



Medicine Stories Podcast

Episode 77 with Marysia Miernowska

Herbalism is Homecoming and Our Senses are Portals of Connection

April 20, 2021

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(Excerpt from today's show by Marysia Miernowska)

The vastness of the whole network of the web of life and the uniqueness of what is the medicine for us, what is the medicine for me? What is the medicine for you? And knowing that we each have our own unique portal and golden thread of connection.

(Intro Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Intro]

[0:00:24]

Amber: Hi Friends, Welcome to the *Medicine Stories* podcast, where we are remembering what it is to be human upon the earth. I am Amber Magnolia Hill. This is Episode 77 with Marysia Miernowska.

For most of human history, herbalism hasn't had a name. It was just a way of life, part of being human upon the earth. The folk traditions of our ancestors have deep nourishment to offer us and are an antidote to the depleting and disheartening realities of modern life. Let us reclaim an embodied relationship to plants, come into alignment with the regenerative currents of nature and ourselves, and get back to the root of the root of the root.

Two Patreon offerings go along with today's episode. The first is open to everyone over at the *Medicine Stories* Patreon — so you don't have to be a patron. And as you know, if you've been listening to this podcast for a while, that means it's a giveaway. And you know my favorite things to give away are books.

So this is a giveaway of Marysia's beautiful book, [*The Witches Herbal Apothecary: Rituals and Recipes for a Year of Earth Magic and Sacred Medicine Making*](#). It will be signed to you if you win, and all you have to do is head over there and leave a comment.

The second offering from Marysia is for patrons at the \$2 a month level — thanks, y'all. It is a video recipe tutorial for her Cosmic Bliss Blue Lotus Chia Pudding dessert. Yes (*Amber laughs*). So this is from her online herbal apprenticeship, which we talk about at the end. I didn't even know it existed until our conversation, but I'm very intrigued, which goes through the Wheel of the Year, which is all about what Marysia's work is all about: seasonal, cyclical living, and paying attention to life, death, and rebirth cycles of both nature, plants, and ourselves — I know that's three things, so both was not the right word to use there.

She writes that “In winter, we work with herbs for dreaming and foods, rituals and practices that deeply restore our nervous system, and help us enter deeper states of consciousness. This is a Divine Dessert that is also really healthy for the brain, the heart, and the soul. Enjoy the cosmic bliss of this medicinal, alchemical, aphrodisiac, adaptogenic creation.”

[0:03:07]

Amber: At the end of this episode today, I've included a really quick outro that is myself telling a story about an experience I had with some plants, which was directly related to what Marysia and I talk about in this interview.

A final note before I tell you more about Marysia is that the illustrator of her book is Maggie Lichtenberg. During the interview, Marysia was temporarily blanking on Maggie's last name. That's what it is, and I've linked to her Instagram in the show notes.

Marysia Miernowska is an herbalist, teacher, author, Earth activist, gardener, and green witch rooted in the Wise Woman Tradition of healing. She teaches herbal medicine, regenerative farming practices, Earth magic and holistic healing, and is the Director of the School of the Sacred Wild.

A multilingual and multicultural devotee of Mother Earth, Marysia has grown up intentionally and travelled extensively, learning different ways of tending to the earth and sharing regenerative, grassroots, Earth medicine. She draws on her background as a community organizer and activist. She keeps her feet rooted by designing and tending to medicinal and sacred gardens using permaculture and biodynamic practices.

Marysia makes herbal medicine, runs a yearly apprenticeship program, consults, formulates for natural healing companies, curates educational events, writes, speaks, and teaches internationally. Her work and devotional practices are centered around the mission of supporting a deepening of the love and regenerative relationship between Earth and people for the mutual healing of both human and plant communities.

You can learn more about her at the [School of the Sacred Wild](#) which, of course, will also be in the show notes. Alright y'all. Let's check it out.

(Transitional Music: acoustic guitar folk song "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Interview Begins]

[0:05:10]

Marysia: Hey.

Amber: Marysia, hi, it's so good to see you again, and I'm so happy to welcome you to Medicine Stories.

Marysia: Thank you so much for having me, Amber. I'm so delighted to be here with your beautiful community.

Amber: Yeah. So I'm thinking now we met through the Spirit Weavers gathering.

Marysia: Yeah.

Amber: And I'm remembering — because I'm seeing on my bookshelf right now — that you were sitting there on a stage. We were waiting for class signups, and we were looking at little herbal community art, and you had you had the book, *If Women Rose Rooted*.

Marysia: Yeah.

Amber: And you just kind of held it up for all of us, and you were like, "Oh, by the way, everyone should read this book," *(both laugh)*. And I was like, wow, really, you know, entranced by the title. And thank you so much because Sharon Blackie has been a podcast guest and just a really big teacher in my life.

Marysia: Oh, that's so great. Yeah, she's amazing. And I feel like there's just so much juiciness in some of those old stories and in our ability to remember those parts of ourselves through storytelling. It feels so connected to the plants and the lands that we come from and the lands that we inhabit. So there just feels like there's so much alchemy there, between those three.

Amber: Absolutely. And this really seems like a huge part of your work, as well, is this intersection of embodiment, plants, well being, health, storytelling. Just, there's so much in your work that pulls me in.

So I would love to start by knowing how you became an herbalist, and if you can, like, weave your ancestral threads into it, too, because I know there's some strong ties there?

Marysia: Yeah. Well, I am an herbalist, and I'm a folk herbalist. And I first began learning about the plants through my great-grandmother in Poland. And I remember one of my earliest memories is, like, as a three year old, I remember my great grandmother, Marika was her name, showing me how to pick nettles so that I don't get stung. And little did I know that, you know, like, I don't know, maybe 20 years later, or 15 years later, nettles would just completely re-stitch me together in a moment when I was really sick and become one of my primary plant allies.

[0:07:23]

Amber: How do you pick nettles to not get stung?

Marysia: Well, she would say to just really focus on holding the stem and to avoid the leaves. And since then, you know, in this, like, long love affair that I've had with nettles, I've been experimenting with so many things. And just nettles, I think even the sting of nettles is so fun, that I don't actually mind getting stung. I usually harvest her without gloves, and there's like a playfulness in the sting.

And I know that also, you know, when you do get stung, it releases serotonin. So there's that giddy high that is also, you know, there's a scientific explanation to it. But beyond the science, there's, I mean, I feel like the spirit of nettles is both such an ally in boundaries, and in that kind of fiery, airy, you know, delightful vitality. So the sting, for me, has been a part of the joy of working with that plant.

But she would actually use the sting, as well, to beat her knees. She had arthritic knees, arthritis, and would use bouquets of nettle to stimulate blood flow and to help with her inflammation in her joints.

Amber: Wow, I love that because I've read that 1000 times, but I've never actually heard of someone's great-grandmother doing it.

Marysia: Yeah!

Amber: And it would be nice to have her grounded and lived practice.

Marysia: Yeah, you know, it's funny because I ended up really experimenting with that myself and bringing that in, weaving it in, when I was sick with parasites a couple years ago. And there was a moment where I was in the garden, really kind of in this altered state of suffering and, like, mega bloated, and just had all this inflammation with the parasites.

