Listening to Plants

By

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Abstract

This research investigates connections between sensory alteration, pleasure, resistance and healing through a land-focused art practice in collaboration with organic materials. Through multisensory installations, murals, sculptures, and texts, my work engages with the audience, recontextualizing notions of healing, embodiment, and land. This art practice is influenced by new materiality, phenomenology, spirituality, and science. The practice is further informed by contemporary artists who work with herbology and healing.

With this thesis, I aim to explain why working with plants matters. I investigate ways for art to become medicine. I reflect on how I can ethically engage with the land as a settler. I explore how this work is intended to be viewed. Embodiment and inter-species collaboration inform my practice, and I explain how this research shapes my art today.

The objective of this work is to encourage space for healing to become a social or communal practice engaged in a conversation around artmaking. By contributing to a community in this way, I ask viewers to consider what creative healing could mean for them, and how they might imagine this practice themselves.

Land Acknowledgement

This land is the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people. It has become customary to take a moment to acknowledge this, especially when speaking to a group.

I am acknowledging a history of a land I identify as a settler on and people I do not share ancestry with. With this in mind, resolving this history may never be a topic on which I can speak with full understanding, but it is my feeling that these words are not enough to reconcile a history which feels unresolvable.

I am lucky to know this land and the plants that grow here. I am deeply grateful to have been raised in Canada and to have experienced its beauty. In my gratitude, I do work to both decolonize my mind and actions, as well as undo the damage done specifically to the land itself.

I would ask that the reader take time here to reflect on how they might practice making a land acknowledgement into a concrete gesture in support of and solidarity with the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people, as well as the land of Turtle Island.

Introduction

The following thesis is in accompaniment of my art practice. The objective of the text is to give the reader a clear understanding of the methodologies and context that contribute to the work.

The text is structured in four parts. The first section introduces my research questions. Here, I explain the general trajectory of my work and suggest overarching themes. The second is dedicated to orienting the reader to my art through descriptions of installations and works. In this section, the works can be read comparatively, such that each work contributes to the other. In the third section, I contextualize my practice within the field of contemporary art.

In order to arrange references and discussions topically, the third section is further organized into the subsections: resistance, sensory alteration, land as context and process, narrative, listening to plants, making-with and new materiality, and what art can do healing and what medicine can do art? In this section, I will explore the work of Johanna Hedva, Lygia Clark, Gina Badger, Cease Wyss, Mel Chin, Laura Wee Lay Laq, and Christi Belcourt. I will also discuss the texts “Sick Woman Theory” by Johanna Hedva, *Caliban and the Witch* by Silvia Federici, “Land as Pedagogy” by Leanne Simpson, *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Jonathen Wohlleben, *The Botany of Desire* by Michael Pollan, *Vibrant Matter* by Jane Bennet, and *Staying with the Trouble* by Donna Haraway.

I conclude my findings in the fourth section by reflecting on my research. Here I explain how my understanding of the work changes as my practice grows, and how I hope to realize new intentions with future artworks. With these combined strategies, I hope to give the reader a fulsome understanding of both the spirit and context of my work.

Section 1: Methodology

My art consists of immersive, multisensory installations from sculptural objects and paintings made of herbal medicines, as well as accompanying bodies of text exploring the study and practice of herbalism. These works are installed with illustrations of plant-like figures and handwriting woven throughout to indicate the work's interconnectivity.

My research is phenomenological and sympoetic, driven by an intentional, but not always locatable, negotiation between my senses, consciousness, and bioregion. Here my role as an artist is changed to being one influence among many including plants, bacteria, animals and humans.

I have focused my work on the following questions: *what medicine can do the work of art ow can art be medicine? How does art heal us? How can making art become a way to resist capitalist institutions and how does that resistance heal us? What can we learn from plants, how can we learn from plants to give and to grow? How do we heal our relationship with the earth and each other? Can we change our relationship with consumption to be sustainable and healing?*

These questions identify three approaches to research: art as healing, healing as resistance, and plants as teachers. For the remainder of this text, there will be further discussion of these approaches through the reflection of my intentions and research questions individually.

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Section 2: Descriptions of Art

In this section, to demonstrate an overview of my work, I describe two recent installations that illustrate the evolution of my research through art. The first, *Elderberry Forest*, is a large-scale mural painted with herbal syrups and accompanying sculptures. The second, *The Candle Apothecary*, is an installation focused on the sensation and materiality of creative healing.

Fig. 1: Artemis Feldman, *Elderberry Forest*, 2020. Mixed media.

Elderberry Forest prioritizes the vividly painted eight by twelve-foot mural. The painting is haphazard, yet illustrative, suggesting loosely drawn bushes, shrubs and trees. In front, on untreated, elongated plinths are seven sculptures, all sixteen-ounce glass bottles containing the paints, which are herbal tinctures and syrups.

Fig. 2: Artemis Feldman, *Elderberry Forest*, 2020. Mixed Media.

The painting is the central figure of this work. The sculptures orbit in a loosely symmetrical configuration. Though these works are situated in relation to one another, stylistically, the sculptures appear stark in comparison to the maximalist painting technique.

In the mural, there is a variety of paints used. Some of the paints crystalized, while others bled, sometimes pooling on the floor, making gestures texturally distinct. Layers of paints built one atop the other increase the effect. The bottles themselves are less visually dynamic, each containing a brightly coloured liquid, although some of the bottles are messy and none contain the same quantity of fluid.

Fig. 3: Artemis Feldman, *The Candle Apothecary*, 2020. Mixed media.

The Candle Apothecary is a multisensory installation of untreated plinths, of varying heights and widths, stacked with lit beeswax candles, bottles, and jars of herbs steeping in liquor, vinegar, or honey. Like *Elderberry Forest*, *The Candle Apothecary* includes a wall painting, though smaller and less colourful, which extends itself to cover the plinths. The viewer must walk through the work, always among the art, and surrounded by its clutter.

Each candle and jar contain a different blend of herbs. All these herbs are visible, obscured in beeswax or solvent. Here appearance is not as striking, nor as noticeable as smell. The candles make the smell of beeswax, rose petals, and other burning herbs overpowering. Because each candle is made with a distinct blend, different areas smell distinct from one another. As herbs catch fire, the candles crackle. This sound signifies a change in the scent of specific areas of the room, as different herbs catch fire, releasing their scents as they burn.

Fig. 4: Artemis Feldman, *The Candle Apothecary*, 2020. Mixed media.

The plinths are displayed in several different, unevenly spaced groupings. Repeated marks made on the plinths interrelate the various groupings to one another. Recipes and information about the herbs used in the installation are written in pencil, covering the plinths. The herbs are listed here by their folk names and their names in Halq'eméylem or Ktunaxa, depending on whether they are local, or from the Kootenays.

There is writing on the wall, in pencil, in two separate sections. One section is listing citations, the other is a land acknowledgement. The land acknowledgement and the inclusion of Halq'eméylem and Ktunaxa names were written with the help of Laura Wee Lay Laq, an ethnobotanist, artist, and Indigenous language speaker.

Section 3: Contextualization

Resistance

In her book *Caliban and the Witch*, historian and theorist Silvia Federici explores the patriarchal restructuring of medicine in the fourteenth century when women healers were vilified and persecuted, while birth control and abortions were criminalized. Women losing the right to care for themselves and each other was a part of the chauvinistic turn culminating in the witch hunts. Federici says that this turn was taken in order to gain control of women's bodies that they could be used as part of the machinery of the new capitalist regime.

My engagement with empowerment and the politics of medicine is informed by Federici, and this historical lens helps me to think through the bigger picture when viewing works of other artists. In, "Sick Woman Theory," written by artist and author Joanna Hedva for *Mask Magazine*, Hedva equates healing with resistance, claiming that "caring for ourselves and each other is the most radical act we can take" (maskmagazine.com). The implication from reading "Sick Woman Theory" is that being sick is itself a way to politically resist. Hedva, who often explores sickness and resistance in their practice, discusses the politics that contribute to illness. Here there is an opportunity for illness to contribute to politics: we can stay home, we can disengage from the economy, we can use our stance as bedridden as a means of protest.

Hedva goes on to say:

The most anti-capitalist protest is to care for another and to care for yourself. To take on the historically feminized and therefore invisible practice of nursing, nurturing, caring. To take seriously each other's vulnerability and fragility and precarity, and to support it, honour it, empower it. To protect each other, to enact and practice community. A radical kinship, an interdependent sociality, a politics of care. (maskmagazine.com)

Hedva is saying that care should be a constant act and this line of thinking informs my work. My goal is to spark interest in alternative medicines. I make art that is resisting capitalist institutions in this way by educating viewers about medicine they can make without a prescription and without spending money.

Hedva's work draws attention to connections between sickness and otherness and validates the position of sufferers. For example, in their 2016 performance, *Sick Witch*, Hedva screams satirized repetitions of advice and comments from doctors, pharmacists, and friends made ironic by their comparative impotence in the wake of Hedva's pain. These words become cries of resistance, as Hedva's yelling positions their body as one that cannot be subdued. This expression points out the structural imbalance of power between the sick and the healthy. Not only does illness bar the sufferer from many privileges the well enjoy, but also, the sufferer is not granted the right to be the expert of their own pain, rarely getting to contribute to the conversation around chronic illness.

Referring to both *Sick Witch* and *Caliban and the Witch*, we see the societal impulse to control bodies in their most unpredictable states enacted at the expense of that individual. In this way, unpredictable bodies must give up power and freedom in order to maintain the institutions put in place to care for them. In this paternalistic approach to medicine, to be cared for is also to be controlled, dictated to, and thus contained.

Fig. 5: Johanna Hedva, *Sick Witch*, 2016.

This is why self-treatment outside of institutional frameworks is so important. When Hedva screams that we must listen to the sick, I would add that we further need to listen to ourselves and let our bodies guide us in how we live.

My intention is always to heal the space I work in. Here, I'm trying to oppose oppressive narratives or environmental forces that may haunt it. Some of what I do is intentional, such as the privileging of Indigenous languages. In other cases, the actions I take are intuitive, such as a feeling that painting a messy, effeminate, illustrative, and colourful mural of flowers onto the walls of Emily Carr University might empower or validate artists walking through the halls. This action is a method of

encouragement to students to express themselves freely and free from a well-intentioned pedagogy that may sometimes be unaware of its prejudice.

Fig. 6: Johanna Hedva, *Sick Woman Theory*, 2016.

In my practice, the empowerment and solidarity I want to express lie in pleasure and learning. Although rage and protest are important aspects of illness, I focus on what lies after the rage and before the cure, encouraging my viewers to learn about plant medicine. This is resistance because I encourage viewers to choose their own perspectives of their bodies as the most expert opinion available.

Sensory Alteration

When I set up an installation, I am creating a space that is also *for* healing. I follow the guidance of pleasure to infuse the senses, allowing the viewer to experience creative healing through this. My primary method of working with pleasure in *Elderberry Forest* is colour, whereas, in *The Candle Apothecary*, I work with smell. In both cases, the beauty is the medicine. The pleasure of looking at the brightly coloured paints in *Elderberry Forest* is derived from the bioflavonoids in the plants. The colours are the same chemicals that strengthen a body[1]. Likewise, the pleasurable scent is the scent of volatile oils, which are the same chemicals that clear the lungs. In both cases, the qualitative components of the work I seek out artistically are one with the components acting medicinally.

These interactions between humans, matter, sensory input, and the therapeutic value of art have longstanding precedents in art practices. Lygia Clark, a Brazilian neo-concretist artist, was an innovator in this area in the 1960s, making interactive pieces with healing specifically in mind. For Clark, the importance of the audience engaging with her work was to bring a shift in their perceptions having the artwork happening in real-time, between the viewer and the art. Influenced by psychotherapy, she began experimenting outside of the art world, creating one-on-one interactions between soft sculptures which altered perception and "patients" she worked with.

We see how forward-thinking Clark's work was in her struggle to find a label for it; she is considered to have 'dropped out of the art world' to take on a 'therapeutic practice.' I agree that there can be therapeutic value in sensory alteration. For me, for the alteration to be therapeutic, it must be rooted in a holistic engagement between body and object such that the viewer is guided to feel the healing happening and understand it.

Clark's practice informs the shift in focus in *The Candle Apothecary*. The mark making and bright colours I devoted most of my focus to in *Elderberry Forest* to are demonstrative of primarily considering the look of a space. In *The Candle Apothecary*, I consider the space holistically, creating a complex series of sculptures to address space in a multisensory way. The continuation of the painting in this work is a symbolic gesture weaving disparate elements together. In *The Candle Apothecary*, we can also see Clark's influence where it becomes unclear whether the art is for healing or for art.

The departures from Clark's ideas are that the space is focused on pleasure, where I am not working with neutral or strange scents in order to have an exploratory effect, but familiar and sweet ones to make a space comforting. There is a psychosomatic effect of being soothed as one focus in my work.

[1] This topic is covered often in my schooling at The Commonwealth Centre for Holistic Herbalism, where I am currently completing a year-long program on community herbalism. An article written by one of the founders, Ryn Midura, titled "Practical Phytochemistry," speaks more at length to this topic and can be found online at: https://commonwealthherbs.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CCHH-practical-phytochemistry.pdf

Land as Context and Process

In the article "Land as Pedagogy" for *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, author and musician Leanne Simpson describes a land-focused way of learning through a Nishnaabe story. She summarizes the meaning of the story from her perspective, and how this way of meaning-making and learning is important and needed.

Simpson writes:

Kwezens learned a tremendous amount over a two-day period – self-led, driven by both her own curiosity and her own personal desire to learn. She learned to trust herself, her family and her community. She learned the sheer joy of discovery. She learned how to interact with the spirit of the maple. She learned both from the land and with the land. She learned what it felt like to be recognized, seen and appreciated by her community. She comes to know maple sugar with the support of her family and Elders. She comes to know maple sugar in the context of love. (pp. 7)

The story Simpson tells is foundational to my practice as it tells of a girl learning from the land and engaging with plants with reciprocity and gratitude:

To me, this is what coming into wisdom within a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabe epistemology looks like – it takes place in the context of family, community and relations. It lacks overt coercion and authority, values so normalized within mainstream western pedagogy that they are rarely ever critiqued. The land, aki, is both context and process. The process of coming to know is learner-led and profoundly spiritual in nature. Coming to know is the pursuit of whole-body intelligence practiced in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community minded individuals. It creates communities of individuals with the capacity to uphold and move forward our political traditions and systems of governance. (pp. 7)

When Simpson describes land as both "context and process" and coming to know as "the pursuit of whole-body intelligence," she is describing a way of learning that is holistic, embedded in the land, embedded in the community, and embedded in a life. For my own work, coming to know must also be so embedded. I work with land by walking it, learning in it, and eventually, engaging with it respectfully and sustainably by tending to it and incorporating carefully chosen wildcrafted herbs into my practice. I work with narrative by making art a personal story about things I love and things I have lived through; I work with community when I share knowledge and information, and when I do one-on-one works with people, talking to them about creativity, art, and health.

Mel Chin is an artist creating botanical, land-focused works. *Revival Field* is Chin's forward-thinking piece where art is doing science, working with land and plants. Chin planted datura and tested the soil at various times to see if the mineral composition changed. He found that over time the datura purified the soil. The most impressive aspect of Chin's work to me is his assertion that plants, creativity, and intuitive processes can be trusted to do scientific work, asserting that land can be both context and process in art and science. Chin does this by melding a creative and data-driven approach in *Revival Field,* where the plants themselves are doing both the creative work as well as having the utilitarian application of cleansing the soil, while the humans involved in the process are carefully observing work

done with lab testing. Because Chin has established this trust as valid, it opens up space for artists such as myself to work with land as context and process, trusting land and plants to be active in the work directly.

Chin is demonstrating that plants can do work to remediate the land when he shows how datura can purify the soil. In my own work, I am trusting plants to do this same sort of rehabilitation but within the context of the body. Chin is thinking of plants as doing science, and I am thinking of plants as doing medicine. It is my hope that the land here is brought into the gallery and body through plants as intermediary actors.

When I am bringing smell and fire into *The Candle Apothecary*, as well as herbs steeping in solvent, I am trying to work in a way that makes herbalism more real for my audience. I chose to make an indoor installation instead of working outside because I wanted to really push the beauty of making medicine and working with plants as a process. Though walking the land and learning about plants is an important part of rehabilitating bodies to the earth, the intensely pleasurable experience of making and working with medicine is so moving to me, I feel a strong pull to communicate it. Through the use of text in accompaniment to herbal medicines, I can further contextualize this process by relating it back to the land.

Narrative

In “Land as Pedagogy” Simpson argues for an Indigenous understanding of theory:

Most importantly, ‘theory’ isn’t just for academics; it’s for everyone. And so, the story of maple sugar gets told to (some of) our kids almost from birth. ‘Theory’ within this context is generated from the ground up and its power stems from its living resonance within individuals and collectives. Younger citizens might first understand just the literal meaning. As they grow, they can put together the conceptual meaning, and with more experience with our knowledge system, the metaphorical meaning. (pp. 7-8)

And later, Simpson relates theory to narrative:

Stories direct, inspire and affirm ancient code of ethics. If you do not know what it means to be intelligent within Nishnaabeg realities, then you can’t see the epistemology, the pedagogy, the conceptual meaning, or the metaphor. You can’t see how this story has references to other parts of our oral tradition, or how this story is fundamentally, like all of our stories, communicating different interpretations and realizations of a Nishnaabeg worldview. (pp. 8)

When I am writing recipes on the walls, I am teaching a theory. There is a lot of freedom here to recontextualize expertise within these texts. Besides quoting eclectic experts, I am also asking the viewers to become experts of their own bodies and gardens, to foster loving relationships with plants, and to find ways to redefine healing in their lives.

