



# School of Intuitive Herbalism



# Welcome!

The wild places in nature have been my passion for most of my life. As a child, I would always find myself drawn to those boundary areas, the weedy, untidy, slightly not-allowed places. The places where humans rarely went, the places where the raw energies of nature had not been manicured and controlled under human will.

The importance of this remained somewhat peripheral to my life until my early twenties. Social/cultural pressures of academic achievement led me to successfully complete a chemistry degree, yet all the time I felt the lack of a certain soulfulness.

However, gradually, through a regular meditation practice, time spent in nature and the calling to start a professional training as a herbalist, I have put this love of the wild at the centre of my life.

I would now love to share this with you, and in doing so hear your stories of the sacred in nature, of the sense of wonder, of the love of our shared earth. Come walk the path of herbs together.

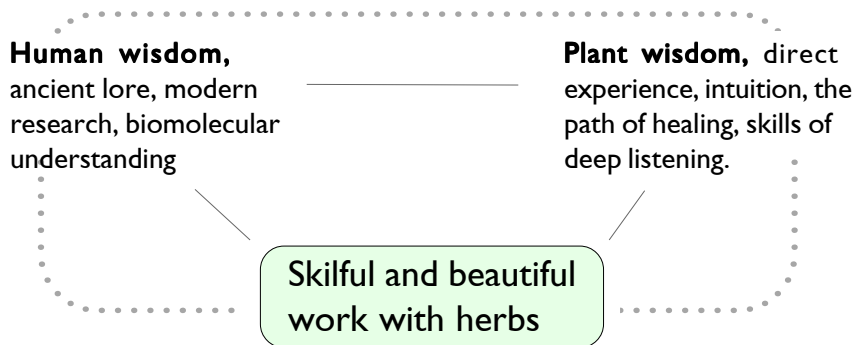
Nathaniel Hughes

These classes have evolved over ten years, from a short evening course to what is now an ongoing training in the path of the heart and the path of herbs.

When I started teaching, I thought that I needed to give people information. However the longer I taught, the more I found that by simply creating the spaces for experiences with plants to happen, a natural intuitive ability revealed itself in every participant.

Most trainings in herbalism are based around the teaching of old and new herb lore, learning from ancient masters, modern research and an experienced practitioner. This is great, and is an important part of learning about herbs, but it is also only half the story.

The other half is all about your direct experience of the plants, your personal journey of healing and the relationships you form with these sacred weeds.



In all the courses we offer the focus is 80% direct personal experience and intuition. That said, I will very much draw on the wisdom of our herbal traditions to help understand and enrich our experiences, but always this way round.

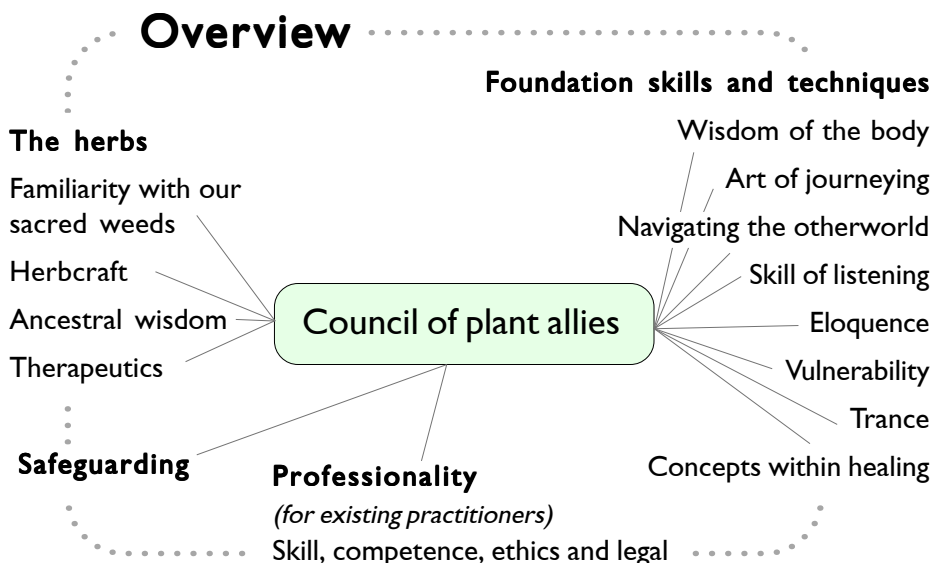
In the Introductory course I aim to give you a rich toolbox of techniques and open a few more doorways for you into the plant world.