And I was near the nettles and the nettles was like, "Lift your shirt and bring your belly to me." And I started doing that, and it felt like a million acupuncture needles that were just really stimulating a flow and a movement. There was so much kind of stagnation and swelling.

And so I have found the topical use of nettles in so many different ways, you know, be it infusion, hair wash, ritual, bath, and then the actual stinging to be so incredibly enlivening and healing.

Amber: Wow, what's the name for it? There's some name.

Marysia: Oh I don't know.

Amber: It has the root, Urtica, genus name in it, too. It's like "urtification" or something like that.

Marysia: Oh, cool! *(both laugh)*

[0:09:59]

Amber: Were you born in Poland?

Marysia: I was. I was born in Poland in the early 80s, and we moved to the United States when I was six, and then moved back to Poland when I was 12. I spent a lot of time between Poland and Madison, Wisconsin.

So to kind of speak to my ancestral roots with herbalism, you know, while I had two grandmothers that really connected me deeply to the plants, and a lot of my earliest childhood memories involve the plants, like linden and rose and nettles, just kind of have painted this, you know, that kind of dreamy memoryscape of early childhood. At the same time, there wasn't really a naming of it as herbalism, and it was just so much more part of life.

And I think to this day in Poland — and a lot of, I think, you know, a lot of actually folk traditions all over the world — people don't necessarily call themselves herbalists, but they practice herbalism. And they know the plants, and they have a deep connection to some plants in their area, and they know how to bring healing with the plants.

So I never really even had a concept of herbalism when I was really little, and I went on, actually, to study architecture, took a really different turn. I went to university for architecture and studied the psychology of space. I was really fascinated about how the way we design spaces changes the way we interact. And I really had this kind of, you know, 20 year old, fiery calling to change low income housing in the United States and create these environments that would be really healthy and supportive.

And I don't know, maybe our listeners know this, but a lot of low income housing projects in the United States are built in a way to mimic prisons. And so there's a kind of psychological, easy transition into the prison system. There's like a part of the body and the psyche that knows that kind of environment and knows it to be home. So that's what I was really passionate about.

[0:12:07]

Marysia: And it led me to Mexico where I studied architecture in Oaxaca, and then I went on and did my thesis on vernacular architecture, traditional architecture, and how it influences food rituals. So I was really always interested in these kind of traditional ways that we interact with food and landscapes and culture, and how our culture is — and then our society, really — changes based on our connection to these ways of interacting with food and land.

From there, I ended up working, actually, in your town, Nevada City, with an architect there who specializes in cohousing, and I felt like I could do that work that I wanted to do by helping people create intentional neighborhoods. And from there, I ended up, you know, I ended up getting really sick in Mexico and quite burned out in the field of architecture, which it feels very patriarchal (*Marysia laughs*).

And I also remember just, you know, growing up with professors, as parents, we traveled so much as a kid, I backpacked my whole life and really grew up in a multicultural and multilingual environment. And I remember the first summer that I was working in an office in front of a computer, and I saw that the people outside on the street, you know, and people going to the river, and I was like, "This doesn't feel right. Summers are meant for me to be adventuring and in the

wilderness.” And from there, I moved to Northern Vermont, where I worked at a ski academy as an art teacher and a Spanish teacher, and really kind of there found my way back to the plants.

I had come there pretty sick, really depleted, a lot of adrenal burnout, had taken so many antibiotics when I was sick. And in a way just the forests of Vermont embraced me in a way that felt like home, that felt like Poland. And I was spending a lot of time in the woods, talking to plants, and just started really hearing them talk to me again and guide me and found nettles and, you know, and was nibbling on pine tips on my walks, and I just started entering that, this state of consciousness, that really felt like those earlier memories.

[0:14:37]

Marysia: And from there I found the Gaia School of Healing and Earth Education in Southern Vermont which is a school, an herbalism school, that was founded by Sage Mauer 20 years ago, and I started studying with her, and that was just an amazing coming home. Sage is an amazing teacher and has become a dear, you know, friend and sister. Years later, I ended up opening a branch of her school in California.

But that's a little bit about some of the threads that brought me back to the plants into these kind of nourishing and restorative traditions of folk healing and herbalism.

Amber: It's like it was like a homecoming for you, and I think that even for those of us who did not grow up with grandmothers and great grandmother, showing us how to have relationships with plants, coming to herbalism feels like a homecoming as well because it is this ancient human thing that's in all of us.

And I love how you bring that up, because even really having a term for herbalism kind of like having a word for nature is bullshit. Like, there's...

Marysia: — Yeah.

Amber: ... Like, you know, people go, “Oh, I'm not an herbalist. Like, you know, yeah, I use herbs for my friends and family.” And I'm like, “Well, you're an herbalist!” And there's no official thing where *now* you're an herbalist. It's just if you're using plants for healing.

Marysia: Yeah, I love how you're speaking to how it's a homecoming for all of us. And I do, yeah, just really want to kind of, like, feed that and emphasize that. That's been my experience. You know, in all these years of teaching, it's probably one of the most beautiful things that, as a teacher, I get to witness: is how us, as humans, when we come back to our connection to the earth, it is such a healing homecoming.

And it just, yeah, you don't need to even really know what your ancestry is, or, you know, have learned anything about plants. I mean, I've worked with people who, you know, really started not knowing anything, and just, you know, coming from such diverse fields, but there's something, you know, at the end of the day, we're made of the same, you know. Both plants and us are made of the earth and of water of fire and of air, and when we can drop into our senses, and drop into our bodies and our hearts, and begin to feel that place where the plants weave into us and where we

can welcome them in, it's one of the most rich and expansive and loving portals of relationship, I think, that is found.

[0:17:19]

Amber: So how does one do that? How do you do that? How do you teach your students to do that? Like, I'll just speak, personally. It's hard for me, always, to find this inner space maybe to do that, or to shift my consciousness out of work, work, work, fight or flight. We were talking before we started recording, like, I have a four year old, that's a lot. But when I do take the time, of course, to do a plant meditation, or just sit outside or tend to the earth in any way, or even just bring more mindfulness into, like, when I'm taking herbs into my body. It's so profound.

So give me, personally, please, Marysia, some tips or practices on how I can cultivate more embodiment in my relationship with plants.

Marysia: Well, I love all the things you mentioned, and those are all just so wonderful. You know, I think that for me, the practice of plant meditation is kind of my touchstone. And that's where I can go in and really get the most messages and really move the most energy, so to speak.

But I feel like you're right, you know. Having the time and the space for a plant meditation, it doesn't happen every day at all. And what I've really found is that there's a way that we can enter those states just by coming into our senses, and kind of almost pretending like we're a three year old again.

You know, just this morning, right before our call, I was washing the dishes — my dishwasher broke. And I, you know, at first I was like, "Oh man, my dishwasher broke! I got all these dishes. It'll take me 30 minutes." And then I was like, "Okay, I'm going to use this as a moment for embodied presence."