Fig. 10: Christi Belcourt, *Medicines to Help Us*, 2007

Working with text, I have two artistic references in mind. The first is Gina Badger's book, *Get Radical, Boil Roots*, and the second is Christi Belcourt's *Medicines to Help Us.*

Christi Belcourt is a Metis artist and author. She makes large-scale, detailed paintings of plants and animals inspired by Metis beadwork. She includes narrative to her paintings such that each painting has a story. Because of Belcourt's focus on nature, on narrative, and the way she approaches visual work, my work, with its focus on illustration, murals, and herbalism-influenced botanical imagery, can be seen as in conversation with hers.

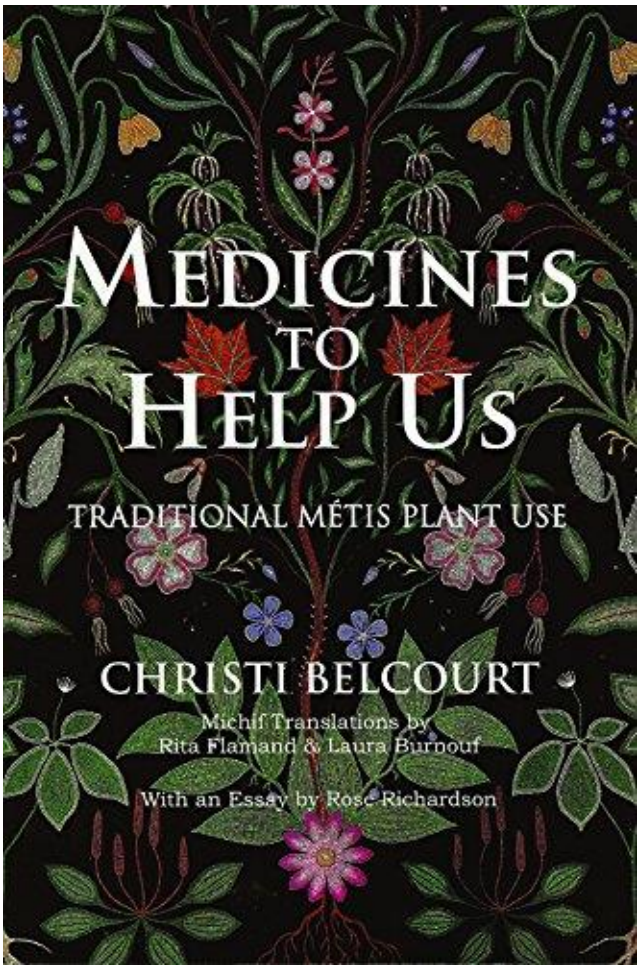

Fig. 11: Christi Belcourt, *Medicines to Help Us*, 2007

Belcourt's *Medicines to Help Us* is an instructive manual on traditional Métis herbology. Included with the book is a series of prints of Belcourt's illustrations. Belcourt's attention to detail makes this work memorable, and her investment in the work is infectious.

In an herbalist's terms, *Medicines to Help Us* is a materia medica: a book of herbs with information about their medical applications, and other information helpful to a reader interested in working with plants for healing. Belcourt makes this work even more striking by including the illustration posters, as well as information on how to work with plants spiritually.

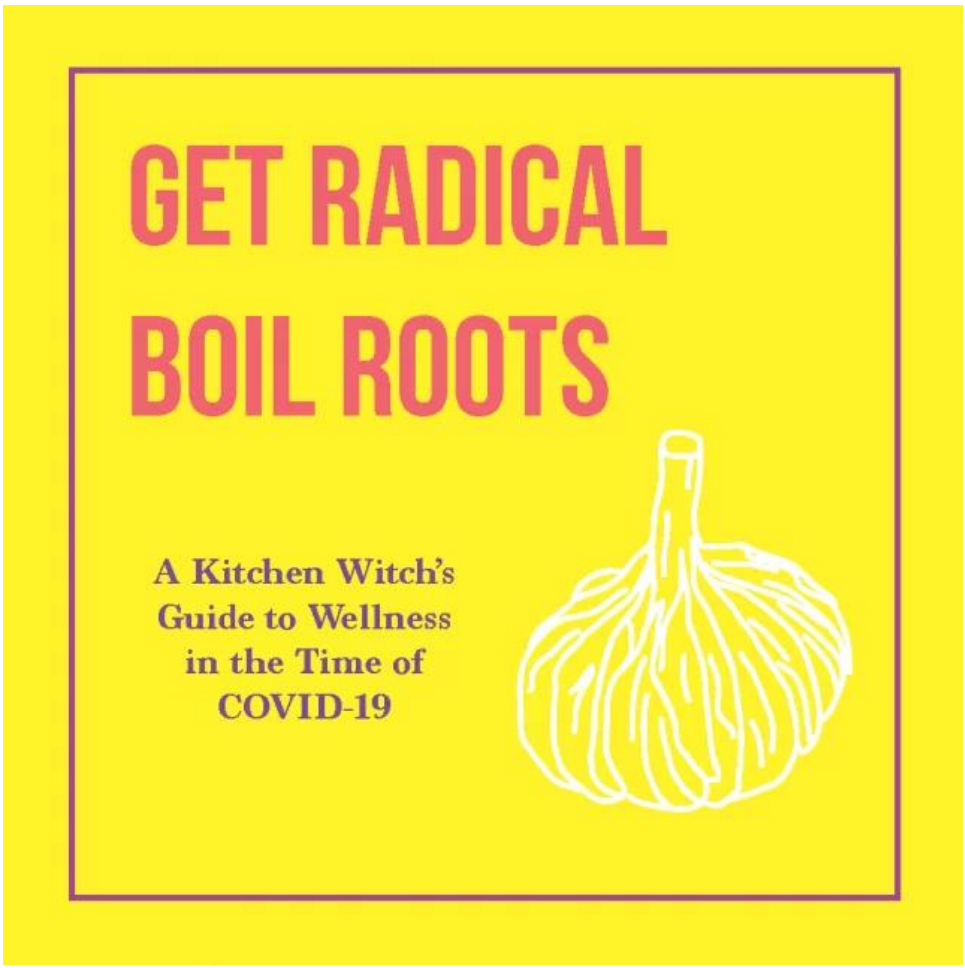

Fig. 12: Gina Badger, *Get Radical, Boil Roots*, 2020

In contrast to Belcourt's general overview, *Get Radical, Boil Roots* was made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The book is also illustrated, although Badger hired Bonnie Rose Weaver for this. In this book, Badger overviews a list of herbs t specifically help with coughs or flu. I appreciate how responsive *Get Radical, Boil Roots* is to the needs of the community. In the case of *Medicines to Help Us*, a lot of the good of the book is to preserve and share the knowledge of the Métis herbology, whereas in *Get Radical, Boil Roots*, the information is specifically related to building a protocol that can empower the reader to care for their body.

Fig. 13: Gina Badger, *Get Radical, Boil Roots*, 2020

In my work, I am positioning the viewer as the potential expert of their own health and the land they are on. By positioning the viewer in this way, I am challenging the understood structures in our culture around health. When we engage with a human and non-human community in a way that is sympoeitic, we can contribute to a culture of healing. This resistance doesn't have to destabilize modern science or medicine. I envision communities invested and engaged in caring for themselves and one another. I am hoping that by using a story or narrative in this work, I can frame education and recipes in a way that may be revisited many times and learned on different levels.

Listening to Plants

Listening to plants is a whole-body practice. I immerse myself in my senses completely while being mindful of the experiences I'm having. Without searching for a narrative or assigning words to a plant, I try to pick up on what is being communicated. When I respond, I am moving my body in such a way that it is connecting with the plants. We have been having these sorts of communications with plants for the entirety of our evolution together, but we disregard that conversation because we are so acclimatized to language.

Fig. 14: Laura Wee Lay Laq, *The Fox Olla*, 2018

During my many phone conversations with the Vancouver-based sculptor Laura Wee Lay Laq, she has described to me how she makes work by listening to the land. I was surprised by hearing someone describe a practice so like mine and encouraged by it. I also learned from Laura[2] about the importance of trusting ourselves in doing this. Listening is something that we can do with the land, but it is something that is difficult to talk about or explain.

[2] I refer to Laura Wee Lay Laq by her first name throughout the text because of the close relationship we share. Because of the love and respect I have for her, I feel that I must refer to her as a friend.

Fig. 15: Laura Wee Lay Laq, *Eight Point Pod*, 2018

When Laura makes work, she is also responding to the land with her body. Laura's sculptures, though, are about capturing the essence, or spirit, of the land she is listening to. I also find myself searching for that essence, my way of grasping that essence is by bringing plant matter into my installations. When I paint, I am working with rhythm and entropy. There is an expressionistic way in which I work, trying to express the essence of the paints and the plants they were made from through mark making. I keep myself in constant motion and allow the stickiness and fluidity of the syrups to come through. Though I loosely illustrate, what I paint is a response to how the paint wants to flow. I am both embracing the essential unknowability of a plant, being unable to understand how its consciousness works, and at the same time going about my relationship with them under the presumption that they are speaking to me. In *Elderberry Forest*, I listened to the plants I was working with, allowing them to take over the painting through their fluidity. When making syrups, I didn't control the viscosity or colour, I didn't measure the time or quantity, I allowed them to boil until they smelled good and simmer until they tasted good. In the same way, I did not plan my painting or try to make a particular configuration, rather letting the syrups do what they wanted. Here, I was listening to the desires of the materials I was working with.

A plant speaks through colour, directing me on how to treat it, and how to be a part of its life cycle. This is more than simply the brilliant shades of bioflavonoids. In nature, there is a certain shade of red, you probably would recognize it, that means poison and another shade of red that means food. If a plant is a food colour, it is telling humans and animals how it would like them to engage with its

reproductive cycle[3]. If a plant is poison red, it is telling you that it doesn't want you to harm its fruit. These messages are clear, assertive, and straightforward.

The volatile oils of plants are also a means of communication. In *The Hidden Life of Trees*, arborist and author Peter Wohlleben describes how trees use scent to communicate with one another. A tree might release a chemical to notify other trees or animals that some predator is in the area (see works consulted). Thinking of smell in this way was another reason I chose to burn herbs in *The Candle Apothecary*. It was my intention by working with smell to facilitate a more direct conversation between the plant matter and humans in the room.

These aromatic herbs, such as eucalyptus and thyme, also use their scent to fight disease. In this way, when I'm highlighting the smell of thyme by burning a candle filled with it, I am inviting my audience to listen to the herb's solution to disease. Though I'm not able to interpret it in words, when I am smelling and touching the plant I am working with, it is speaking through sensation and my body is interpreting it. Because of this, I think about ways to amplify it and highlight the 'voice' of the plant to engage the viewer. It is important to bring a piece of myself and a piece of the land to my work. When I do this, there are many voices speaking at once, and this visual cacophony represents the sympoetic experience I invite my audience to join.

[3] *A Botany of Desire* is a very good reference for understanding how plants and humans evolved together. Here Michael Pollan describes how plants benefit from human engagement with their reproductive cycles.

Making-With and New Materiality

In my own relationship with plants, I feel that they have a certain radiance that speaks to me. I consider this radiance, this force, speaking without language. I am responding to this force as well as the sensation the plant transmits to me sensorily through taste, texture, and smell.

In her book *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennet described perfectly the phenomenon I sense:

When the materiality of the glove, the rat, the pollen, the bottle cap, and the stick started to shimmer and spark, it was in part because of the contingent tableau that they formed with each other, with the street, with the weather that morning, with me. (pp. 5)

I would like to elaborate here on the unknowability of matter and clarify that when I am listening, aware that I may never able to understand, it is always the case that I am not even fully aware of who I am listening to. The plant I am working with comes from an ecosystem that I can also never fully know, where it was embedded into a community of countless beings. Animals, plants, bacteria, all generating and maintaining and consuming life together.

It may have been the constant, vicious attacks from a virus that produced such an abundance of aroma in the thyme I chose, or it may have been the contributions of earthworms to the soil. It could have been a nearby nitrogen-fixing weed. Whatever the case, there are countless contributions to my work that I cannot know and cannot even guess. This is humbling, and it makes me feel closer to the world and the beings that are in it to acknowledge this in my work and my intentions.

Through this collaborative approach to art, I have built a long relationship with the plants I work with. Trusting them, I take this collaboration to do healing. I bring my healing plants to a space and allow for physics and chemistry to do the work for me by lighting candles on fire or letting paints drip down the wall. Beyond my control, the materials guide the experience. I think of this work as 'making-with.' I came across this phrase in Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* when she uses it to explain sympoiesis:

Sympoiesis is a simple word; it means 'making-with.' Nothing makes itself; nothing is really autopoietic or self-organizing. In the words of the Inupiat computer "world game," earthlings are never alone. That is the radical implication of sympoiesis. Sympoiesis is a word proper to complex, dynamic, responsive, situated, historical systems. It is a word for worlding-with, in company. Sympoiesis enfolds autopoiesis and generatively unfurls and extends it. (pp. 58)

Here, Haraway asserts that making is always a joint effort and that the idea of an individual is an illusion, referring to relations between beings, as well as the multiplicities within one seemingly singular being. Acknowledging these multiplicities and relationships guides me in my intentions to collaborate when I make art.

In my art, when I am making-with, I am relinquishing part of my role as a designer. The construction and making of my pieces are guided by what I'm hearing a plant say. This means that the work becomes unpredictable to me. I don't know much about a piece until I am making it. This also means that I am allowing the plants to do the work to seduce the viewer. In my past work, before I began this research, I might rely on my skill at composition or at constructing pieces which are conceptually interesting. What I do

now is try to be sensitive to the story a plant wants to tell. If a plant is especially brightly coloured, for instance, I might enhance the colour by a method of extraction and display the extraction in a jar or on the wall. If a plant is strongly scented, I might burn it or boil it in the gallery. When I am making-with, a lot of my work becomes to curate a dispersal system for a story a plant is telling.

When I am working with an herb, I am taking part of a plant that grows from the ground, and the ground is full of bacteria, fungus, worms and other animals. The dirt is infusing and nourishing the plant which infuses and nourishes me and the bacteria and critters[4] in my body. The same plant that I take with my mouth and give to myself and my bacteria, I work with on the walls, listening to it and painting with it. People pass my work and breath it in, the volatile oils that grew from the nourishment of the earth enter their respiratory systems and interact with the community of bodies that comprise a human. I work with these same plants with groups. Mycelium and bacteria and earthworms interact with roots and seeds that immerse themselves into the bodies of my friends and families.

To acknowledge this ecosystem, and my presence in it makes me more aware of the art that I'm making. It also makes me a more ethical artist. Though the research I do is often driven by readings such as those listed in this text, by learning about plants from books and herbalists, and by discussing art with my colleagues, the answers to my research questions themselves are found by listening to plants and responding creatively, in collaboration with them.

[4] The term "critters" is used frequently in Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* to refer to life forms large and small, frequently for bacteria or microorganisms.

What Art can do Healing? What Medicine can do Art?

Here I consider self-healing, healing the institutional space, empowering viewers to heal, healing through the senses, and healing our relationship with the earth. Art is well-situated to heal because of its focus on sensation, the enormous variety of possibilities within the field, and the ethical and philosophical trajectory the study of art has taken to become what it is today. To rehabilitate our bodies within our culture, our medicine must be holistic, and in fact, our medicine must come from within our culture, infusing us with rehabilitative spaces and perspectives. By combining pleasure with politics, artists create rehabilitative spaces.

This collaboration between myself and plants is where I deviate from artists my work may be in conversation with. For my practice, I believe it is important that an audience learns about plant medicine in the gallery through the lens of pleasurable sensation. I am taking this consideration with me as well as I move forward.

This is why I stress the importance of poetry and going beyond the transmission of information. I believe that I can bring the senses into my work by writing in a way that is following pleasure.

Reading Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire* changed the way I thought about plants. I did not think of plants as beings that might desire things from me before I read it. One of my takeaways from the book was the evidence to the contrary. Plants, it would seem, desire my protection and care, and they are giving, pleasing, and seductive to me in return. My understanding of a flower as beautiful is part of its strategy to court me, drawing me into its reproductive cycle as my caress of its blossoms' spreads pollen from one plant to the other. Being pleased by a plant is part of its communication with me. In this way, pleasure is part of a plant's voice.

There is a great deal of difficulty talking about pleasure and beauty in reference to an art practice. We can't all agree on what is pleasing, on what is beautiful. The unquantifiable nature of pleasure demands that we talk about it, despite the habit in art institutions to ignore its presence. I deal with this problem in my practice by thinking about pleasure and beauty as a process. I can think of my engagement with pleasure and plants as a seduction rather than an attribute. Maybe we can agree that whether the scent of a rose is or is not beautiful, it is an attribute of a rose trying to seduce us. When I work with botanical colours, scents, flavours, that are beautiful, I am engaging with the plant in its seduction. When I display these colourful or scented objects and works in the gallery, there is an explicit invitation for my audience to also engage with that seduction and if they find my work beautiful, they have. Whether or not the invitation to be sensorily seduced is a beautiful one, there is the undeniable fact that the invitation is there. In this way, it is not only land that is context and process in my art, but also pleasure.

