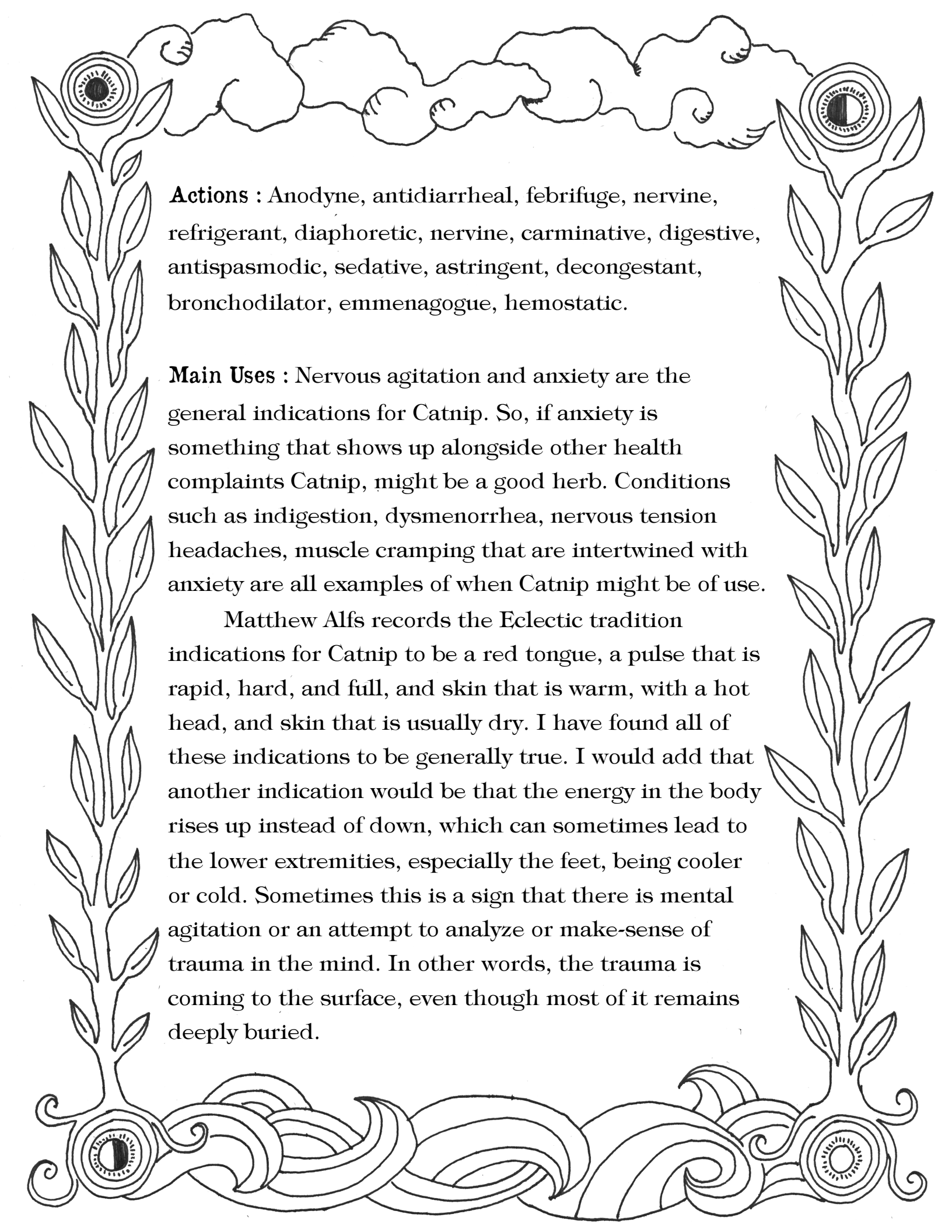
**Flavor :** Pungent, bitter

**Temperature :** Cool

**Moisture :** Dry

**Tissue State :** Tension/Constriction, Cold/Depression, Heat/Excitation.

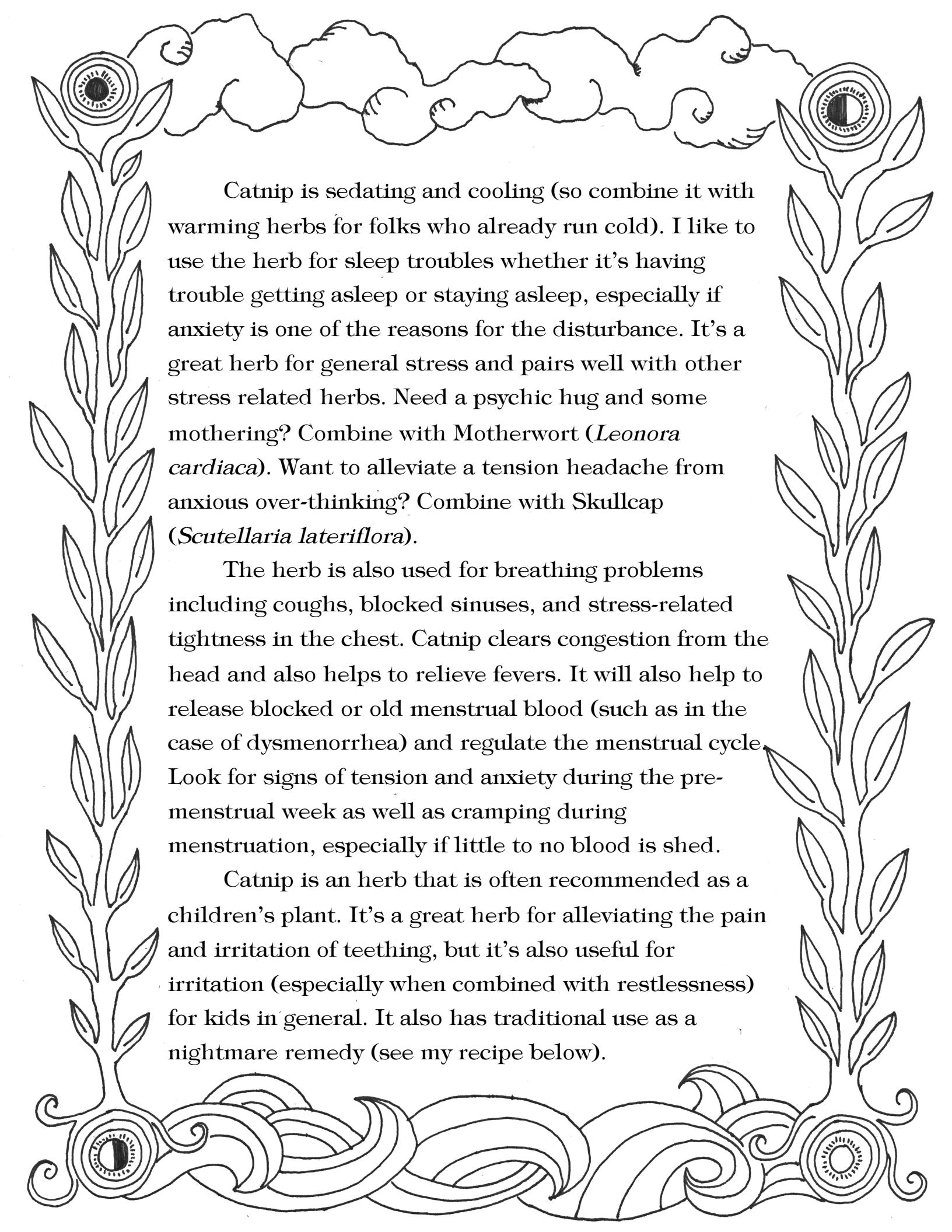
**Constituents :** Calcium, magnesium, chromium, B vitamins, C vitamins, iridoids, volatile oils (citronellol, geraniol, citral, linalool, pulegone, thymol), tannins.



**Actions :** Anodyne, antidiarrheal, febrifuge, nervine, refrigerant, diaphoretic, nervine, carminative, digestive, antispasmodic, sedative, astringent, decongestant, bronchodilator, emmenagogue, hemostatic.

**Main Uses :** Nervous agitation and anxiety are the general indications for Catnip. So, if anxiety is something that shows up alongside other health complaints Catnip, might be a good herb. Conditions such as indigestion, dysmenorrhea, nervous tension headaches, muscle cramping that are intertwined with anxiety are all examples of when Catnip might be of use.

