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# MWSHS Student Newsletter

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Winter 2022-2023

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## MWSHS Alumna Profile

### Jamie Tatreau

“After many years as a massage therapist, aesthetician, and owning my own skincare company, I was looking to deepen my skills in the wellness industry,” reminisced Jamie Tatreau, an early-2023 graduate of MWSHS’ Western-Herbalism program.



“One day,” she went on to relate, “I met this woman at a work event and we started talking about the power of plants and herbal remedies. She mentioned the Midwest School of Herbal Studies and I stopped in my tracks. That night when I got home from work, I found the website. I was so happy to see that the program was affordable, that you could study at your own pace, and that it was within 30 miles of my house. After reading about director Matthew Alfs’ background and watching his video on the website, I felt that it would be a great fit. I enrolled a few days later and couldn’t wait to receive the materials in the mail!”

Jamie shared that certain aspects of MWSHS’ herbal-studies program really appealed to her upfront: “I loved the fact that I could run my businesses and further my education at the same time! Honestly, this was the factor that made this endeavor possible. With this scenario, I didn’t feel like I had to give something up in order to enroll. It was a win-win. I also really appreciated the flexibility in the completion timeline.”

Asked as to what helped to motivate her to progress through the program to graduation, Jamie elaborated: “First of all, knowing that I am a very visual learner, I bought many illustrated plant books. I found it extremely helpful to have colorful pictures to go along with the plant descriptions and the *300 Herbs* textbook. Associating the pictures with the plant details really helped me retain more information about each plant. Secondly, I found the plant walks extremely insightful. These group gatherings allowed me to hear the material while feeling the plants, smelling the aromas, and tuning into nature. It was eye-opening to see how many

plants I once considered weeds actually had medicinal properties. Witnessing the plants in different stages of their life cycle (depending on the season of the walks) was also priceless.”

How, though, is Jamie utilizing what she learned in her herbal studies? “Currently,” she explains, “I’m applying my herbal knowledge into my skincare business, Sweet Mana Natural Botanicals ([www.sweetmana.com](http://www.sweetmana.com)), and helping to guide my customers and massage clients to a healthier lifestyle. I chose the name and found inspiration from my love of the Hawaiian Islands. Sweet Mana is a mindfully made botanical skincare line offering antioxidant-rich, plant-powered ingredients for glowing skin and elevated well-being. I use topical products that represent my love for nature, my respect for all living things, and my passion to help people feel their best. This is my way of living in the spirit of aloha and sharing it, no matter where we live. I want to continue to use what I learned from the School to further infuse plant healing magic into my skincare recipes. Moving forward, I hope to expand my use of locally foraged ingredients in my products.”

**Register Now for Our  
[Holistic Assessment Workshop](#)  
March 26th, 2022  
*See Page Two***

What would Jamie say to anyone reading this profile? “I would highly recommend this program. The simple joy that comes from being around plants and getting back to nature is so very beneficial. Having this knowledge in your tool belt can be extremely helpful for those who have personal health challenges. It’s also very rewarding to be able to guide friends, family members, and clients on their healing journey. Another perk is how lovely Matthew Alfs is as an instructor. I really loved going to the classes and plant walks for that personal connection. He has such a gentle approach and the ability to take a science heavy topic and make it seem interesting, fun, and light-hearted.”

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## WORKSHOP CREDIT OPTIONS

Except where noted, all of the below-listed events qualify as Workshop credits toward the Master-Herbalist program. Each hour of *verified* attendance (e.g., per instructor-completed workshop-credit slips as supplied by MWSHS) counts toward an equivalent hour of Workshop Category #3 credits (up to the student limit of 20 hours), unless another category is specified or unless one attends a particular workshop at one of these events that is *strictly* in one of these other categories.

### Workshops, Conferences, Lectures, & Events in Herbal Studies Across North America

**Ninth Annual Florida Herbal Conference, *March 10th-12th, 2023*, Camp Winona FL**, will feature scads of workshops, including wild-plant walks which qualify for Workshop Category #2 "Wild Plant Walks". For more info or to register, visit the website: [www.floridaherbalconference.org](http://www.floridaherbalconference.org).