When listening to and being guided by the plants I work with, I am letting these plants seduce my audience rather than designing or composing a work on my own. I am choosing the acknowledgement of a sympoeitic work intentionally, letting it guide the direction of making. Experiencing this collaboration has taught me about the importance of pleasure in healing. I have found that in *Elderberry Forest*, in *The Candle Apothecary*, and in the herbs that I eat, breath, and bathe in is a medicine that is gentle, comforting, and pleasing that can change the way my body exists in a space.

There is a psychosomatic effect I experience when being guided by pleasure that heals part of how I exist in and with my body. I have also learned that by relinquishing myself to this pleasure and putting faith in the plants I work with, I become more aware of my role in this collaboration, and humbled by this, grateful for it, I am more considerate of other beings I meet and more sensitive to sustainability.

Reflections and the Next Cycle

As I come to conclude this phase of my research, I find what I expected to be achievements unfolding as new projects to explore. At this point, I have written and presented my thesis, as well as the newest work, the text entitled *The Outdoor Archetypes.* This iteration of *The Outdoor Archetypes* exists right now as an eBook, showing at Emily Carr's online graduate exhibition, *Interruptions*. The text includes a materia medica, intimate prose, and botanical illustrations. The intention of this work was to engage with the same sort of subject matter as is written in this text, such as healing, art, land, and resistance from through a poetic voice and directed at a wider audience. I have included a copy of this work in the appendix of this document.

The discussion at the defense inspired me to think more deeply about opportunities for this and future texts to grow. We talked about poetry being utilized to access the somatic through discourse, pleasure and its relationship to activism, the relation of rituals and cycles to my work, the importance of communities and matriarchy to my work, and dedication to reciprocity in relation to the land and Indigenous knowledge keepers. I am immensely grateful for possibilities for evolution the discussion presented, for the way they have influenced my plans moving forward.

Inspired by talking over reciprocity and decolonial perspectives, I am revisiting and developing the way the text handles Indigenous knowledge, possibly by using a similar technique to that which I used in *The Candle Apothecary.* By making an ethnobotanical perspective more central to the text, I believe I will make the work stronger and more true to itself. I am researching the origins of the plants in the book more thoroughly and reach out to Indigenous ethnobotanists in other localities. It is important that as a settler-identified author, I am aware of a decolonial perspective and collaborating with Indigenous knowledge keepers in ways that are respectful. I am hoping that by making these connections, I can not only represent a decolonial perspective, but also make new friends and begin to grow into a community.

I am also planning and constructing a second book, *Through Trauma/The Body*. The intention with this new work is to take a very close look at somatic healing through ritual and how that healing can help with mental health issues. I also intend to explore pleasure and ritual more as unique topics. I have a loose understanding that I want to write a cookbook and I want it to be an intimate experience for the reader, making them feel the author's experience and empathy. At the same time, I am also evaluating my past construction of narrative. As I prefer to move freely from one style to another, this is also a time to dive into explorations in poetry. This book is focused on making a body feel comforted, safe, and nurtured, so the recipes are more closely related to pleasure and somatic ritual. I am re-reading Adrienne Maree Brown's book, *Pleasure Activism* right now for inspiration as well as looking at Tania Willard's *Affirmations for Wildflowers: an ethnobotany of desire*, looking at the way these authors' embrace of the joyful is resilient, courageous, activism.

Finally, I am looking at illustration in my work more carefully. I am thinking about the didactic potential of illustration as a recipe or instruction. It was put to me at the defense that *The Outdoor Archetypes* is in a way, a manual, and this really interests me. If my work is on the one hand, a manual, and on the other, a poem, I am very interested in the tension between the two, and how one supports

the other. I would like, for ongoing work, my illustrations to be an integral part of the manual as well as evocative and supportive of the poetry. To inform this research, I am looking at artists like Barbara Dziadosz. Vanja Vukelic, as well as works such as illustrated manuals that are topically relative to my work, such as *The Moosewood Cookbook*, by Mollie Katzen.

I will be working on these two projects at once, and documenting my research on ethnobotany with narrative, possibly on a website as a way to demonstrate my learning and experience. I believe that by working on both projects together, I can use the momentum from one to inform the other. For the foreseeable future, I will not be doing installations or in-person group work, but this is in response to the restrictions of the pandemic. As restrictions lift, I will be immediately inviting people into my house to hold workshops on sensation, herbalism, and art, exploring activism through togetherness.

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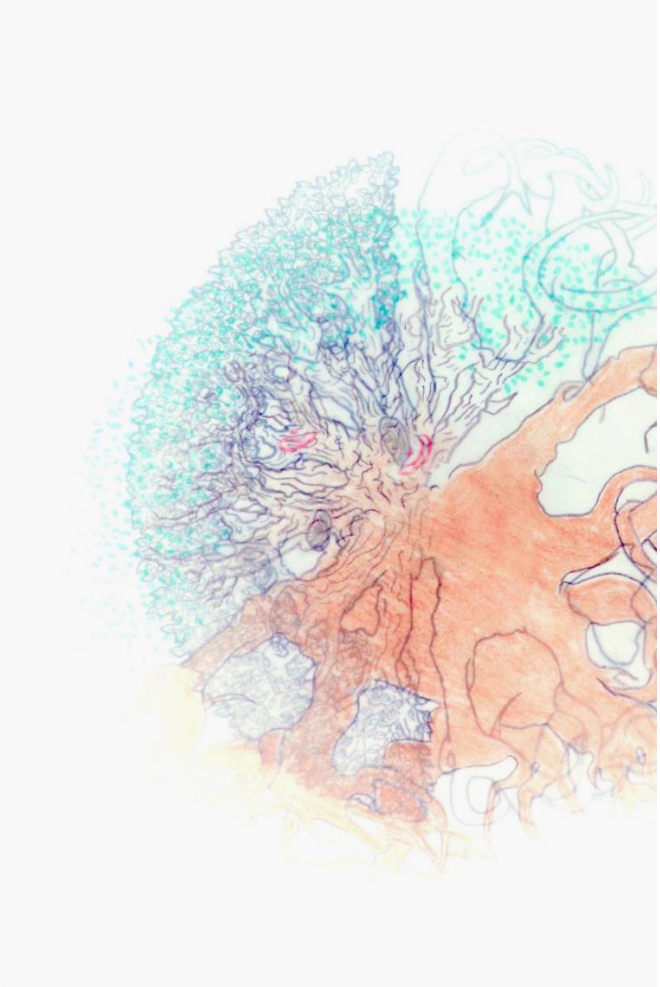
Appendix

The Outdoor Archetypes



Artemis Feldman

This book is dedicated to Justine Poyntz, and anyone that's sick

The Outdoor Archetypes

Artemis Feldman
2021

Table of Contents

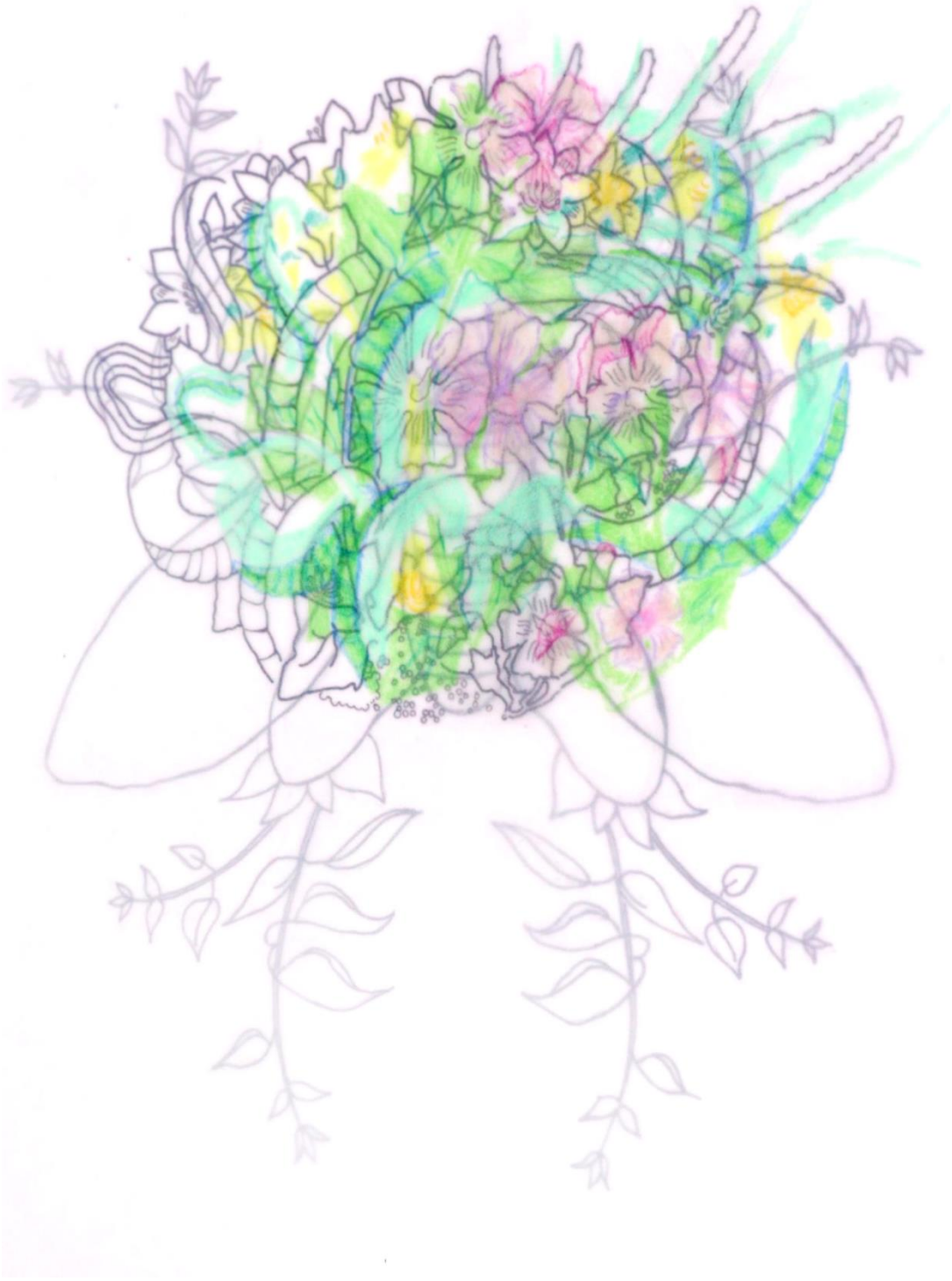
Preface

There are many ways to read a book...

As there are many ways of learning, knowing, understanding, and solving. There are infinite ways to relate to plants and equal the amount to look at art. I invite the reader to find thier own way of reading this book, and thier own way of understanding how the different voices of narration and the different methods of illustration establish meanings in ways which can be finite, or holistic. Whether that means reading cover to cover, skipping through, choosing to only read the recipes, or only observe the drawings. Within the pages you will find the chapters divided into archetypes important to both healing and nature. This is an incomplete list of essential components of herbal medicine. Included in each section is an introduction and several herbs and recipes to help the human body come to know this archetype in a deeper way. Throughout the text, my understandings as an herbalist, an artist, and human are described through different voices, represented textually with separate fonts. In my experience, these perspectives are woven together both awkwardly and seamlessly, and have been included to represent the many perspectives contained in one person and the many ways of knowing that comprise intimacy. For me, this work is unresolved, and that is a place of possibility. I consider the text a patchwork quilt of ideas still in the early stages of its existence, and an opening to work with further permutations and new iterations expected. In future works, and in future iterations of this work, I would like to do more to explain the ethnobotanical history of each herb I speak on. My practice comes from a tradition originating in Europe and expanding greatly during the colonization of North America as settlers were taught new ways of making medicine by Indigenous groups, and further expanding during the 1960's as North American herbalism was influenced by Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Though it is beyond the scope of this edition to research and explain the ethnobotanical history of each plant I list, this is a component of the story I consider essential to investigate and do justice to before I consider publishing.

Sourcing Herbs

Herbal medicine is folk medicine. It is the medicine of the people. Despite these humble origins, it is easy to think of herbal remedies as a privilege of the wealthy. When we look to the most popular conceptions of herbal medicine, we see products listed as vitamins, supplements, and luxury items. Here there is limited access to obtain alternative medicines, especially for groups less likely to be adequately supported by institutionalized healthcare systems. In order to get access to plant medicine, it is possible to obtain herbs by wildcrafting. This is the practice of finding herbs growing in the wild and harvesting. If you are someone who cannot afford to buy plants at herbal apothecaries, and don't have access to a garden, wildcrafting can be an important component of self-support. Keeping in mind that those who need alternative medicine and can't afford it may need to wildcraft and that the practice is ethical under those circumstances, many herbs are over-harvested and can become endangered if the wildcrafter is not careful. It is essential to find a more experienced wildcrafter to start out, and to take a very long time to become familiar with an area to understand when a plant is thriving and when it should be left to grow stronger. Some plants are generally safe to wildcraft everywhere, common plants like dandelion, raspberry leaf, wild rose, and red clover fall into this group, as well as invasive plants like Japanese knotweed. If considering wildcrafting, make sure to research your area thoroughly. If you have access to a garden, or even a balcony, consider growing calendula, St John's wort, purslane, lavender, and chamomile. These herbs are all very easy to care for and available at garden stores. Finally, the grocery store is an excellent place to find herbs. Peppermint, cilantro, shitake, garlic, ginger, onion, turmeric, cayenne, rosemary, sage, clove, thyme, black pepper, juniper, and hibiscus are easy to find either fresh or dried, and all have medicinal properties. Branching out and exploring new grocery stores can also be helpful. I have found astragalus, codonopsis, angelica, and maitake at grocery stores in Chinatown, and hawthorn, marshmallow, eucalyptus, rose petal, yarrow, and vervain at a Persian grocer near my house.



Marrow Broth
One handfull each:
Codenopsis and astragalus
Shitaki mushrooms and kelp
One head of garlic
Chicken bones
Onion, carrot, celery
Thai chilli peppers and lemon
Boil twenty-four hours, crush the bones, boil four more hours.
Strain
Give the bones back to the Earth

Earth

This Land, which is precious, sacred, and full of infinite magicks, is referred to as the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh People. I do not believe that a Land belongs to a people, but I do believe that it is important to acknowledge the ongoing injustice of colonization.

This Land, which is precious, sacred, and full of infinite magicks, as all lands are, has been colonized for commodity.

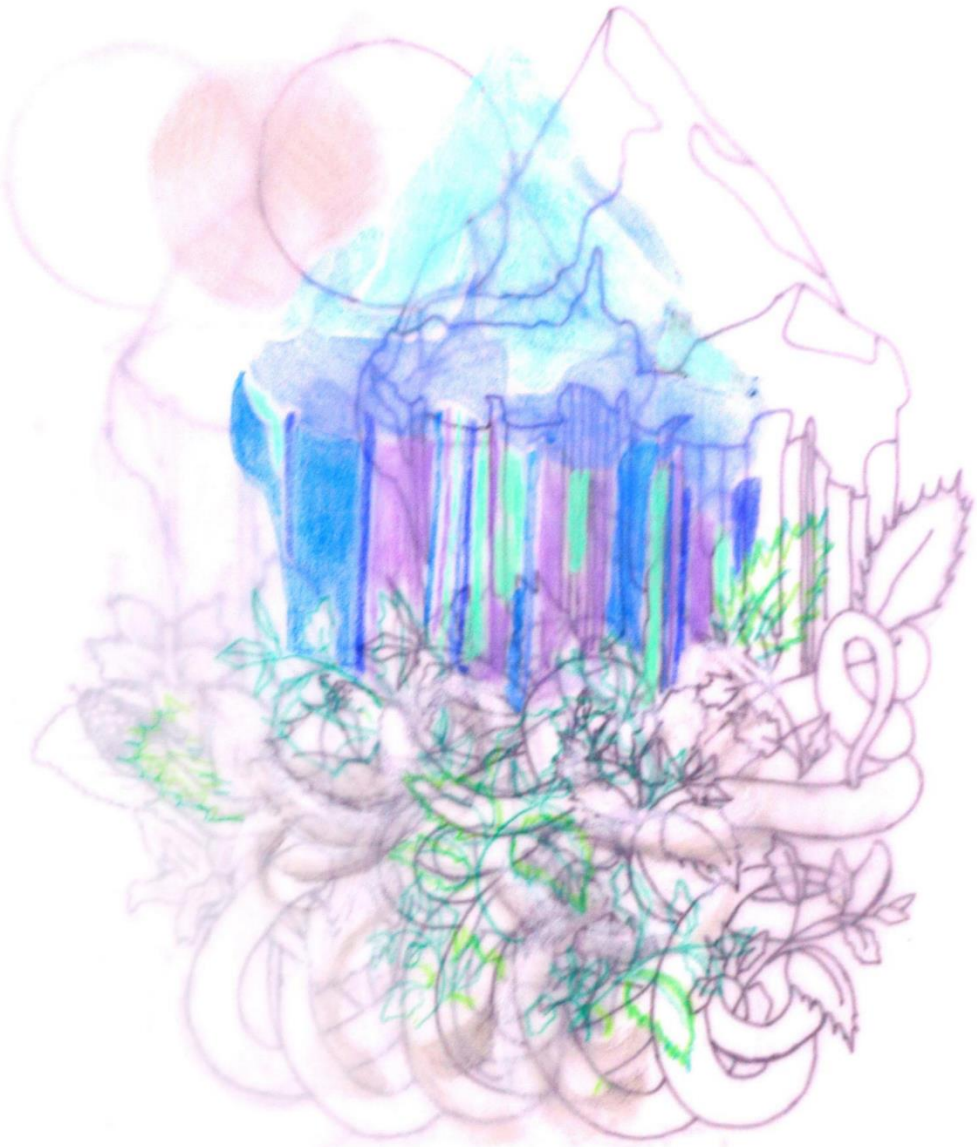
These people, who are precious, sacred, and full of infinite magicks, as all people are, have also been colonized for commodity.

