

*Plant Healer's Monthly*

# — HERBARIA —

ENCOURAGING SELF-EMPOWERED HEALING, HEIRLOOM SKILLS,  
MYTHOS & DELIGHTS

VOL XIII · ISSUE II

[PLANTHEALER.ORG](http://PLANTHEALER.ORG)

MAY 2022

## AWAKEN & HEAL

An Inviting Conversation About Herbalism,  
Empowerment, & The Joys of  
Being a Plant Healer With

JESSE WOLF HARDIN

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*The following convo with Wolf blends new inquiry with an excerpt from our book of interviews Herbalist Visions & Visionaries (available from the Bookstore at [PlantHealer.org](http://PlantHealer.org)). Here he discusses our special Plant Healer community, his admittedly dramatic life's mission, and the state of and spirit of herbal practice today, encouraging everyone to take deep dive into medicinal plant uses and the "connections and joys that they can provide". You are welcomed to attend his class on writing about herbs and "developing our personal characters, roles and life stories" at your [Good Medicine Confluence](#) in Colorado end of next month.*

–Kiva Rosethorn Hardin



## TO AWAKEN & HEAL

An Interview With  
JESSE WOLF HARDIN

Culture-Shifter & Herbal Ally

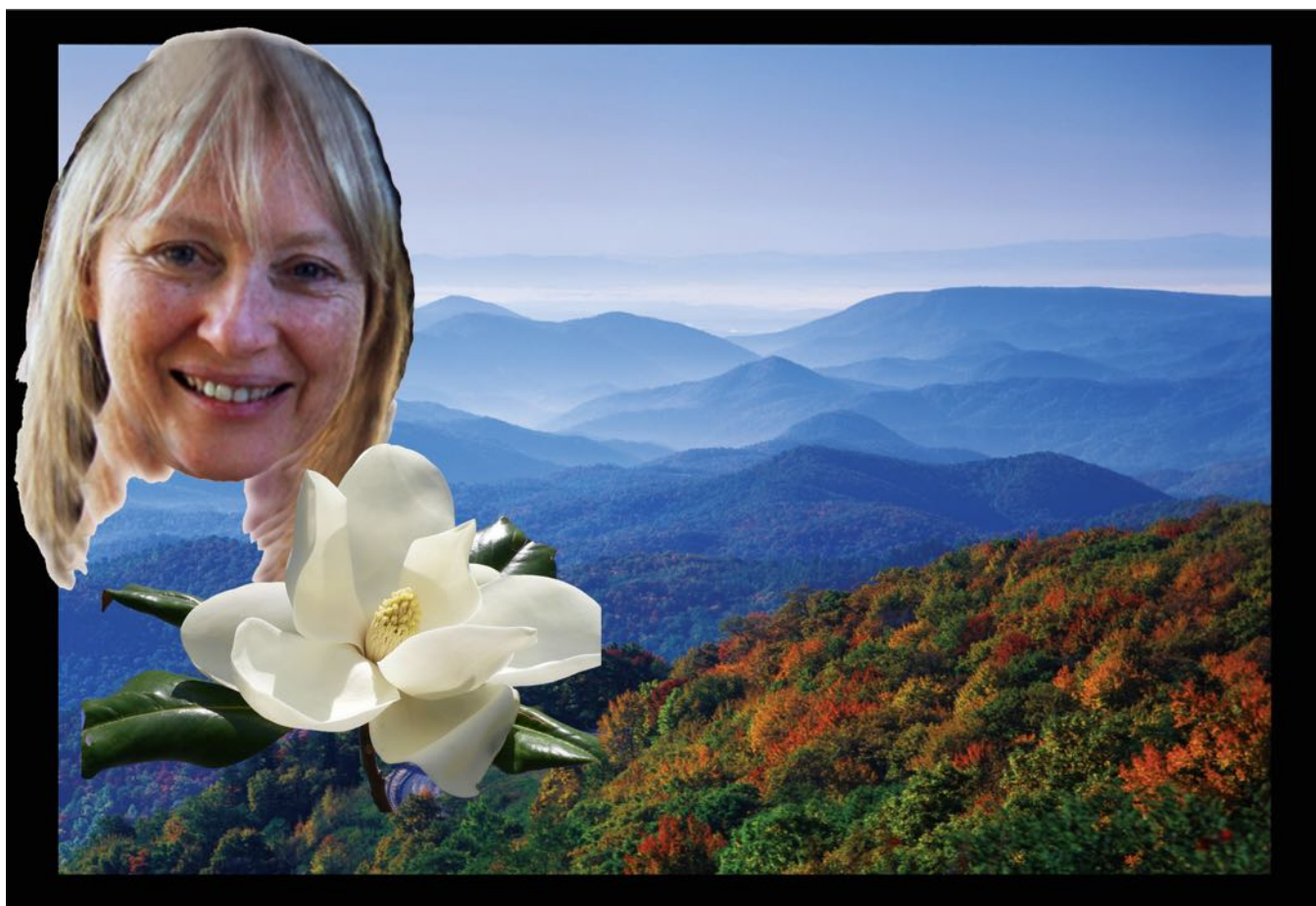
*featuring questions from herbalists*

Melanie Pulla, Phyllis Light, Kiva Rosethorn, Sarah Baca, & Mason Hutchinson



**Sarah Baca:** Jesse Wolf, this is the 13th year of you and Kiva publishing Plant Healer Quarterly and these free Herbaria Monthlies, and we are now only a month away from the 12th annual Good Medicine Confluence. How does it feel?

**Jesse Wolf Hardin:** Nothing else I have ever done has felt more effective than serving the well being of the all life by helping to inform, equip, encourage, and support a resurgence of empowered healing. And nothing yet has been as satisfying as helping weave that culture of healing back together with the quest for meaningful lives and lifestyle changes, deepened purpose and individual roles, to social change and ecological restoration, to ancient mythic lore and contemporary mythic dimensions, and to the sensory and aesthetic rewards of our beautiful arts.



**Phyllis Light:** You simultaneously serve as a teacher, example, and facilitator of an herbal movement dedicated to preserving and celebrating folk traditions.

