

Local gives new meaning to 'going green'

Austin-based herbalist uses Texas plants to make the most of her environment

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Cactus, ragweed, mesquite beans, dandelions.

To most, these simply sound like undesirable scenery, but for herbalist Ginger Webb, these plants are the beginning of a long list of edible and medicinal plants ripe for picking.

"It is so empowering and gratifying to know how to use wild plants," Webb said. "I like that wild energy of using what grows near, without the hand of a human being. Knowing how to use the plants is so human — it's a birthright."

Webb stumbled upon herbalism as a means of feeling more connected to the earth while working in the environmental movement in Europe. At 26, she moved back to the United States to pursue her education at the Southwest School of Botanical Medicine.

Now, between teaching herbal medicine classes at Plant Spirits Apothecary, her East Austin classroom; guiding group herb walks to identify useful local plants; and Texas Medicinals, her herbal-products business, Webb works to provide the knowledge and the means to help keep Austinites naturally healthy. She uses herbs from around the world in her teas and tinctures sparingly, relying as much as possible on local plants for her products.

"Sustainability-wise, it just makes sense," Webb said. "What is around you is what makes the most sense to use. When you buy herbs in the store, you usually don't know who picked it or where it grew. You have no connection to that plant in the earth. Choosing plants that grow around you provides a full relationship with that plant; you see it grow. By making conscious decisions, you are choosing to be a steward of the earth."

Only doctors can diagnose serious health issues, but Webb can help simply by using gentle and strengthening herbs.

For students, she suggests replenishing the nutrients and minerals that stress depletes with nourishing herbal infusions, such as nettles, oat straw and alfalfa, which provide positive green



Meredith Stone; The Daily Texan
Ginger Webb, herbalist and founder of Texas Medicinals, instructs a small class at her shop in East Austin.

energy. For anxiety, she recommends the herbs kava kava and ashwagandha to help the body prepare for sleep and, if taken regularly, to help balance the body's natural cycles.

"The way the economy is, one of the positive things about people not having much money is they are more interested in the simpler things in life, like growing their own food and spending time outside," Webb said.

"Nature heals on so many levels," she said. "Anytime that you can use any of the plants and reconnect with the wild natural world, it's going to help counteract the craziness that we're experiencing."

Texas Medicinals products are available near campus at Wheatsville FoodCo-op, People's Pharmacy, Whole Foods Market, EcoWise and Cafe Mundi.

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