Earth and Flesh must not be used in this way. I know that it is difficult to not use people and things.

The damage done to the Earth and People of this land haunts us all.

Earth is many things, Earth is soil and land and food and creature and home.To me, Earth is changeable, Earth is potential, Earth is contested, Earth is alive.

I am prepared to listen and I am willing to take action to repair the harm and to find justice. I do not believe we have found truth and reconciliation yet.



Wild Fermented Nettles
1lb fresh stinging nettles
1Tbs sea salt
Water to cover
Clean the nettles and chop very fine. Stir in the salt. Place them in a 1Qt mason jar. Pour cold, filtered water on top, and cover with an exceptionally clean stone so that the nettle is completely covered by water. Wait for four days

Rock

The salty taste is the taste of mineral, the salty taste signifies silica, magnesium, sodium, iron, selenium, calcium, these traces of body and spirit leeched up from the Earth, through the dirt, gleaned from the sea, swallowed by fish and whales and sharks and laughing, swimming children. The salty taste nourishes marrow and bone, muscle and nerve. The salty taste is a building taste, growing plants and women and pigs and dogs and mosquitoes bigger and stronger and healthier and happier.

Cravings for salt colour my appraisal of mineral significance here. Soy sauce, table salt, Himalayan salt, miso, pickle juice, mustard, and nettle tea, I orbit these in reverence as my brain burns through potassium.

.

In this work, I have chosen to set my intentionality and tone using rocks, minerals, salt as my guide for the silence, timelessness, and wisdom they represent, and most of all for the nourishment they provide. The salty herbs I have chosen here are nettle, tulsi, and peppermint. I chose these herbs because they are safe to use, very powerful, and easy to find. These herbs are nutritional, daily herbs that we can work with in a gentle way, and even a voracious one. These salty herbs can enhance the rockiness of us to be rocky people in a stormy world.

Tulsi

Tulsi is bright and sunny medicine. This adaptogen brings ease to our lives.Tulsi is cooling, aromatic, nutritive, gentle, and tonic, meaning that it slowly and steadily builds up health the more you take it. Tulsi is a neurological trosphorestorative: slow brain medicine. Tulsi helps the brain to process memory, and we turn to it when working with traumatic events, or PTSD. We can work with tulsi in times of stress, where the vitamins and minerals can help fill the gaps when we are neglecting ourselves. We also turn to tulsi in addiction, depression, anxiety, or problems with impatience or anger.

Tulsi is friends with hawthorn, wood betony, chamomile, St John's wort, rose, nettle, dandelion, linden, skullcap, elderflower, and vervain. It can be found in many grocery stores, either as dried leaves or blended with other herbs as tea. To ensure potency and to be respectful to this plant, make sure what you purchase is organic.

Working with Tulsi

I like to brew two heaping tablespoons of tulsi in one litre of boiled water with some honey and a splash of rosewater. After brewing all night, it is a very nice tea to drink how or with ice. Another way I take tulsi is an electuary, which is a paste made of ground herbs and honey. I grind tulsi into a fine powder, cover with honey, and stir. I like to add a little bit of minced candied ginger in as well. This I just eat by the spoonful whenever I feel low. Tulsi is also a great addition to a multivitamin blend, as its effects are felt after consistent, daily use.

Our bones and blood are imbued with salts. Draining from saliva, trickling through lymph, reaching out from our pours. To be imbued with rock is a magickal thing, it is a thing of wildness. All of the resilience of a mountain is in our spit.

Nettle

Nettle is a cool and salty drying herb. Nettle is bioavailable. Its deep, forest green leaves contain magnesium, calcium, iron, potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C. Nettle is a diuretic, an alterative, an antihistamine, and a blood tonic. With Regular consumption, nettle strengthens the blood and kidneys, encourages lymphatic drainage, and offers relief to allergies. Topically, the nutritive qualities of nettle still hold. Because of this as well as antiseptic properties, nettle is often included in recipes for herbal washes and baths.

Nettle can treat nutritional deficiences, allergies, bladder and kidney infections. Because of its nutritional density, it is also included in many other herbal protocols to build stronger health.

Nettle has an affinity for the kidneys, bladder, and blood, and is friends with dandelion, rosehip, marshmallow, tulsi, yellow dock, goldenrod, ginger, turmeric, and garlic.

Nettle grows in forests and fields, and is not at risk. In order to harvest sustainably, much should be left growing. If you feel uncomfortable wildcrafting, or don't have access, this plant is also widely available at health food stores, and local herbal apothecaries.

Working with Nettle

To make a very basic multivitamin, mix equal parts nettle leaves, dandelion leaf, dandelion root, and rosehip. To drink this as a tea, place two to three tablespoons in a litre sized Mason jar. Cover in boiled water and allow to steep overnight. Another option is to grind the dried herbs in a coffee grinder, and add the powder to food.

Peppermint

Peppermint is one of those herbs that is both familiar, and medicinal. This plant is an aromatic, circulatory stimulant, muscle relaxant, antinausea, and carminative herb. The brain registers peppermint as cold, but the tingling sensation is signifying the same sort of work that a warming herb would do. For this reason, peppermint is very helpful in tense or inflamed tissue states where the tingling cool can soothe, while also drawing blood to the area. Peppermint can be helpful with sore throats, coughs and fevers, muscle and back pain, headaches, IBS, and poor digestion.

The best way to find peppermint is to grow it. It likes light and a fair amount of water and can be found at any garden store in the spring. Otherwise, dried or fresh peppermint in the produce section is also medicine. Peppermint is friends with tulsi, rosehip, nettle, dandelion, lavender, sage, lemon balm, spearmint, skullcap, hibiscus, and rose.

Working with Peppermint

To make a simple headache tea, mix equal parts peppermint, wood betony, and skullcap. Steep one tablespoon per cup of tea, covered, for at least ten, preferably twenty, minutes. To help ease muscle cramps, soak a clean cloth in the tea and apply to the affected area, keeping it warm, as desired, with a hot water bottle.

To make a headache salve, place fresh peppermint in a pot with a cup or two of coconut oil and heat on the lowest setting for a few hours. You can add a few drops of peppermint essential oil to make the mixture stronger. Strain and let cool.

I imagine the sounds of the waves off the coast of Vancouver Island, crashing again and again, saltwater against rock, saltwater against rock. From this place of silence and sound, I am hoping to find a thought that crystalizes within me. I am hoping that if I hold on to the silent sound and imagine its mineral nourishment guiding my consciousness, I can find my way through this forest of syrups, weeds, and tinctures, and thoughts float through driftwood, growing like crystals.

Dandelion Bitters
Fresh dandelion leaves
Peel from one orange
A thumb of ginger
Chop all ingredients well. Place in a half quart mason jar and cover with brandy. Leave the jar for one month to infuse. Shake daily.

Liver

For an herbalist, when we want to heal our liver, we eat liver. The liver detoxifies the body, herbs like milk thistle, St john's wort, and dandelion help by feeding the liver a little bit of what it needs. Herbs here contribute by supporting the liver's regular functionality. When I work with herbs, I am thinking of collaboration rather than control.

Rebuilding a relationship with the earth is the most important thing a human can do.

The liver regenerates itself. I did not cure my anorexia or Crohn's disease with herbal medicine, that is not a claim I can make. I work through illness in relationship with plants, the ground, the sea, and in it, my body. My prescription changes daily. My healing moves backwards and forwards, and I work through it. I came to this work slowly and the conclusion is ongoing. .

I chose Liver for the title here because of its functionality to a body. The liver accepts every piece and particle assimilated, sorting, producing bile, and filtering waste. The liver's job is never over, it is in constant response to what we take in from the environment. The self-assessment and transformation the liver provides for us brings me to reflect on the work we as a species must do rebuilding our relationship to our planet, and to each other.

Botanical and fungal friends are part of my community. They sometimes come into my home and grow, and sometimes come into my home and become medicine. As they encircle me and my space, I find myself more connected to the earth, and in a more holistic relationship with the tasks of daily living. I learn to infuse nettle into vinegar and stop buying shampoo. In my concern and gratitude for the ocean, I avoid plastic packages by making everything from scratch. My food is humble, and tastes alive. I have a skincare routine contained entirely in recycled olive oil bottles. I am one of many humans dependent on a capitalist economy for survival, and we are not given a choice in the matter. In some cases, it is now possible for me to choose. The nutrition plants bring me, and the joy of working with them is a place of resistance.

I chose three liver supportive herbs here, milk thistle, St John's wort, and dandelion. My thinking here is that if I want to transform my behaiviours, I should support the most transformative organ of my body. Sometimes I'm vegetarian, and sometimes I eat liver.

Milk Thistle

Milk thistle is a quiet herb, with a mild, nutty flavour, and an energetic quality of neutrality, meaning that it is well tolerated by most constitutions. This plant is a hepato-protective, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant cholagogue. Milk thistle moves straight through the digestive system and passes through the liver over and again, feeding it antioxidants each and every time. When our livers are overwhelmed with a tough detoxification task, milk thistle can offer invaluable support.

We take milk thistle when we are detoxing from a substance (nicotine, drugs, sugar, coffee, etc.), we are going through hormonal changes (like puberty or menopause), or struggling with difficult menstruation, or if we are recovering from illness, especially if that illness included taking a pharmaceutical medicine.

Milk thistle has a liver affinity, and is friends with St John's wort, dandelion, burdock, barberry, yellow dock, calendula, wormwood, angelica, calamus, parsley, cilantro, and nettle. Milk thistle is very easy to just buy, but if you are looking to wildcraft, make sure that you are not confusing it with blessed milk thistle, which is an invasive species in the area.

Working with Milk Thistle

One of the easiest ways to work with milk thistle is to take it in capsules, this herb does not extract well into solvents, so a capsule is very convenient. You can even find capsules of milk thistle at big drug stores for cheap. Though I do take capsules of milk thistle when I am very busy, I strongly prefer to have a more intimate relationship with the plants I work with. For me, this means I want to taste the herb.

For a delicious seasoning, I make milk thistle gomashio out of toasted sesame seeds, milk thistle, and sea salt, ground together. I put this on rice, or sauteed vegetables.

I also put milk thistle powder in smoothies. If I have had too much to drink one night, I put in a blender grated ginger and turmeric, a handful of parsley and whatever other greens are in my fridge, coconut water, and a few teaspoons of milk thistle powder and blend on high. I drink half before bed, and the rest in the morning.

Though the boundaries between herbalism, science, and magic feel blurred, I find resistance in its practice. I believe that when I am doing herbalism, I am trusting beings that I do not fully understand but which I coexist with to support me, care for me, and love me when the institutions of care I've been provided with fail.

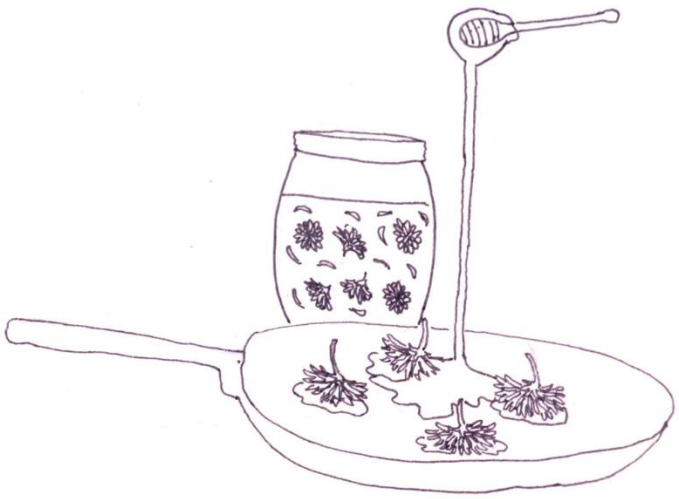
Dandelion

The bitter-salty leaves of dandelion are nutritionally comparable to nettle, a good tea to drink a litre of once and a while or every day.Boiled with chicory and burdock, dandelion root tastes like a softer, sweeter coffee. These roots are full of inulin and even more bitter than the leaves, stimulating the liver to produce bile and the body to focus on digestion.We take dandelion to support digestion and elimination, for nutritional deficiencies, or to stimulate the production of bile. The bitter flavour can also ease tension in the nervous system and build resilience to stress.

The blood building and diuretic qualities of dandelion leaves make it good friends with nettle, parsley, rosehip, and cilantro, while the root's liver and stomach affinity relate it to burdock, milk thistle, angelica, and St John's wort.

Working with Dandelion

In the early spring, you can pick dandelion leaves from anywhere with good air and soil, and put them in soups, salads, and smoothies. The flowers are also edible, and are delightful. You can dry these for tea, or keep them fresh to dress up salads, or put them in a jar of honey for a few weeks to a month to have flower infused honey. Let the fresh or dried leaves infuse into vinegar for to infuse it with dandelion's abundant minerals. You can use this in cooking, and there is something very satisfying about having a salad of dandelion leaves and flowers with dandelion infused vinegar. The best thing you can do is to carefully clean fresh picked dandelion flowers, dip them in your favorite pancake batter and fry. Of course, you'll want to serve it with dandelion-infused honey.



St John's Wort

St John's wort is strong, strong, medicine. The tiny flowers are completely cluttered by countless delicate stamen looking like rays of sun. This intricate mess of a flower taste like chocolate carrot, or wheatgrass cupcakes. St John's wort is a nervine, carminative, cholagogue, hepato-stimulatory, and nervine trosphorestorative, working both with the nerves that comprise thought, as well as the nerves in sore wrists and feet. St John's wort is also friends with the stomach and liver, stimulating digestion, and so much detoxification activity that taking it should be avoided if you rely on pharmaceutical medicine, because when the liver is fed St John's wort, it will cleanse the body of the medicine faster than it is supposed to.

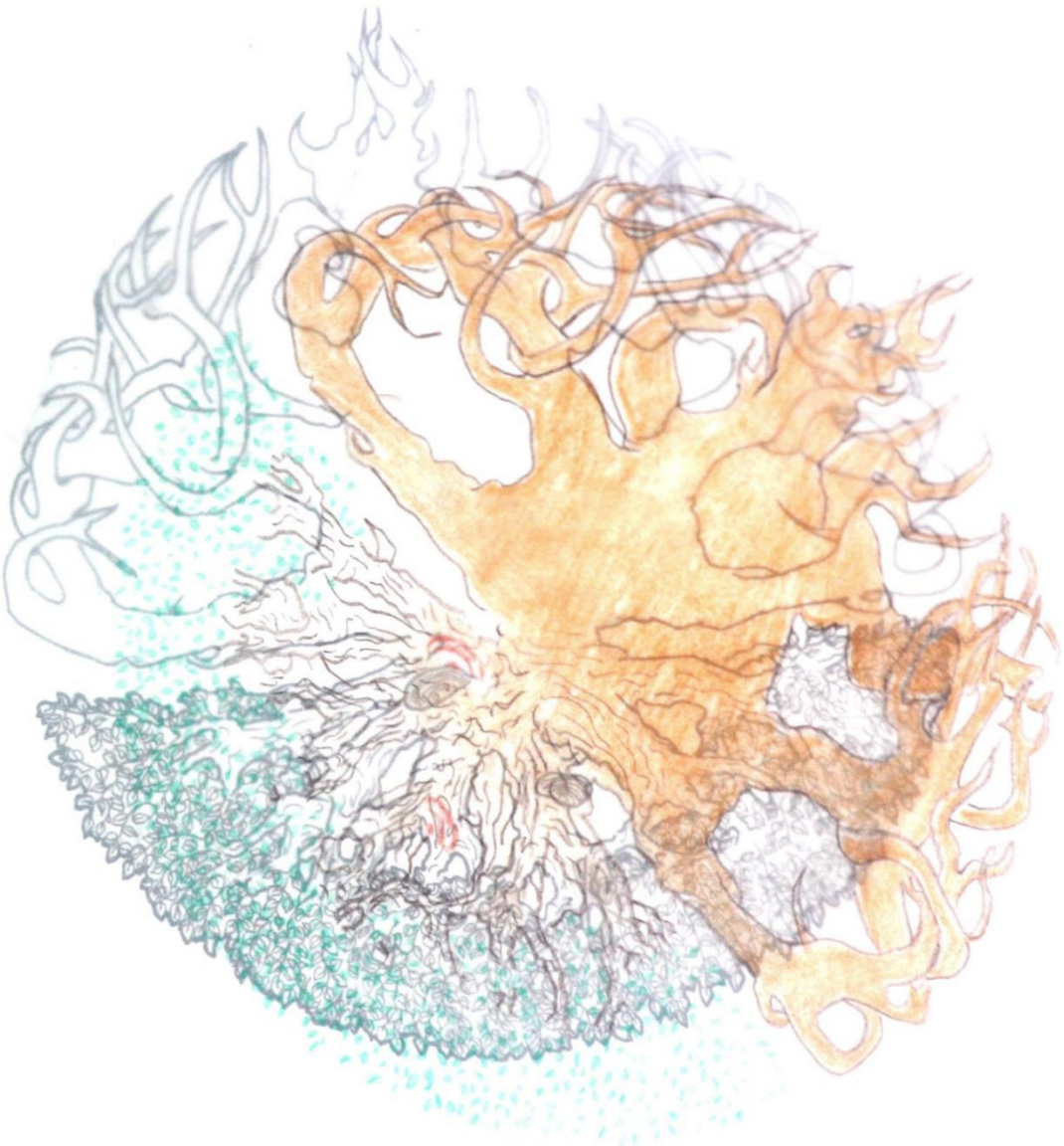
We work with St John's wort to help speed up the detoxification process in cases of addiction, or to help us feel better when we are depressed. For those with arthritis or nerve damage, we cover freshly picked St John's wort with olive oil and leave the jar until the oil is the colour of a ruby. Strained, we apply this oil daily to the damaged tissue. This oil is precious, even so, I have been known to rub it into my face at night to get rid of crow's feet.