**Wolf:** We became deeply involved with herbs and herbalism out of a passion for the experience and lessons of nature, along with a drive to contribute to personal, bodily, cultural and ecological healing. Our mission has been to encourage and further the heartfelt sensibilities and aesthetics of folk herbalism, infusing a sense of vitality and purpose that can help sustain it through the increasing challenges ahead. We have dedicated ourselves to championing an herbalism that is accessible and empowering, individualized and personalized, diverse and wondrous, so as to encourage the organic growth of its community and earthen healing values.

**Kiva Rosethorn:** People often wonder what drives all you do. I know what you are going to answer, but what would you say compels the Plant healer work, and can you describe what can get in the way of people's fulfillment these days?

**Jesse Wolf Hardin:** Too often we civilized humans fall into rote existences wherein we work uninspiring jobs to cover expenses, and then are too exhausted after shifts to develop and follow our real interests and callings. I place great stock in the value of pursuing and manifesting personal missions, self selected aims based on needs to fill, skills and gifts to utilize, and a powerful dream or passion to follow. That is where we can have the best effects in these unhealthful times, and where we are most likely to find fulfillment and satisfaction.

Over the decades it has become clear how my core mission is predicated on and characterized by an insistent and rebellious drive to:

- Help create a community of relationships, an alternative to the fractious polarized state of our current dominant culture, to the isolation, and internecine conflicts

- Include the excitable young folks and humble home-tenders who feel alienated or excluded from what they see as official or professional herbalism, and who might feel insecure about what they know and can offer others

- Help create and provide a sanctuary and well of support for the divergent or dissed, the reclusive nerds, activists and artists, self identified misfits and outliers who can contribute so incredibly much fresh color and energy to herbalism and the world.

