
MWSHS Student Newsletter

Autumn 2019

MWSHS Profile: Paige Swanson

“A friend asked me one day if I’d like to attend a series of classes on herbalism by Matthew Alfs at Normandale Community College,” relates Paige Swanson, “and I jumped at the chance.” With what result? “I was really impressed and I decided I wanted to learn more and so I signed up as a MWSHS student. I’d already been playing around with herbs for more than 20 years and thought I knew quite a bit. I was wrong: I knew nearly nothing in comparison to what lie before me.”



As Paige delved into the MH program, she really began to appreciate that because it is self-paced she “could take a year off from my studies if that’s what I needed to do.” Yet, she progressed very well, which she attributes largely to her study methods: “I would often go to a coffee shop to study,” she noted, “so that all the distractions of my home wouldn’t get in the way. I would take just the chapters that I intended to work on out of the large curriculum binder and slide them into a separate folder and that’s all I’d needed to bring with me. I also found that highlighting the answers in the coursework as I found them and then writing the question numbers in the margin was a huge help when it came to reviewing my answers and finding them again easily.”

Now, as Paige nears graduation from the MH program, she tells us that “the reward is in having a comprehensive understanding of what clinical herbalism really is and how to use that information. I also greatly value the knowledge of the medicinal plants growing in my region that are not available on the commercial market, as well as how to identify and use them. There is something empowering in knowing that most of what I need is essentially right outside my door.”

Paige’s current herbal related activities are many and varied: “I am the founder of Tandem Herbals and am already making and distributing herbal remedies, as well as working on a mother-and-baby line of products. I have also made over 100 different flower essences and 16 flower essence blends. I forage for much of my herb material and grow quite a few herbs at home and at an organic herb garden in Northfield. I try to source as many of my ingredients from what grows in my area as I can.”

Paige’s Facebook pag (<https://www.facebook.com/Tandem-Herbals-447183335625824>) features many beautiful plant photographs and herb info and she (*Continued next column.*)

Mid-2018 to Mid-2019 Graduates

We offer congratulations to the following graduates of the Western-Herbalism program:

Anna Gales Schmidt
Emily Raleigh
Paige Swanson
Jason Brazil

We also offer congratulations to the following graduates of the Asian and Integrative modules:

Paige Swanson
Jason Brazil
Lucia More

We also offer congratulations to the following graduate of the Master-Herbalist Diploma Program:

Rachel Fitzgerald, MH (MWSHS)

We look forward to hearing more from these graduates as they apply their knowledge to life’s opportunities.

MWSHS Profile: Paige Swanson (*Cont. from column one*)

informs us that she is happy to receive communications there, including inquiries about a remedy or other product that she makes.

Paige is also applying her herbal knowledge and skill in a very personal way, namely, to assist individuals on the road to optimal health. “I currently do online and phone consultations within a large group to which I belong and would very much like to begin client consultations at home very soon. I very much enjoy teaching plant walks, informational classes, and workshops to help others to learn about herbs and to make remedies to take care of themselves and their families.” Indeed, Paige has already led a number of wild-plant walks for the School—to rave reviews—and we look forward to her future contributions.

In conclusion, Paige tells us: “I am very thankful for the School’s encouragement during my study time and for all that I have learned through the MWSHS program, including the historical component of the curriculum, which I honestly hated at the time, but now value having a well-rounded understanding of it. I say this because I know I’m not the only one who wished they could skip that part; but I want to encourage you to keep going because you will be glad of this knowledge in the end.”

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WORKSHOP CREDIT OPTIONS

Except where noted, all of the below-listed events qualify as Workshop (Course-Eight) credits toward the 2-year Master-Herbalist program. Each hour of *verified* attendance (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. **Dates for MWSHS-sponsored workshops for March through May will be announced in mid-January.**

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

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

This is a question we hear frequently from MWSHS students who live outside of the Midwestern USA, where MWSHS is located and where our workshops are held. 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.

Feb. 28th to March 1st, 2020 "Eighth Annual Florida Herbal Conference," **Lake Wales, FL.** Over 35 presentations, 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

March 27th-29th, 2020. "Southwest Conference on Botanical Medicine," **Tempe, AZ.** Over 35 presentations, including wild-plant walks, which qualify for Workshop Category #2, "Wild Plant Walks." For more info, see the website at www.botanicalmedicine.org.