St John's wort can help with IBS, GERD, slow digestion, blood sugar spikes, and liver deficiencies. This medicine can also help anyone having a hard time getting through the winter. St John's wort grows in the area, although I have not found an area abundant enough to be comfortable wildcrafting. When I am in my hometown, where I know the plants well, I drift through the fields, picking a piece here and a piece there and leaving much so that it will continue to thrive. St John's wort is friends with tulsi, cinnamon, linden, hawthorn, chamomile wood betony, Solomon's seal, angelica, ginger, and milk thistle. If you have a garden, this plant is very easy to care for, it just likes a bit of sun every day, and has something to offer everyone.

Working with St John's Wort

If I am not eating properly, I can help my body deal with a sugar overload with herbal tea. I take about a tablespoon each of St john's wort and tulsi and a stick of cinnamon and steep it in a mason jar, preferrably overnight. Then I just drink that tea throughout the day.

For emergencies and travel, I convert the tea into a tincture by tripling the dose and steeping in vodka for a month. The tincture is convenient, though not quite as effective as the tea.



Decoction for Immune Resilience
1 part pleurisy root
2 parts ginger root
2 parts angelica root 1/2 part licorice root
For severe cases of prolonged illness:
1 part elacampane root
1 part ginseng
Cover herbs with water and boil twenty minutes to one hour. Strain, and take in doses of a small teacup or wineglass.

Root

A root is the foundation of nourishment. To an herbalist, roots are particularly strong, reliable medicine. Angelica and ginger are powerful guides for weakened, sickly lungs, stomachs and wombs. We decoct Pleurisy root and enduring for bronchial infections. Licorice root builds and nourishes the blood and adrenals. Turmeric and calamus warm our stomachs, healing inflammation of the bowel. These roots are warm, steady, vital. Their richness enriches our bodies, bringing the Earth's strength into our blood.

Digging endless tendrils through a network of mycelium, drawing the spirit of Earth and Rock, up through bark and stem to nectar and petal, the foundation and formation of feeding, from one body to another, roots split and coil, their branching chasms like legs squatting for childbirth, their talents for finding nutrition nursing the forest around them.

I use these archetypical indexes to parse my world of plants and illnesses, weaving a narrative for myself which guides me in my work. In this context, the root can be seen as the foundation of knowledge. The unfathomable wisdom of a root is demonstrated in its functionality, its capacity for communication, its reactivity. When I reflect on the root, I am thinking of the foundational sustenance of my knowledge. I find this foundation, at its core, to be situated within my own body and the knowledge's sustenance to drawn from those bodies I surround myself with. The bodies of plants, people, mycelium and bacteria all feeding me and teaching me as I feed and teach them. This wisdom asked for and given from one generation to another. The profound influence of these beings helps me to understand how to collaborate with plants, and the Earth. They tell me to slow down, speak and sing to the plants, to send my spirit out to the cosmos when I dream. Each of these roots is a single tendril from which I am drawing to feed my own body of knowledge and grow.

Ginger

Ginger root is fiery and aromatic. The potency of ginger medicine is soothing and balanced between sweetness and spice. There is no upper limit when it comes to ginger, a little helps a lot and a lot helps more. Ginger is the first herb I worked with seriously, drinking two pots of tea every morning made with ginger, angelica, and orange peel, and then blending a thumb sized root, peel and all, into green tea with cayenne and honey. Ginger would hold my hand every morning, and get me through the pain I woke up in.

Ginger's affinities are for the stomach and lungs. It is a relaxant and a circulatory stimulant: the blood ginger drives to the muscles helps them unwind from themselves. Ginger warms the body, clears the lungs, and eases dyspepsia. We can take ginger for a cough, cold, or flu, for stiffness, cramps, and aches, for chills or fever. Ginger is friends with turmeric, citrus peel, cayenne, onion, garlic, hibiscus, cinnamon, cardamom, fennel, and clove. The ginger you buy at the grocery store is the ginger I work with.

Working with Ginger

I boil one or two thumbs of ginger, chopped or grated, for twenty minutes to an hour. I drop a handful of chamomile into the pot, cover, and let steep for twenty more minutes. This blend is very helpful for stress and stomach upset as tea. If I have back pain or cramps, I put the hot tea in a bowl and dip a long, clean piece of fabric (gauze, or even a washcloth) into the bowl. I wrap my back in the cloth and keep it warm with a hot water bottle until I feel better or fall asleep.

Astragalus

Astragalus is a quiet herb. I have never noticed astragalus working, and I've barely ever noticed its slightly sweet and nutty taste blended in with all the other plants in my tea. The work astragalus does is preventative. Astragalus is an adaptogenic and an immune modulator. We take it in food-sized doses, with consistency, to protect our bodies all fall, winter, and spring. Here, the complex polysaccharides in astragalus root stimulate immune function, helping our bodies do the work of protecting us.

Astragalus is friends with codonopsis, shitake, maitake and oyster mushrooms, garlic, ginger, nori, kelp, onion, and cayenne. It is not as easy to find as garlic or ginger but is available at some health food stores. With Astragalus, it may be a bit harder to find organic, so I always make sure to ask. Because astragalus comes from Traditional Chinese Medicine, it can also be found in Chinese grocery stores.

Working with Astragulus

The most basic combination of herbs is astragalus, codonopsis, and angelica. I might take this blend and boil it on the stovetop with coffee beans, or if I'm not drinking coffee, dandelion and chicory root. I could add to this cinnamon, cocoa, orange peel, cardamom, rosehip, ginger, vanilla, or elderberry, or any combination of these plants. They will work synergistically together helping with nutrition, stress management, and immune function.

Another thing I could do with the astragalus blend is to put it into miso or chicken broth with garlic, ginger, onion, nori, shitake and cayenne. This is a deeply nutritious blend and very supportive during colder months.

Elderberry Syrup
1 cup dried elderberries
1 thumb of ginger
Zest of one lemon or orange
1 Litre water
1⁄2-1 cup sugar
Boil elderberries, ginger, and citrus for half an hour
Strain. Add sugar, boil and reduce by half

Flesh

The fleshy part of a plant is its fruit. Sugar, its sweetness and pleasures can be found in fruits, rice, bread, honey, vegetables, even nuts and seeds. Herbalists look to sweetness to soothe and soften, to moisten inflamed tissues, and to heal frayed nerves. Honey and rosewater could help a heartache or a burn. Linden uplifts us, body and spirit. We turn to berries for their vitamins and bioflavonoids, and grains for their rich, life-giving sustenance. Sweetness is a balm for our vulnerable tissues, sweet moments are precious, and often rare.

I remember lighting a scented candle with my mother and saying prayers to goddesses she believed in. I remember foraging for pineapple weed to bring her as a gift. I remember cinnamon toast in the morning and echinacea to calm me down. I think about gatherings around sacred or magickal objects, these things that held special significance.

Gazing back into these dreamlike memories of rituals shining through a conflicted childhood, I remember my magickal mother protecting me and nurturing me with plants from local farms an her garden. This narrative being woven was a powerful demonstration of a maternal figure and female role model. The special tools and ingredients of her practice nurtured my psyche and gave me so many dreams of becoming.

I believe there is healing in even listing the names of herbal tinctures. Lobelia, butterfly pea, and chamomile or blue vervain, lemon balm, and rose. The mystery and magick of the words can awaken a spirit grown old and sick with reason, planting the seeds of a daydream. I believe there is healing in just looking at plants, they can heal us even if we take the time to do nothing more than to sit with them. Paint a tincture onto the side of a building to heal its walls.

Rose Hip

Cooling and toning, pink and tart, the hips of wild rose are its berry-like fruit which ripen during late summer and fall. The taste of a rosehip is somewhere between a strawberry and a cherry, and this herb imparts a soft pink colour when extracted. Rosehips are nutritive, astringent, cooling, and vulnerary. The most common application of rosehip is as a building herb, for its high vitamin content, antioxidants, and flavonoids. Rosehip also makes its way into cough syrups and cold medicines for times when vitamins and flavonoids are needed most. Finally, rosehip is a fantastic addition to a tea, syrup, or oxymel formulated for a picky eater, as its berry-like taste will make a formula sweeter.

We pick rosehips in the fall, when these berries are bright red. Rosehips are abundant in the area, and safe to wildcraft If you are concerned or cannot find any, rosehip can also be found at herbal apothecaries. Rosehip is friends with elderberry, dandelion, nettle, sumac, goji berry, billberry, mullberry, hawthorne, orange peel, tulsi, and marshmallow.

Working with Rose Hip

For a picky eater, a vitamin and mineral tea can be made with simply rosehip and peppermint. Boil two or three tablespoons of dried rosehip in one litre of water for twenty minutes. Take off the heat and add a couple of tablespoons peppermint. Let this sit overnight, and drink throughout the day.

To make rosehip syrup, make this same tea, but with half maple syrup, then reduce until the consistency has thickened.

Hawthorn

Hawthorn tastes like burnt vanilla and has a great heart affinity. This herb is antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory, and cardio protective. The constituents of hawthorn are antioxidant, nervine, and vasodilating. Here, the healing effects of hawthorn on the heart is both symbolic and biological. We take hawthorn for high cholesterol, we take it for a breakup. Hawthorn also is a remedy for high blood pressure, anxiety, and chronic heart conditions. This herb is very safe to take for all ailments of the heart, only contraindicated if you are taking blood pressure medication.

Hawthorn is another plant which is abundant in this region and safe to wildcraft. If you do so, be sure to pick the berries carefully as not to hurt the tree, or yourself. Hawthorn is best friends with linden and wood betony, and friends with elderberry, rosehip, sumac, motherwort, ginger, garlic, and yarrow.

Working with Hawthorn

For a heart healing tea, I take one part hawthorn and boil for ten to twenty minutes, then I take it off the heat and add two parts wood betony, two parts linden, and one-half part rose petals. I steep, covered, for another twenty minutes and always drink warm and with honey.

Alternatively, I might take that same blend to make bitters with. For a strong bitters, I would add to the mix one-half part motherwort, cover in brandy, and steep for two to three weeks. If I am making bitters for someone more sensitive or a child, I would make the bitters with yarrow instead of motherwort, and potentially swap brandy for apple cider vinegar or vegetable glycerin (if using glycerin, heat may need to be added for a proper extraction). After the bitters has steeped, I strain, and add one quarter part honey or maple syrup. This bitters can be taken to help support heart health, but also to fortify oneself emotionally. The bitters is perfect for heartache, stress, overwhelm, or fears.

Elder

Elderflowers look like fine lace, and I cannot find a description of their flavour other than joyful. Elderberries are rich, like the earthiest, muskiest, blueberry imaginable. Fruit and flower have different medicinal properties here. The flowers are cooling and calming, helping heat move through the body, and soothing the throat and lungs. Apart from their nutritional density, elderberries have powerful immuno-supportive properties. Some of the constituents of elder berry prevent viral replication within the body, so these plants make their way into many cough syrups and anti-viral remedies. We turn to elder during coughs, colds, fever and flu. We reach for elderberry for daily nutrition and an immune boost, while we might work with the flowers for heat exhaustion, congestion (including allergies), and anxiety.

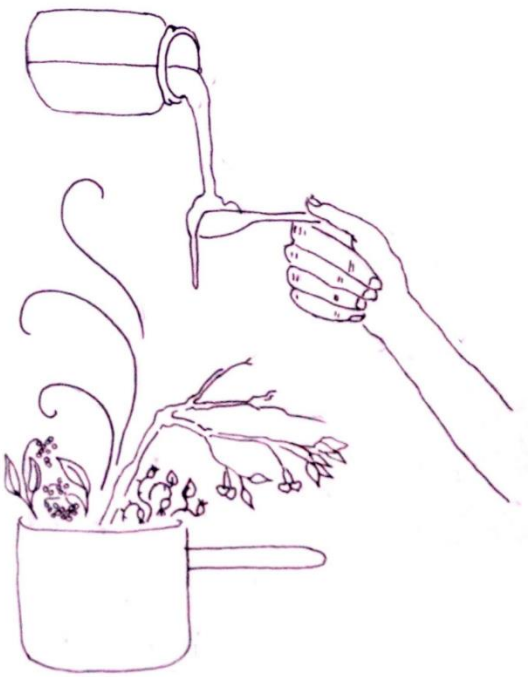
Elder grows locally but is also widely available in health food stores. Be sure to wildcraft with care, in order to share this essential medicine with all the humans and non-humans that require it and consider that buying an organically farmed herb can sometimes be more sustainable overall than wildcrafting, depending on the ecosystem where you are living.

Elder is friends with cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, clove, rosehip, sumac, boneset, blue vervain, wild cherry, wood betony, orange peel, and skullcap. In fact, if you took two parts elderberry, and one-half part all of its friends (maybe one quarter boneset and vervain) and covered with alcohol and honey, you could make an incredible cough syrup.

Working with Elder

An easy tea for a fever that I love is equal parts elderflower, lemon balm, and yarrow, steeped for at least ten minutes. If the fever is an emotional one, this tea will still be effective, and could be followed with a tincture of the exact same blend. This blend is very decongesting, and effective as a steam.

A simple syrup for a cough is equal parts elderberry and rosehip, and one half part wild cherry, boiled for twenty to forty minutes. After this, I strain, add as much maple syrup as there is water in my pot, and then reduce it all the way down until it looks viscous enough.



Alterative Tea
1 part marshmallow root
1 part calendula
1/2 part nori
1/2 part bladderwrack
1/4 part rose petal, or 1 Tbs rose water
Place 2-4 Tbs herbs into a 1 Qt mason jar
Cover with boiled water and let cool
Place in the fridge and steep for 4-24 hours

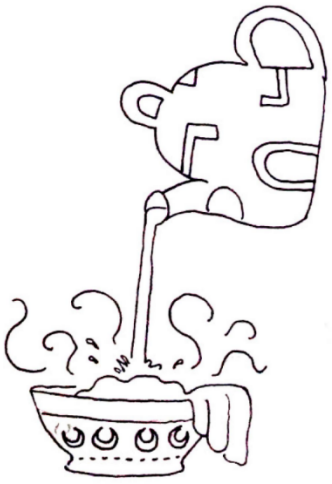
Sea

The sea is a place of mystery for humans. It is a place I can lose myself in, staring at. From oceanic depths, an herbalist collects bladderwrack, nori, dulse, Irish moss, oyster shells, and kelp. The deep green of these seaweeds is chlorophyll and other life giving constituents. The fishy umami, proteins and essential lipids. We treasure seaweed for its talent for healing thyroid problems, and mineral deficiency while giving thanks to fish and shellfish for giving their oils to quell a body's inflammation. The deepness of fluidity is likewise cherished. We look to the sea for its wisdom to guide our own constitutions, seeing the enduring strength of softness, and prizing mucilaginous plants like marshmallow root and hibiscus for their watery capacities.

The sea's unknowable mysteries are embodied for me by working through a state of unknowing. As I make work, I am exploring without needing knowledge or understanding. The practice emerges from a web of explorations in different modalities: embodied making, slow learning through daily practice, fieldwork and collaborations, and gathering ideas through historical research. I find this work and practice also slipping into my life, cooking, tasting and building relationships within my community are the daily practices of an herbalist that make their way into my research

Taking inspiration from coral reefs and weeping willow, we herbalists entangle the model of slow growth deep into the marrow of our philosophy. Katja Swift, an herbalist and teacher of mine, taught me to only wildcraft with plants from lands I have known for ten years or more, and only recommend herbs that I work with in my own body for a month. The practice of waiting a month with an herb may have come about to reflect the duration of infusion for most tinctures and oxymels.nThe making of traditional medicine is also slow. A tea is the fastest herbal medicine to make, and even these are most often infused overnight. Herbs work with the body as growing relationships spanning years.

Cycles and rhythms are important to herbalists, our habits repeated, as sure as the tide. The bulk of my research happens gradually in a repetition of small tasks and chores that comprise life. There is research underlying the daily practice of making tea, kimchi, chicken soup, and repeating these simple tasks over and again. Gradually, a familiarity and kinship with the red clover blossom (*which moves from the fields beside the railway tracks to a cup of boiled wate*r), the smell of a good ferment attracting fruit flies on my windowsill (*it's bread, cayenne, urine, and thyme*), the duration to boil bone marrow (*four hours, carve away flesh, then twenty-four, crush the bones, then another four if you must time it*), blooms. There is what I know, what I've read and learned and memorized, and then there is an underlying knowledge, a knowledge untrackable, that grows slowly, like a brook into a river over time.