**MWSHS' "Holistic Assessment" Workshop for Spring 2023, *March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023***. 1:30 - 5:30 PM. **New Brighton, MN**. \$45 (only \$40 if early-bird registration). This workshop will focus on assessment skills different from what we focused on in the Nov. 2022 workshop. Register on the MWSHS website or call in (651-484-0487) or mail (P O Box 120096, New Brighton MN 55112) your registration and payment.

**Heal Con. *May 4th-7th, 2023*. Bellevue, WA**. This annual conference invites naturopathic doctors, dieticians, holistic nutrition professionals, and others to connect with like-minded practitioners and attend workshops, round tables, and talks presented by prominent industry experts on the most important topics in the holistic nutrition industry. For more info, see <https://healcon.org/>

**Medicines from the Earth Herb Symposium. *June 2nd-4th, 2023***. University of North Carolina **Asheville, NC**. For more info or to register, visit [www.botanicalmedicine.org](http://www.botanicalmedicine.org). MWSHS students may receive \$120 off of their registration by using the discount code **MESTU**

### "Where Do I Find Qualifying Workshops in My Local Area?"

Aside from the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, which lists resources from around the country of which we become aware, you can check holistic newspapers that are available in many larger cities. In these areas, as well as in less populated communities, you might check local, independently-owned health food stores and food co-ops, which may have bulletin boards or knowledgeable staff who may be aware of local teachers of holistic-assessment skills, herbal-medicine-making, or who may lead wild-plant walks. (Local nature centers, plant nurseries, greenhouses, horticultural clubs, and native-plant-appreciation societies may know of local wild-plant-walk instructors as well.) Finally, check the phone book for local naturopaths, herbalists, acupuncturists, and other holistic-health professionals who may be willing to mentor you on some of these skills or allow you to "shadow" them as they see clients.

**International Herb Symposium, *June 9th-11th, 2023***. Hybrid event (in-person with limited registration; otherwise online—note that only in-person classes count towards MWSHS workshop credits). For more info or to register: <https://internationalherbsymposium.com/>

**Botany and Foraging Intensive, *July 2<sup>nd</sup>-15th, 2023*. Oregon**. Featuring Thomas Elpel with special guests John Kallas, Tom Brown III, and Rob Miller. For more info or to register, see [https://www.greenuniversity.com/Class\\_Schedule/Botany\\_Foraging\\_Intensive.htm](https://www.greenuniversity.com/Class_Schedule/Botany_Foraging_Intensive.htm)

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# Midwest School of Herbal Studies Celebrates Two Decades of Herbal Education!

Here now, in 2023, we are excited to announce that MWSHS is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

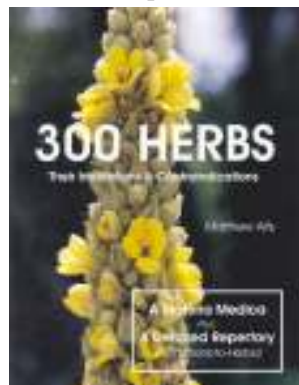
Yet, how did the School start? How did it grow? What challenges did it meet along the way? To answer these questions, we present an in-depth interview with MWSHS director Matthew Alfs by one of the School's coordinators. We hope that you find it of interest.

## ***Birth of a Very Unique Herb School***

*Q. What Prompted You to Start an Herbalism School, Director Alfs, and How Did It Come About?*

*A.* In the late 1990s, there were very, very few herbal education schools in the United States, although some older ones had been running in Canada. The schools that were in existence in the USA at this time were primarily regional-oriented schools situated in small buildings on herb farms that were usually limited to offering classes on herb identification, herb gardening, and medicine making and not focused on providing a clinical-level education. Seeing this sorry state of clinical herbal education, I resolved to change it: I envisioned a distance-education School, with periodic "hands-on" workshops, in which the serious herbal student could achieve a world-class education in *clinical* herbalism. With that in mind, I began to write a curriculum revolving around what I was envisioning.