May 29th-June 1st, 2020. "Medicines of the Earth Herb Symposium," **Black Mountain, NC.** Over 40 presentations, including wild-plant walks, which qualify for Workshop Category #2, "Wild Plant Walks." For more info, see the website at www.botanicalmedicine.org.

August 21st-23rd, 2020. "33rd Annual New England Women's Herbal Conference," **Newfound Lake, NH.** For more info, see the website at www.newomensherbal.com/

Sept. 10th-13th, 2020. "37th Annual Breitenbush Herbal Conference," **Breitenbush Hot Springs, OR.** For more info, see the website at www.herbalconference.net

A Call for Student Articles

The *MWSHS Student Newsletter* is for *you*, the MWSHS student, and we would like *your* input and help in assembling the best possible vehicle for you! So, if you have something you'd like to contribute to the *Newsletter* (*an article, news item, book review, or unique experience with herbal healing or herbal education*), please don't hesitate to contact us for possible inclusion of that material into a coming issue!

MWSHS graduates may also send us a calendar of upcoming wild-plant walks, lectures, workshops, or presentations that they will be doing for consideration of possible inclusion in the "Workshop Credit Options" section of the Newsletter.

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Your Thesis: Which Topic to Choose?

As all students enrolled in our Master-Herbalist Diploma Program are no doubt aware, a thesis is required for completion of this Program. In this regard, many students have expressed concern about which topic to choose for the thesis. We say here: "Choose one for which you have a real passion--for both learning and sharing!"

For example, one of our students has a family member challenged by autism and so she chose for her topic "Understanding Autism and Implementing Herbal Allies." Another, who cares very much for animals, opted for the theme of "Botanical Remedies for Animals." Still another, who has a relative in the military and who witnessed the stresses that deployment and its aftermath produces, entitled her thesis: "Coming Home: Using Herbal Therapies to Ease Post-Deployment Adjustments."

Do you have a great interest or love for a particular herb? In this regard, one of our students produced a lovely thesis on "Plantain: A Stellar Herb." Another, who lives in Texas and who is enamored of plants in that region, presented a thesis on "West Texas Plants: An Integrative Survey of 50 Acres in the Trans-Pecos Region."

Or perhaps your passion is for a particular herbal tradition? In that regard, one of our students wrote a most informative treatise on "Tree Medicine of the Ojibwa." Another did her thesis on "Sacred Herbs of the Anglo-Saxons and the Way of the Warrior."

We hope that the above thoughts help guide you in your thesis choice.

Features of Our New Website

Have you had occasion yet to peruse our new website? Aside from the aesthetic and practical improvements over our previous website, there are some new features of which you might wish to be aware.

The first new feature is the ability to become a *site member*, which can be accomplished by clicking on the tab furthest to the right on our top-of-the-page site menu. This is a password-protected area of the site in which you can record your name and contact info for other students to become aware of your passion for herbal learning and to contact you.

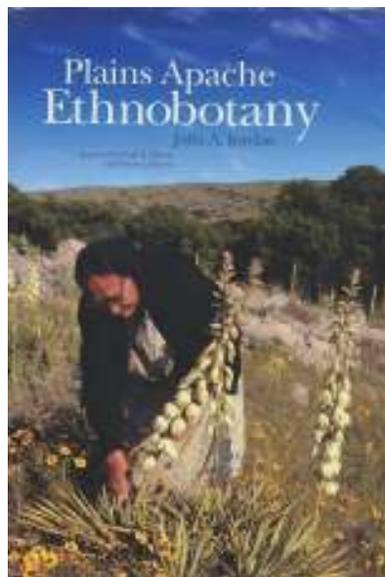
Then, while the messages from our old site's message board are no longer accessible, there is a new board on which to post messages (experiences with herbs, questions for other students, herbal news items to share, etc.)

Thirdly, there is a student log-in page (password protected) on which we eventually will be posting workshop info and other features solely for students.

Fourthly, we are currently editing some short videos on individual plants that we look forward to adding to the site before too much longer. Stay tuned, students!

Book Review

Jordan, Julia A. *Plains Apache Ethnobotany* (2008), hardcover, 212pp. (Reviewed by Matthew Alfs)



I realize that it might seem strange for a book that was published over a decade ago to be the subject of a review in 2019, but I added this book to my library about a year ago and, after studying it in depth, I've come to appreciate it as a real gem that deserves a review here.

