

## ***Community & Gratitude for Wild Greens***

What extraordinary, challenging and creative times we live in! Over the last few weeks life as we knew it has been turned upside down as the coronavirus swept from country to country, town to town, community to community.

It is a time to be taking great care of our health and well-being and for supporting others in ways that are possible. Amongst the deep challenges and loss that many have already experienced, we are also seeing that, 'we are all in this together'.

Communities are springing up where there weren't any, and where they already exist much kindness, compassion and gratitude is flowing between people. These times of challenge and creativity are reminding us of the interwoven nature of all life, (yes that includes us too).



Over the last decade or so, perhaps longer, we have started to hear more information about the *biosphere*, *ecosystems*, *the wood-wide web*, *mycelium* and *Mother Trees*. At heart what we are learning is that what we call 'nature', is alive, intelligent, communicating, protects its young and vulnerable, and creates sustainable relationships as a diverse community. *We are not just part of nature, we are nature*. Our lives move in cycles interwoven with all other life cycles. Our health, well-being and existence is totally dependent on the health, well-being and existence of the whole biosphere.

It's the same **Sun** that; warms the bark of the pear tree, that plant leaves interact with to create glucose – these leaves we eat and our body transforms into energy, that warms the soil for our seeds and stirs them into action creating food, that brings fish to the surface of the water, that offers light to every creature with eyes, that creates awe and wonder at dawn and dusk for many human beings.

The **Water** on the Earth today has been here for nearly 5 billion years. The amount of water on the planet does not change, and it does change form. We drink the same water that our ancestors drank! The same water the dinosaurs drank, that the plants and trees draw up through their roots that interacts with the sunlight in their leaves. We share the same body of water with the cormorants, herons, cows and horses on Port Meadow as they drink and bathe. Water holds memory, but that's another story for another time and another place. Our human lives are utterly interwoven and utterly dependant on the rest of life.

*So it is with this in mind that I feel even deeper gratitude to the trees, wild plants and herbs that become medicine, food and teachers for our body, heart, mind and soul.* Many of our common wild greens contain the vital vitamins and minerals we particularly need at this time to support our immune system.

Our immune system is also nourished by happiness, calm and joy, which can be part of our experience of noticing what is growing and thriving around us as we respectfully forage and learn about plant medicine.



Let's begin with the humble and tenacious **Dandelion**. Antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, diuretic. The leaves are high in vitamins A & C, beta-carotene, potassium, iron and calcium. There is no need to spend hours trying to dig up their roots or pull their sun-burst yellow heads off, just eat them! The roots, leaves and petals can be eaten. The young tender saw-tooth shaped leaves are great raw added to salads or chopped up with yarrow and comfrey to make a wild green omelette.



**Recipe** – gather a hearty handful of wild greens including, dandelion leaves and heads, small nettle leaves, plantain leaves and a couple of small comfrey leaves. Rinse and chop the greens. Whisk 2 organic free-range eggs, add to the pan with a little butter, salt and black pepper. Add the chopped wild greens plus oregano fresh or dried and a sprinkling of caraway seeds. When cooked serve with beet-root sauerkraut. Sprinkle the yellow dandelion petals over the meal.



The older leaves can be used as you would spinach; for example wilted or cooked down with garlic and a squeeze of lemon. Or cook them in hot sesame oil and sprinkle with sesame seeds. (The Hedgerow Handbook). I also chopped and steamed wild greens and added them the previous night's curry, delicious! For dandelion tea simply put a few washed leaves into a teapot, add boiling water, steep for 5 minutes and sweeten with honey if you wish.

I'm just beginning to make a deeper acquaintance with **Yarrow**, Bloodwort, (*Achillea Millefolium*) having recently transplanted some onto my plot, and feel I'm becoming enchanted... There is something about the soft, fern-like curvaceous, feathery leaves that starts to shift my consciousness into another realm. (I later read that yarrow is associated with magic and ingesting it is said to improve your alertness and psychic abilities). *When getting to know a plant sit with it for a while and notice what you become aware of, do this without expectation or agenda.* Often the plant will start to show you some of its qualities, its medicine.



Yarrow contains vitamins A, C and E. The leaves have a dill-like aromatic quality, and can be collected throughout the growing season and be used fresh or dried. This herb is anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antimicrobial, astringent and diuretic. The *Achillea* part of the Latin name comes from Achilles, the Greek warrior known for one weak spot, his ankle. He used yarrow to heal the wounds of his men during battles. Yarrow has a high reputation as a healing plant as it contains anti-inflammatory chemicals and boosts circulation. Do not use yarrow the in the first 3 months of pregnancy or whilst breast feeding.

Like the dandelion, yarrow flowers, (pink and white) are loved and needed by many insects including, bees, butterflies, hoverflies, ladybirds and parasitic wasps. (The Medicine Garden, Corby). The colour of dried yarrow-heads holds the magic of the Scottish Moorlands.

Life thrives through diversity, gratitude makes the heart sing, and kindness creates community. Feed your soil and your hearts with what truly nourishes. Only put into your soil what you are happy to put into your body. Gaze with awe and wonder at leaf shape and texture, the work of worms and centipedes in the soil, leaf litter decomposing into humus, unfurling pear blossom and new green shoots. And be well.

**Inspired reading and beautiful illustrations:** The Hedgerow Handbook,  
<https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/108/1088063/the-hedgerow-handbook/9780224086714.html>

**Inspired watching:** Call of the Forrest – The Forgotten Wisdom of Trees  
<https://vimeo.com/ondemand/calloftheforest>

Ally Stott  
Plot 77