

# Wild Carrot Study - Final Summary, August 2011

*by Robin Rose Bennett and Mischa Schuler*

## **First, the background:**

During 2009 and 2010 we invited women between the ages of 18 and 50 to take part in a yearlong research project to explore the reliability of *Daucus carota* tincture (made from wild carrot flowers and seeds in 100 proof vodka) when used as a woman's sole method of contraception. Women were welcome to use dried seeds if they preferred. Generally, women were asked to take wild carrot tincture, 15 drops of flower and 15 drops of seed, every 8 hours, 3 times after each occasion of intercourse. The participating women were asked to fill in a monthly menstrual wheel (sample attached) and chart their ovulation (when known), menstruation, times of intercourse, and times of taking wild carrot. There was space for notes, impressions, and any other feedback a woman chose to provide. We asked women to note any time they used another method of contraception in addition to wild carrot. We didn't count those instances in the study data below. We are truly grateful for the help of all the women who participated in helping us gather together this body of knowledge, as well as to the medicine makers who donated their time and skills so that we would have enough tincture for the study.

## **Second, the results:**

30 women participated in the study enough to be counted.

5 women completed the entire year and there were no pregnancies among those women.

The average number of charts per woman participating in the study was 5, not necessarily indicating how long they used carrot, but indicating how many charts we received.

Throughout the study women recorded 731 occasions of intercourse. Of those, we counted 160 instances of intercourse during fertile phases.

There were 9 pregnancies in 160 potentially fertile times of intercourse.

That is: 5.625% pregnancies, which equals a 94.375% contraceptive success rate.

We did not include in that number any times a woman used an additional method of contraception, only wild carrot.

In January 2010 we did a mid-study review and reported 7 pregnancies, but it was actually 6 because as it turned out, one of the women had conceived prior to starting wild carrot seed, right before the study began. Subsequently, there were 3 more pregnancies recorded.

It is enlightening to look at some of the details surrounding these 9 pregnancies, as summarized below. Nearly half of the pregnancies resulted when women were not using wild carrot as suggested in the study guidelines and there were other potential problems in 3 of the 5 instances where the women were using carrot as suggested.

*Summary of pregnancies:*

Pregnancies in women taking wild carrot as suggested

1) 38-year-old woman (mother of 2) –

Conceived during her 4th month of using wild carrot

Notes: she was almost immediately physically uncomfortable, had terribly painful breasts while using this plant. Her cycles got shorter and shorter over the first couple of months. We suggested this might not be the right method for her. She continued to rely on wild carrot and conceived during her 4th month of using wild carrot.

2) 38-year-old woman (mother of 1) –

Conceived during her 4th month of using wild carrot

Notes: She was so fertile she'd had 5 previous unintended pregnancies, all while using contraception: birth control pill, condom (3x), and condom and sponge.

3) 27-year-old woman –

Conceived during her 3rd month of using wild carrot seeds.

Notes: This woman lost her supply of seeds outside for several weeks. They were exposed to rain and all weathers. We don't know how this may have affected them. Additionally, she communicated via a letter that she had been separated from her lover for a month and conceived during their reunion. She shared that she had been feeling into and giving serious thought to the possibility of having a baby with him.

4) 32-year-old woman -

Conceived during her 8th month of participation in the study.

Notes: Used wild carrot for contraception for almost one year before the study started. She had conceived in October 2008 (before the study began) and used herbs to bring about a miscarriage. She began using wild carrot again as a study participant in June 2009. One month after beginning to use wild carrot she noted that she began spotting before and after menstruation, which was unusual for her. Over time, the spotting after menses got longer though no discomfort was associated with it. The spotting could indicate hormonal changes were occurring for her, stemming from wild carrot use.

Additionally, the relationship she was in was in some turmoil at the time of the conception and she suggested that there might have been a mixed intention regarding conception/contraception.