This in-depth study began as a 1960s master's thesis by the author, relative to fieldwork she conducted with the Plains Apache Indians of western Oklahoma and the plants growing in that region. That thesis was revised and expanded in the early part of the present century for publication. The result is a masterly study of the edible and medicinal uses of over 110 plant species by this hunter-gatherer tribe of Native-Americans. A feature that makes this study so exceptionally invaluable is the incorporation of scads of comments by Plains Apache elders (Ray Blackbear, Fred Wigman, and others) who so desperately wanted to pass on their accumulated botanical wisdom before it was lost during the modernization of the tribe's way of life.

As to the information-packed contents, the lengthy chapter on edible wild plants is quite instructive and especially so regarding the elaborate preparations of wild plums, the chief wild fruit consumed by this tribe.

In the chapter on the medicinal uses of plants, we run across many Native-American uses that we have encountered in the MH coursework, such as blackberry root for diarrhea and goldenrod for fever. However, there were also a number of applications that were new to me and which I am excited to explore. For example, the information on the varied oral applications of *Echinacea angustifolia* ("tooth-gum medicine," as it was called) was quite instructive. Another interesting use, this time along psychological lines, was the custom of rubbing cattail pollen on "a cranky, jealous child" on four different occasions during the day in order to "make him good-natured and happy." I can imagine that, to many parents, such a successful utilization of this common marsh weed would be worth the price of the book alone!

Cherish or Perish!

NATURE'S MORAL FOR OURSELVES AND OUR CHILDREN

by Matthew Alfs, MH, RH (AHG)

(By popular demand, this article has been reprinted, with a few updates, from a 2003 Newsletter.)

What do you talk about with a new lady barber, when you park yourself in her fancy swivel chair, about to say good-bye to a portion of your locks over the next 20 minutes? In my case, I opted to discuss my love of nature....

I was pleasantly surprised to discover that my new haircutter shared my delight in the natural creation. She particularly enjoyed viewing, walking in, and nurturing a small nature area near her home in the suburbs. However, to my surprise, she went on to relate how that every year she had to appear before the city council to try to keep that lovely spot from being taken over and denuded by land developers!

Later that day, as I pondered this woman's struggle, I picked up one of our local papers and turned to the "Letters" section. Here, to my utter disbelief, was a person arguing, with great passion and to great length, to turn one of our community's most beloved nature centers into a golf course!

The cumulative effect hit me hard. First, it called poignantly to mind a comment that Euell Gibbons once made, about how modern society possesses an "engineering mentality," seeking to bulldoze and pave everything in sight.¹ Second, it brought back some bitter memories of hearing, one day, the sickening drone of just such a bulldozer on the perimeter of some lovely fields next to where I had been raised and where I had often gone (even as an adult) to immerse myself in nature. To my horror, I had learned that this "wasteland" was slated to be "developed." What this *really* meant, of course, was that it was to be *decimated*—gutted and flattened. And why? In order to put in, of all things, a village of fancy-pants' homes—a "Ritz City."

In the ensuing weeks, the ham-and-egger aboard the bulldozer "pushed it to the hilt" to see just how much devastation he could accomplish. Before long, an entire world—a rich and complex and utterly beautiful ecosystem—came to a tortured, screaming demise. Gone was the lively and comical woodchuck I would often surprise on my walks. Eradicated were the prairie skinks I would sometimes spy under boards, amazing me with their beauty, swiftness, and methods of eluding predators (their tail actually breaks off when accosted, wriggling frantically and thus distracting the assailant so that

the main part of the animal can scurry away unnoticed!) Vanished was the immense family of crows I would "talk" to on my walks (I had even gotten to the point of deciphering what was meant by the number and pitch of their brassy "caws!") Spirited away was the bevy of lavishly colored butterflies that had virtually covered this beautiful tract of land as if some Master Painter had brushed them onto a living canvas. Exterminated was the vast array of plants, some of them rare native species I have seldom since encountered, and many of them important medicinal plants. Uprooted and pulverized were the magnificent poplars, willows, wild plums, and other trees that had stood proudly for so many years, with their leaves glistening mesmerizing in the soft breeze. In but a few, short days, the life and breath of this incredible area of wonders had been callously obliterated by a pot-bellied man on an angry road machine.