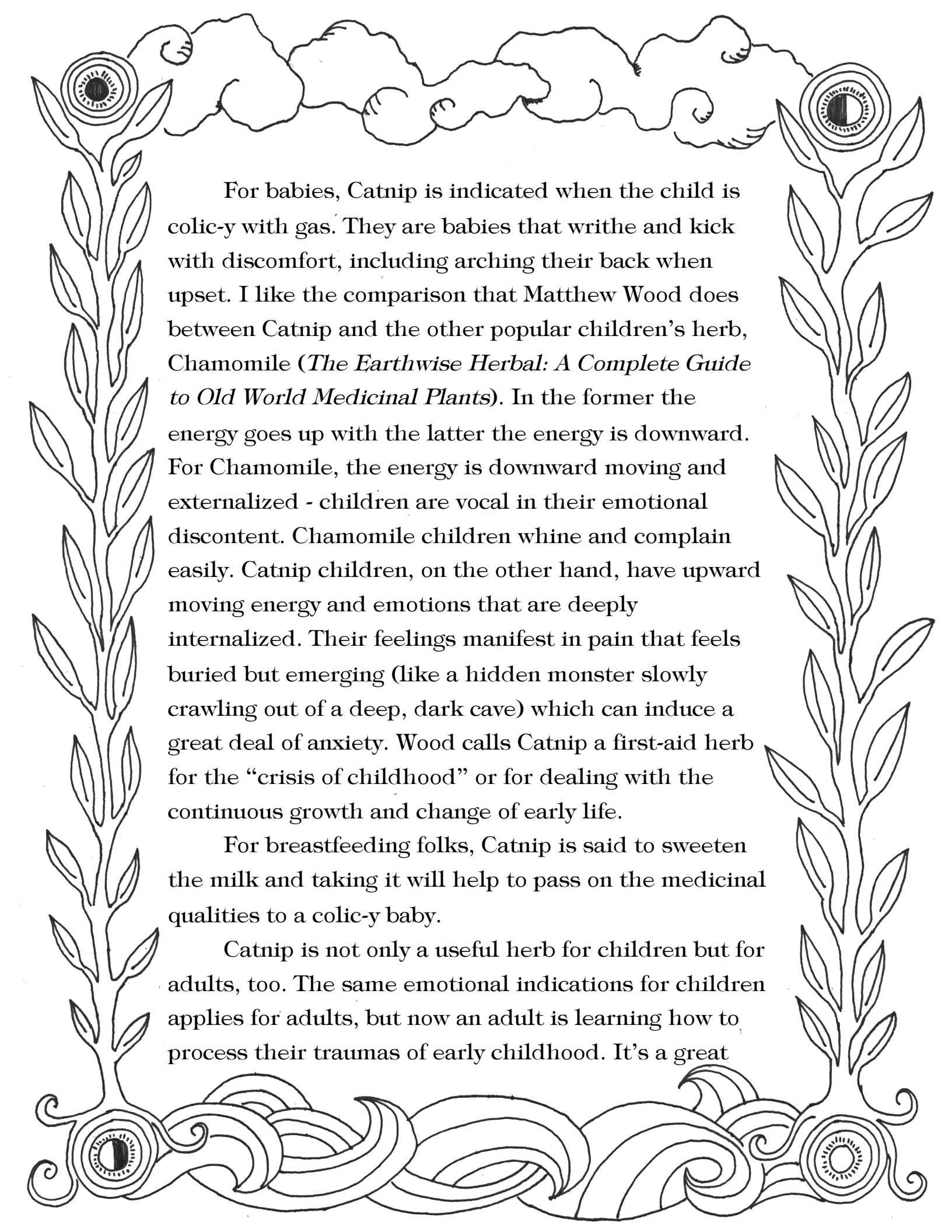
Matthew Alfs records the Eclectic tradition indications for Catnip to be a red tongue, a pulse that is rapid, hard, and full, and skin that is warm, with a hot head, and skin that is usually dry. I have found all of these indications to be generally true. I would add that another indication would be that the energy in the body rises up instead of down, which can sometimes lead to the lower extremities, especially the feet, being cooler or cold. Sometimes this is a sign that there is mental agitation or an attempt to analyze or make-sense of trauma in the mind. In other words, the trauma is coming to the surface, even though most of it remains deeply buried.



Catnip is sedating and cooling (so combine it with warming herbs for folks who already run cold). I like to use the herb for sleep troubles whether it's having trouble getting asleep or staying asleep, especially if anxiety is one of the reasons for the disturbance. It's a great herb for general stress and pairs well with other stress related herbs. Need a psychic hug and some mothering? Combine with Motherwort (*Leonora cardiaca*). Want to alleviate a tension headache from anxious over-thinking? Combine with Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*).

The herb is also used for breathing problems including coughs, blocked sinuses, and stress-related tightness in the chest. Catnip clears congestion from the head and also helps to relieve fevers. It will also help to release blocked or old menstrual blood (such as in the case of dysmenorrhea) and regulate the menstrual cycle. Look for signs of tension and anxiety during the pre-menstrual week as well as cramping during menstruation, especially if little to no blood is shed.

Catnip is an herb that is often recommended as a children's plant. It's a great herb for alleviating the pain and irritation of teething, but it's also useful for irritation (especially when combined with restlessness) for kids in general. It also has traditional use as a nightmare remedy (see my recipe below).