And I just kind of started using some of the same techniques that I use for plant meditation for washing the dishes, of allowing myself to bring all of my awareness to my skin on my hands and feel like they were little eyeballs that were opening on my hands and feeling the warm water, and allowing myself to speak to the water and be like, "Wow, thank you, water, for caressing me with your warmth and your, you know, this cleansing sensation." And it just totally shifted my experience.

And so, you know, I feel like the senses are our portal of connection to the plants, and whether it's going out in the garden and just laying down on the earth, I mean, that is for me one of the primary ways of shifting consciousness. And it's also, you know, for those of us who kind of nerd out on science, it's shown that the earth, of course, has its own electromagnetic frequency, and that frequency brings us into the theta brainwaves, which are very restorative and healing brainwaves.

When we're in that mind of like, "Oh my god, you know, I got to do this and work and work!" and "Oh my god! I'm juggling so much," or even just like, you know, that list mentality, we're in the beta brainwaves, and healing doesn't happen there. Really important things happen there: thinking, analytical thinking, but healing and deeper states of consciousness happen in the theta and the delta brainwaves.

And in the alpha brainwaves, we kind of get into that yummy, relaxed creative state. And the earth is just like right there vibrating at the beta and alpha brainwave state the whole time.

So for me, one of the quickest ways of shifting my consciousness is I just go and I lay down on the earth, and I close my eyes, and I just start to breathe deeply. And when I do that, I just find tension leaving my body. I take deep breaths, and I sigh them out with sound, and I can feel tension moving out of me into the earth.

The Earth is so generous. She just takes, right? She just takes any excess energy and composts it.

And then I slip over to my belly, and when I do that, I find that like laying on my back, there's a moment where I'm like, okay, I've dropped in. But when I switch and lay on my belly, I'm like, whoa, here's a whole other level. And I start to feel that intimacy of like, oh my goodness, my heart to your heart, my flesh against your flesh, like the smell of the soil, the coolness of her skin on my skin. And I find, again, so much energy, tension, stress draining from my body, and it really takes five minutes, 10 minutes at most, to enter a completely different state of consciousness and presence.

Amber: (*Amber laughs*) I'm gonna do that as soon as we're done.

[0:22:34]

Amber: I noted that you work with chakras. And I've kind of been coming into a new understanding of chakras lately, where, like I found, you know, that framework in my early 20s, and got it and, like, loved it, and it stayed with me ever since. But I've really, really been working with them as embodied reality lately, and this ever expanding healing journey that I'm on, and it's really been helpful. I'm like, oh my gosh, like, this needs to be something that I'm just tuning into on a deeper level more often.

So I would just love to hear, like, how you envision the chakra system, how it's helpful for you, and healing your students.

Marysia: Yeah, the chakras have been so huge for me, and I really have to credit Sage Mauer for weaving the chakras and herbalism together. I mean, I feel like, you know, she started doing that 20 years ago and has been just phenomenal in teaching so many people about the chakras as a lens through which to look at imbalances, and also to connect to the plants and notice where they enter and which chakras they really activate.

So, you know, just to kind of back up for our listeners, the chakras are these energy bodies, right, this system of energy bodies in our body. And each of them are kind of like a portal that holds a different vibration, that vibrates at a different color, and that almost is like an information disc that holds our beliefs and different kind of vibrations we've collected — experiences that we hold in our body, in our energy body, about kind of whatever theme that chakra connects to.

So the root chakra is at the base of the spine. It vibrates with the color red. The element is Earth, and it's that place where we plug into the earth. It's also the place where we hold our beliefs and experience of safety, family, nourishment, community. As you move up the chakras, they become kind of more ethereal and less Earth realm-y. But the root is very Earth realm, very vast, and a lot of

my healing is always focusing on the root. I always start with the root because, well, of course, we have to begin with the root in order to — like a plant — bloom and thrive.

[0:25:04]

Marysia: So the chakras are amazing, and there's a wonderful book that also has been huge, and I highly recommend it to you and to anybody else who's interested. It's called *Eastern Body Western Mind*, and the author is a psychotherapist, and she goes through the chakras, and really gives examples of people who she's worked with and shows how kind of different imbalances in the chakras can manifest in our life, in our way of thinking, and et cetera.

And what's helpful for me as a practitioner and as a teacher, the chakras are amazing, because it's kind of like, again, the elements: it helps to simplify things, and it helps to notice patterns in nature, right? And when we begin to notice patterns in nature, you know, like in permaculture, where, by looking at the elements, we are able to bring balance to them without so much story.

You know, if you, for example, have a friend who's very fiery, and when that fire is in balance, that person might be passionate, and, you know, motivated, and quick to make great changes, and very joyful. But if that fire is in excess, which translates to a solar plexus excess, they might show things like anger, or jealousy, or a lot of ego, or they might interrupt people, or, you know, whatever that fire, however that fire is in its excess state.

And so being able to look at that just energetically — through the chakras or through the elements — you can kind of take away the human story, and it allows you to notice, okay, there's a lot of fire here. How can I balance that fire? Okay, by grounding, by nourishing the root.

You know, often people are fiery, or they're chaotic, because they don't feel safe. And so by bringing in, like, nourishing herbs that hold a lot of Earth and water and are cooling, that fire, that energy in the solar plexus, can start to be less inflamed and can drop deeper and can actually restore some of the qi of that person.

So I find that both the chakras and the elements are really amazing frameworks for looking at all imbalances in humans, and then also looking at all plants and noticing oh, this plant has a lot of fire. You know, maybe this other person, they need more fire — they're depressed, their digestion system is sluggish, they're, you know, they're not feeling connected to themselves. And so I can bring in plants that hold fire, that hold that solar aspect, like St John's or ginger or schisandra, and really wake up that energy center and bring in that element of healthy fire.

[0:28:00]

Amber: I'm interested in what you said at the beginning, too, about, like noticing when you take a plant in which chakra it's affecting or interacting with.

Marysia: Yeah, that's really how I probably one of the primary practices of the plant meditations that I guide people into. One of the main things we do or one of the several things we do is really just notice where the plant goes in the body, you know. The the plant meditations that I lead are like an active prayer; they're like an active intimacy where we're inviting in a different consciousness into our body and asking it to go into the place most in need of healing. And then we're observing, and we're, you know, opening our body with tools such as breath and dropping

deeper in presence, and noticing the sensations and noticing where where it lands, where it goes, how it moves.

And often you can really feel that, you know. I mean, I'm sure you can relate to this, like if you drink nettles, right, or chickweed or dandelion or burdock. You drink it, and you suddenly kind of go "Ahhh," you know? You feel more full and relaxed and grounded and nourished. There's a cooling quality and almost like a lubrication, a hydration. There's a lot of water and earth element, and it tends to land lower in our abdomen. And so that is connecting to that root chakra, that grounding.

You know, if we drink a plant like blue vervain or lavender, we often kind of notice our mind shifting. We notice our nervous system shifting. Since we have a little consciousness shifting as we enter more of a dreamy state, we tend to open our breath more. And so we feel that plant often kind of entering our upper chakras, the third eye, you know, the throat, the heart. Those plants are wonderful conscious shifters. They are great for meditation. They're amazing for those upper chakras and for the mind.