- Create an arching resource for sharing the wisdom and inspiration of too often unheard practitioners, explorers of new ideas and possibilities, and bold visionaries – sharing their gifts an through books, periodicals, recordings, and educational events.

- Empower and encourage individuals to explore and then embrace their true natures, take ultimate responsibility for their actions and futures, honor their needs, care for themselves, escape any unhealthy positions or situations, give full throated voice to their insights and feelings, make a satisfying and expressive art out of every moment of our finite days, and take chances in order to be happy.

- Preserve and spread the millennia-old narrative of human enmeshment in the natural world, the truth that medicine comes from plants and nature and that the best overall remedies are natural, that other living beings have an intrinsic value apart from what they provide us with, and that the protection of natural diversity, threatened species and their wild habitat is essential to life on the planet.

- Help balance the unhealthful dis-eases, sadness, self doubt, fear, trauma, depression and resignation that is rife — with exaltations of and opportunities for joys and pleasures, rising self worth, physical and emotional healing, and aroused determination to be and to do!

Herbalism is only one way in which my mission could have revealed, focused or coalesced, but it has proven to be a perfect language, form, instrument and means. So much healing and joy comes through working with plants and trying to help those who suffer or need. Herbs are evidence of the powers of the nature and call us into more intimate engagement with the more-than-human world. Our Plant Healer Quarterly, compilation books and events have contributed to the visibility, self confidence and blossoming of those who contribute. Those who felt marginalized or unnoticed have found shelter, communion, support and celebration in the organically evolving Plant Healer community of herbalists, creators and culture-shifters.

**Melanie Pulla:** There's a prevailing notion that being a clinician not only makes you more credible but also more respectable and worthy of the title "herbalist".

**Wolf:** Understand this –no one can tell you if you are worthy of being called an herbalist, not a professional organization, or a federal agency, or even our peers with more experience than us. We are made worthy simply by the strength of our intent and focus,



and the degree of our efforts. Levels of competency are another issue, but are only proven by our results and effects over time. We alone can make the determination whether our knowledge, commitment and daily practice makes us an herbalist or not. And whether others call us an herbalist or not, will hinge on the good we do in working with plants.

For our purposes here, "clinical" means directly working with people, personal interaction with the intent of helping them regain their health. This can certainly happen outside of a clinical setting, such as in client's homes, or even on the sidewalk with "street herbalists" handing out shotgun remedies to the homeless, and herbal medics volunteering at the sites of natural and human-made disasters. Making herbal tinctures in one's kitchen can be done strictly by following a recipe, but the best formulas are created in response to observations and experiences, whether our own responses to herbs or the responses of the people we are trying to help.

**Melanie Pulla:** Thank-you. I love your vision of future medicine people proudly and boldly claiming their title, and integrating themselves in all aspects of community and place. I also appreciate that medicine is so often equated with an ingestible substance as opposed to a broader scope of practice that includes other modalities such as story, counsel, empathy, and healing touch to name a few.

**Wolf:** The English word “medicine” derives originally from the Latin “*medicus*”, “the physician,” and commonly refers to ingested or injected agents of healing. We also hear, of course, that “laughter is the best medicine,” that time is medicine for the grieving heart, and that love is medicine for the spirit or soul. In historic cultural terms, the word for “medicine” was usually synonymous with “power” – not as in power over somebody or something, but as in the power to act and affect, the power to help and heal. This is certainly about more than the treatment of illness and wounds, but also emotional, spiritual, social, cultural, and ecological healing, utilizing whatever medicine that each of us is born with, learns or develops, in order to contribute to health and wholeness. The word “heal” originally meant to “restore to soundness,” and I would say medicine is anything that contributes to the regaining of soundness, wholeness, and animate vitality.

Medicine is more than tinctures and teas, it includes such things as empathy and concern, tending and touch, ritual or prayer, visualization and positive attitude. There can be medicine in art and music, medicine in beauty, medicine in “forest bathing.” In reconciliation or resolution. In giving, and receiving. Medicine in love, medicine in a hug. There is even medicine in disruption, whenever habit and structure have proven unhealthy.