The first volume, *Edible & Medicinal Wild Plants of Minnesota & Wisconsin*, published in 2001, consisted of a field guide and historical monographs on the clinical uses of 100 wild plants. (A revision and expansion of this book was eventually published in 2013 as *Edible & Medicinal Wild Plants of the Midwest*, with a revised and updated 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published in 2020). The next volume, *300 Herbs: Their Indications & Contraindications*, was published in 2003. This consisted of both a materia medica and a repertory of 300 different herbs from the Western, Chinese, and Ayurvedic traditions. It remains the textbook for MWSHS students to this day and is also an assigned text in several other herbal-educational schools throughout the U.S. Finally, and also in 2003, a



Master-Herbalist Diploma program of over 1,200 pages was completed and published! This program focused on the clinical uses of herbs per body system, but also provided an education in the development of Western and Asian herbal systems, botany, nutrition, holistic-assessment skills, herb-drug interactions, and the "ins" and "outs" of analyzing a case and developing healing strategies for such. Once we found a site for our office and clarified our exempt status with our state, we began distributing our educational materials to eager students in 2003, preparing and guiding these students to become world-class herbalists—to our great satisfaction and delight!

## ***Establishment of the MWSHS Clinic***

*Q: What Occurred in 2004 that Enabled the School's Educational Program to Find a Real-life Outplay?*

*A:* That was the year in which we established the MWSHS clinic (the Midwest Herbs & Healing Center), an integrative, natural-therapies center that we attached to the School offices. Since that time, this center grew to serve the public with, not only my own services as a clinical herbalist, but also the services of a naturopath, an acupuncturist, a homeopath, a massage therapist, a shiatsu therapist, an aromatherapist, and a holistic psychologist. Since the founding of the Midwest Herbs & Healing center, those of us who have worked in the clinic have witnessed an amazing confirmation of the healing properties of herbs as outlined in the School program. Indeed, many *thousands* of sufferers of a large variety of different maladies have embarked on a journey of genuine healing by means of the skillful application of herbs and other natural therapies by our seasoned clinicians.



## ***Vital Role of the MWSHS Coordinators***

*Q. What Role Have the MWSHS Coordinators Played in the Success of the School and of its Students?*

*A:* They have played a vital, irreplaceable role! MWSHS coordinators grade student lessons, prepare the students' grade documents, assemble programs for mailing to new or progressing students, contribute to the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, answer phone calls and emails from students and from inquirers of our

programs, market our programs via phone calls to inquirers, coordinate our workshops, manage student files, and perform countless other functions. Our original student coordinator, Deborah L., worked with me from 2000-2002 as a clinic assistant in an integrative, natural-therapies clinic owned by a university in which I was practicing (this was in Woodbury, MN), during which time we became fast friends. In 2003, she was kind enough to accept a position as a part-time coordinator with the School



Matthew Alfs in clinic office (2002)

despite working full-time at another job. Deb and I still have fond memories of doing a skit at the School's very first workshop for the students demonstrating the proper *and improper* ways of developing a rapport with clients who seek one's services as an herbal counselor. Some of the lines in that skit were so humorous that we had to make a supreme effort to keep from breaking down laughing!

Succeeding Deborah in that position (as she moved on to greater responsibilities in her full-time employment) was Sara R., who had also worked with me at the natural-therapies clinic in Woodbury. Sara came on as student coordinator in 2004 and served ably in that position until the last part of 2005, when she moved on to focus on finishing her schooling to become a dietitian, in which capacity she now serves in the community. We introduced the students to Sara in the Summer, 2004 issue of our *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, in which I wrote: "Those of you who attended the June herb walk got the opportunity to meet Sara: Clever, hardworking, good-humored, and soft-spoken, she has already demonstrated herself to be a tremendous asset to MWSHS, and we are very happy to have her on our team. Thanks, Sara, for the 'go-getter' spirit you bring to MWSHS!"

Succeeding Sara was Laurie S., who served most capably as Senior Student Coordinator from late 2005 onward. Laurie also served as office manager for our clinic until 2012 and was responsible for much of the clinic's growth and success. Our debt to Laurie is *tremendous*, indeed!

Kara C. came on as Assistant Student Coordinator in January, 2007 as the School was growing in leaps and bounds and additional help was needed to

efficiently serve our students. Kara did a lot for the School in our outreach to inquirers, as well as in grading student lessons, preparing many of the course completion documents for the students, and maintaining student records. Smart, capable, and possessed of a very pleasant personality, Kara was a wonderful addition to the team here at MWSHS. Sadly, she had to leave the School in 2012 to raise her newborn daughter.