So you can kind of follow, I often say, "Follow the swallow," (*both laugh*) when I'm guiding a meditation, but you can kind of just follow them and follow the sensations in your body.

Amber: Which would take being super present, and yeah, present with the senses and the, what's that, interoception, what you're feeling inside your body as well — notes to self that I'm...

[0:30:46]

Marysia: Yeah. And to speak to that, you know, it feels very tantric, actually, you know. I'm a student of Tantra as well. I don't, I'm saying that hesitantly because I'm sure there are people who are much more devoted, and academically student-like, but I'm a lover and a devotee and student, yeah, student, a humble student of Tantra.

And what I appreciate about Tantra and meditation in the tantric practices, unlike zen meditation, we're not trying to have an empty experience or a clear mind, or, you know, we're not trying to just go into that place of meditation where I am, you know, "quieting the monkey mind," so to speak, right, which I think is really hard (*Marysia laughs*).

And, you know, it's helpful, I find, to just also be so compassionate with ourselves, when we're trying those forms of meditation and give ourselves the context that a lot of those meditation practices were cultivated in Zen monasteries, by men who had the environment to just not have to cook and take care of kids, and, you know, they were able to just focus on that and go into that state of, you know, empty mind.

And what I appreciate about tantric meditation is that we use the senses. We engage the body, we recognize that we are embodied. And so we instead use our body as a portal, and we notice, you know, we bring our attention to, yeah, the breath, or the wind that's caressing our skin, or the sun on our face. And I find that that's just so much more human, you know. It's just so much more available, and it's so powerful, and it gives the mind something to do, too.

Amber: Yeah, yeah, that makes so much sense. It is very comforting and normalizing, too, (*Amber laughs*), to reframe zen meditation and its evolution in that way.

[0:32:52]

Amber: Infusions. You mentioned infusions, and I've been rereading your book in preparation for our interview, and I was like, oh, yeah, I haven't been making infusions for I don't know how long. It's been a long time. So I started doing it again a few weeks ago, and it's just feeling so good. Are you a daily infusion drinker?

Marysia: You know, I think I am (*both laugh*). But I'm also not rigid. You know, I, in my book, I talk a lot about, you know, daily nourishing herb infusions. And I feel like even just hearing you speak to that, I felt the coming home that you experienced again, right?

And I think that's what's so amazing about the plants is, like, the coming home happens over and over and over again, no matter how far we are, you know, you know, linearly in some way, as some may perceive.

And yeah, and there's, you know, there are many times where I'm not drinking nourishing herbs every day. But I do drink a lot of plants, and there are, yeah, there are definitely moments where I'm not making infusions as often. But when I do, I'm like, it is also for me a coming home. And I'm like, oh, my goodness, I feel so much better! And like where have you been nettles? Where have you been, dear friend? I, you know, where have I been?

So I feel like different times of the day, like I have many jars, and I'm kind of sipping on different things. And, you know, if I want to feel more mental clarity, I'll bust out my schisandra. We're in the spring right now, it's such a time where I'm starting to work with schisandra. Again, just calling in that awakening and that brightness, kind of, you know, washing away some of that kind of heavier, denser energy of winter.

And then I'm also really coming back to the nourishing herbs as well. I'm working with chickweed right now, which I'm just like, oh, chickweed! (*Marysia laughs*) And yeah, and I've been drinking nettles again, and it's just feels so good to be flooding your body was nourishment.

Amber: Yeah.

Marysia: And I don't always do it. And when I do it again, I'm like, "Duh." (*Marysia laughs*)

Amber: Oh chickweed, I just love chickweed so much. Like on our land, it's just growing right next to all these other weeds, so it's hard to harvest in the way I would like to be able, to just grab a handful, you know? (*Amber laughs*)

So I mostly make pesto out of it. I have never, I don't think, made an infusion out of chickweed. But the infusion that I love the most, wildcrafting in the springtime, is violet leaves.

Marysia: I knew you were gonna say that! I kind of felt her around you! (*Marysia laughs*)

Amber: Oh, the taste! That, there's nothing to me like the taste of like long steeped violet leaves in water.

Marysia: Yeah.

Amber: It's like pure plant energy. It's pure Earth. It's green. It's green.

Marysia: Yeah. Ugh, like so soothing, too, right? Like, I feel all those fiery parts of me that are just instantly like, “ahh,” when I drink violet. The heart opens, just the lubrication of all the tissue. Yeah, I love violet leaf. It's one plant that I don't have the blessing of living near here in Southern California. It's a little too dry here. So I do sometimes buy dried violet leaf, but it isn't the same.

Chickweed is an amazing infusion. And I also love chickweed, you know, on salads, because it's such a... It's one of those weeds that is not bitter, and it's not tough. I mean, it's just so juicy and tender. But my favorite way to drink chickweed is to throw a handful of fresh chickweed into a blender and just blend it and then drink it, and that also feels like this like IV of just like green energy, and those fresh herbal juices are just incredible.

[0:37:04]

Amber: Yeah, so you talk about doing that with milky oats in the book. And a friend and I, she has like a little ridge on her land that gets milky oats, you know, for a week or two every spring and we're, like as soon as they're ready, we're gonna go out there and harvest, and we're gonna do your blending technique.

Marysia: Yeah, it's wonderful. I learned that from the tropical herbalists of, you know, Costa Rica and other tropical lands. They do fresh juices by blending. It's a very...

Amber: — Not juicing.

Marysia: .. Yeah, not using the juicer, but blending with water.

If it's a plant that has a lot of fiber, you can also strain it before you pour it. Like with the Milky oats, you would strain it. With chickweed, you don't even have to strain it if you have a good blender.

But yeah, you know, that's one of their ways of working with the herbs, the folk herbalists of those lands, because they don't, you know, they don't really have a dry environment, so they're not drying herbs. And then their plants also grow year around so they can make fresh weed juices, you know, nourishing weeds. Yeah, it's really good to have them in the spring.

[0:38:09]

Amber: This seems like a good time to touch on the Wise Woman framework, and why we are focusing so much on simple, nutritive, mineral-rich weeds instead of these more sexy plants with their big heroic actions.

Marysia: Yeah, well, you know, I think — just to kind of circle back to my my own healing journey and story of coming back to the plants — when I was really sick, having come back from Mexico, and having just become a little depleted and having adrenal burnout and such, by working in architecture and in front of a computer all the time, I started really looking at different alternative medicine options.

And I really came into contact with The Heroic Tradition, you know, things like the raw food diet, which I think is, you know, great for moments and for some people, but has a really strong kind of like, if it's not raw, are you 98%, or are you 100? And you're bad if you have something cooked. And there's just so many different places where in alternative medicine, there's a strong presence of guilt and shame, and of are you doing it right? Are you not doing it right?

Amber: Clean versus unclean.

Marysia: Exactly. And then often when you start to track the power dynamics, you find that the practitioner is made into this hero, right? That's the name: The Heroic Tradition. I think these are all terms coined by Susun Weed.

Amber: Let's say that these are terms coined by Susan Lee, but she was just naming what was already there. Like, when we're talking about the Wise Woman Tradition, she didn't invent that. She put an eye on it.