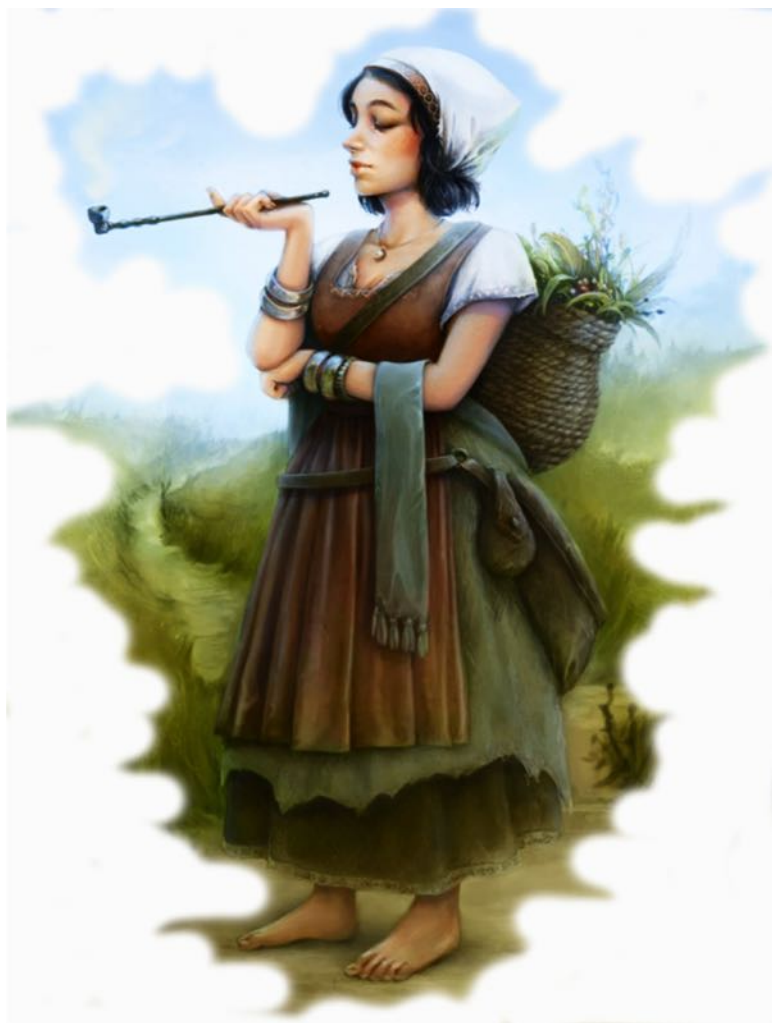
We call our event The Good Medicine Confluence, to evoke the common stream bed where these diverse manifestations flow together in shared direction and purpose. It is for us to find our personal medicine: our individual mix of born gifts, special abilities and learned skills, our original innate power to affect other people and the world in meaningful, helpful and healthful ways. And then to identify, mobilize and utilize the many medicines around us and available to us – including but not limited to medicinal herbs – for the essential purpose of healing.



**Sarah Baca:** What are the kinds of people seeking herbal knowledge these days, and who show up at your events each year?