Marshmallow Root

Demulctant, vulnerary, cooling, moistening, sweet, delicate, and slimy. Marshmallow root is cooling, hydrating, antiseptic, and anti-inflammatory. The mucilaginous consistency of marshmallow tea signals to the body to cycle its fluids. The body drains the lymph and makes good use of the tea provided. Marshmallow and water mix together into a gently hydrating gel that can clean a wound, soothe a cold, ease indigestion, and is fantastically soothing to the tissues it touches. As marshmallow root travels through the body, it helps with inflammation, dehydration, and infections. We work with marshmallow as a nutritive herb, but also in cases of kidney or bladder infection, coughs, colds, and flu, Crohn's, acid reflux, GERD and IBD. This plant helps with a sore throat or dry cough, dehydration, and any situation where a tissue is dry, burning, or enflamed.

So far, I have not spotted marshmallow root growing, I always buy dried root at the store. When we work with marshmallow root, we are often working with it in the place of slippery elm, which has become endangered. In any situation where you might apply slippery elm, the elms thank you for substituting with marshmallow. Apart from the elms, marshmallow is friends with mullein, rosehips, calendula, plantain, dandelion, nettle, hibiscus, goldenrod, fenugreek, licorice, and cinnamon.

Working with Marshmallow Root

To make marshmallow tea, I simply place two to four tablespoons of dried marshmallow root in a one litre jar, cover with cold water, and leave overnight. I do it this way because the constituents of marshmallow dissolve in cold water. If I want to make it as a blend with herbs that require boiling, I just start hot, let it cool down on the counter, and then move to the fridge overnight. Marshmallow root tea can also be reheated once strained. I drink this tea, usually at room temperature, throughout the day. I might also take a pot of stronger tea, and use it as a bath or wash for burns, cuts, or just very dry skin. I sometimes do the tea with a stick of cinnamon, some rosewater, hibiscus and rosehips, cucumber, or fresh peppermint. Marshmallow is a mild tasting herb, and many things work with it.

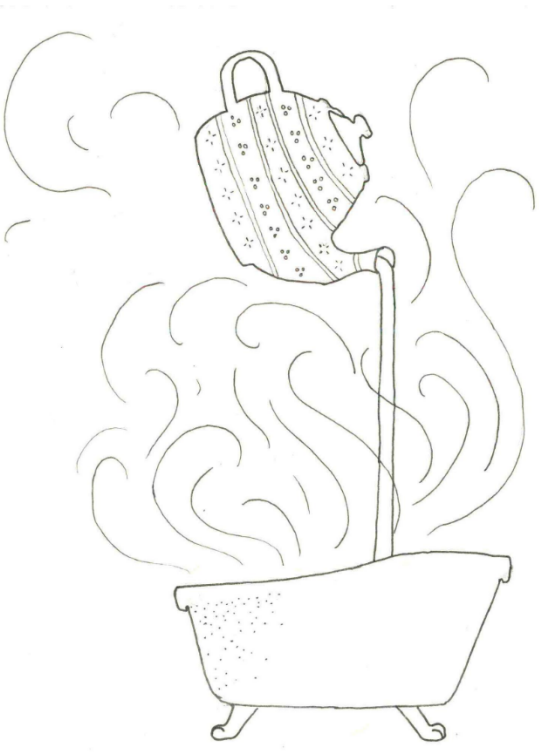
Hibiscus

The bright, rosy color and taste of hibiscus is irresistible to me. This flower is showy, tart, cooling, and relaxing. It is nutritive, diuretic, antiseptic, alterative, refrigerant, anti-inflammatory, and vulnerary. Hibiscus stimulates lymphatic drainage, moving fluids through the tissues. Hibiscus cools and quiets the body, draining, calming, and rehydrating. We work with hibiscus as an antiseptic wash, or to treat urinary tract and bladder infections, in cases of high blood pressure, and to bring relief during hot flashes or fevers.

Hibiscus is easy to find at grocery stores in the tea section. If you are not able to find "loose leaf" hibiscus tea, be aware that for an effective dose of hibiscus, you will probably need about five teabags worth each time. Hibiscus is friends with red clover, rose hip and rose petal, calendula, plantain, marshmallow root, goldenrod, cranberry, aloe, and ginger.

Working with Hibiscus

I have a very hard time with water retention in my own body. My body holds onto water in my intestines and legs, and is often dehydrated everywhere else. I work with an alterative tea when this is happening which is equal parts marshmallow, ginger, and hibiscus. I let the tea steep overnight, and drink a litre a day of this. This blend pleases me so much, marshmallow rehydrates, ginger stimulates circulation, and hibiscus drains old fluid. This tea also makes its way into the bath where the chemical constituents of these plants have the same effect on the skin as they do internally.



Enduring, unknowable, and rhythmic, in a cycle of days, nights, months, and seasons, I am adrift in my work. I am able to see the task in front of me, though I may not understand it. I don't have all the knowledge of a master herbalist, and I cannot have a bird's eye view of my practice, but I trust that by continuing these rhythms, this body of knowledge slowly grows broader and wider. Doing this daily work is like being immersed in an oceanic painting.

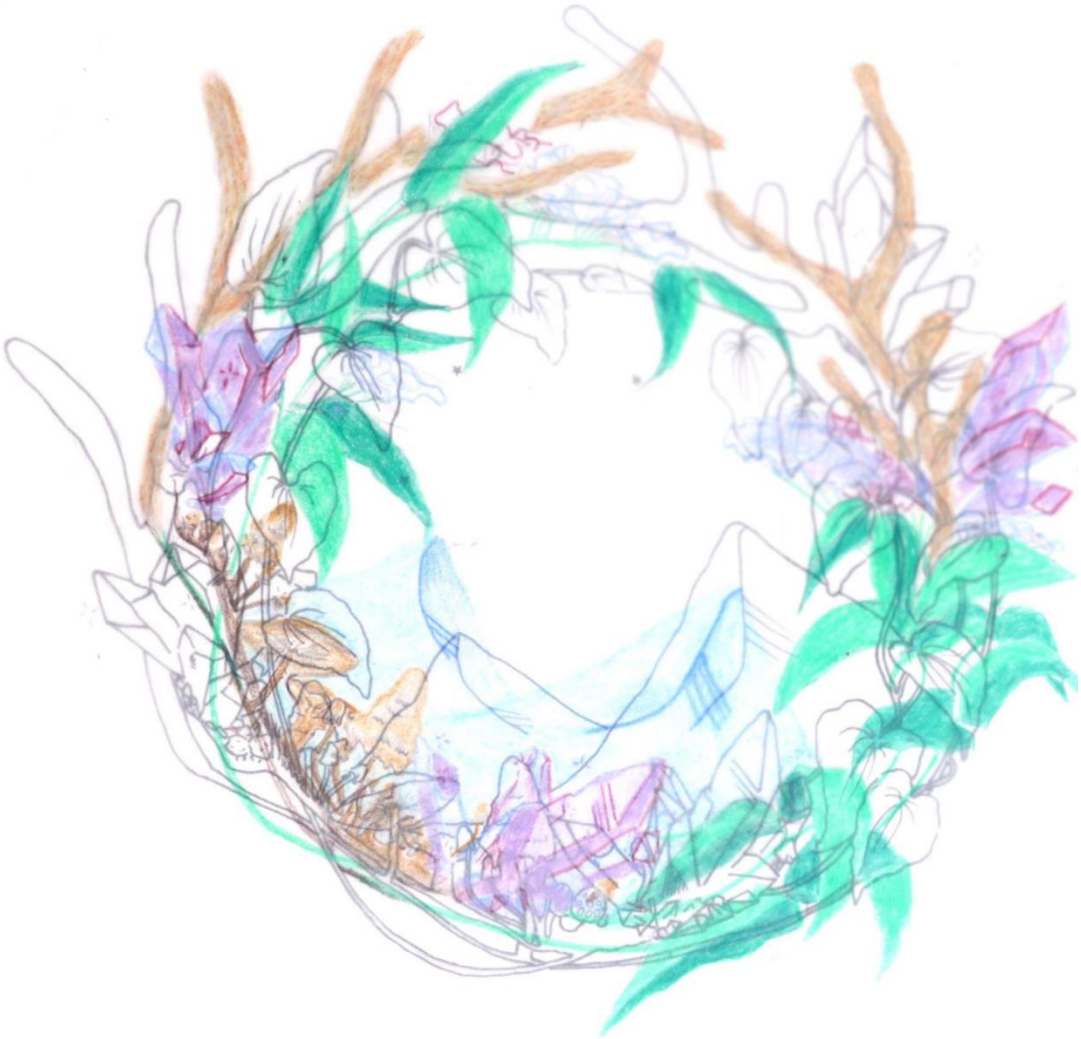
Seaweeds

Kelp, dulse, nori, bladderwrack, and Irish moss are cooling, and blood building, umami and salty. These seaweeds are nutritive, toning, emollient, demulctant, and vulnerary. Seaweeds provide the body with minerals, vitamins, and proteins, they inhibit the growth and replication of certain viruses, they relax the muscles and increase thyroid. We take seaweed for nutritional deficiency, hypothyroid, gout, immune deficiency, muscle aches and back pain.

Though seaweed is available in the area, be careful of pollution, the further from the city, the better. Seaweed is friends with maitake, shitake, and oyster mushrooms, cayenne, ginger, turmeric, garlic, astragalus, codonopsis, nettle, and reishi. For topical applications of seaweed, it is best friends with marshmallow and rose, and good friends with calendula and plantain.

Working with Seaweeds

For a topical application of seaweed, I soak long strips of nori or kelp in rosewater and apply to the area. This is helpful for a sunburn, irritated skin, and sore muscles. For the most part, I take my seaweed as a food. I like to add nori to salads or stir-fry, dulse to salad dressing, and kelp to soups and stews. I also make homemade Furikake (a Japanese seasoning) by grinding up nori, then mixing with toasted sesame seeds and nutritional yeast which I put on everything, but especially popcorn.



Poultice for Mending
1 part boneset
1 part comfrey
1 part fresh ginger, grated
Cheesecloth
Pour hot water over herbs, and spoon into cheesecloth.
Wrap the cheesecloth up, like a package and place on affected area (strains, sprains, aches, pains)
Leave on for up to an hour.
Repeat daily.

Marrow

We build our resilience through our bones. Our bones build white blood cells to defend us from pathogens. In this way, at a human's utmost interior, there is consideration to our utmost exterior. At the core of our beings, we are preparing for communication, community, and conflict. The core of my work, my methodology, is to me its marrow. Not only is it marrow because the knowledge is embodied, but it is also marrow because these considerations are those considerations comprising my most interior move to my hands becoming part of a communal engagement.

I am mindful of the interplay between my body and consciousness, reflecting on enacted experiences as research. Here, sensation, perceptions, and interpretations engage sensorially between plants and people. I learn about plants through organoleptics, which is the development of an understanding of chemical profiles through taste. I am practicing and developing this skill. With these influences in mind, sometimes I do research in my spirit, sometimes I do research in my skin.

Plants communicate with us and each other all the time. Learning about these communications has changed the way I relate to plants: I believe that I am in a community with sage and elder. We help each other, and I learn from them. I work with plants every day

.

I do this work with my hands, my nose, my mouth, my skin.

In the beginning of my practice, from a desperation driven by my long sickness, I worked with herbs carelessly. I bought bottled herbal formulas I didn't know anything about and took them as if they were Tylenols or Tums. This reckless desperation led me to poison myself from a strong dose of wormwood and horse chestnut. I feel that there is a particular sort of education embedded in this story.

I became violently ill

I my hands, my mouth, my skin.

Every muscle of my lower body was cramped as tightly as it could

my muscles, my bones, my thighs.

When I saw blood in my feces, I took a taxi to the hospital

my bowels, my chest, my blood.

Walking was tricky for a few days

my hips, my legs, my feet

I begin to learn that plant beings require reverence and care

my brain, my spirit.

More skin and spirit research came from the look in my partner's eyes when I gave him his first compress, with skullcap and spearmint, for a migraine

touching his neck, seeing his relief, his gratitude, feeling it radiating from him, smelling the herbs and feeling them run down my hands slipped through my pores and into my bones.

Boneset

Boneset is cooling and relaxing with a bitter and mossy taste. Boneset is so named for its affinity for the deep tissues, reaching down to soothe deep aches and bone pains, even those that are excruciating. Boneset is emetic, diaphoretic, and antipyretic. Like many bitter herbs, boneset is cooling, but in this case, it is particularly effective. We work with boneset at times when there is intermittent fever with aching and pain.

Though it may be unique to my particular school of herbalists, I have been taught to work with boneset topically in injury, wrapping a muscular or bone injury in a poultice of boneset. I also have done much work with boneset in my own body for cases of tissue pain without fever. I work with boneset for torn muscles, menstrual pain, back pain, and headaches. For these cases, I either work with tincture, or with tea.

Working with Boneset

For endometriosis or very intense menstrual cramping, I make a tea of one part skullcap, one half part mugwort, and one quarter part boneset. I flavour this with two parts peppermint, and one quarter part each of lavender and rose. I steep for twenty minutes, and drink the tea hot, to help flush the herbs through my system. This tea is intense, tasting very earthy, musky, and floral, but when I am bleeding, I find my body craves the bitter taste. If I am formulating this tea for someone with heavy bleeding, I work with nettle instead of mugwort, as mugwort can exacerbate this.

For those that find boneset unpalatable, a tincture is a great way to take this herb. Simply cover fresh or dried leaves with high proof brandy and wait one month.

For me, from action comes profound learning. In practice, healing is a lived/embodied/research/labour/experience. This lived/embodied/research/labour/experience is what I enter daily, and what I learn from. A research of the marrow is chaotic. It is muscle memory and gut flora. It is work and also eating, spilling, cleaning, bathing, breathing.

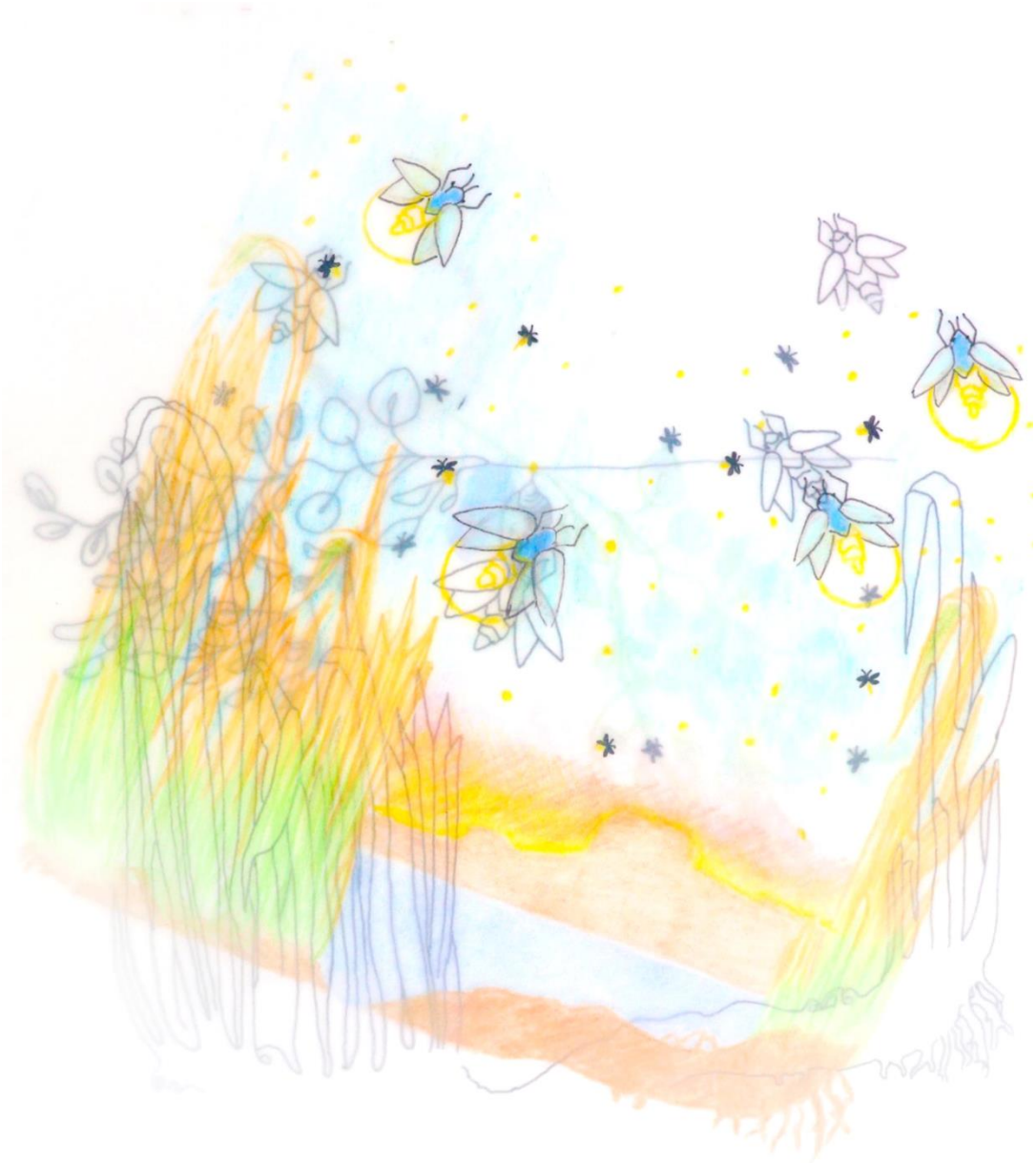
Ashawaghanda

An astringent and musky flavoured root mild enough to blend into cinnamon tea, ashwagandha has become famous for its adaptogenic properties. This herb is also nervine, antispasmodic, immunomodulatory, and deeply strengthening. Over time, ashwagandha can help a body to regulate its circadian rhythm, which in turn helps to stabilize emotions, balance hormones, and strengthen the immune system. I think of ashwagandha as fitting into marrow here because this long-term relationship with it slowly sinks into our bones and helps to bring about deep and profound change. This herb is a plant that can fit into many different protocols, it is flexible, finding a place to restore health where it is needed.

