

The Practicing Herbalist



Meeting with Clients • Reading the Body
Fourth Edition Shared by Margi Flint

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Fourth Edition

Shared by Margi Flint

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Dark is where truth resides
Sight is where you see it
under the shadows
is Joy

K A R Y N S A N D E R S

Dedication

I dedicate this fourth edition to all who supported me in The Great Isolation of 2020!

Jaime Jancosek, constant companion in the office, apothecary and gardens. Every weekday and some weekends she always had a smile and bright new thoughts. Videographer, label maker, a real human to share meals with. She kept me sane and, really, kept me alive. I would not have made it without her. Seriously.

Trader Joe's, Tendercrop Farm, The Fish Market, Crosby's, Shubie's, all my favorite restaurants who stayed open for takeout and safe outdoor dining. To all the staff who kept it going under terrible conditions.

My Sarah and Ryan for producing such incredible fun, brilliant and polite kids, Ethan and Owen. And the honor of caring for them while their parents teach. Becca Matusa for constantly being willing to change dates to care for these grand kids.

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Mindy Green, Anne Dickerson, Stratton Semmes, Nicole Telkes, for cocktail conversations at sunset. Sunset brought on the Dementors of Loneliness lurking nearby. Me alone in the big house.

My Man, Imaginary Lover who is all mine, in my bed, or dancing around the second floor and responding to all my cleverness adoringly or laughing at my ridiculousness. He is always good to me. Fantasy is an effective survival tactic.

Eagle, same vintage as me, for keeping my website protected and functioning. Sure, dive into rebuilding and modernizing. I love him.

Virtual Interviews by so many, Eric Nielson in Greece or was it Germany? Todd Howard at Pacific Rim in B.C., Yolanda in Italy. A feeding frenzy of book sales after the Herbal Entrepreneurs Conference, and they were gone! The world came in through the screen and was shared with everyone else isolated in the world. We are all connected!

The invention and learning curve for Virtual Clinics, herbalists from around the world and the star herbalists and wonderful clients I continue to work with. Distance is no longer an obstacle.

Virtual Qigong, Kundalini Yoga, Dance for Joy, and therapy, we all needed therapy!

The internet for sharing many fun videos from how to roast a chicken to making Bitters and all the people who commented and made me feel loved.

Tracy Santagate and Nick for inviting us to the Adirondacks to bark Wild Cherry, make hydrosols and best of all, Bog-walk! Four days to play in the forest and on and in the Lake like normal people.

All the Covid Concert musicians who played and will play again safely in my gardens. My soul is fed by them.

The Ocean for walks and a few amazing sailing days. I feel the Mother speak to me from the Ocean.

For Jaime sharing my nightly and morning Metta meditation repetitions by Sharon Salzberg. Once again, Jaime saves me.

May I be safe

Be happy

Be healthy

Live with ease.

May we be safe

Be happy

Be healthy

Live with ease.



William LeSassier and Margi

Acknowledgments

They say it takes a village to raise a child. This book is my latest child, and most repeated birthing. It was conceived years ago as a seed-for-thought-handout to accompany classes on how to be a better herbal practitioner. It started out short and sweet and has grown through a few evolutions. During these years many hands, hearts and minds have stroked and coddled this baby.

Heartfelt thanks to my teachers. To my first herb teacher, Rosemary Gladstar for constant nudges to take the next step. She who comes in through the keyhole, changes everything without notice, and leaves as quietly. "Cloud medicine." For her fine example of being kind to all who cross her path and for loving the plants and the students of the plants. Rosemary exemplifies how a person lives in good relationship, honoring Great Spirit, our ancestors, all living beings, two legged, four legged, winged ones, creepy crawly, swimming beings, rock, wind, fire, water, and loving the living Mother Earth we walk on. All of life she honors with quiet, joy-filled caring. The voice of truth and right action is channeled through her like golden filaments of enlightenment. No matter how daunting the message heard, she reflects, takes action and organizes for the greater good. She walks her talk. All of this she accomplishes with kindness and in a humble way. And most of all for our juicy-women-of-the-mountain camaraderie. My connection with Rosemary is magical. Juicy Garlic Queen stories filled with laughter or tears, we share the pulse of life. How fortunate I am to call you friend, confidant, sweet sister of the herbs. Thank you for being alive, awake and awakening me.

To David Winston for years of teaching the same classes over and over again until I got it. For the First Nation wisdom in stories told of 'Remaking yourself, the path to becoming human', for the strict standards of sterile lab and knowing when to use fresh plants. For weeks on Swan's Island with Sundew and Pond Lily, good food and giggles, ceremony and deep, simple prayer.