**Wolf:** Herbalism, self care and natural healing in general have increased in popularity to the point that big corporations have entered the market, and average consumers often at least consider trying herbal supplements before submitting to expensive and often harmful pharmaceutical based treatment. A segment of actively practicing herbalists began to seek professional accreditation and mainstream acceptance, sometimes positively influencing for the better the protocols of the schools, clinics and production companies that they found employment with. After a sad period of contraction, there are now more herbal related conferences than at any time in recent history, from the huge International Herbal Symposiums to tiny but fruitful bioregional gatherings. Some are focused on women's spirituality, one is meant to increase organizational membership, another serves primarily herb-using naturopathic doctors. Plant Healer events like The Good Medicine Confluence arose not only to help encourage and fuel public awareness of plant medicine, but also to provide a milieu for the neglected traditions and deep values of folk herbalism, community herbalism – the “medicine of the people.” Plant Healer publications and events serve an audience that is anything but typical: Plant and herb enthusiasts from all over the world, from esteemed clinical PHDs to excited beginners just learning about herbs, from indomitable grandmothers to wild eyed children and teens. This includes “kitchen” herbalists, wildcat nurses, street medics, free clinic organizers, herbal activists, visionaries and alternative folks, providing alliance and a sense of belonging to all the plant loving, deeply caring outliers.

They may sometimes think of themselves as misfits, but in reality they are representative of the majority of herbalists throughout the ages: independent of organizations, doing the work no matter what the prevailing laws or prejudices against herbs, their position and reach determined by their reputations rather than certification, helping people regardless of the level of remuneration, devoted to healing not as a profitable profession so much as a service and an art, honoring traditional knowledge yet willing to try new things.





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**Mason Hutchison:** What do you feel distinguishes Plant Healer events?

**Wolf:** Every year we try to balance reuniting the loyal core teachers that have helped define the event, with new teachers, new and unusual topics, and in that way new voices, new ideas, new perspectives and ways of thinking... and always with the characteristic Plant Healer feel and flavor. One thing for certain, is that it will always be “different,” with the amazing folks who attend being the ones defining, manifesting, and celebrating that difference. You can expect each year to be both unpredictable and inimitable.

nature, service to something beyond mere survival, income and comfort... and our compulsion and dedication to our chosen healing processes.

**Sarah Baca:** Anything else you'd like to add?

**Wolf:** We live in a time of increasing wars, pandemics, societal divisions, and climate change – therefore the need and calling for self-care and community care skills like herbalism has never been greater. As the price of pharmaceuticals continually goes up and their dangers become ever more evident, and whenever the general economy is shaky, herbal knowledge is again given credence as it was in the days before the advent of “modern” treatments. There is a new and rising wave of herbalists of all ages, insistent on learning the old ways with some new twists, treating their families or serving their communities. It's that which has us giving the bulk of our time to these projects, and the satisfaction that comes with being privileged to help arouse, inform, fuel, and celebrate this herbal resurgence.





Informed folk herbalism is only one piece – albeit a very important one – in what is a larger interweaving of social action, earth stewardship and crucial cultural and political change. With increased attention to the self-empowering field of herbal healing, we will again and again be making the connection to the necessary, active healing of our wounded hearts and psyches, healing the schism between us and the rest of the natural world, healing our communities and the damaged earth that we and our herbs together grow from.

**Kiva Rosethorn:** There's another side to your message, or at least another tone that's not very politically correct, that's adamant, a bit in your face, even pushy.

**Wolf:** This work is loving, but not appeasing, kind and considerate but not without irreverent humor, confrontation with the forces of injustice and intolerance, disrupting the status quo. It is undeniably time to raise our voices and to raise hell, to tilt at impossible windmills to a hard rockin' soundtrack... while also putting to use more incisive critical thinking and nuance. It's time to pay attention to sources, causes, results and ramifications. To redefine our priorities, and while stopping letting other people's opinions or requirements for approval define us. Do what serves or satisfies even if it is hard. Listen for a calling you can answer, heed your heart, define and put into action a self chosen mission. Savor food, animal lust, friends' embrace, alone time, silly play time, attentive walks in the woods, awoken to the sensuality of touch, music, scent, and wind.

This – *and so much else* – is cause for wild celebration!