Marysia: No, no, absolutely. Yeah, no, for sure. I mean, that's what is so beautiful about the Wise Woman Tradition is it's like the oldest way of being in relationship to the plants and the earth, and to the cycles of life and death.

So yeah, that Heroic Tradition is something we see a lot, and I find that it often can cause more harm than good. You know, there are so many people that I've worked with that have moved from, you know, being sick and being disappointed in Western medicine, and then looking to alternative medicine for options, and then sometimes getting more sick by entering some of these different practices that often — you know, when they are destructive — often there is a connection to a “healer,” who is holding a lot of power and is kind of acting like the one who knows everything, and this is the right way, and this is the wrong way. And it's very disempowering.

What I love about the Wise Woman Tradition of healing is it's so empowering. And it really honors the truth that our own relationship to the earth is what's going to heal us; that it's not someone else's relationship with the earth. It's not what works for them, it's really our own deep inquiry into how to love ourselves and the earth that brings healing and love into our lives.

[0:41:18]

Marysia: And the Wise Woman Tradition of healing is something that we see in all cultures, all around the world. So, you know, I've had students from many different backgrounds, and I'll have students who are Korean, and African American, and a lot of European students, and really just all over. And there's a moment where people from all cultures are like, “Oh, yeah, my grandma kind of would, you know, was like that, or would do that thing that sounds like this tradition.” And it's a tradition of nourishment, and where food is medicine, and where the plants that we work with are plants that are really abundant and available and often free. They're the wild weeds of that area, that ecosystem. So there's a strong connection to the plants of where we live, instead of these kind of glorified, like you were saying, hero plants of like, oh this one rare, you know, root from the Amazon, or this one, you know, special berry that only grows, you know, in this region.

And then therefore, by nature, it's very healing to the root chakra, the Wise Woman Tradition of healing, because it's about connecting your body, yourself, with your land, the plants that live in

your area, and flooding yourself with an energy that is so abundant, that is so safe, that is really restorative and nourishing, and that is wild and free.

[0:42:54]

Amber: So it's spring time, and we've been talking about having you on the podcast for like a year. And I'm so glad that it finally landed in springtime, because you're really focused on regeneration, and this is what we're seeing around us right now. And I really love, I want to find this specific words that you said:

Much of my work is around us humans learning how to harmonize ourselves to the regenerative currents and forces of nature, so that we can regenerate our own creativity, health, et cetera, and so we can be regenerative forces for the Earth's regeneration.

That's such a beautiful sentence with the word regenerative four times in it. I love it. *(both laugh)* I just, like when I read it, was just like, "Yes!" Tell me more.

Marysia: Yeah, well, the regenerative currents of nature follow what we see in nature, right, which is a death-life-rebirth cycle, and we see it echoed in the seasons. And there's a time that is equally, wholly, a time of rebirth: right, of springtime, of blossoming; a time of summer: of manifestation, of hard work, of being out there in the garden until 9pm, a season of fall, which is a time of gathering and slowing down and reflection; and then a season of laying fallow: of winter, of deep rest, and dreaming.

And in the regenerative cycles of nature, each one of those is so important, but we live in a culture that is really focused on linear, perpetual growth, always expansion. And so it's kind of like our culture is always trying to push us and ride that moment from spring to summer, and that's just unnatural. I mean, it's just unnatural! We can't always be blooming, right? Nothing in nature is always blooming or fruiting. It's really unnatural, and it creates sickness and disease and burnout in humans, and wildfires on land, right, that perpetual growth. And so when we begin to connect to the regenerative currents of nature, we learn how to ride these moments in the year and the seasons.

And they're also echoed in the moon cycle. So there's the Full Moon that holds that energy of summer. There's the New Moon that holds that energy of just going slow and resting.

And then it's also echoed in the cycle in the day. Dawn and sunrise holds that same energy of the Crescent New Moon, of springtime, of awakening; there's a feeling of freshness and possibilities and newness, rebirth, every single day at dawn. And you know, at noon, when the sun is at its climactic peak, and it's a moment where our digestion, right, is the strongest; there's the most fire element. It's a great time to get things done and to connect to that energy of productivity. And then as the afternoon wanes, 4pm, it's a wonderful time to come back to the hearth, to come back to the family, to come back to the body, to come back to a more kind of relaxed and creative way of being, to turn off the devices, to gather, the way that we can gather in the garden at that time. And then at night, to really drop into rest, to really unplug, to not do.

And so when we start to align with those regenerative currents in our own life, our health is just, like, obviously, so grateful, and we see huge changes in our health. Our family life, our creativity really becomes renewed, and, you know, ultimately, our culture can shift.

Because when enough people realize that it's sick — it's actually psychotic to treat people like machines and to expect them to be perpetually producing, perpetually creating, perpetually expanding, that, in fact, mimics a cancerous growth. Like there's nothing in nature that grows forever except for cancer, and so that is what our culture is pushing.

And the earth is suffering, you know. The earth is suffering, and people are suffering. But when we begin to invite in and honor the moments of composting, of midwifing death, of rest, when we begin to realize that we are forces of regeneration on the earth, and so we can dismantle systems of oppression, right, we can take things apart. It's not about just creating new things, it's about learning how to take things apart, how to roll up our sleeves, and get into the compost pile, how to cut back on our consumption, or cut back on these habits that are, really, very capitalist in nature.

When we learn how to midwife death in our own lives, then we can learn how to midwife death in our culture, in our society, in our cultural agreements, and we can let things lay fallow. We can let things rest, and then we're feeding a renewal — a renewal of our culture, of our relationship to the earth, how we relate to each other.

[0:48:36]

Amber: I love how your book is structured along the Wheel of the Year and weaving in all these correspondences as you just did — time of day, the moon cycle, phases of our lives, of the phases of the year — it's really been deeply grounding for me to read those sections of the book at the right time of year. For me, your book feels like a daughter to Judith Berger's book, *Herbal Rituals*, which is my very favorite book.

Marysia: I know how much you love that book! Wow, what an honor! *(both laugh)*

Amber: And really, I was thinking it's like, yeah, I feel like a mother-daughter relationship, like that's just how I picture it, as having, like, an ancestral resonance, you know. I'm super grateful for it.

I'm very loving the recipes. My teenager and I made the hemp milk the other day because I have these amazing, you know, herbal powders that you can blend in with milks, and I just wasn't happy with any of the milks available at the grocery store, alternative or regular. So I just I really loved the book, and I want to say thank you so much for it, *A Witch's Herbal Apothecary: Rituals and Recipes for a Year of Earth Magic and Sacred Medicine Making*.

And you did the drawings, right?

Marysia: No, no, I didn't, an amazing student of mine, an artist, Maggie. Oh gosh, I don't know how to pronounce her name. I'll send it to you, so you can...

Amber: Okay.

Marysia: She's an amazing artist, and she did the illustrations. It was a great collaboration.

Amber: Oh, yeah, I figured it was you because they seem so perfectly.

Marysia: It was amazing. I would tell her what exactly, like, “And then there's a line coming out of the head, and then you see the connection!” And she's like, “I totally see it.” Right, I think it helped that she was my student, and we worked with the plants for a year together because it was just a really beautiful, yeah, synergy there.