Ashwagandha is not native to Canada, it comes from Ayurvedic practice. This herb has become widely available in recent years, and is often added to health products. To begin to get to know ashwagandha, it is best to buy dried or powdered herb rather than choosing a formula as their doses tend to be too low to have an effect. Ashwagandha is friends with eleuthero, angelica, tulsi, reishi, licorice, and cacao.

Working with Ashawaghanda

I love to make coffee or chai with a thousand adaptogens. Many adaptogens have rooty, spicy flavours that begin to taste like dessert with cinnamon, honey, and milk. For instance,I might blend equal parts ashwagandha, eleuthero, angelica, reishi, licorice, and orange peel, fill a big pot with water and coconut milk, add in a couple of cinnamon sticks, a tablespoon of crushed cardamom pods, a pinch of nutmeg, and a thumb of chopped ginger, boil, and then simmer for a few hours on low.



Fire Cider
One onion
A head of garlic
A thumb of horseradish
One chopped ginger root
A lemon
A handful of rosehips
A pinch of lavender
Thyme
Sager
Chop fine, cover with apple cider vinegar and honey. Infuse one month and strain.

Cocoon

Heat is the greatest catalyst, I think. Heat brings those things seeming most inert to life. Heat is dancing and running and climbing and leaping. Sometimes, we humans think of our passions as dangerous, reflected in the plant world, sometimes heat is a claw. The spice of chili peppers is to protect the plant from both animals, and bacteria. I chose cocoon as the title of this section to acknowledge that though heat is a defense, it can also be protective and comforting, even enough to be transformational.

I I like to burn my fingers on the steam from my teapot and poke my frigid toes into my partners back. Quaking in the steam of my shower, I rub oil of ginger and cloves over my legs and knees whenever I get the chance, reminding my blood to explore numb toes.

Cocoon heat is the gentle heat. Cocoon heat draws the body into itself, warming us from the inside out. Cocoon heat relaxes our muscles and soothes our stomach. Cocoon heat is the delicious golden warmth of ginger and cinnamon, it is calamus, angelica, cardamom, turmeric, fennel and cacao. Cocoon heat is powerful because it is slow. When we build ourselves up gently with a cocoon of warmth, the slow, daily nudge of just a bit of extra force can build an enduring resilience that we feel to our core.

When heat is a claw, it strengthens the body's defenses with its fire. Heat can build a strong enough fever to ward off infection. A fiery herb can be medicinal in this way. We take cayenne, garlic, horseradish, onion, rosemary, and thyme when we need to smoke out a flu. We burn spices and herbs and fill our houses with smoke and steam. Claw heat makes our eyes water and our noses run, it helps us drain out, sweat out, and rid ourselves in times of need. Claw heat can burn us a little too, when we work with it too much, we might start to feel dry and parched. Some bodies are very sensitive to heat, especially bacteria-bodies, but a small amount of heat can have a synergistic effect on the human body where all that movement energy from heat becomes dynamic vitality.

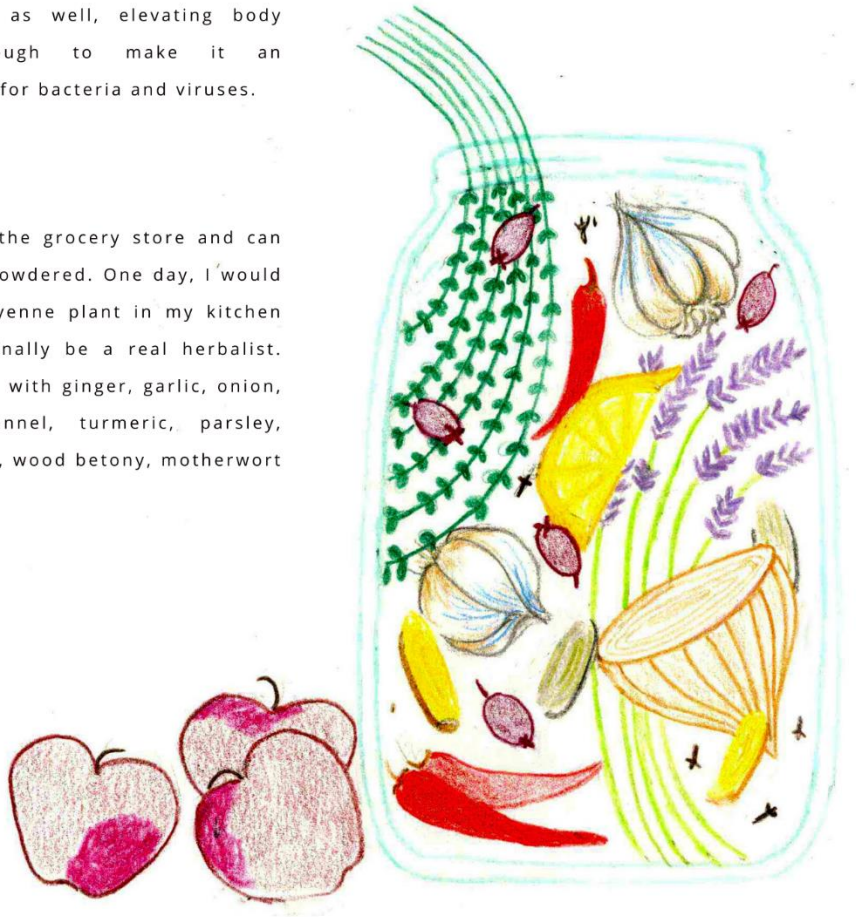
Cayenne

The spice of cayenne is such a pure and clean flavour, my tongue almost registers it as sweet. Cayenne is a cardinal warming herb: drying, stimulating, diaphoretic, carminative and pungent. Cayenne operates as an herbal activator by drawing blood to the tissues it touches and stimulating digestive motility. We turn to cayenne to break a fever, relax tense muscles, and move sluggish or slow digestion. Cayenne is an important herb for topical applications, it is effective for relieving pain both palliatively, as some of its constituents desensitize the nerves. It also works holistically as it improves circulation in the area so that tissues that need to heal are replenished with fresh blood. The heat from cayenne can improve immune function as well, elevating body temperature enough to make it an unhospitable host for bacteria and viruses.

I buy cayenne at the grocery store and can only ever find it powdered. One day, I would like to grow a cayenne plant in my kitchen and then I will finally be a real herbalist. Cayenne is friends with ginger, garlic, onion, clove, cumin, fennel, turmeric, parsley, cilantro, hawthorn, wood betony, motherwort and rose.

Working with Cayenne

When someone is sick, the best thing I can think to do is give them lots of warming herbs. I make miso broth with a head of garlic, onion, and cayenne. I make a big pot of this, so that they can drink enough to clear their sinuses. I might apply a cayenne salve as well, to keep their blood moving even if they are bedridden.



Calamus

Calamus is both spicy and bitter, which is rare to find. To me, this herb tastes rich, nutty, metallic, and tingly. Calamus is a cholagogue, a circulatory stimulant, a carminative, and sialagogue. Calamus draws fluid to the mouth, soothing the throat and stomach. This unique combination of bitter, warmth, and aromatics stimulate digestion in several different ways. The aromatic quality draws blood upwards and to the core. The bitter quality stimulates the secretion of bile. The warming quality improves peristalsis by stoking digestive fire. Many people also find that this combination acts on the nervous system as well. I have heard calamus worked with in order to get out of anxiety, and into a "rest and digest" state. This quality is one I see in many fiery, bitter roots, all of whom I consider to be calamus's good friends: ginger, turmeric, angelica, elecampane, and kava kava (although kava is much more tingle than fire). With all of these herbs, except maybe elecampane, a fantastic way to work with them is to simply chew on the fresh or dried roots, you can fill an altoid tin with a mixture of your favourites and bring this out with you for unplanned meals or unplanned anxiety.

Calamus grows in the Okanogan and Kootenay region. In Vancouver, I buy calamus from Quidditas or Sweet Cherubim (the quality being much better at Quidditas as they have higher turnover of their bulk herbs).

Working with Calamus

For a warming digestive bitters, mix equal parts calamus, and ginger peel and cover with brandy. This is a bittering agent. To make the bitters more aromatic, you can add one part burdock, one half part fennel seeds, an orange peel, and fresh ginger. Aromatics can also change the medicinal properties of the bitters. The aromatics I mentioned are for a digestion focused bitters. To make this bitters more focused around calamus's throat protection, add lung focused herbs instead, such as elderflower, lemon, and wild cherry bark. To work with a focus on calamus's nervine properties, add ginger, chamomile, and hawthorn.

Warming herbs are easy to find. I buy cayenne, ginger, garlic, onion, nutmeg, horseradish, turmeric, and clove at the grocery store near my house. I dissolve the cayenne into alcohol for a tincture to strengthen the heart, I make ginger honey for digestive distress, I make horseradish into fire cider and garlic into thieves, cinnamon and turmeric made into a coconut milk tea or herbal pastilles for diarrhea, and the clove is extracted into oil which is a remedy for any sort of oral infection, while also being effective rubbed into tense muscles. The ubiquity of spice can be relied on here for an entire home apothecary.

Garlic

Garlic is a taste that leaps from the plant, clinging to fingers, faces, and tongues. As potent as the aroma and flavour of garlic are, they don't even begin to signify the strength of garlic medicine. Garlic is a diaphoretic, pungent, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and carminative herb. Garlic stimulates circulation and liver activity and balances blood sugar. The antioxidant and anti-inflammatory constituents of garlic make it an excellent cardiovascular tonic. Because garlic moves the lymph, especially in the head and chest, it is a remedy for respiratory and sinus infections. When we work with garlic, we do so a head at a time: the more potent the taste, the more potent the medicine. Garlic is friends with ginger, turmeric, onion, cayenne, lemon, horseradish, parsley, cilantro, oregano, and thyme.

Working with Garlic

There is one way to work with garlic that makes it very easy. Take a few heads of garlic, peel them and put them in a jar, and cover them with honey. After about five days, the garlic will turn transparent, which means that it has candied. This treat is sweet, savoury, and delicious. You can get anyone to eat a lot of garlic that way. Once you have eaten all the candied garlic, the remaining honey can be added to salad dressings, vegetables, meat or tofu.

Another recipe which every herbalist knows is fire cider. We all have our own variations of this, but this is an oxymel for the immune system containing a few cloves of garlic, some citrus fruit (traditionally lemon), cayenne peppers, horseradish (many people omit the horseradish, and this is fine), onion or green onion, green herbs, especially thyme, fresh ginger and turmeric. I like to make mine with garlic, ginger, onion, Thai chili, thyme, lemon or grapefruit, lavender, rosehip, crab apple, and clove. You cover this with vinegar and let it extract for one month, and then add honey to taste (really, honey is part of them medicine so it's fine to add quite a bit if it helps you take it). During colder months, I take a shot of this every day to keep my immune system strong.

Working with garlic topically might be hard to imagine, but for situations where there is not enough appetite to eat garlic, but garlic would be helpful, this method can be effective. The volatile oils of garlic are particularly suited for this work as they are absorbed into the bloodstream by touch (you can get garlic breath from a foot bath) and travel to the lungs. Simply make a strong garlic decoction and bath part of the body in it. The same volatiles extract wonderfully into oil and are extremely effective for ear infection.

Herbal Steam for Congestion
For Deep Congestion:
Thyme, oregano, monarda, or sage
For children, or very dry and inflamed states:
Chamomile or yarrow
Throw several generous handfuls of dry
Herb into a pot of boiling water.
Remove from heat, and sit above the pot,
Covering oneself with a towel.
Breathe deeply under towel for five to ten
Minutes. The water can be re-used for bathing.

Lung

My body is reached out to and touched by the world, through my lungs, with every breath I take. Though my lungs are deeply situated in my body, I have never met them. Though I have never met them, they are penetrated by bacteria and microbes at every moment. The lungs are a great focus for the world at this moment in time, they are a source of anxiety for us. Our voice, our breath, our strength, and our life force, are unified by vulnerability.

In the lungs, there is a special relationship between us animals and plants: we complete each other's breath. We rely upon each other for this, and this is why the lungs for me represent being-with. The lungs are a reaching outward organ, the lungs are represented by and representing desire that is social. Through our lungs, we can experience the essence of other beings, and through our lungs, we create the noises we use to communicate with each other. Plants also create communication for our lungs, producing essential oils we inhale, and can learn from. These oils also cleanse our air passages, their antiseptic properties protecting us from disease. The aroma of a plant can calm or stimulate us, they can disinfect, and move blood around the body. To talk to a tree, all you have to do is breathe.

Rose

When I was a little girl, my mother and I would stop to smell lilac and roses bushes every time we passed them. If I could touch the smell of rose with my fingertips, it would feel like the combination of satin and leather. Roses are aromatic, astringent, and sweet. We drink rosewater to quell hot and enflamed states. Rose is cooling and tonifying, soothing inflammation and tightening up lax tissues. These action makes rose a fantastic choice when dealing with burns and sunburns. We turn to rose for sadness and heartache, especially in combination of wood betony, hawthorn, and linden. In summer and spring, rose can cool the body down, and refresh heat-lax tissues. The topical applications of rose are so effective and diverse that rose is basically a panacea here, and a bottle of rosewater can replace a whole bathroom cupboard's worth of lotions and salves. I work with rose for burns, varicose veins, acne, rosacea, enflamed skin, and certain rashes.

Rose is easy to find, but be sure you are working with wild rose and not domesticated. They are easy to tell apart, as wild rose has five petals, whereas domesticated rose has many, many more. Rose is friends with wood betony, linden, hawthorn, and motherwort for nervine and cardio supportive qualities, hibiscus, lemon balm, and willow to cool down, and aloe, green tea, licorice, witch hazel, chamomile, yarrow, and elderflower topically.

Working with Rose

I make my own lotion with rose by warming one part cocoa butter, one part almond oil, and one fifth part beeswax in a pot, along with rose petals, licorice, and St. John's wort. After the oil is fragrant, I strain it into my blender and let it cool until it almost, but not quite, set. This is a salve, and would be very nice, but very heavy, so as much oil as I have made, I have to add in an equal amount of liquid. My liquid mixture is one part rose water and one part aloe vera gel. I turn the blender on a low setting, and slowly by slowly pour the liquid in. As soon as it starts to look like whipped cream, it's done. I keep the lotion in the fridge, because it has no preservatives.

This recipe took me a few tries to get right, but my failures were absolutely still useable, they were just a little runny or separated.

Thyme

Warming, drying, thyme is fiery and savory, full of energy and vital force. Thyme is antibacterial, antiseptic, aromatic, carminative, stimulant, and expectorant. A bronchodilator most fragrant, thyme was made to be inhaled. The volatile oils in thyme stoke digestive fire and are antibacterial on contact. Thyme also increases circulation and is often extracted into oils and worked with in salves. Because thyme both dilates bronchial tissues and has some antibacterial properties, it is fantastic lung medicine when inhaled. We can burn bundles of thyme, work with essential oils, or boil it in water for a steam. If you suspect you have been exposed to an infection, you can sit above a steaming pot of boiled thyme with a towel to keep the scent contained, and inhale to help your body fight off whatever you have been exposed to. It can also be effective to simply keep a pot of thyme simmering on low in water whenever you are at home. When I am too sick to get together an herbal steam, I just put a few drops of time essential oil in the shower. The heat from the shower will be full of aroma and it can clear out the lungs, throat, and sinus.

Thyme shares these qualities with other aromatic herbs and is friends with rosemary, monarda, sage, yarrow, chamomile, peppermint, eucalyptus, and tea tree. If you aren't ready to start growing thyme, just buy it fresh or dried at the grocery store.

Working with thyme

A famous herbal recipe is thieves' vinegar. This is equal parts rosemary, sage, and thyme, extracted into herbal vinegar along with a little bit of garlic, and a little bit of clove. Simply fill a jar with herbs, pour vinegar over it until it is completely covered (a fermenting weight can be very helpful here), cover the jar, and leave it to extract one month before straining. One more tip is to be sure to use a jar with a plastic lid, as a regular mason jar will oxidize. This vinegar can be taken daily for immune support.