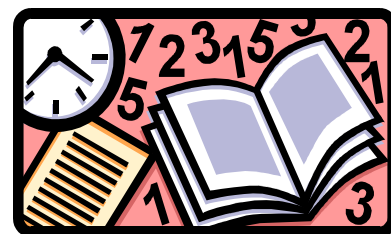
Joining MWSHS as Assistant Student Coordinators over the next few years were Deborah G. (in 2008) and Annika C. (in 2011)—both of whom worked diligently for the School as well as served as clinic assistants in our natural-therapies clinic. While Deborah had to leave the School to raise newborn twins and to finish her schooling, Annika remained with us into the 2020s. Her pleasant personality and resourcefulness have been a blessing to both our staff here and to our many students.

In truth, the School would not have been able to function optimally without our dedicated, hard-working coordinators! *Thank you so very much, ladies!*

### *Western-Herbalism Certificate Program Added*

*Q. How Did the School's Educational Efforts Diversify in 2007?*

*A.* By 2007, we had been deluged with requests on the part of health-care professionals for a shorter version of the program that emphasized simply the herbs used in the USA and Canada and excluding lesser-known herbs from other countries. Realizing that this was a reasonable request, we spun off the Western-Herbalism module of the Master-Herbalist Diploma program into a separate "Western-Herbalism Certificate Program" later in that year, which we designed to be able to be completed in about a year. This was gratefully received by healthcare professionals as well as by many other busy persons who wished to focus strictly on Western herbs. Since this shorter program's inception, a goodly number of medical doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, and massage therapists have studied herbal therapy by means of it, finding that they have benefited greatly by what they have learned. I want to shout out here a



special "thank you" to all such healthcare professionals for making this program a such a large success.



Later in that same year, we rearranged the Master-Herbalist Diploma program so that students would proceed to study the various streams of herbalism *separately* and *successively* instead of *all at one time* as was done in the older version of the program. This adjustment allowed for greater focus and fewer distractions and was warmly received by our student body.

### **Thriving in a Tight Economy**

*Q. What Do You Think Has Enabled the School to Grow and to Thrive in This Tight Economy While So Many Other Natural-Healing Schools Have Bit the Dust?*

*A.* While the Great Recession and its aftermath have been responsible for the demise of a number of natural healing schools (e.g., Clayton College of Natural Health and the Global College of Natural Medicine), the Midwest School of Herbal Studies has registered a greater amount of students each and every year that we have been in existence! I believe that *our integrity* and *our transparency* have been major factors in our success as a School: For example, we've stated on our website from Day One that the reward that we offer is a master-herbalist's diploma (similar to a master-gardener's or master-chef's diploma) and not a master's-level degree, clarifying the difference in detail. Contrast this to some other natural-healing schools who claim to offer accredited master's-level "degrees" when in reality their "accreditation" lacks government recognition and comes only from "accreditation" mills that have been set up simply to offer such an empty backing to schools such as these. While we could have gone the latter route, we made the firm decision not to do so right from the beginning, feeling that it would have been deceptive and disingenuous. The schools to which I've just referred are typically not listed on the educational resources page of the American Herbalists Guild (AHG) ([www.americanherbalistsguild.com](http://www.americanherbalistsguild.com))—the first and major association of practicing herbalists in the USA—and understandably so. However, we have been listed on the AHG's educational page since our inception and have been for quite some time *a member school* of this prestigious organization. I think that the *quality of our course materials* has also played a major role in our success as a School. All of these materials are original to our School, as mentioned in the first part of this interview, rather than being a mishmash of herbal books from a variety of authors that lack any real cohesion, which latter curriculum is true of so many other natural-healing schools. Students of ours who have taken coursework from other schools

have consistently informed us that our section on holistic assessment skills is the most extensive and most well presented that they have ever seen. Unlike many other schools, too, we offer extensive material on nutrition, herbal formulation, the "ins" and "outs" of using herbs when pharmaceuticals are being utilized, and provide a good number of actual case histories from our clinic evincing the healing potential of herbs.