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Resources for Herbalists

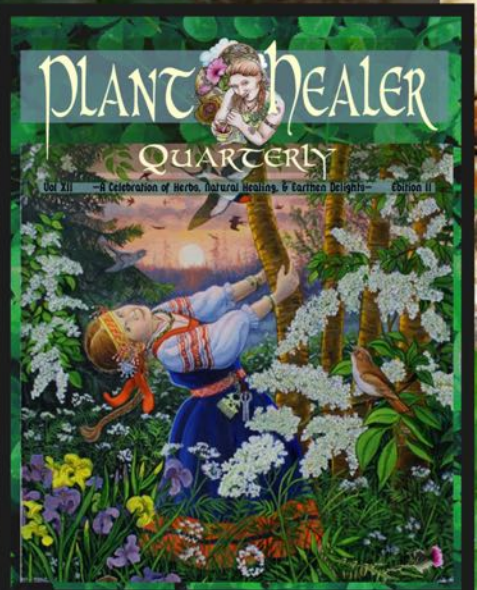
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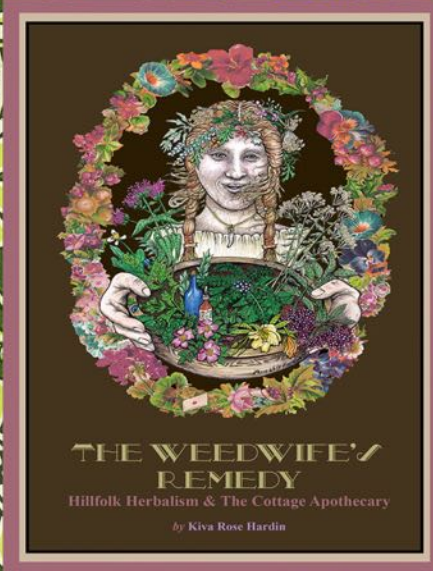
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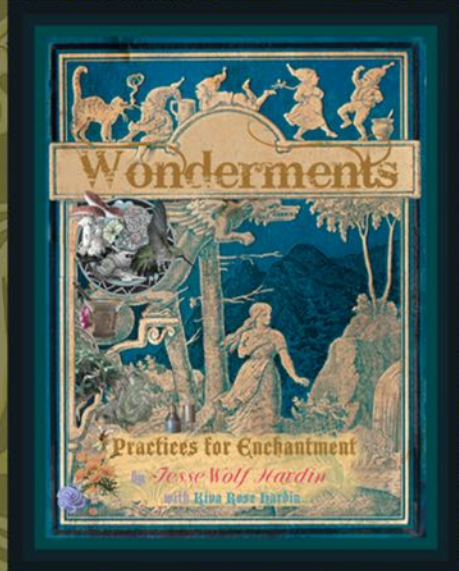
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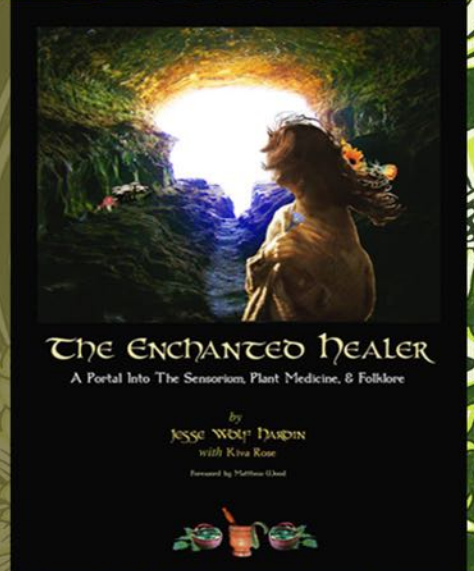
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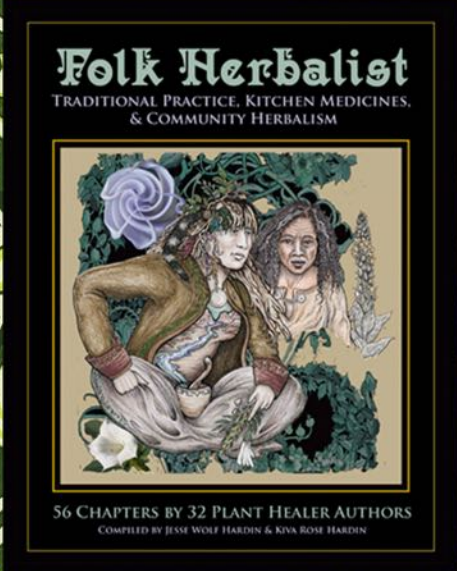
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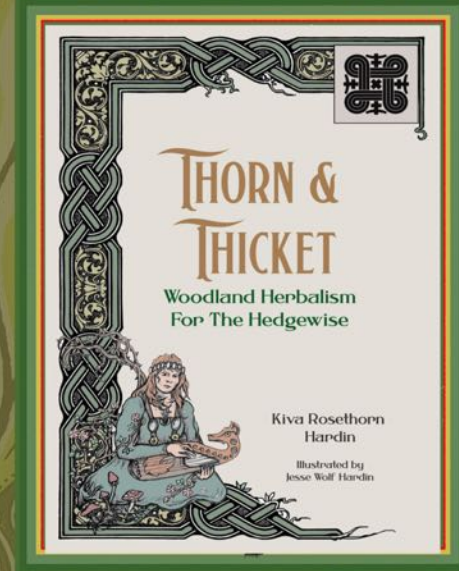
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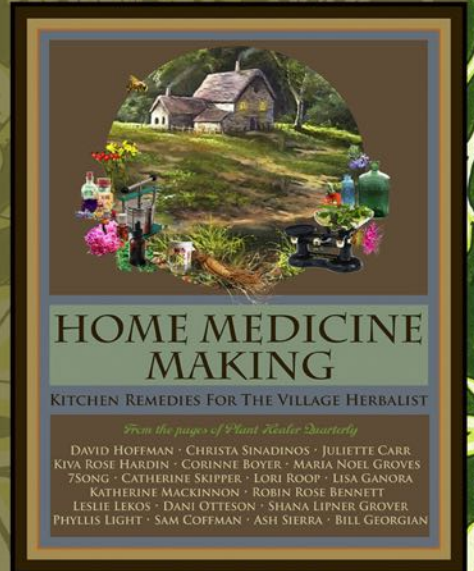
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WITH KIVA ROSE