Amber: Yeah. And you have a lot of basics in here, too, for anyone who really is a beginner, like medicine making and what is a nourishing herbal infusion? How do you make it? It's a lovely book. So thank you.

[0:50:55]

Marysia: Yeah, that structure is the same structure of my course. I've moved my school to online. It's called The School of the Sacred Wild, and that's a journey that I take people on through the Wheel of the Year, and each month, we connect to different plants and practices that regenerate our health, our bodies.

We make herbal medicine that connects to that theme of the month and the season, and also learn how to bring these into the garden with practicing some regenerative agriculture, gardening, permaculture, and tending the wild, as well. So all those things are woven in. And it's been fun to, yeah, to take this work that I've been weaving for so many years, and to have first that book come out, and then to be able to kind of take people on the journey, too.

Amber: Wow, I didn't know that you had moved it online. How does that work? Do people sign up once a year, or can you jump on any time?

Marysia: Yeah, they sign up once a year, we're going to open registration, I think around Beltane in May.

Amber: Oh fun!

Marysia: Yeah!

Amber: I mean, I can't believe we didn't know that or talk about that when we were planning this. Yeah, so obviously, I'll put a link to that then in the show notes.

Marysia: Yeah, and thank you! And it's a 10 month journey, starting on the Fall Equinox and ending with the Summer Solstice.

Amber: Yay!

Marysia: Yeah. So they don't jump on any time. You kind of go through the whole thing through all the seasons together.

Amber: Okay, so you can sign up starting in May, but then it starts at the Fall Equinox. Oh, perfect. I love that.

[0:52:31]

Amber: Well, even though I feel like this is normally the place where, like, I would end an interview because it's been an hour, and we just talked about, like, your work, I wanted, I would love to get a little more into a medicine story or two of yours, because I know there's some like richness there.

I really was intrigued by this thing that you said about your name, Marysia, being the Polish version of Mary, named after Mother Mary, and, like, my given middle name is Marie. Magnolia is what my father called me when I was in the womb and when I was a little girl, but my mom gave me Marie. And it's my youngest daughter's second middle name, and every woman in my pure matrilineal line that I've been able to trace is a Marie, as well.

And the similarity there is that it's the Catholicism — for you, Polish, for me, French, and I'm just interested. You wrote that, “In my strong, Polish, Roman Catholic roots, I have found a great deal of mysticism and folklore.”

So I'm just interested, I guess, in this sort of dichotomy between, like, the patriarchal, hardcore religious, really, so detrimental to the spirit of women — in my lineage, at least — forces of patriarchy and Catholicism, but then how there's always like magic and folklore and healing traditions to be found underneath these sort of systems of oppression and colonization.

Marysia: Yeah.

Amber: And here we are with the name, with the version of Mary in these languages, that sort of ties us to the Goddess archetype of that tradition.

Marysia: Yes. Oh, I love that. I love that you have the name all through your lineage. My daughter's second name is also a version of Mary. It's Marika, which is kind of is one of the Polish derivatives, like Marysia. It's kind of like “Robert” and “Bob,” right? Where in American English, they're the same name. So Marysia is the same name as Mary and Maria, and Marika is another one of those. And my great grandmother, the one that I spoke of, when we talked about nettles is also another Mary, so it's so sweet that we both have that.

Yeah, you know, I really echo your experience around the oppressive nature of the church. In my own experience, I definitely remember, you know, having to go to church and like my body would feel sick when I would enter, and my whole energy would just drop, and I would feel so tired.

I really didn't like going to church, especially when I was more of a teenager. When I was younger, I was really... I loved the love and the teachings of Jesus, and I felt them to be really heart-opening. But I also, you know, have found through the years — and I'm not a Catholic. I don't identify as Christian — but what I have found has been this kind of remembering of what is beneath the stories and the rituals of Catholicism and Christianity, and it's so pagan! It's so pagan. (*Marysia laughs*)

[0:55:38]

Amber: Yeah, Easter just happened, right? And I was like this to my teenage daughter, and she's like, “Too bad that these Christian...” and I was like, “No, these are pagan holidays.”

Marysia: Okay, I wrote an article, actually, about Easter called *The Pagan Roots of Easter*.

Amber: Oh good, good. I want to send it to her.

Marysia: It's on my website and on my blog. But yeah, I mean, just to speak to Easter for a moment, like the hare, the bunny, that's a symbol of the goddess. You know, colored eggs, the druids used to dye eggs red, and put them into freshly plowed fields to symbolize menstruation and to feed the fertility of the earth. It's just so fun when you're like, "Yay, all y'all are just feeding these beautiful pagan traditions!" (*Amber laughs*)

And it's really fun to learn about that, you know. I think that people who are practicing Christians love to learn about some of the deeper meaning of these things that they might otherwise not know about.

But in terms of Mary, you know, in Poland, people don't really pray to Jesus. Poland is a Roman Catholic country, most people there are Catholic, but they pray to the mother, they pray to Mary. And in the forests, and in the woods, there are a lot of little shrines to Mary, little, kind of wooden houses that have a little statue of Mary.

And as, you know, as a grown up now, and as a witch, and as a, you know, an earth worshipping person now, you know, with that context whenever I go and I see these beautiful shrines for Mary, I just smile, and I'm like, this is so pagan. You guys put Mary on linden trees and pine trees, like, you know. But people, a lot of Polish people would take offense to that.

But what I have found with Mary, when this was kind of a magical story was, you know, one of the depictions of Mother Mary that we pray to a lot in Poland, she's called "Matka Boska Częstochowska." And it's an iconograph of the Mother Mary, and she's black. She's a black-skinned woman. And I've always loved that painting of her, and she's, you know, hangs in my grandfather's house.

And Poland, you know, is a very white country. It has a very different history than the United States. There was never any, you know, slavery. So there's more diversity now. But, you know, Poland was occupied by the Nazis, then it was occupied by the Russians, and the borders were always closed. So there's not a lot of people that are not just born in Poland that live in Poland. So it's, you know, it's interesting that there's that the Polish people are praying to a Black Madonna.

[0:58:19]

Marysia: And there was a moment in my life, a moment of great death and rebirth, and it was one of the more challenging moments of my life, where I felt very much like my root chakra got severed and cut, and was very much brought to my knees.

And this chain of events that lasted about seven years began where death and rebirth were so present in my life, and at the same time Isis came in. And this was right when I started to teach. And I found the statue of Isis that I still, to this day, anytime I'm holding a circle, I bring her, this beautiful blue statue of Isis. I don't even know how I found her. I don't remember, and I didn't know anything really about her. And I'm not that into statues, especially from, like, traditions that are not necessarily mine, or that I don't understand. But she just was there, and there was this motherly

presence where I felt like she was watching over me with her wings and embracing me in a moment where I felt really alone and very vulnerable, very, very judged by patriarchal forces, and very wounded, really.

And throughout the years, Isis just kind of became more and more present and would speak to me through plants, through these plants that really teach about regeneration. And I maintained a little bit of this kind of, like, I don't want to dive in and study her. I'm just going to allow her to be here with me and allow for my own relationship to continue to unfold, without this, like hunger of needing to understand. And that went on for years.