### **Recent Developments and Current Objectives**

*Q. What Objectives Do You Have in Mind for the School's Future?*

One goal we have is to provide a *greater number* of *short* workshops in the place of the *less-frequent* and *longer* workshops that we have held in the past. Workshops need to be shorter, we have found, because people are more and more committed to work and to other responsibilities than ever before and cannot afford to spend a whole weekend—or even a whole day—at a workshop, as they used to be able to do before the Great Recession. Yet, we have also discovered, our workshops need to be *more frequent* in order to keep our fine students in regular touch with the School *and with their fellow students* and to enable them to practice more consistently the skills they are learning from the course materials. To supplement the workshops and to increase communication with our students, we have also begun doing Topic Sessions by Zoom every few months. (We did one recently on Migraines and previous to that, one on Long-COVID Syndrome, with a large number of students participating in each of them.)

Finally, in our emphasis on increased contact with our students, we have been sending more “interim” newsletters their way (one a month now) and have been happy to learn of the positive reception there from.

In summing up: On a personal level, I'm hoping that the next twenty years will prove to be even more enjoyable for me than the previous two decades have been!



*MWSHS Coordinator: Thank you, Director Alfs, for Your Insights on the Birth and Growth of the Midwest School of Herbal Studies. This Has Been Really Interesting!*

*MWSHS Director: It's been my great pleasure.*

# Living in Harmony with Nature

by Matthew Alfs, MH, RH, MWSHS Director

It is no secret that modern peoples dwell largely divorced from nature and, in fact, have largely disrupted its very balance through the use of pesticides, herbicides, land erosion, pollution of the air and water, and the “development” of lands to such an extent that only small chunks of such are available for wildlife—habitable by prey, but not by predators which need large swaths of land to live and to roam.

*Where the Wild Things Were*, a book by William Stolzenburg, explains that this latter circumstance has allowed Lyme disease to mushroom because the Lyme spore’s host animals—white-footed mice and deer—are proliferating to an unhealthy degree owing to the lack of predators. This situation has also reduced both the quality and the diversity of the growth of wild plants in the above-described areas, owing to the proliferation of deer. One example that Stolzenburg ably documents is the trillium—called “beth root” by herbalists and historically used as an astringent—but so threatened in the wild now that United Plant Savers and many others have discouraged its harvesting.

Then, too, the book *Last Child in the Woods*, by Richard Louv, details various ways in which the divorce between Nature and our children is leading to dire consequences for these youngsters—a “nature deficit disorder,” as Louv calls it.

However, this was not the norm in olden times. Many ancient peoples had a healthy relationship with our planet. “Speak to the Earth and it shall teach thee,” noted the book of Job. (Job 12:8) Lao Tzu, in the *Tao Te Ching*, wrote: “Be at one with the dust of the earth. This is primal union.”

Even in more recent times, indigenous peoples lived largely in harmony with nature. The Indian chief Luther Standing Bear related: “The old people came literally to love the soil and they sat or reclined on the ground with a feeling of being close to a mothering power. It was good for the skin to touch the earth and the old people liked to remove their moccasins and walk with bare feet on the sacred earth. Their tipis were built upon the earth.... The soil was soothing, strengthening, cleansing, and healing.” (*Land of the Spotted Eagle*) Likewise, an Apache saying dating to about 200 years ago said that the further a person’s feet were removed from the earth, the less respect that one would manifest for the earth and for its life forms and eventually even for his fellow man.

Chief Seattle of the Duwamish Indian tribe, Washington Territory, gave a speech in 1855 when forced by the U.S. Government to sell his ancestral lands, during which he tried to communicate the Native-American view of the land in contrast to that of white people. During that speech he said, among other things: “Every part of this earth is sacred to my people—every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and every humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memory of the red man.... We are part of the earth and it is part of us.... We know the white man does not understand our ways... The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on.... He kidnaps the earth from his children. He does not care.... He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold.... His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert. The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath—the beasts, the trees, the man, they all share the same breath.... All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.”—as quoted from a television program presented by The Human Dimension and aired in Pittsburgh in Winter of 1972

Happily, though, during what has been called an Ecological Renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s, a number of white nature teachers began inculcating the idea of harmony with nature through their books, articles, lectures, and television appearances. One such person was Rachel Carson, whose book *Silent Spring* initiated the research that led to the banning of dangerous pesticides. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1963, she appeared on a CBS television program, along with Robert H. White of the Cyanamid Company. White lambasted her, saying that her teachings would lead us all back to “the Dark Ages” and that “Miss Carson believes that the balance of nature is a major force in the survival of man; whereas the modern scientist believes that man is steadily controlling nature.” Carson responded that some people might believe that “the balance of nature is something that was repealed as soon as man came on the scene,” but then cut to the chase: “You might just as well assume that you could repeal the law of gravity. The balance of nature is built of a series of interrelationships between living things, and between living things and their environment.”