PLUS: DAVID HOFFMAN, PAUL BERGNER, PHYLLIS LIGHT, ROGER WICKI,  
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Plant Healer's Path



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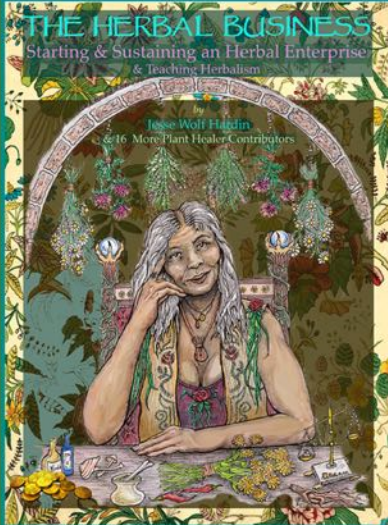
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The Herbal Business



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Herbal Clinician I



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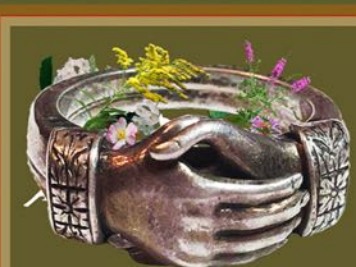
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Herbal Clinician IV



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Herbal Clinician IV

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Herbal Clinician V



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Kiva Rose Hardin & Jesse Wolf Hardin, Editors