Reflecting on all of this—on my personal loss; on the lady-barber's struggle to preserve her neighborhood's little wild area; and on the letter-to-the-editor arguing to turn the nature center into a golf course—I couldn't help but wonder: What sort of hideous moral cancer is eroding our communities to the extent that ostensibly intelligent people could sanction the steady conversion of our lovely fields, woods, and meadows into a cesspool of concrete, plastic, and wires? In less than two hundred years, we've ruined a country that was once so rich with natural resources that the settlers arriving here literally dropped their jaws in astonishment in viewing a land that had been kept lush with every kind of wildlife and vegetation, and this though dwelt in by hundreds of Indian tribes for at least several *thousand* years! (Amaze yourself, and take a look at a recent book on this subject by Bill Lawrence entitled *The Early American Wilderness as the Explorers Saw It*.)

While our swelling population may preclude recapturing our land's pristine past, does the opposite—the eradication of our natural resources—really need be the alternative for mankind's future? One would certainly hope that it would still be possible to put a halt to what Bill McKibben and others have ominously called "The Death of Nature"—if we really put our minds and hearts to it! And yet, the motivation and the methodology seem to elude most people. What, then?

Lack of Intimacy → Lack of Appreciation

In order to appreciate and implement the solution, we first need to understand how the problem occurred. And here I believe that the evidence shows that our current pitiful situation arose as a result of trends and developments in society that separated man from the land, divorcing the interdependence and symbiosis of the two. Technology was the spearhead, for in making life “easier,” it allowed people to simply sit behind four walls and push buttons for their needs and desires. No longer did man find himself self-sufficient, fending for himself in the country. Now, “progress,” with all its distractions, overawed man into an ill-gotten divorce from Mother Nature. The development of large-scale, collective agriculture especially played a role in separating man from the land, as Jared Diamond has carefully documented in a very excellent article.²

It’s almost impossible to maintain an appreciation for something when you cease to interact with it. (Not incongruously, studies have demonstrated that married couples who have disparate work schedules tend to fall out of love and into divorce more so than those who relax together after returning home from their respective jobs.) The result is that society in general, which has largely lost such interaction, has become “green conscious” only to the extent of calculating how many greenbacks they can extract from the environment!

But there is another faction that shares some of the blame, in my opinion: Ironically, overzealous environmentalists, most of whom have never so much as camped a night in the woods, perpetuate this divorce from another direction, with their multitude of ordinances “regulating” interaction between man and the land: “Take nothing but pictures.” “Don’t pick the plants.” “No Hunting,” etc.

What these good and well-meaning people fail to realize is that man, after all, is *part* of nature, not a bystander off to the sidelines. Far from putting nature on a pedestal, then, humans must *live in relationship with it* in order to truly appreciate it and genuinely wish to preserve it. The classic example of this is, as earlier noted, the American Indians who dwelled in our land for centuries before the white man arrived, *using* (not merely “observing”) its many resources, but treating them with wisdom and respect so as to keep them *renewable*. Such a true ecology was a natural consequence of their interaction with nature, for in continually experiencing the wilderness to be their provider on a day-to-day basis, there grew in these native Americans a deep reverence for it in direct derivation of such intimacy.

Yet, in less than two centuries, so-called “civilized” man has effectively succeeding in alienating himself from the land, trashing it on one hand and regulating from sym-

biotic interaction on the other hand. Nature has become the victim, caught between “a rock and a hard place.”

Toward A Solution

What’s the answer to this enigma? *Education*, of course! But it’s hard to “teach an old dog new tricks.” The present generation is not likely to change its views. Yet, what about the coming one? Rachel Carson, a giant among naturalists, gave us this sage observation: “If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child... be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.”³

That’s the key! We need to allow the innate love of nature that kids possess to blossom to the full, giving it opportunity and encouragement to do so. Such a passion will then give them a base for an indescribably rich journey throughout their lives! Thus, Albert Schweitzer, when a man of 70 years and hopelessly in love with the natural world around him, remembered vividly how, even as a child, he had been “like a person in an ecstasy in the presence of nature.”⁴

Strangling the Sense of Wonder

In educating our children, however, it is not enough to send them away to school, hoping that they will learn nature’s lessons there. Neither the pedantic rote offered by stodgy science teachers nor the platitudes of pop-environmentalist guest speakers nor those pithy little “save-the-earth” articles in school newsletters are truly satisfying. The type of education sorely needed springs instead from a commitment to bring the entire human family back to what Rachel Carson had called (as noted above) “the sources of our strength”: *a genuine bonding with this planet we call Earth*.