In the last book that she wrote shortly before her death, *A Sense of Wonder*, Carson had this to say: “Those who dwell... among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life. Whatever the vexations or concerns of their personal lives, their thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and to renewed excitement in living.”

### Achieving Harmony with Plants

Stalking Wolf, a celebrated Apache healer, told a juvenile student of his who had just stalked and killed his first deer for food and clothing and who felt sad about killing that deer whom he had come to know during the hunt: “When you feel the same way about plucking a blade of grass as you do about killing a deer, you will truly have found harmony with nature.” – Tom Brown, Jr., *Tom Brown’s Guide to Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants*.

This appreciation for plant life was further underscored by the Omaha Indians, who urged: “Do not needlessly destroy the flowers on the prairies or in the woods. If the flowers are plucked there will be no flower babies (seeds); and if there be no flower babies then in time there will be no people of the flower nations. . . . Then the earth will be sad. . . . The world would be incomplete and imperfect without them.” – Melvin Gilmore, *American Indians of the Missouri River region*

The Cherokee have long believed that plants allied themselves with the “two-legged ones” (humans) partly out of pity for the devastation that insects had brought upon mankind (bites, stings, disease, etc.), just as those insects had likewise done to the plants. Then, too, in the book *Plants Have So*



*Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask*, Mary Siisip Geniusz enlightens her readers with Anishinaabe wisdom as follows: “The plants always know their place in the cycle of life. They are always willing to serve their fellow beings, for we are all brothers and sisters in the cycle together.”

Indigenous peoples have traditionally sought the aid of plants and even learned to communicate with them—treating these plants with respect and

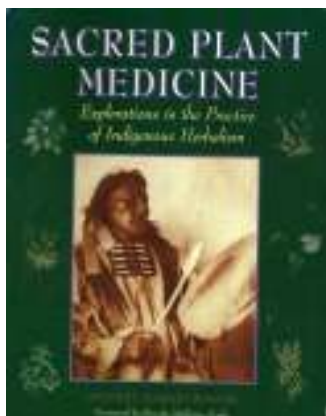
thanksgiving and showing appreciation for their aid. In fact, a classic Indian adage is: “If you want to know how a plant can offer assistance, just ask it.” Tom Brown, Jr., who was mentored by the Apache healer Stalking Wolf, as mentioned earlier, offers tips as to how to do this in his book to which we earlier referred. Brown says that it is a matter of tapping into your intuition, inner voice, or instinctual knowing, stating that ‘the heart is where all communication occurs, not the mind.’ One must recognize first, however, that we are not superior to plants but that humans, plants, and animals are all connected through “the spirit that dwells in all things.” (Even the ancient Jewish book of Ecclesiastes, in the Bible, states that “there is no superiority of the man over the beast, because they all have the same spirit.”)

The next step, he says, is to talk to it—either audibly or silently. He says you must not let logic or past learning interfere with your belief that *your voice is being heard*. He then mentions that scientific experiments have shown that polygraphs have registered reactions of plants. Although he does not go into detail on that point, let’s do so now...

In 1966, a man who operated a polygraph school, Cleve Backster, hooked up the electrodes of a polygraph to the leaves of a plant on a whim. He wanted to see if intended harm to a plant would elicit any response from the plant. To his amazement, when he simply *thought* of getting a match and burning a leaf on the plant, the polygraph needle went flying! The next experiment he performed was even more incredible: he chose six students for a test in which he put two plants in a room, one of which was attached to the polygraph. One student was randomly chosen, without the knowledge of Backster or his fellow students, to take the plant that was not connected to the polygraph and to throw it on the floor and stomp on it. Then, all of the students left the room and the door was closed. Finally, each student, one by one, opened the door and re-entered the room. The polygraph was motionless until the student who had assaulted the plant entered the room; then, it went wild!

However, once a plant is supplicated, how does one receive an answer? This comes through the intuition or inner voice. Brown notes that this can be achieved in a variety of ways; depending on the particular person, it might be through “mental pictures, images, dreams, visions, emotions, and inner feelings, to mention a few.” Kenneth Cohen, in his book *Honoring the Medicine: The Essential Guide to Native American Healing*, suggests that if one places a plant under one’s pillow before going to sleep that it may enhance understanding of that plant through one’s dreams.