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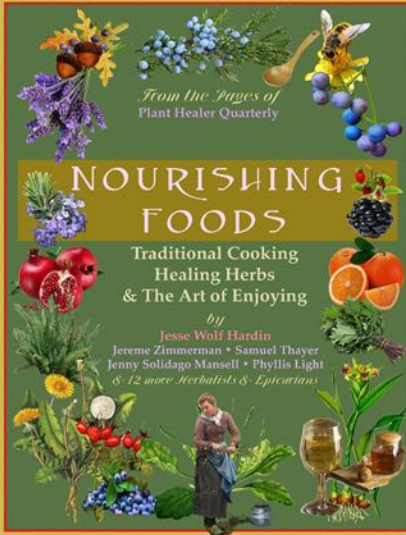
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Nourishing Foods

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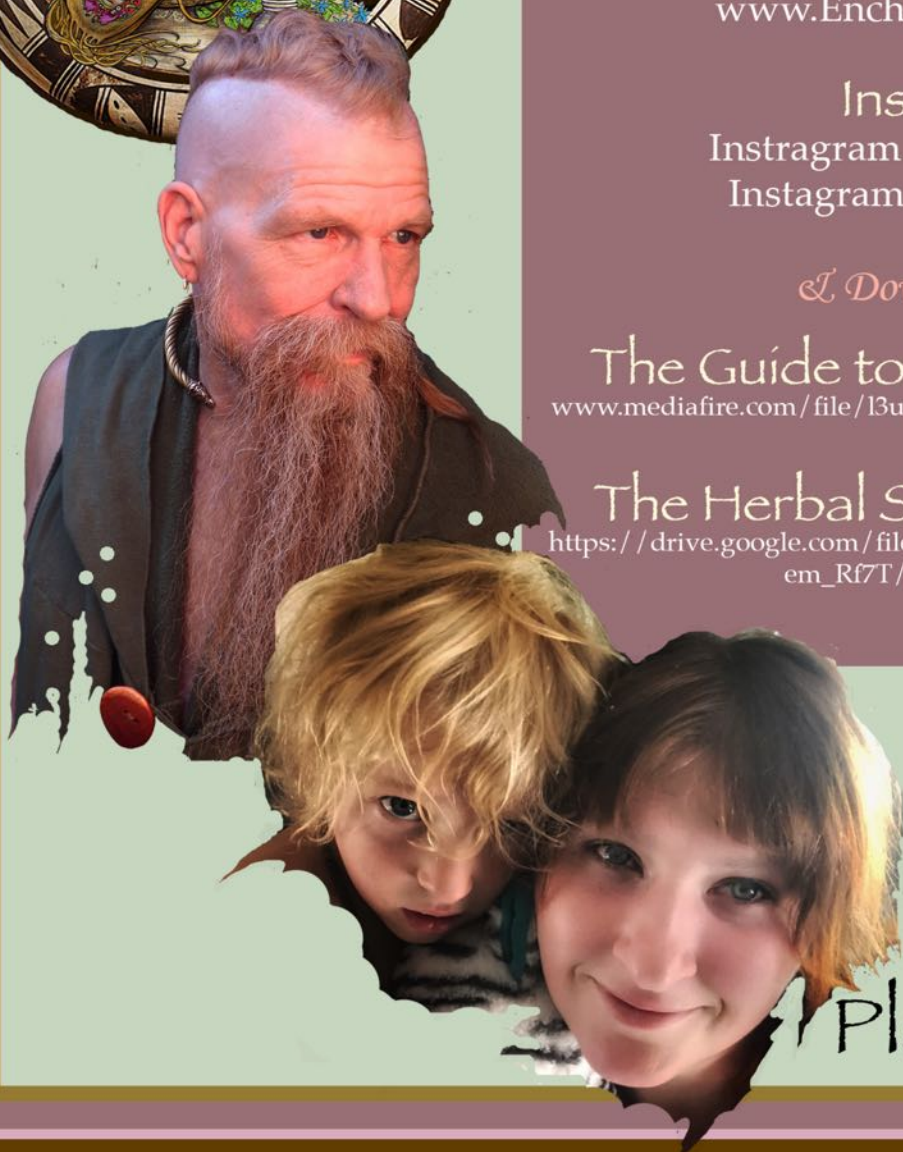
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