Pregnancies in women not taking wild carrot as suggested

5) 20-year-old-woman

Conceived during the 4th month of the study

Notes: Her cycle ranged from 37-42 days. The day she conceived she did not take wild carrot until 33 hours after intercourse/conception. She had a surgical abortion at 8 weeks and resumed having intercourse during her fertile phase and began relying on wild carrot again the month after that. She reports that the tincture has worked for her whenever she uses it as suggested.

6) 25-year-old-woman –

Conceived during the 5th month of the study

Notes: She took wild carrot later than instructed, and had highly irregular cycles and 4 previous unintended pregnancies, 2 using fertility awareness method, and 2 using no contraception.

7) 31-year-old-woman (mother of 1) –

Conceived during the 6th month of the study.

Notes: She used wild carrot successfully for 1 year (before and during the study). Previous to that, she had had 4 unintended pregnancies, 2 using condoms, 1 using the birth control pill, and 1 without contraception. The pregnancy during the study resulted when wild carrot wasn't taken until 22 hours after intercourse, and she notes she also didn't take a 3rd dose after that fertilizing intercourse.

8) 31-year-old-woman -

Conceived during her 7th month of using wild carrot

Notes: For six months she consistently had intercourse during ovulation and used wild carrot as instructed. The 7th month she waited 3 days before taking wild carrot after intercourse during ovulation.

## Pregnancy in woman who we don't know if she took wild carrot as suggested

9) 27-year-old-woman -

Notes: wrote to us that she conceived during her 6th month of using wild carrot tincture. We don't know when she took wild carrot relative to this conception, as we have no chart for that month. For the first five months she had taken wild carrot 3 times, every 12 hours after potentially fertilizing intercourse. Prior to using carrot, her cycles started every 26-30 days, in her words, "usually pretty regular at 28 days". The first month after beginning to use carrot, her cycle ran 2 weeks later than usual. Whether or not this was caused by carrot, we're not sure. She speculated it could be carrot, stress, or travel.

One of the women who completed the entire study got married and she and her husband decided they were open to conceive "if it happened" and stopped using wild carrot seeds. She became pregnant about one and a half months later and is going to have her baby in September 2011. During the 9th month of the study, she had switched to using seeds and found them stronger, yet less pleasant to use and therefore, she forgot them more often, but did always use them during her fertile cycle.

According to the American Pregnancy Association women can expect to conceive 85% of the time if they have unprotected intercourse over the course of one year. This statistic seems suspect because we don't know how many times they are having sex, nor how many times during their actual fertile phase. We measured the fertile cycle (when a woman wasn't sure of her ovulation) by counting 4-5 days prior to our best guess at her ovulation and up to 3 days after, based on her cycle as revealed in her charts.

### **Our gleanings:**

All nine pregnancies that resulted confirm our general hypotheses so far, seven of them very clearly, and the other two suggest somewhat that:

Women must use the wild carrot in a timely way (approx 8 hours after intercourse.)

Wild carrot is not to be solely relied on after coming off of hormonal medications until cycles are re-regulated for at least three months. Highly fertile women may need to use a combination of methods.

Women who become physically uncomfortable while using wild carrot or who experience menstrual cycle changes should not rely on carrot as a contraceptive.

Intention matters.

Specifically, the first pregnancy affirms our thought that any woman who has a negative physical reaction to the seeds or tinctures should not use them for this purpose. The second woman was highly fertile, suggesting that women who get pregnant easily using other forms of contraception will be at risk using this method too, and will probably do best using a combination of methods. The third conception has a wild card unknown of her seeds getting seriously exposed to the elements and a mixed intention.

The reasons for the fourth conception are not as clear. There were slight cycle changes noted. The fifth pregnancy resulted when there was a serious delay before taking wild carrot. The sixth woman had highly irregular cycles and took carrot late and was highly fertile. The seventh woman waited 22 hours till she took wild carrot after conception. The eighth woman waited 3 days to take wild carrot after conception. The ninth woman didn't provide us with a chart for the month she conceived but her cycle did immediately change upon starting to use wild carrot, backing up our caution.