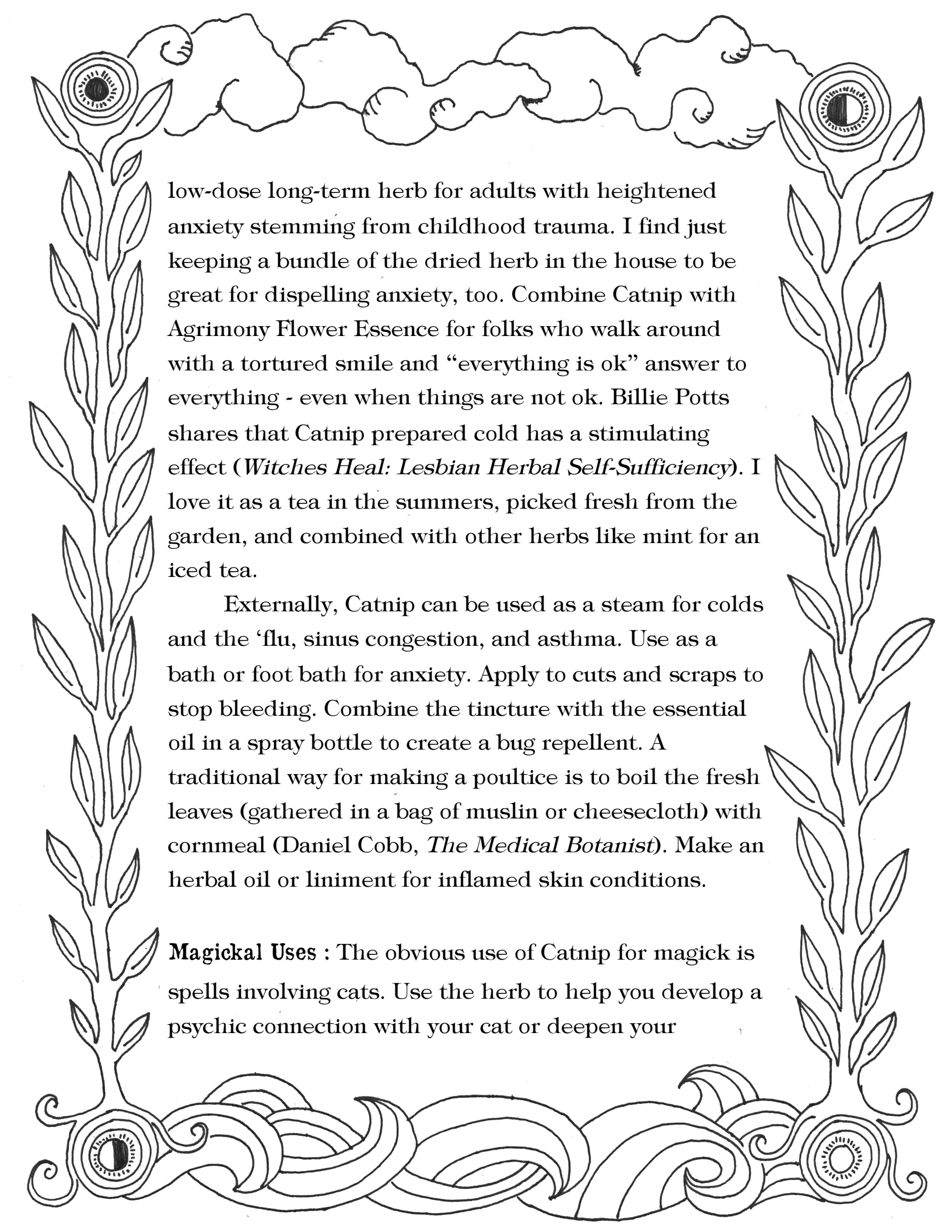
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For babies, Catnip is indicated when the child is colic-y with gas. They are babies that writhe and kick with discomfort, including arching their back when upset. I like the comparison that Matthew Wood does between Catnip and the other popular children's herb, Chamomile (*The Earthwise Herbal: A Complete Guide to Old World Medicinal Plants*). In the former the energy goes up with the latter the energy is downward. For Chamomile, the energy is downward moving and externalized - children are vocal in their emotional discontent. Chamomile children whine and complain easily. Catnip children, on the other hand, have upward moving energy and emotions that are deeply internalized. Their feelings manifest in pain that feels buried but emerging (like a hidden monster slowly crawling out of a deep, dark cave) which can induce a great deal of anxiety. Wood calls Catnip a first-aid herb for the "crisis of childhood" or for dealing with the continuous growth and change of early life.

For breastfeeding folks, Catnip is said to sweeten the milk and taking it will help to pass on the medicinal qualities to a colic-y baby.

Catnip is not only a useful herb for children but for adults, too. The same emotional indications for children applies for adults, but now an adult is learning how to process their traumas of early childhood. It's a great