Herbalist Stephen Harrod Buhner offered some thoughtful material on plant communication in his marvelous book *Sacred Plant Medicine*. He shared the story about a woman with a mental illness who felt hollow inside. To help heal her, he experienced “a strong and visceral response about one particular plant that might be of help.” Here he took her on a walk to meet the children of an angelica plant that he had



sat with many times over the years—angelica being a plant with a hollow stem. After sitting and spending some time with one of the plants and touching and experiencing it in many ways, she finally offered the thought: “For the first time, I don’t feel hollow and alone inside.”

While the idea of human-plant communication might seem outlandish to some folks, few of these would question that people can experience unspoken communication with their pets—even to the point of knowing what their pets are thinking. Fascinating camera experiments, too, have shown that pets in a home can be aware of the exact moment when their owner, absent from the home, has made the intention to return home, as the pets head for the door in anticipation! See an in-depth study on this subject here: <https://www.sheldrake.org/research/animal-powers/a-dog-that-seems-to-know-preliminary-investigations>

### Foraging, Harvesting, and Harmony

Yet, how does one most readily find plants to harvest? First, as Brown and others mention, one must establish a genuine need for finding a plant for food, medicine, or utility, and that for one’s self or for another human or an animal.

Secondly, one must fix one’s inner voice on finding a smattering of the particular plants. Initially, one will usually encounter what might be called a “sentry” plant—a gatekeeper to a colony. Personally, I often ask this plant permission and direction on where to find a colony, explaining why I need some of his or her kin and that I will take no more than ten-percent. Geniusz, quoted earlier, offers similar thoughts: “Speak to the plant and tell it who needs it.... Promise that the plant’s grandchildren will live after it and that you will protect them in that place.... Never take the only individual plant of its kind in that area, for the plant is trying to establish itself there.”—*Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask*

When a colony is found, it is best to locate the “grandfather” plant (usually the oldest and largest plant) and explain why you need to take some of the colony, asking permission and making an offering of some kind. That may be Indian tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*), as was done by some Native-American tribes, or per other tribes, “cornmeal, pollen, beads, shells, or other substances.” (Kenneth Cohen, *Honoring the Medicine*) Some prefer simply to offer sincere thanks and a promise to re-plant the seeds of the plant. One might also offer a song, as plants love sweet music, even as an experiment at Temple Buell University once noted. In this experiment, plants grew nicely, remained healthy, and leaned in the direction of a speaker when jazz, classical, or easy listening music was played. (Contrariwise, they leaned away from the speaker and died when hard rock was played!)

One of my own students, who is particularly adept at plant communication, once informed me on a plant walk that *the plants love when I make music to them*. I was baffled by his comment until I realized later that I often unconsciously hum or whistle when I am out with the plants because I am so happy to be in their company!

Don’t be surprised, however, if sometimes the answer is “no!”—as it has been, on occasion, in my own case. While, at first thought, it might seem that that would be discouraging, it is rather testimony to one’s communicative acumen with the plants and to the honesty shared between you and them.

In closing here, my hope and prayer is that you, dear reader, will treasure and enjoy harmony with both the plants and indeed all of nature so that your “thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and to renewed excitement in living.” as Rachel Carson so beautifully expressed it. Amen to that!

### OBITUARIES of Herbal Movers & Shakers

#### **Stephen Harrod Buhner (1952-2022)**

Beloved author of many herb books and articles  
<https://www.diseasesolutions.net/dr-stephen-harrod-buhner-has-passed/>

#### **Paul Lee (1931-2022)**

Organized the herb industry in the 1970s and one of the founders of the AHG in the late 1980s  
<https://www.herbalgram.org/resources/herbalegram/volumes/volume-19/issue-12-december/news-and-features-1/paul-lee-obituary/>

“Great Spirit, when we come singing,  
 When we face the sunset, the last song,  
 May it be without shame, singing  
 ‘It is finished in beauty. It is finished in beauty!’”  
 —Evelyn Eaton (1902-1983)



## Book Reviews

In this issue of the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, we continue our trend of late of offering reviews of books authored by dynamic herbalists, now deceased, who practiced during The Herbal Dark Ages and kept the flame of herbal healing alive during that most challenging time in American herbal history....