People who were once connected to the earth (like Schweitzer et al., above) have faded (or are rapidly fading) away. They are being replaced with a generation of persons largely sheltered from nature and reared instead by the cruel stepparents of technology and industry. And while a few of these folks still have emotional ties to nature owing to the limited contact that they’ve had with it, the kids of today—who will be the adults of tomorrow—have largely come to view nature as “scary, boring, and full of icky bugs!”

But what has been the impetus for such pitiful thinking? Incredibly, the parents of these kids, as well as other adults in their lives, have encouraged such an unhealthy attitude by showering them with so many technological and other distractions that the kids never get the opportunity to experience the wonders of nature.

My chiropractor has experienced this sorry attitude firsthand: His son belongs to the Cub Scouts and his troop is allowed a "special experience" that the kids can request each week, in consultation with parental guidance. My chiropractor had been suggesting that they invite a naturalist to lead the kids on a nature walk, but he was saddened to hear that this suggestion was out-voted. At first, he thought that it was the kids who were balking, but later he learned that it was *the parents* who were against the idea, preferring to have the kids experience a ride in a police car instead! He could hardly believe his ears, having been under the impression that parents enroll their kids in the Scouts primarily to experience and learn about nature!

Philosopher Sam Keen has linked the loss of wonder in our society to the adult concept of "necessity," arguing that the rigidly utilitarian constructs of adult society—what he calls "the pathology of adult experience"—can wind up smothering the appreciation of the natural in young people *as they grow into adulthood*. He observes, however, that in primitive societies this sense of wonder is seldom lost upon maturation. Even in our own Space Age society, he notes, there are still some who have maintained their sense of wonder and who have gone on to live highly creative and reality-based lives. Keen logically concludes from this that the tragic loss of wonder during adolescence *is far from inevitable*.⁵

If this is true, and I believe that it is, then the children of today, secreted in their houses and blasting away at video games or transfixed in front of their smartphones, may yet find nourishment for their inborn sense of nature wonder, should we as parents strive to aid them before it is too late. But, what can we do?

Treading the Path of the Great Naturalists

We can turn to the experts. Here the authorities on nature nourishment are the great naturalists—men and women whose "sources of strength," as Carson put it above, derive (or have derived, in the case of those now deceased) from a genuine bonding with the wild realms. One of these, the beloved author Gladys Taber, once observed: "A city has much to offer... but children should be able to dig in the dirt, climb trees, catch frogs, chase butterflies, wade in a brook, pick wildflowers, play games one of those things on a bright spring day?"⁶

Taber's wisdom is most profound: While acknowledging the benefits of a civilization, she yet paints an irresistible picture of the glories of nature interaction, heartily bringing to life a scene that beckons the human spirit, whether young or old. Likewise, many readers of Euell Gibbons' lively books have commented that, upon delving into them, they felt an overpowering urge to "get out in nature" and to start experiencing the natural realm just as Gibbons had so enthusiastically experienced and described it. Of the many valuable lessons that the great

naturalists have to offer us then, foremost is their *motivational power!*



However, nourishing today's kids with nature does not necessarily mean that we as adults have to be proficient in the knowledge of plant and animal names and other technical matters. As Rachel Carson once put it: "I sincerely believe that for the child, and for the parent seeking to guide him, it is not half so important to *know* as to *feel*.... Once the emotions have been aroused—a sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love—then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning."⁷

Naturalist Tom Brown Jr. has found this to be quite true in his nature walks with children. He once related of a class he taught where the kids kept pummeling him with questions about the names of various animals and plants but seemed to lack any real interest. So he switched tactics. Drawing on teaching methods learned from his own mentor, an Apache Indian he calls Stalking Wolf, Brown began asking the children thought-provoking questions about a snail they had found—questions about its appearance, means of movement, daily activities, and role in the natural world. Very soon, he found that the children were aglow with interest and appreciation.⁸

I have personally found Brown's many books to be excellent aids in rekindling any loss of nature love that has affected children owing to the thoughtless attitudes accrued from their adult contacts. My chiropractor has borrowed them and found them to be hungrily absorbed by his youngsters as well. Brown's enviable life as a youth, narrated in a style reminiscent of the "flashbacks" to childhood by David Carradine's character on the old *Kung Fu* TV series, makes for captivating reading, indeed and I doubt that any child could resist the "call of nature" after becoming acquainted with these books.