### **In conclusion:**

Our conclusion is that wild carrot is a wonderful method of contraception for some women, but not for everyone, and in some circumstances, but not all. It has a high success rate when used in a timely way and with clear intention. We do not suggest relying on wild carrot for women who are conflicted about having a baby, taking hormonal medications, who are lactating and don't yet have a regular cycle, or who are recently off the pill. It is contraindicated in those circumstances. In our opinion it is also contraindicated for any woman who experiences rapid changes in her menstrual cycle or breast tenderness when taking wild carrot.

We encourage women, especially those new to wild carrot, to proceed with careful attention. If you feel uncertain, feel free to use a condom while you are getting to know how wild carrot and your body fit together.

We believe that wild carrot works well with clear intentionality around what we are doing with our fertility. Every time we turn to the wild carrot plant for guidance this is what she tells us: "I can help you hold a pregnancy. I can help you release a potential pregnancy. The choice is yours."

Fertility is generated during lovemaking and we can choose how to direct it, what we want it to feed and generate. When one is a fertile (young) woman, the natural tendency is to create a new human being. If that is not what you want, it is vital to choose what you do want. This is true co-creative empowerment. It is important to include your partner in this discussion, too.

The longest history of known use of the plant as a contraceptive is based on the use of the seeds. Wild carrot was originally used in seed form in China and India over 2000 years ago. If you wish to use wild carrot seeds, purchase them from a reliable source or harvest them in the fall when they are fully formed, green and/or freshly turned brown, and store them in a paper bag.

### **SUGGESTED WILD CARROT DOSES:**

Approximately 8 hours after intercourse, either chew one teaspoon of seeds (most women find this to be the least pleasant way of taking wild carrot) OR grind up one teaspoon of seeds in a coffee grinder set aside for herbs, and do one of the following:

Stir the ground seed into water and drink it

Roll the ground seed into a honey ball and take it

Roll the ground seed into a ball with nut butter (peanut, almond, etc). It is possible that the fat content in the nut butter can aid the hormonal activity of carrot in our wombs. Several women have reported that they enjoy using the seeds this way.

We suggest grinding no more than a one week supply of wild carrot seed at a time, to ensure freshness and potency. Powdered seed, by itself or in any preparation should be stored in an airtight container such as a jar or a tin.

If you are having intercourse during your fertile phase, we suggest repeating the dosage of wild carrot (seeds or tincture) approximately 8 hours apart. Pay attention to sensations in your body and intuition regarding how many subsequent doses of wild carrot you take.

If you are using tincture, we recommend 15 drops of flower and 15 drops of seed in water per dose.

Open questions remain regarding whether wild carrot needs to be used sparingly, rather than continuously and whether wild carrot is reliable as a contraceptive when a woman has highly irregular cycles, or is still nursing, yet has resumed her monthly cycle. Any babies that have been conceived while a woman was taking wild carrot (as suggested or not) have been born healthy.

Our opinion is that other methods are as good as wild carrot, but that none is better. If you are crystal clear with carrot she responds crystal clearly. If you are ambivalent, then anything goes. She can help you hold life and she can help you release potential life. But it has to be your decision. It isn't just done for you. You (and your partner) need to be conscious. Becoming more and more familiar with your body's fertility signs (fertile mucous, breast changes, energy, mood) is part of the beauty of allying with wild carrot for natural, conscious contraception.

Wild carrot is powerful, playful, and alive and connected to our 2nd chakra and our sexuality. She is a shape shifter. Robin has perceived her as a spinning orange mandala. Wild carrot deals with the greatest energies in the world, sex, life, and death, and yet, this plant is playful and uplifting. We hope you will want get to know her better. She is a profound teacher and healer.