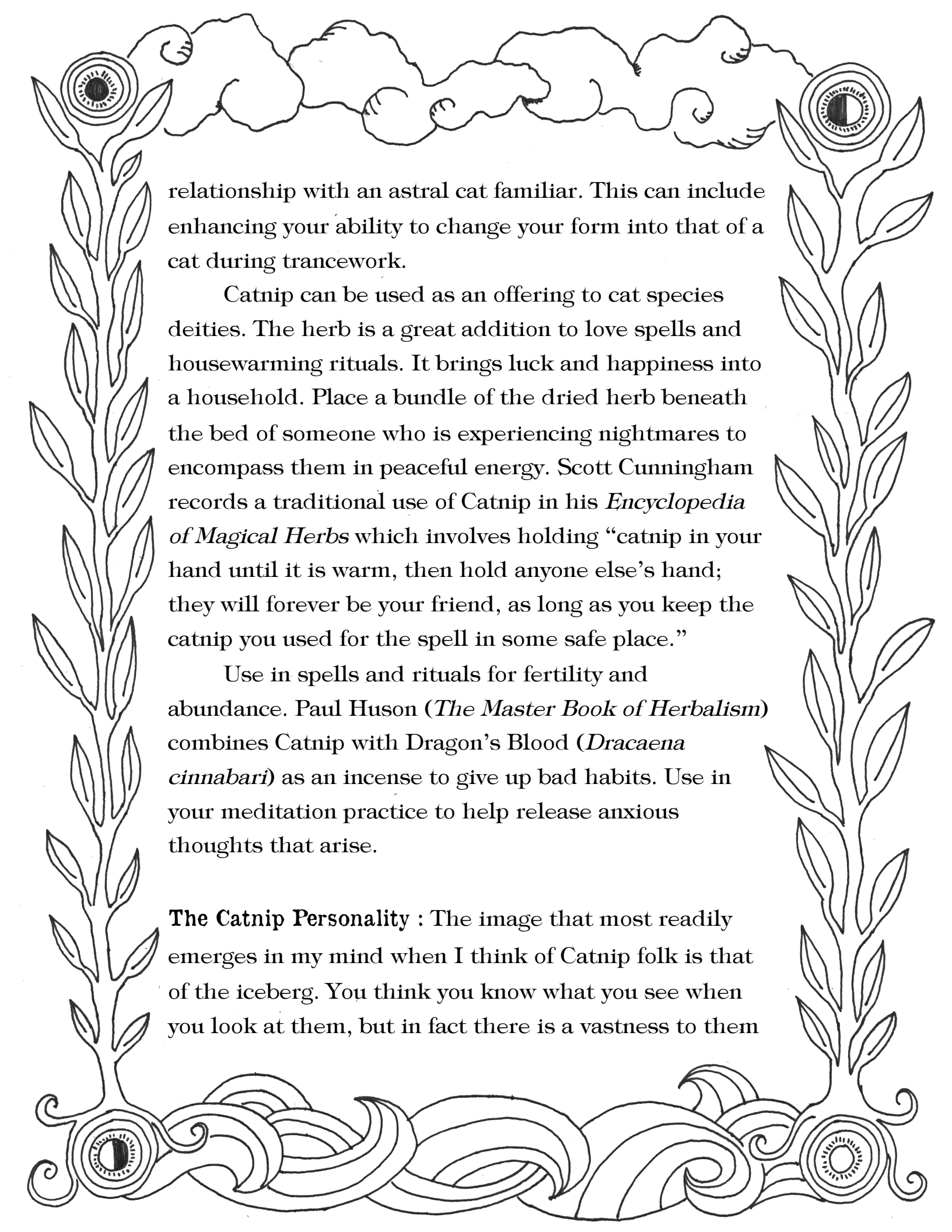




low-dose long-term herb for adults with heightened anxiety stemming from childhood trauma. I find just keeping a bundle of the dried herb in the house to be great for dispelling anxiety, too. Combine Catnip with Agrimony Flower Essence for folks who walk around with a tortured smile and “everything is ok” answer to everything - even when things are not ok. Billie Potts shares that Catnip prepared cold has a stimulating effect (*Witches Heal: Lesbian Herbal Self-Sufficiency*). I love it as a tea in the summers, picked fresh from the garden, and combined with other herbs like mint for an iced tea.

Externally, Catnip can be used as a steam for colds and the ‘flu, sinus congestion, and asthma. Use as a bath or foot bath for anxiety. Apply to cuts and scraps to stop bleeding. Combine the tincture with the essential oil in a spray bottle to create a bug repellent. A traditional way for making a poultice is to boil the fresh leaves (gathered in a bag of muslin or cheesecloth) with cornmeal (Daniel Cobb, *The Medical Botanist*). Make an herbal oil or liniment for inflamed skin conditions.

**Magickal Uses :** The obvious use of Catnip for magick is spells involving cats. Use the herb to help you develop a psychic connection with your cat or deepen your