I also know some adults who, likewise having felt the impact of Brown's special magic, experienced not only an enthusiasm for delighting in nature, but an additional feeling as well: they found themselves plagued with a *sense of waste*, lamenting the years they had spent in materialistic pursuits while nature had been beckoning to them all along, willing to welcome them with open arms.

How such regret has reminded me of something F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote: “And after reading Thoreau I felt how much I have lost by leaving nature out of my life.”⁹

Henry David Thoreau’s writings, indeed, could weave a spell over just about anyone. But behind his special charm lay a bedrock of common sense and sober reflection. He saw all too clearly the seeds of wilderness destruction that were being sown in his own day and, as he pondered the ramifications of it all, he waxed solemnly: “In wildness,” he reminded his readers, “is the preservation of the world.”¹⁰

May we, as a society tottering on the edge of ecological extinction, never forget that. May we (and our now-youthful heirs) learn to cherish the sense of wonder above the desire for selfish gain. May we all open our minds and hearts to the reverential approach to life so wonderfully captured by seventeenth-century poet William Blake, when he wrote:

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.”¹¹

¹ Euell Gibbons, *Stalking the Faraway Places* (NY: David McKay Co., 1973), 148.

² Jared Diamond, “The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race,” *Discover* 8 (May 1987):64-66.

³ Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder* (NY: Harper & Row, 1956-1965), 42-43.

⁴ As quoted by his biographer, Hermann Hagedorn, in *Prophet in the Wilderness* (NY: Macmillan Co., 1948), 18.

⁵ Sam Keen, *Apology for Wonder* (NY: Harper & Row, 1969), 51-59

⁶ Gladys Taber, *Stillmeadow Calendar: A Countrywoman’s Journal* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1967), 105.

⁷ Carson, 45.

⁸ Tom Brown Jr., *Tom Brown’s Field Guide to Nature and Survival for Children* (NY: Berkley Bks, 1989), 16.

⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-up*, ed. Edmund Wilson (NY: New Directions, 1945).

¹⁰ Henry David Thoreau, “Walking” (1862).

¹¹ William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence” (1803).

Printed Books vs. E-Books for Learning: No Contest!

by Matthew Alfs, MH., RH., MWSHS, Director

With the advent of digital publishing, virtual books—often called “e-books”—seem to have become all the rage. Yet, how do they stack up against printed books?

A 2018 survey from the Pew Research Center demonstrated that while e-books are gaining in popularity, only 26% of Americans aged 16 or older had read a book on a tablet or e-reader during 2017 compared to 67% who had read a printed book. (https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/09/25/one-in-five-americans-now-listen-to-audiobooks/ft_18-03-07_bookreading_printbooks/)

While one might suspect that college students would prefer e-books to physical books as textbooks, a 2015 survey of college students by Direct Textbook revealed just the opposite: According to that study, 72% of respondents preferred a physical textbook over an e-book, stating that they like to highlight the text, that print textbooks are easier to read, that e-readers make their eyes hurt, and that they can’t focus or concentrate when reading e-books like they can when reading printed books. (<https://campustechnology.com/articles/2015/09/01/survey-most-students-prefer-traditional-texts-over-ebooks.aspx>)

Perhaps this preference is also because discerning persons sense what a 2014 trial of 50 graduate students revealed, namely, that reading a physical book *fostered better retention* than reading an e-book. Why, though, would this be the case? One of the chief trial researchers, Anne Mangen PhD from Norway’s Stavanger University, found that *the physical act of turning a page* and of *sensing the pile of pages to one’s right and one’s left* somehow cemented the book’s information into a reader’s brain! (See <https://www.shoppersbase.com/thinking-buying-kindle-read-first/>.)

This aspect of *retention* is why we, at the Midwest School of Herbal Studies, continue to offer our coursework in *printed* form—in the way of workbooks and textbooks—instead of producing it in a digital format as so many other herbal schools are increasingly doing. Indeed, we want our students to *master* herbalism (even as the word “master” in the “master-herbalist” diploma we offer indicates)! No doubt, this is one reason why MWSHS graduates show themselves to be *head-and-shoulders* above the graduates of those schools offering digital coursework, and this especially so in the way of retention—for example, in knowing the specific indications for particular herbs, the Latin names of herbs, and the contraindications for herbs. This is one of many reasons why we are *so very proud* of our talented and hard-working graduates!