Lavender

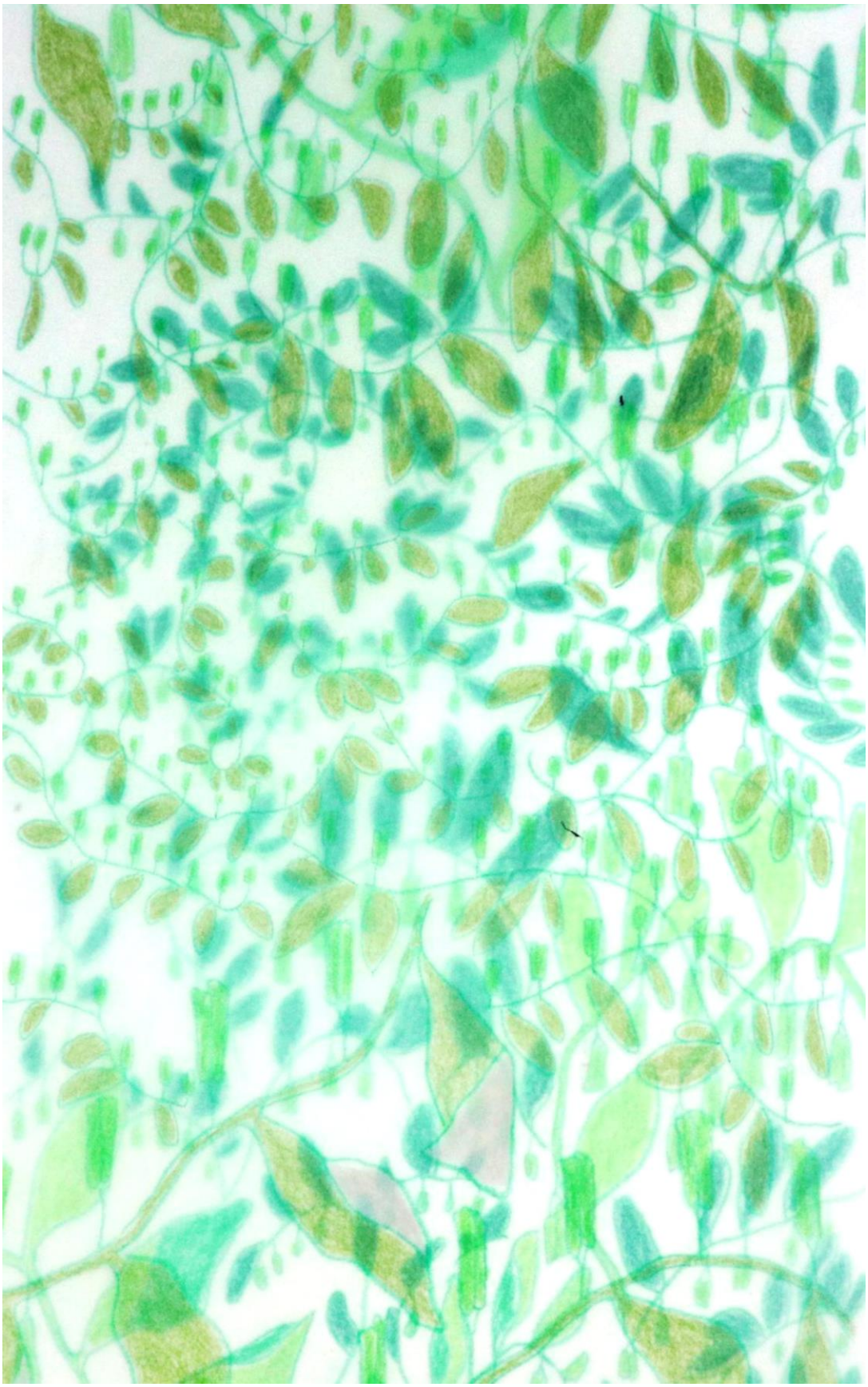
The aroma of lavender is so strong it is almost spicy. Lavender is throat and lung clearing, antiseptic, nervine, carminative, and emmenagogic. Those spicy and antiseptic qualities in lavender are from such potent volatile oils that it can dry a body out. For this reason, I tend to only work with lavender internally in small doses. More often I work with lavender in fumigations, steams, baths, and soaks where its antiseptic properties can have their effect. When I work with lavender topically, I do so in such a way that the skin is only exposed to a very dilute amount, or that will be rinsed away. Lavender can make an excellent rinse, having an antibacterial effect, and then being washed away so not to cause any irritation. Lavender draws blood towards it, improving circulation. For this reason, lavender oil or salve can be very soothing to sore muscles. Lavender moves energy upwards, and this can be helpful for the lungs upon inhalation, or relieving a headache in tea or tincture.

Lavender grows very well on a balcony or porch, and if available, this is the best way to keep it on hand. Lavender is friends with rosemary, sage, orange peel, ginger, clove, peppermint, spearmint, chamomile, lemon balm, skullcap, passionflower, and vervain.

Working with Lavender

For a chest cold, make a tea with one part mullein, one half part citrus peel, and a pinch of lavender. For tinnitus or ear infections, extract these same herbs into an oil and massage into the ear area, you can also tilt your head and put a few drops into your ear, resting on one side for fifteen minutes or so on each side.

For anxiety, blend one part chamomile, one part spearmint, one part skullcap, one quarter part lavender, and one quarter part rose. This blend can be a tea, you could make an herbal steam, or you could brew it very strong and add to your bath.



A Tea to help us Breathe
1 Part Lung Wort Lichen
1 Part angelica root
1 part Ginger
Cover in boiled water and let steep overnight
Reheat in the morning and drink immediately.

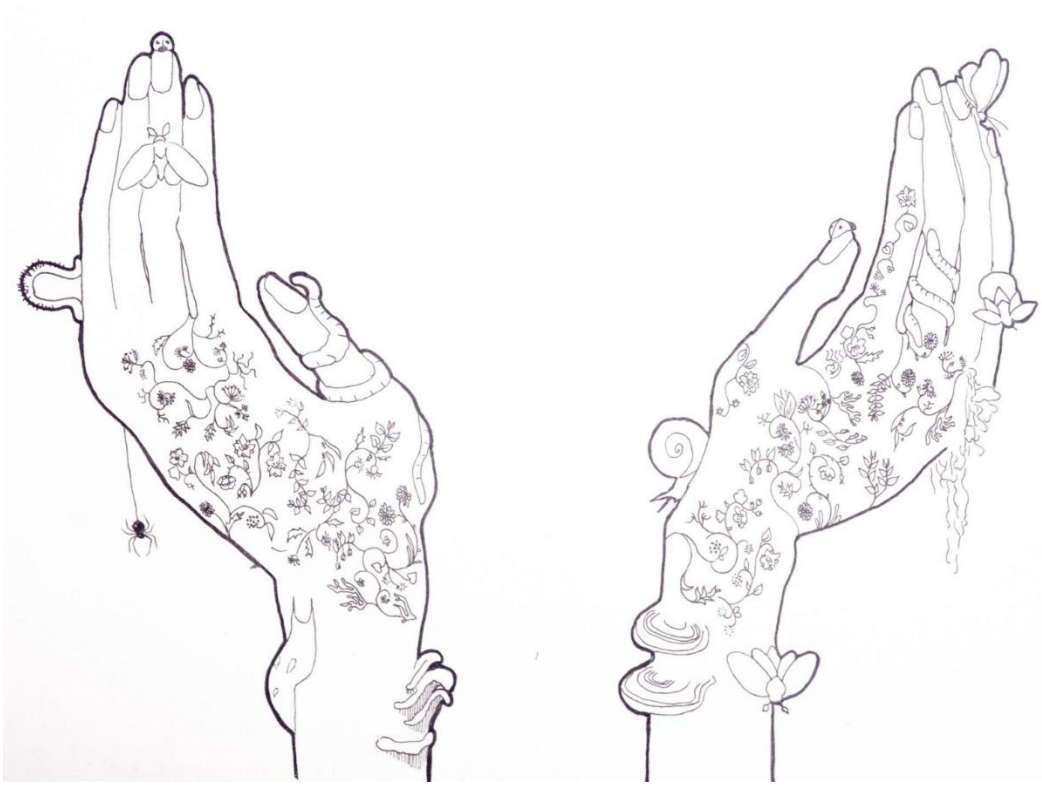
Web

To make medicine, I go outside and collect herbs. I ask my teachers for guidance of the traditions, and to clients for guidance about the specifics of their lives, experiences, and bodies. When I am walking to find plants, I am walking in a place filled with the smells of trees and grass, little mosquitoes, flies, and spiders, deer, bears, slugs and snails. They are also looking for food and medicine.

My hands dig into the bacteria filled soil, finding earthworms on the way, and probably intruding on the mycelial network throughout. I find some licorice root, or wild ginger, I pick red clover and goldenrod. I admire the Oregon grape. I don't know the biographies of the herbs I collected, I cannot know their histories, but I know that these herbs do have histories, and that until I found them, their lives had been entwined with countless other beings, some mammalian, some microscopic, and that these kinships have made them stronger, more resilient, and more vibrant as they continue their wild lives.

In my home, I work with these plants. As I chop, grind, dry, and extract, the essential oils of the herbs find their way into my lungs. Nectar, juices and sap stain my hands. Bugs burrowed on inner leaves are relocated to my kitchen. All throughout my body, bacteria that are and are not me interact with the bacteria from the soil, and eating as I go, I begin to absorb the constituents of the herbs, the matter of the plants becoming my skin, my hips, my blood.

I bring the medicine to my clients, and tasting it, smelling it, they become also connected to that land. They become part of the soil and earth and plants where I gathered. Sharing the same plant matter in our bodies, we are connected to each other. The matter I have brought into my body guides me forward, becoming one with the brain cells that comprise my thoughts. I am enmeshed here in an infinite feedback loop of growing and collecting and eating, being inspired by the herbal medicines I take create new formulations, my thoughts aspire to be plant thoughts, but in a way, they are already.



Irish Moss

Irish moss is a lichen most known for its spectacular viscosity. This herb is an interspecies collaboration between a fungus and several algae. Like humans and our symbiotes, there is no sensible distinction here between these beings. Irish moss is cooling, demulctant, relaxant, expectorant, and vulnerary. The dried herb rehydrates into a thick green, gold, or purple gel full of nutrients capable of rehabilitating depleted body. We turn to Irish moss for chronic weakness and dryness, particularly in the skin, digestive, or respiratory system. The herb can be medicine for ulcers, heartburn, lung or bladder infections, constipation, anorexia, a palliative treatment during or after food poisoning, or colitis. Irish moss is a tonic herb, well suited for long-term work on sensitive systems.

This herb can be found at health food stores and herbal apothecaries. As the plant has gained some popularity in vegan and raw foods cooling, I have also had good luck with ordering Irish moss online. Irish moss is friends with astragalus, shitake, marshmallow root, hawthorn, turmeric, angelica, and cinnamon.

Working with Irish Moss

The first step with this plant is to rehydrate in a cold infusion for several days, it is important here to rinse this plant very thoroughly as it usually is mixed with a lot of sand. After a few days, the herb will have thickened into a gel and can be added to soups and stews, or applied to the skin.

For cases of convalescence, mix equal parts of Irish moss and powdered marshmallow root and one quarter part fenugreek, mix with warm water until it is a thin gruel, and let cool. Have a small bowl of this every couple of hours until your strength has returned.

I cannot listen to a plant without being aware of all of its brothers and sisters, a song too complex for me to understand, but I don't need to understand the song to join in. When we talk about working with a plant, we grow closer to being aware of the song itself.

Reishi

Reishi mushroom erupts from tree trunks in the deep forest and is patterned like Saturn's rings, salty, bitter, and precious. Reishi is adaptogenic, analgesic, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant. Reishi is an herb which stabilizes the body. We turn to reishi to balance blood sugar, wake up the immune system, lower cholesterol, and balance emotions. The potency of reishi's adaptogenic effect is notable. We can take reishi to help us adapt to new diets, new climates, it is a friend to those undergoing any environmental change. Reishi also helps our bodies harmonize systemically by enhancing immune function, tumor seeking cells, and balancing consciousness with physical state thereby bridging the gap between thinking and feeling.

Reishi can be readily found in grocery stores and health food stores. It is often found in capsules or in adaptogenic coffee blends. Capsules here are preferable to an "adaptogen latte" because reishi would be included as a very small part of an herbal blend, and once powdered, loses potency. Capsules can be very expensive, the best option by far here is to try to find sliced reishi at an herbal apothecary and extract this by decocting in water.

Working with Reishi

Reishi is very bitter, which is why it is so often made in coffee blends. This is very easy to do at home. The recipe I use here is to boil two parts crushed coffee beans on the stovetop for several hours with cocoa nibs (one part), ashwagandha (one half part), licorice (one half teaspoon per litre), and reishi (start with one half slice per litre and work your way up as you get used to the flavour). This coffee will be strongly bittersweet and make a fantastic mocha. Drinking this every morning will change your emotional balance very much over time.

I cannot listen to a plant without being aware of all of its brothers and sisters, a song too complex for me to understand, but I don't need to understand the song to join in. When we talk about working with a plant, we grow closer to being aware of the song itself.

Licorice Root

The chthonic sweetness of licorice is as wild as the woods. This black, spindly root's flavour is dark and intense, feeling too sweet to be contained by one tongue. Licorice root is alterative, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, demulctant, emollient, and an immune tonic. Its demulctancy, like with marshmallow, soothes and draws moisture to inflamed tissues. The constituents of licorice root are antiviral, hepato-protective, and adreno-modulatory, making it widely applicable to many chronic conditions where the body is in a weakened, depleted, or vulnerable state. We turn to licorice for sore throats, coughs, dehydration, chronic fatigue syndrome, immune deficiency, ulcers, and eczema. Licorice root is a harmonizer, meaning that when it is added to an herbal formula, licorice root balances the recipe and enhances its synergy. In many cases, licorice root builds the web between herbs.

Ginger	Stomach conditions
Cinnamon	Diabetes
Hawthorn	Heart conditions
Fennel	Intestinal pain
Lungwort	Lung Conditions
St John's wort	Depression
Astragalus	Immune conditions
Solomons Seal	Connective tissues
Meadowsweet	GERD
Willow	Back pain
Chamomile	Nervous tension
Red Raspberry leaf	Menstrual imbalance
Goldenrod	Kidney/bladder
Irish Moss	Nutritional deficiency
Calendula	Leaky gut

Working with Licorice Root

For long term deficiency or chronic conditions, it is wise to keep the daily practice of drinking one quart of a tonic tea. We work with slow and gentle medicine here to build up vitality over time and avoid shocking a body that is already vulnerable. This tea should be balanced and simple but made with tonic herbs (herbs that slowly strengthen a particular system in powerful ways). In a one litre jar, add a few small pieces of licorice root, two tablespoons of marshmallow root, and an herb from the following list, depending on symptoms. Cover with water at the appropriate temperature for herbal extraction. Leave overnight and drink the infusion at room temperature or just above the next day. As long as you don't experience any uncomfortable effects from the plants, continue to drink the infusion daily for at least three months. If you do experience adverse effects, keep looking for the herbs your body needs.

Linden	Sadness, loneliness
Burdock	Liver
Red Clover	Lymphatic drainage
Yarrow	Vasculature
Skullcap	Chronic headache
Nettle	Allergies
Angelica	Exhaustion
Ashwagandha	Sleep imbalance
Chickweed	Tinnitus
Tulsi	Anger
Gingko	Neuro-protective
Mug wort	dysmenorrhea
Dandelion Root	Liver deficiency
Seaweed	Hypothyroid
Elderberry	Weak immunity

Epilogue

I am not a master herbalist, I'm just a girl that got sick. The beginning of this work for me was feeling foolish for buying herbal pills to help with my stomach pain. It has evolved into something much more. When I set out to write this book, I wanted to share the experience I have had collaborating with plants. For me, this work is magickal and beautiful, it re-enchants my life and the world I live in, it helps me to have empathy for myself, and more importantly, for those beings that surround me. I hope that this book will inspire others to re-imagine the lives of the dandelions outside, to think of plants as active in the world, and to get to know them more. We have learned in the last few years that we are not doing enough to care for ourselves, each other, or the planet. We have been living from one crisis to another between polarizing politics, climate change, and a global pandemic, it is clear that late capitalism, and its instrumentalization of beings can take us to a very dark place. I hope that this work can document one way of resistance and reassessment, to contribute to a conversation of how we relate to the world around us, and how we can reconstruct our lives to be more influenced by care. If you are inspired by this book to learn more about plants, trust that you already have all the tools you need to get started. This work is ready to be picked up at any moment, all it takes is a little empathy, a little slowness, and a bit of fresh air.

Further Reading

If you want to learn more about plants, some books which I personally enjoy are Healing with Whole Foods, by Paul Pitchford; Christi Belcourt's *Medicine to Help Us*; Gina Badger's *Get Radical Boil Roots*; and Phyllis Light's *Southern Folk Medicine*. To learn more about Ayurvedic tradition, I would suggest *Ayurveda: the Divine Science of Life*, by Todd Caldecott. Ted Kaptchuk's *The Web that has no Weaver* is a good resource about Traditional Chinese Medicine. For more on Indigenous herbal practices, read *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. For Traditional Western Herbal Medicine (my tradition), some classic books are *A Modern Herbal*, by Maude Grieves and Nicholas Culpepper's *The Complete Herbal*. Two online references I visit very often are Henriette's Herbal Homepage, which is a great reference for specific herbs; Worts and Cunning, which is a more spiritually and artistically focused resource; and The Holistic School of Herbal Medicine, which is probably the most extensive online resource on this list and includes not only write ups for specific plants, but also offers free online course (there are more thorough ones which you can purchase) and also has an enormous associated podcast.