One who is widely appreciated as having been one of herbalism's greatest teachers and writers during this time was **Michael Moore** (1941-2009). (Mark Blumenthal, executive director of the American Botanical Council, has even called Moore the "Godfather of American herbalists.") During his illustrious career, Moore wrote a number of books and founded, in 1979, the Southwest School of Botanical Medicine (in Albuquerque, NM; later, it was moved to Bisbee, AZ)—the website of which, some 14 years after Moore's death, still generously features reprints of many old Eclectic and other herbalist works. (See <https://www.swsbm.com/HOMEPAGE/HomePage.html> )

We review three of Moore's most important books below....

**Moore, Michael. *Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 1979), softcover, 200pp.**

Having worked in the American southwest as a plant merchant, picket, teacher, and healer since the 1960s, Michael Moore came to a very extensive knowledge of the plants growing in this region by the time he wrote *Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West*, a work that offers monographs on 169 plants. "I have picked all the plants in this book in the wild," Moore writes in the Introduction, "and their uses and dosages are the result of firsthand or reliable secondhand information filtered through my own preferences and opinions."

While the monographs cover many of the herbs familiar to MWSHS students, they also encompass a large variety of plants seldom even mentioned in other books on herbs, including amole lily, Apache plume, cachana, cebadilla coffee berry, contrayerba, cota, escoba de la vibora fremontia, maravilla, mountain mahogany, and storksbill.

When this remarkable work was published, it carried an endorsement from the editor of the venerable *Well-Being* magazine, David Copperfield, who wrote that it shines as "the herbal that we've needed for a long time." (Copperfield even noted that Moore was the inspiration behind the origin of his magazine.) Anyone reading this book can easily see why, in the year of its publication (1979), this was adjudged to be the case.

It was from this tome that I first learned about the hemostatic properties of bugleweed, the value of

cocklebur leaves for chronic cystitis, and the incredible power of the root of mullein to improve the tone of the bladder in order to support urinary withholding power.

The book contains a comprehensive glossary, a center section of color plates of 28 different plants, and a valuable "Therapeutic and Use Index."

**Moore, Michael. *Medicinal Plants of the Desert and Canyon West* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 1989), softcover, 183pp.**

In this companion volume to the book reviewed above and published about a decade later, Moore reviews 60 plants with which he became familiar after writing *Medicinal Plants of the Mountain West*. Some of the lesser-known species covered include chaparro amargosa, chimaja, cliffrose, condalia, desert lavender, desert senna, desert willow, elephant tree, epazote, marsh fleabane, matarique, prickly poppy, prodigiosa, sangre de drago, silk tassel, soapberry, Syrian rue, tronadora, trumpet creeper, and turkey mullein.

It is from this book that I first learned about using pineapple-weed flower as an antispasmodic for the gut: "Taut, cranky, red-faced, belly-sore children respond especially well to the tea...."

Appendices include a glossary and a therapeutic section, like what appeared in his earlier book, but add a brief section on formulas and a bibliography. There is also a center section of color plates of 30 different plants and a thorough introduction on how to make tinctures, infusions, decoctions, eyewashes, and salves

**Moore, Michael. *Herbal Materia Medica*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Albuquerque: Southwest School of Botanical Medicine, [1994]), softcover, 32 pp.**

I was so excited to add this slim volume to my rapidly growing herbal library shortly after its publication, in 1994. The booklet features "a brief outline of over 450 botanical medicines, giving the preferred forms and methods of their preparations, strengths, solutions, and the most common adult dosages." Indeed, the strengths and dosages are quite precise, something that is sorely lacking in most herb books. Where else would you find, for example, that balmony (*Chelone glabra*) should find form as a 1:2 tincture of the fresh plant and dosed at 10-20 drops, to t.i.d. or as a dried-plant tincture, 1:5 strength, and dosed 30-60 drops, to q.i.d., or used as 1-3 oz. of a cold infusion, to t.i.d.?

To get an idea of the immense value of this work, one need only consider that it was assembled after a quarter of a century of clinical experience on Moore's part. Believe it or not, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition is available for free on a page of the SWSBM website. <https://www.swsbm.com/ManualsMM/MansMM.html>