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To the late William LeSassier, teacher of all my teachers, who left me too soon. He who I studied least with, and whose teachings are etched into my herbal brain most. I give thanks for tape recordings of classes I never attended so that I may continue to learn from you.

To the teachers I bring to EarthSong Herbals. The gifted teachers of Aromatherapy, Mindy Green, Linda Patterson, Kathi Keville, Gabriel Mojay and David Crow. Flower essences with the oh-so-tuned-in David Dalton, Ian White and Kate Gilday. Anatomy and Physiology with the absolutely entertaining Tammi Sweet. And Phyllis D. Light, Betzy Bancroft, Ryan Drum, Roberta Horsman, and Bevin Clare. To the witty and lovely Annie McIntyre, and David Crow who makes Ayurveda understood. To William Morris for pulse and tongue knowledge with healthy doses of play afterward. I could ramble on singing all of their praises! These classes are for students but really more for the pleasure of my education.

To Karyn Sanders and Garbis Dimidjian for appearing just at the right time. Cracking open the shell, the wrappings, the cocoon, allowing me to evolve into an open, safe, protected yet vulnerable, empowered and whole me. The dance of dark and light, the shards of years and fears faced, pulled together and walking out onto the Mother freed. My heart is filled with appreciation bursting with sparkles for all you do, for me and all who enter spirit work with you.

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and Roceo Alarcon for ritual bathing and feeling the power of the pelvic floor, the joy of breast massage and appreciation for the juiciness of being a woman. Thomas Easley for insights into consultation presentation and questioning ideas. Nicole Telkes for her good strong spirit and devotion to living environmentally conscious on this planet and classes worth investing in. So many bright lights to learn from. So much to grasp and fit into the puzzles of healing work. And to all the teachers un-named who have helped me become who I am. These are the teachers of my village.

To the herbal practitioners who travel to Practitioners' Circle held for the community monthly. Seeing clients interact with each herbalist is an honor to witness. Their diverse wisdom is so appreciated. I learn so much. I honor the clients who share their histories and hearts as a means to find wellness as we practice.

To the plants whose energy makes it all happen. I think of the plants as my friends. So I have capitalized their names through out this book as a simple matter of respect for who they are, our kin. To the teachers, plants, clients and herb students I am going to meet next. I look forward to all new lessons.

I also wish to thank everyone who helped manifest this book. To Bill Hettinger for suggesting speaking into a tape recorder and telling my story. The lovely Cheryl Rowan for transcribing tape to disc and making me aware of saying "So" in between thoughts. To Linda Farmer for an amazing indexed transcription. Especially to Dawn Gregory, who for every edition has patiently and expertly helped compile, index, and be fussy about art, indication images and recognition for all that is this work, this book, that my life is. To my students who allowed me to ride the back of this wild book while imparting some knowledge to them. To my Mom and Dad for always supporting me in every way, I love you, when on Earth and now in the great beyond. To all my clients for understanding my pre-occupied absent-mindedness throughout this writing journey. I am truly blessed.



William LeSassier, Margi, Matthew Wood

Forward to The Fourth Edition

The path of the practicing herbalist is one that inherently begins with a calling to be of service to the world through the healing power of medicinal plants. Perhaps we are touched by the beauty and intelligence of nature, a plant stands up in the forest and calls our name, or we ourselves are profoundly healed through a leaf, flower, root, or seed.

Whatever catalyzes our first step on the plant path, it often begins with something beyond an intellectual decision to become an herbalist. This calling of the medicine of the Earth goes beyond our logical mind, for beckoning of the plant path echoes out from the forest and touches a deep place within our hearts. Something within us is awakened, an innate connection to the natural world and a feeling that we have to do everything we can to contribute to the healing of the world.

As we take our first steps on this plant path, a complete fascination with the plants ensues. We explore our local ecosystems, learn the plants that live there, and more often than not, start building our herbal library. We start growing the plants, wildcrafting them, preparing medicine with them, and immerse our senses in the living medicinal intelligence of the Earth. We learn their medicinal properties and how they touch our inner landscape in unique ways. We learn the cultures and traditions that have a profound understanding of not only the plants, but what it means to be a human, how we heal, and the truth of the natural world outside of us, as well as the natural world inside of us.

Through this deep immersion with nature, we inevitably heal ourselves. Sometimes it's just those nagging little health problems that bother us, and other times it is a complete and total cure of issues that have followed us throughout our lives like a shadow. For many modern herbalists, the healing we receive from the plants is a complete reorientation of our perception of the world, as we decolonize the modern cultural mindset that inevitably separates us from nature. We purify ourselves of the world and become a student of the Earth. We realize that to effectively heal others, we must first heal ourselves.

