

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
*THE PRACTICING HERBALIST*



AN INTRODUCTION TO  
*The Practicing Herbalist*

Meeting with Clients—  
Reading the Body

SHARED  
BY  
*Margi Flint*

AEON

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## FOREWORD

*by Anne McIntyre*

It's hard to believe that it is nearly twenty years since Margi's first edition of *The Practicing Herbalist* was published by Margi herself. I remember that time well, and I recollect thinking at the time what a brilliant idea it was to give us the rare opportunity of a bird's eye view of a herbalist at work. I've always longed to know what other herbalists' practises are like, how they relate to the people who consult them, what their diagnostic tools are, what they put in their prescriptions and what their thinking was when formulating them.

It is fascinating how varied we all are as herbalists, each one of us creating an ever-evolving practice as we learn and develop from our life experiences: the people we meet, what we read and hear and the alchemy of this fusion in our ever-transforming hearts and minds. As Margi says, the unique gifts we have created from our own life experience are what we have to offer our patients.

I first met Margi in 1998 when I was invited by Rosemary Gladstar to speak at the International Herbal Symposium just outside Boston. That was the start of a new adventure in my life. I had never visited the USA before and my first encounter with this vast and varied country was with hundreds of herbalists! You can imagine what a rarefied view I must have had! They started the conference with an "opening circle"

and with their warm sense of community and quite a different, somehow more earthy, way of being herbalists that contrasted with my hitherto rather confined experience of being a “clinical herbalist”; my eyes were opened wide, and I was hooked!

One of the first people to befriend me was Margi with her wonderful warmth and enthusiasm. She invited me to teach at Earthsong Herbs, her beautiful home and practice in Marblehead (which as Margi writes, is idyllic) and this was the beginning of a long friendship. We shared some wonderful times, and I loved going there sometimes twice a year to teach the students that she would gather, about the amazing world of Ayurveda. Margi, Rosemary and Deb Soule were instrumental in my being able to become part of the amazing community of American herbalists for over twenty years which I will never forget. I’m so indebted to Margi for the central part that she played.

Not only did Margi and I work and study together in those times, but we also had a lot of fun playing. I remember so well going out often to breakfast to a lovely café we would walk to. As we did, there were frequent calls of “Hi Margi”. Everybody knew her, and you could see that they held her in high regard. She really was, and still is, the community herbalist and has been since the days when herbal medicine was considered much more eccentric and whacky than it is now. She was and is impressive! She has been the practitioner and the teacher for decades and yet she has always been the student too, not claiming to own her vast and profound knowledge and getting too attached to it, but acknowledging her debt to others in the field. I’m honoured to be among the teachers she acknowledges so generously.

Margi’s descriptions of her practice are detailed and vivid, and even include which computers she uses and her invoice and banking systems .... all very helpful for anyone just starting out as they are setting up not just a herbal practice, but also a business that needs to support them if they are going to be able to practice their art sustainably. She accomplishes such a lot, seeing clients, making all her own medicines and prescriptions, teaching far and wide and I remember being impressed by how highly organised she was. Her home is lovely, the herb garden beautiful, and I remember fondly the distinct perfume of her dispensary!

*The Practicing Herbalist* covers so much ground and illuminates, in a way I find fascinating, Margi’s unique way of practice for which she has gained well-deserved wide renown. She describes how she does

a client intake and has included her case history form; I love her little helpful notes by questions on the form like “Varicose veins. Uterine Balancing Class (UBC), more bioflavonoids, Yarrow” and “Nose bleeds. Lack of bioflavonoids. Viral conditions. Nose picking, cut nails”. She gives detailed explanations of the endocrine system, a unique description, to me, of how the varying colours of the body can be indicative of health imbalances, how symptoms in one part of the body can tell us about what’s going on in another in her organ/body correspondences, and then she guides us through her unique way of reading the body. She begins this with the face and comprehensive diagnostic signs that I find very helpful and then page after page of tongue diagnosis—one of my favourite subjects! She continues with examining the fingernails, stool and urine analysis, pulse diagnosis and pulse testing and finishes with what she calls “quicksight confirmation”—a summing up in words and great illustrations of how to read the body—how the body in its great wisdom is telling us about other major body parts and their correspondences.

In *The Practicing Herbalist*, Margi has so generously opened her herbal practice for the world to see, and what a wonderful educational tool that is! Her chatty informal way of writing makes her descriptions of her world so easy to envisage, it is just like having a great conversation...though of course she is doing all the talking! Well, she is a wonderful and highly experienced teacher! And if, as she also says, our own personal experience with herbs and giving herbs to our clients is a far better teacher than anything we can read in books, this book is hugely valuable not only for new practitioners with not so much of their own practical experience, but also for others as they evolve their careers. The quest for insight and understanding about the workings of the human organism and its interrelationship with nature in all its magnificence is a subject as vast as the world that we will never finish exploring, which makes our profession just so much fun and perfect really! Thank you Margi!