And in these years, I really was brought on a journey of learning how to midwife death, learning how to midwife death in my own body, in my work, in the garden, through compost, in all these different ways. And, you know, I, who has a lot of, like, fire and air, I've tended more towards the joy of spring and, like, yumminess of pollination and sexuality and creativity. And I had a very kind of deep moment of really learning to get comfortable with pain, and learning how to sit with pain and with death, and learning how to use pain as a portal, and not try to dissociate from those experiences.

And that's where I really became a student of Tantra, where I became a student, really, of Isis. I didn't even know, really, that she is a goddess of regeneration, you know, that she is a goddess of rebirth and death and life. And a few years went by, and I decided to actually devote a month of my life to Isis. And I thought that I would be just meditating with her and meditating with plants, and kind of trying to make medicine that held her vibration and her energy, learn about her, read about her, really, actually go into this exploration.

And when I did that, I found this incredible place where the Black Madonna and Isis are one. And I realized that, wait a second, all of these depictions of Mary, of Mother Mary, of the mother of Jesus, in Europe, are actually located in places where there used to be a temple of Isis.

One of the oldest, most famous depictions is a statue of the Black Madonna is a beautiful statue in France, in Paris, of the Black Madonna, and she holds on her lap, she's sitting on a throne, on her lap, she holds Jesus with a beautiful sunray around him.

And I looked at that, and I was like, that's Isis. That is Isis! She is black as the night, queen of the heavens, on her son is the Sun God through which she was born. Even the hieroglyph of Isis is the throne, and she's sitting on the throne.

And I realized, I did more research, that temple, that cathedral was located in the same place where there was a temple of Isis and, of course, all of Western Europe, belonged to the Roman Empire, which honored Isis, which was very connected to Egypt.

And so, you know, I kind of, through my plants, through plants like comfrey, and blue lotus, and rose, which to me have been plants of Isis and plants that have taught me about Isis, realized that the mother, right, there's just one mother, and that energy of the mother can take on so many different forms, and she does in so many different religions.

But if we go deep enough, if we look at the root of the root of the root, it's that black, fertile void from which we were born, from which the earth was born, and to which we return.

Amber: It's just kind of blowing my mind because I've, right before you said the words "black, fertile void," I was remembering a period of my life where I was doing meditations, where I found that space. And what I found in that space was that it is feminine. You know, in my human mind, I can embody it as, like, the dark goddess, but at its basic, most basic level, it's the feminine pull. And it is pure darkness, and it is death, and it is life.

Marysia: Yeah, yeah, it's that place that on the Wheel of the Year to me, connects with the Winter Solstice, and in our lunar cycle connects to the Dark Moon. It's that place of all kind of boundaries and separation dissolving into that fertile void, from which we are reborn into which we return. It's the source of renewal and regeneration.

Amber: Yeah, like, scientifically speaking, I also think of it as like the zero point field.

Marysia: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. (*both laugh*)

[1:04:56]

Amber: **Wow.** Thank you and like that is what this podcast is about in my mind is this mythic mindedness, where we're just paying attention to the golden threads that call to us, and we're making connections between things, and making meaning. And through that meaning making and mythological diving into our own selves and the dreamscape and the collective unconscious and the archetypes, we find the healing that's meant for us.

Marysia: Yes, I love that. And as you said that, like the gem, the medicine that I really gather from that, is that vastness of the whole network of the web of life, and then the uniqueness of what is the medicine for us, what is the medicine for me, what is the medicine for you, and knowing that we each have our own unique portal and golden thread of connection.

Amber: Thank you, Marysia. My goodness, I could keep going (*Amber laughs*). I could ask so many more questions, but I should get back to my sick little one. And it really just whets my appetite for taking your course. I think I will.

There's so many options out there for herbal learning, and I tend to just dive into all of them, take all the courses, and read all the books. But again, the, like, grounded in the Wheel of the Year approach that you're taking really speaks to me, and I can see that it would help me with the embodiment and being present in my senses, which is something that's hard for me.

Marysia: Thank you, Amber. That means so much to me, I really respect and honor your work and the way that you hold this beautiful container, all the voices that you weave into the space. It's been such medicine. I've been sharing them with my students, and there's just been so many amazingly rich, medicinal conversations that have happened here, and I'm so honored to be part of it.

Amber: I'm honored that you listen.

So where can people find you, your website, and Instagram and all that stuff?

Marysia: Yeah, so my website is schoolofthesacredwild.com. And there you can find out about the course. I open registration in May. And it's probably a good idea to just put your name on the list, so to speak, and then that way, you'll get an email that says, "Okay, registration's open," because there's a moment where I close registration in order to have a well-sized, a good-sized container that I can hold that's not too huge.

And my Instagram is my name, which is [Marysia Miernowska](#), which is really hard to spell (*Marysia laughs*).

Amber: I'm glad you just pronounced your last name, actually, because I was realizing that I did not know how to say it.

Marysia: Yeah, (*Marysia laughs*) I'm sure from like a whatever, Instagram world perspective, it's not wise for me to be using my own name, because it's just impossible. But, you know, you can look it up. (*Marysia laughs*)

Amber: And, of course, I'll link to it.

Marysia: Yeah. Yeah, those are the best places to find me.

[1:08:16]

Amber: Okay, and then actually, can we close — I forgot that I had really wanted to touch on this before we go — with, like, what are you going to be doing for Beltane, and what does Beltane mean to you, and which plants do you bring in to mark the occasion?

Marysia: Well, Beltane, I love Beltane. It's so fun!

Amber: Yeah, same.

Marysia: Beltane feels like a fresh new romance, right, or the renewal. Yeah, the renewal of a long romance as well.

Yeah, Beltane is that cross-quarter holiday between the Spring Equinox and the Summer Solstice. So it's that moment where, you know, if the Spring Equinox and the awakening of spring is the maiden, the young girl, and the Summer Solstice is the mother, who's like holding it down and responsible and producing fruit from the garden, then Beltane is that middle point where the flowers open, and they're singing their song of enchantment and seduction to the bees. And there's pollination, and it's that... it's really sex magic. It's the sex magic of nature.

So I do like to, you know, do sex magic, usually in Beltane. And I'm unpartnered right now, so I'll be probably doing it with myself and with my garden and Earth. But Beltane is an amazing time to, yeah, really connect with your senses, and to practice.

That whole time of spring is such a great time to court the beloved in nature, and to court, yeah, to just, like, speak poetry to the trees, or when you're going on a walk to tell the Earth how beautiful

she is, or to stop when you see a rose in her garden and delight in her and get close and allow her to touch your skin and, you know, really take her in through your senses. It's a time to really play in that alchemical dance of union with the beloved all around us, in the air and the warmth of the sun and the smell of the plants. So that is what I love to do, really, all the time (*Marysia laughs*), but especially in the spring and for Beltane.

It's a moment where I am going to be feeding that sensual delight and that alchemy between a human being, myself, that is in devotion and in love with the earth, and the earth, that gives me so much every single day.

Amber: Do you have an herbal preparation or ritual that you tend to come back to on that day?