And as we do this, there comes a point on our plant path where the medicinal touch of the herbs becomes so powerful for ourselves personally, that we *have* to share that healing with others. They have shown us something about ourselves, a truth within and without that has made us a better human being. A deeper level of calling emerges to help others discover those same truths so they too can become a better, healthier, more whole person. Alas, we enter a new stage of development on this path, one that requires new levels of understanding, commitment, and discipline to become a true and effective practicing herbalist.

It's easy when we're studying herbalism to become nearsighted, only seeing the plants themselves. We become so focused on learning more and more plants, making more and more medicine, understanding more and more about how they heal, that we sometimes forget the other half of the equation: *the people we give them to*. For to be an effective practicing herbalist, there are a host of additional skills we must learn beyond the scope of just knowing about plants. We have to learn to traverse the sometimes-complex landscape of human beings.

You are now holding in your hands what is, in my opinion, one of the most unique and indispensable guides to learn the skills and strategies essential to practicing holistic herbalism. There are a lot of excellent herb books out there, but a theme I have noticed is that many focus on the basics: herbal actions, energetics, materia medica listings, medicine making, and lots of recipes and formulas. While this is all important and valuable information, it ultimately doesn't help you navigate the territory of that first moment a sick person is sitting in front of you saying, "*Can you help me?*"

How do you do an effective client intake, assessment, and evaluation so you can determine what the root cause of the problem is? What are the logistical aspects of setting up your own dispensary and administering remedies to your clients? How do you even *get* clients, keep them, and make sure they are actually healing? Even down to the practical question that is often a big question mark for everyone, how do I make a living as an herbalist? All of these questions and many more are covered by Margi in *The Practicing Herbalist*

with its balanced approach to understanding both sides of the herbal equation, — people and plants. Within are answered questions that you certainly have, and many more that you don't even know you have.

I believe that herbal medicine is becoming more relevant every day amidst this modern chaotic world. With the COVID-19 epidemic, more people are becoming aware of their health and seeking alternative options. Many are disillusioned by modern medicine, getting tired of the vicious cycle of prescription side effects that need another prescription, which in turn creates another side effect. While modern medicine is miraculous in many ways and saves lives every day, it also has its limits. The modern client is becoming more aware of these limits and searching for holistic options to care for their health. I believe the practicing herbalist is going to become much more sought-after moving forward into the future.

And on an entirely other level, there is growing understanding that humanity's disconnection from nature is contributing to the individual and planetary health challenges we're currently facing. It's clear the current cultural paradigm is unhealthy for all. The realization that we are a part of nature — *that nature is indeed within us* — must be revitalized so we can heal the deeper parts of ourselves emotionally, mentally, and even spiritually. I believe the intelligent healing power of medicinal plants can help us on these levels as well — a belief that I know Margi too holds to be true— and that in certain instances, this deeper level of healing is essential for a complete and total cure.

The need for highly effective, well-trained, holistically oriented practicing herbalists will only continue to increase in the years to come. We need true herbalists that really know what they're doing, not just taking pretty pictures of plants and calling themselves an herbalist to build a following on social media because it's the cool hip thing to do. We need people that not only have a heartfelt calling to heal people, but that are willing to give their life to this plant path with discipline, humility, and dedication. *Intention alone isn't enough... we have to be well trained.* And we need people further along on this path to guide us, to watch over us, and show us the way.

That is what Margi has been for me and many others. Someone who knows this plant path not only intellectually through her mind, but experientially through her heart. And she lovingly shares all of that through her teachings with an astounding level of humility, respect, and care. I remember when I picked up my first copy of *The Practicing Herbalist* in my early 20's. It was like a beam of light shone down from the heavens as I turned page after page as all of the questions that kept me up late at night were answered. Answers to many of my tough cases were in there. I finally got a grasp on how to *not* totally bumble my way through my intake process. But most importantly for me, I was able to start seeing patterns in my clients by reading the language of the body that helped me find the right pathway towards helping them.