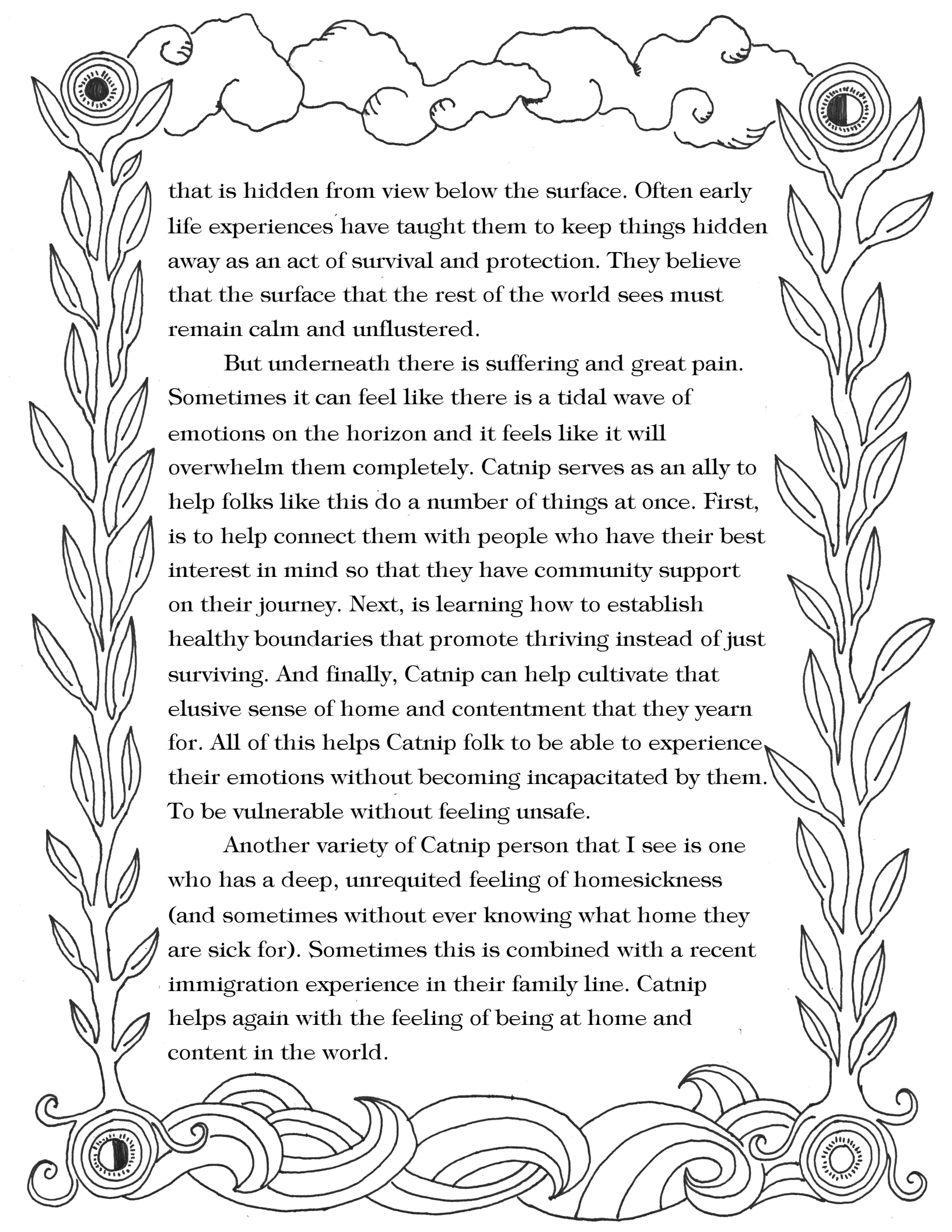


relationship with an astral cat familiar. This can include enhancing your ability to change your form into that of a cat during trancework.

Catnip can be used as an offering to cat species deities. The herb is a great addition to love spells and housewarming rituals. It brings luck and happiness into a household. Place a bundle of the dried herb beneath the bed of someone who is experiencing nightmares to encompass them in peaceful energy. Scott Cunningham records a traditional use of Catnip in his *Encyclopedia of Magical Herbs* which involves holding “catnip in your hand until it is warm, then hold anyone else’s hand; they will forever be your friend, as long as you keep the catnip you used for the spell in some safe place.”

