

A LITTLE GREEN WITCH

BY ANANDA FRY MYHRE

On a stroll through the Texas hills, one might see prickly ash, prickly pear, juniper, agarita or nettles. To the untrained eye, these are simply plants or weeds, but to the eye of an herbalist, they're unique with their own stories, personalities, Latin names, plant families and sub-families. Best of all, they're considered medicinal and used for their antimicrobial and stimulant properties, to strengthen kidney function and to balance blood sugar. Herbalism is the art of working with plants to heal ourselves—body, mind and spirit—and I am an herbalist.

Some people might call me a hippie, flower child, free spirit or any other such name. I owe most of these attributes to my upbringing; I was born on the land where

I still live, and my father is the permaculture enthusiast Kirby Fry. I grew up with a backdrop of love and appreciation for the Earth. I remember being a kid and having my father call me outside to see the beauty of our bluestem meadow in the Texas twilight. I also remember eating briar tips like candy, and staring into the inner workings of a winecup flower thinking there couldn't be anything more lovely.

When I was about 11, my family and I were lucky enough to connect with Austin herbalist Ginger Webb, who owns Texas Medicinals. Ginger sells tinctures, teas, salves, cordials and syrups—all with the purpose of healing the body and helping with overall health. Over the years, she's taught adult and youth classes, led herb walks and camps and offered private consultations. She follows her bliss and sees that the art of herbalism lives on, and she views the practice of healing through herbs as more than science—it's spiritual. Immediately upon learning of herbalism, I was hooked, and knew that this would have to be a part of my life.

Ever since becoming student and teacher, Ginger and I have worked together with speed, ease and fun. Our relationship first began with her weekly classes, called "Little Green Witches" for homeschooled youth. Every week, seven of us would gather around Ginger and learn about herbalism: the intricacies of classification; the types of leaf and flower structures; the medicinal benefits of plants; the body and how it works; chakras; flavors and energetics. We would create all sorts of medicines in her big shiny work kitchen,



often with plants that we'd harvested from our own backyards. Passionflower vine—a lovely, soothing plant used to treat anxiety and insomnia—was our class favorite. We sold our mixtures at farmers markets and gave them as gifts to relatives.

Little Green Witches had camps and more classes, but eventually our group drifted apart, and Ginger and I began working together in an apprentice relationship. Another student (Laurel Tashjian) and I help Ginger conduct research for her classes, and we make fire cider, smudge sticks, medicine and yummy foods like herb-infused honey. We spend blissful hours in a world of plants. I also do work days with Ginger, where we make endless batches of tinctures and wash the mountain of used

glass jars that vary in size from 1 ounce to a gallon and range in color from brown, to clear, to blue. I've learned how the business works: all of the business calls, the records of everything we've made, the research when a new product is in the pipes, the orders to the organic herb supplier, the honey and apple cider vinegar purchased by the gallons—and so much more.

To me, herbalism is a sacred art form, and the work space is the temple. When walking into Ginger's workshop, the senses are flooded with smells of herbs—powdered, dried and fresh. And I've learned that just as I move thoughtfully through the workshop in fear of bumping glass bottles, so do I tread when walking through a field, from the knowledge that what I'm walking on, and surrounded by, is medicine.

When people ask me what I want to do when I grow up, I always list herbalism as one of the top options. Working in harmony with nature to heal is one of the most magical feelings. Whether I'll be healing myself, my future children or sharing my knowledge and preparations with the public, herbalism is certainly a practice that will always remain a big part of my life. Once a Little Green Witch, always a Little Green Witch.

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