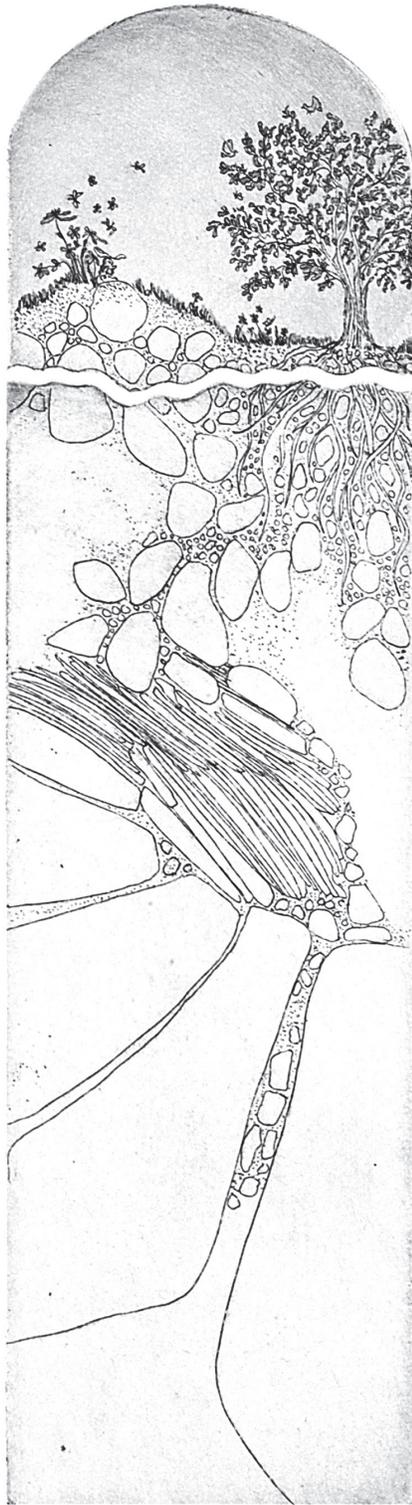
As a member of the "new generation" of herbalists, I am at a unique disadvantage when compared to the generation before me, being that I simply have not been alive long enough to acquire as much clinical experience as them. This is ultimately why we have mentors, and I believe it is imperative for this next generation of herbalists to humbly recognize this importance and learn everything we can from those farther along this plant path. Perhaps they have different values. Maybe they have different perspectives, or have a difference of opinion, but none of that negates the fact that they have significantly more knowledge and experience of what it means to be a practicing herbalist, and we must be their humble students so that we can better serve our communities.

The Practicing Herbalist will become one of the most indispensable herbal books in your library, and I hope over the years yours looks like my 2nd edition... dog eared, tincture stained, dirt smudged, and well used. It will serve you well for many more steps on your plant path, help you navigate the obstacles that you're guaranteed to face, and light your way in a world that desperately needs your unique expression of herbal medicine. From one plant person to another, thank you for heeding the calling of the forest and your heart, and for putting in the hard work to do your part to make this world a better place.

—Sajah Popham B.S. Herbal Sciences
Author of Evolutionary Herbalism
From the forests of the Pacific Northwest



Sajah Popham



Bluebirds

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“With all the skill of a master alchemist, Margi weaves together her years of experience as an herbal practitioner with the best of the teachings and the teachers she’s studied with. She stirs in just the right amount of honey, a bit of sass, and a healthy dollop of humor to bring us one of the most eminently useful books on herbal practice available today. There’s so much wisdom here, so much depth, and so much practical information distilled into these remarkably interesting pages. But even more, there’s so much generosity of spirit as Margi invites us into her heart and home and shares with us her deeply personal journey as an herbal practitioner.”

Rosemary Gladstar, Herbalist and Author

“What a pleasure and a treasure to have all of Margi’s wisdom, experience and ever-useful insights into the art and practice of herbalism. This book will not only serve students and teachers of herbs, but all consumers of health care in search of good medicine.”

Kathleen Maier, Sacred Plant Traditions

“What a great accumulation of vital observation and herbal tidbits! In addition, I see it as a very useful reference for practicing herbalists searching for specific information on facial, tongue, and pulse conformation. A good guide on how to sort information from the client intake. This book will be a wonderful addition to the many books already in the herbalist’s library.”

Gail Julian, Herbalist Director Clinical Herbalist Training Program
California School of Herbal Studies



Margi Flint RH HM BS owns and operates EarthSong Herbals, a busy family practice and clinic in the seacoast town of Marblehead, Massachusetts. Over these forty-plus years of herbal practice she has become their “Village Herbalist” with years of teaching advanced clinical studies in the states, Canada and the United Kingdom. She is on staff at Pacific Rim College in British Columbia and Earth Medicine Institute in Hawaii. She has been caught lecturing at Bastyr University, Tufts Medical School, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and numerous amazing herb schools across the lands. The plants and her clients are her most revered teachers.

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