Use in spells and rituals for fertility and abundance. Paul Huson (*The Master Book of Herbalism*) combines Catnip with Dragon’s Blood (*Dracaena cinnabari*) as an incense to give up bad habits. Use in your meditation practice to help release anxious thoughts that arise.

**The Catnip Personality :** The image that most readily emerges in my mind when I think of Catnip folk is that of the iceberg. You think you know what you see when you look at them, but in fact there is a vastness to them

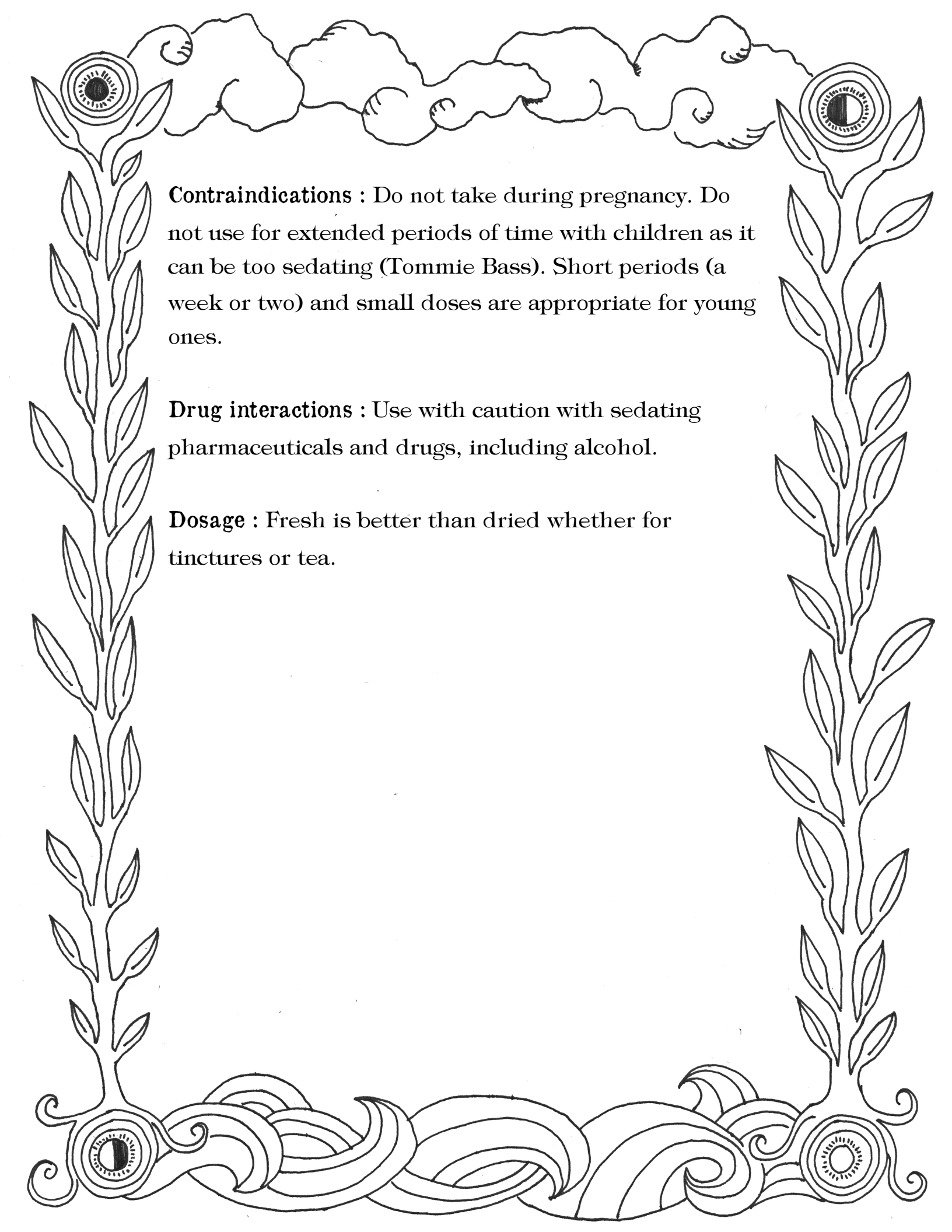
A decorative border surrounds the text. At the top, there are stylized clouds and two circular motifs, each containing a crescent moon and a star. On the left and right sides, there are vertical stems with leaves and circular motifs at the top and bottom. At the bottom, there are stylized waves and two circular motifs, each containing a crescent moon and a star.