Marysia: I don't have one that I do every time, but I would be making infusions of flowers for sure. I love this rose hydrosol that I offer that comes from Bulgaria. So I'll often drink the rose hydrosol and just really flood myself with the vibration of the flowers. I tend to do flower meditations that day, so I love to be naked in my garden, and just having this sensual I exchange with flowers.

And then I love to make offerings. You know, making offerings to the earth is a big part of my practice, and like feeding the earth, and so I'll definitely be making offerings — probably of honey and maybe of milk. Maybe I'll bake something or make some art or sing a song or whatever it is. But one of the things that is a primary practice is using my creative energy to give something to the earth.

Amber: Rose hydrosol that is ringing a bell for me. I think you gave me some of that.

Marysia: Yeah, I did.

Amber: And you said you offer it?

Marysia: Yeah, you can. People can buy it on my website. It's one of the only things that I actually just saw it on my book. That's on there. But it's an herbal creation that I don't make, but that is just oh, the best rose hydrosol I've ever found, and it comes from Bulgaria. There's like this beautiful grandma who plays classical music to her roses, and it's been something that I've been sharing for many years now and is just dreamy.

Amber: Yes. Oh my gosh, I'm so remembering now coming home with some and it being amazing.

Marysia: Yeah, yeah.

Amber: Yeah, roses on Beltane. (*both laugh*)

Marysia: To romance ourselves and the earth.

Amber: Well, I'm feeling more embodied and relaxed and essentially alive than I was at the beginning of the conversation. So thank you so much for joining me today, Marysia.

Thank you, Amber, thank you so much. And many blessings to you and all the listeners and plants that you all love.

Amber: Happy Beltane!

[1:13:28]

[Outro]

(Transitional music: "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[1:13:33]

Amber: Alright, just a quick little medicine story of my own here that ties in to my and Marysia's conversation.

Later, the day after we spoke, my husband, Owen, and daughter, Nixie, and I went on a walk in the woods, as we tend to do. And I had smoked a little cannabis before we went, which is not something I do very often, as I've spoken about before on the podcast. I like it to be a really potent and medicinal experience when I do, and that only happens when I do it rarely. And I appreciate that plant ally to an extreme extent for its ability to open the sensory gating channels in the body and mind. And I was just feeling it that day as we set out for the walk.

So we're over in the woods, walking along, and pedicularis is in bloom right now, in the springtime. Pedicularis is a genus. The species we have here is a *Pedicularis densiflora* of flora. It's very likely that you've never heard of the herb or the genus, because it's pretty rare, and that's also the reason, thankfully, that it's not really in commerce.

We don't make medicine from it for sale. We make a little bit for ourselves every year with the plants on our land, and they are really useful muscle relaxants. So we put it in oil and tincture, and I harvested some this year to try smoking — apparently, that's a really interesting experience as far as the muscle relaxing properties.

But I realized on this walk that I had never just put some in my mouth, which is something I do all the time with plants that I'm getting to know, or that I'm always and ever deepening my relationship with. I think I've spoken before, every single time I've ever passed a mugwort plant, I've put a leaf in my mouth for the last 15 years. Even though it's a plant I have such a deep relationship with, there's always more to learn, and our senses, our bodies, are such a good way to do that.

So I picked a little petal, put it in my mouth, kept walking, and suddenly, boom: my consciousness just dropped into my pelvis. My whole being and the center of my perception was at my root.

I could feel, as I walked along, the way I hold my pelvis, the uneven way I was holding it, where the points of tension were — it's a longstanding pattern in my body — and could feel it. I'm not gonna claim that it totally unwound on that walk, but I came into much more conscious awareness of how I was holding it. And it was just such a strong and overwhelming experience of suddenly boom,

being super aware of that area of my body. And of course, I was like, “Oh, this is what Marysia was talking about: Follow the swallow.” When you take in a plant, notice which chakra or energy portal on the body it hits.

[1:16:51]

Amber: And so then maybe half an hour later, we're home, and I finished drinking a violet leaf infusion that I had made earlier in the day. And I love, I don't even strain the leaves out with violet. I just drink the water and then chew the violet leaves at the bottom and swallow them. It's such a nice way to take violet leaves, and I think eating them fresh like straight off the plant, they have a not completely pleasant texture. But this way, it's just, like, perfect.

And as I was chewing them, I was walking down to one of our gardens. And as soon as I swallowed, I stood at the edge of the garden, and suddenly, my heart, my lungs, my chest just felt so expanded. It was like they were taking up the whole garden space. And I I imagined that the way I was physically holding my body, if I could have seen myself like from a side view right then, that it even looked like that. And again, I'm like, “Oh, oh, it's happening.”

I am aware that the way the violet leaves are hitting my body, that where they are going into my body is the heart center. Just like everyone always says about violet leaves: lung medicine and heart medicine. We have violet leaves in our Rainbow Heart Beams for this very reason. In the interview you just heard Marysia said of violet leaf that the heart opens.

So even though these are things that I know intellectually, to feel it that strong in my body was such a gift, and is something that I want to continue exploring, you know, not mediated by cannabis — such a great gateway drug, in that cannabis can give me a view to what's possible when I can slow down, right, and just work on the embodiment that is like my lifelong practice of reclaiming, like so many of you, and like I've talked about so many times before.

At some point in my young life, I just, you know, cut the head off the body and have lived in my head to the detriment of my presence in my body ever since. And so I'm just loving this idea of “Follow the swallow.” Pay attention after taking an herb. See where it hits you.

And thank you. Thank you, Marysia. Thank you pedicularis. Thank you.

(Exit Music: "Wild Eyes" by Mariee Sioux)

[Closing]

[1:19:39]

Amber: Thank you for taking these Medicine Stories in. I hope they inspire you to keep walking the mythic path of your own unfolding self. I love sharing information and will always put any relevant links in the show notes. You can find past episodes, my blog, handmade herbal medicines, and a lot more at [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com). We've got reishi, lion's mane, elderberry, mugwort, yarrow, redwood, body oils, an amazing sleep medicine, heart medicine, earth essences, so much more. More than I can list there. [MythicMedicine.love](https://www.mythicmedicine.com).

While you're there, check out my quiz "[Which Healing Herb is your Spirit Medicine?](#)" It's fun and lighthearted, but the results are really in-depth and designed to bring you into closer alignment with both the medicine you are in need of and the medicine that you already carry that you can bring to others.

If you love this show, please consider supporting my work at Patreon.com/MedicineStories. It is so worth your while. There are dozens and dozens of killer rewards there, and I've been told by many folks that it's the best Patreon out there. We've got e-books, downloadable PDFs, bonus interviews, guided meditations, giveaways, resource guides, links to online learning, and behind-the-scenes stuff and just so much more. The best of it is available at the two-dollar a month level. Thank you.

And please subscribe, in whatever app you use, just click that little subscribe button and review on iTunes. It's so helpful, and if you do that you just may be featured in a listener spotlight in the future.

The music that opens and closes the show is Mariee Sioux. It's from her beautiful song "Wild Eyes." Thank you, Mariee.

And thanks to you all. I look forward to next time!

[1:21:57]