that is hidden from view below the surface. Often early life experiences have taught them to keep things hidden away as an act of survival and protection. They believe that the surface that the rest of the world sees must remain calm and unflustered.

But underneath there is suffering and great pain. Sometimes it can feel like there is a tidal wave of emotions on the horizon and it feels like it will overwhelm them completely. Catnip serves as an ally to help folks like this do a number of things at once. First, is to help connect them with people who have their best interest in mind so that they have community support on their journey. Next, is learning how to establish healthy boundaries that promote thriving instead of just surviving. And finally, Catnip can help cultivate that elusive sense of home and contentment that they yearn for. All of this helps Catnip folk to be able to experience their emotions without becoming incapacitated by them. To be vulnerable without feeling unsafe.

Another variety of Catnip person that I see is one who has a deep, unrequited feeling of homesickness (and sometimes without ever knowing what home they are sick for). Sometimes this is combined with a recent immigration experience in their family line. Catnip helps again with the feeling of being at home and content in the world.

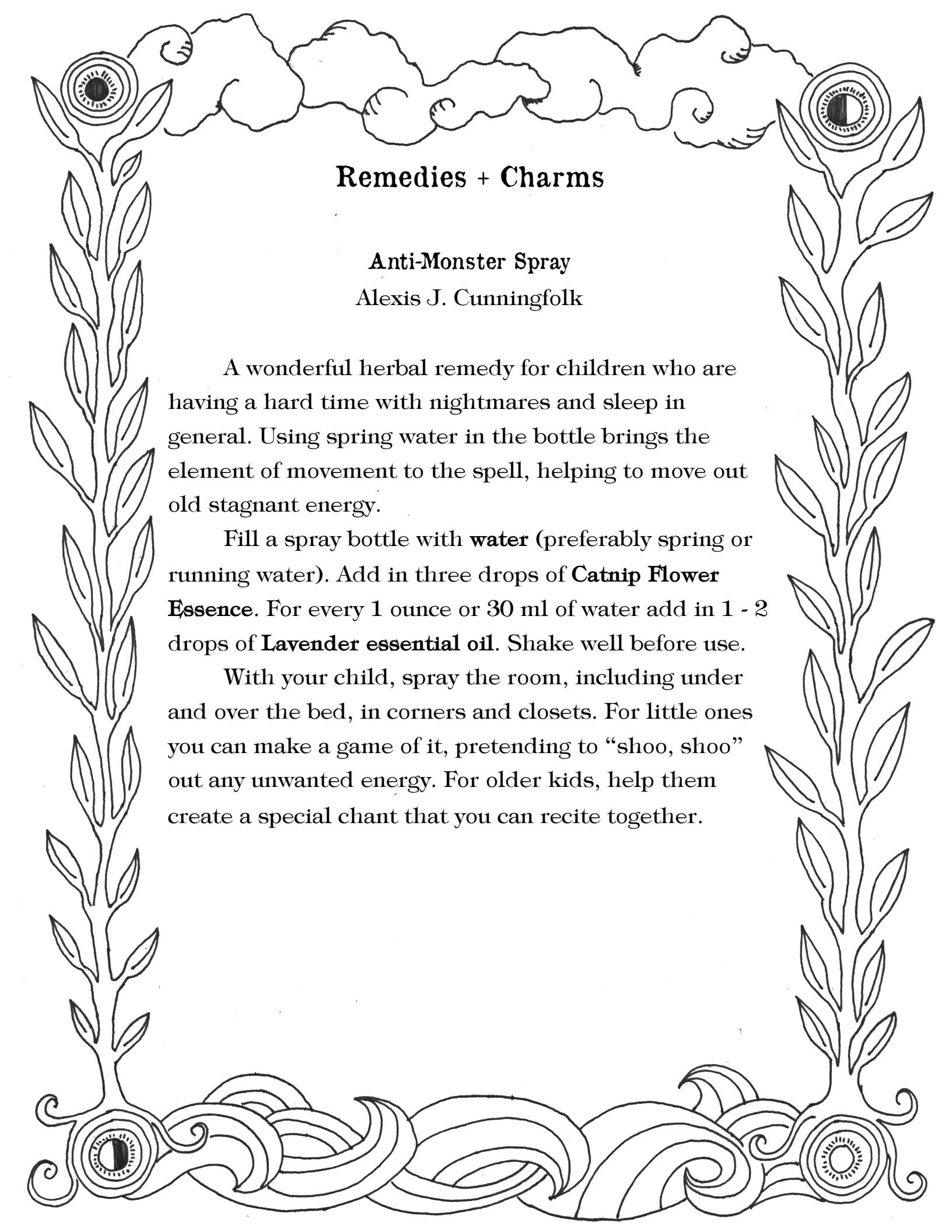




**Contraindications :** Do not take during pregnancy. Do not use for extended periods of time with children as it can be too sedating (Tommie Bass). Short periods (a week or two) and small doses are appropriate for young ones.

**Drug interactions :** Use with caution with sedating pharmaceuticals and drugs, including alcohol.

**Dosage :** Fresh is better than dried whether for tinctures or tea.



## Remedies + Charms

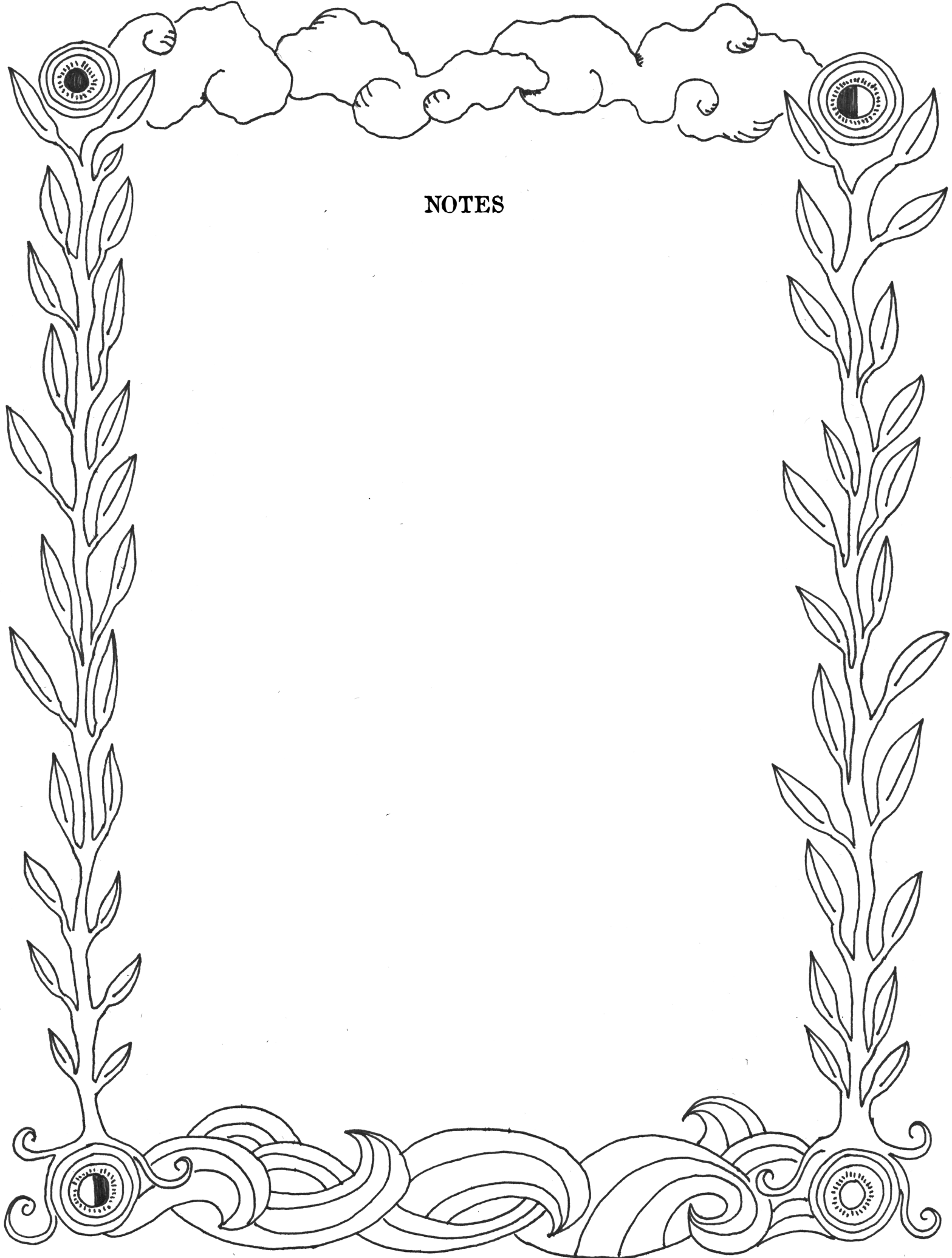
### Anti-Monster Spray

Alexis J. Cunningfolk

A wonderful herbal remedy for children who are having a hard time with nightmares and sleep in general. Using spring water in the bottle brings the element of movement to the spell, helping to move out old stagnant energy.

Fill a spray bottle with **water** (preferably spring or running water). Add in three drops of **Catnip Flower Essence**. For every 1 ounce or 30 ml of water add in 1 - 2 drops of **Lavender essential oil**. Shake well before use.

With your child, spray the room, including under and over the bed, in corners and closets. For little ones you can make a game of it, pretending to “shoo, shoo” out any unwanted energy. For older kids, help them create a special chant that you can recite together.



NOTES