Often this gives people plenty to explore by themselves and lots to chew on! I intend the three day introduction as being useful as a stand-alone course in its own right, though obviously for those who feel drawn to work more with me there is a range of ways to train further.



The overview below gives an outline of the themes we explore in the three day Introductory class. As will become apparent, each one is pathway into wisdom, any one of which could nourish your exploration of herbs for many years. Some people will feel drawn to some aspects more than others - this is good, I always recommend students to follow their fascination!

NB This leaflet is an abbreviated version of the Year Class syllabus, which is available if you'd like to see a more in depth breakdown of the topics.



# COUNCIL OF PLANT ALLIES

At the core of this work is building rich and meaningful relationships with plants. Do to this we learn to open ourselves and journey to both our deeper selves and the plant.

- Deep journeying to plants and the enriching of our relationship with them
- Willingness to approach with vulnerability and receive teachings with humility
- Honouring our allies
- Development of council of plant allies

## The herbs

### FAMILIARITY WITH OUR SACRED WEEDS

A wonderful aspect of working with herbs is finding these friends growing all around us! Over the three days we do herb walks and exercises to help you gain confidence in knowing your weeds.

- Over the three days learn to identify 10 to 15 new plants
- Be able to recognise natural growing conditions / situation / needs for the above plants



### HERBCRAFT

The transformation of herb into medicine. We work with this intuitively as much as possible, letting the herb guide us to its most suitable preparation. All practical herbcraft is a process, and if we are open to it, something changes within us as we work with it. The difference between Alchemy and Chemistry is that once the discipline became 'Chemistry' the subject of our inquiry became simply a 'object' that we are distinct from. In Alchemy, the relationship of the practitioner to the subject is fundamental to the process.

- Learn principles of tincture making, infusions, decoctions, creams, ointments  
syrops, poultices and footbaths
- How to allow the plant to guide you into its most appropriate preparation





## ANCESTRAL WISDOM

Our heritage of herbal and folk literature offers much, but unfortunately is a very broken lineage and has suffered much corruption. We explore sources of old wisdom such as old herbal, leechbooks and magical ballads.

- Develop familiarity for lore available
- Explore how to re-enliven old lore through first hand experience.

## HERBAL THERAPEUTICS ( Healing with herbs )

There are many ways to work with herbs, and in this Introduction course I hope to give you a broad overview of the various living traditions today. Examples include Humoralism, Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Unani Tibb, Physiomedicalism, Homeopathy, Flower essences, Naturopathy, Medical Herbalism, Holistic Herbalism and Evidence Based Herbalism.

My personal leaning is to work Intuitively in a Holistic Way, since I find that this gives the breadth of view that allows me to deeply meet and support people as well as basing my practice on a relatively small range of local plants. Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, and this is something we discuss in the Introductory class.

This subject becomes more prominent in the longer courses as we encourage people to find the model that works best for them and then develop skillfulness in this.

## Safeguarding

Safety issues around herb includes understanding about safe use of herbs, but also covers a wider area including personal emotional and psychic hygiene / boundaries and clarity about intention.

- Understanding safety issues including drug interactions, side effect and inappropriate use of herbs.
- Understand limits to own skill and legal responsibilities
- Know where to go for support and guidance / where to refer people
- Understand importance of own boundaries and be able to evaluate integrity of them



# Foundation skills and techniques

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## **WISDOM OF THE BODY** ( Into the Visceral )

In the courses, we work with our own bodies as a gateway into deeper understanding. In my 15 years of clinical practice I have seen that every spiritual and emotional pattern also shows itself at some level in the physical body. We learn how to access this wisdom and become skillful in our work with it.

In particular we draw on phenomenological approaches to self knowledge such as the **chakra** system and the **meridian** system. These are crucially different from western models of anatomy/physiology for two reasons (1) We can learn to experience them directly (2) They offer well established psycho-spiritual layers of understanding, allowing us to relate a visceral experience to emotion or spiritual realisations.

- Helping guide you into developing a skillful feeling relationship with own body
- Introduction to skills of self-regression (listening to the history within our own body)
- How to recognition our own shielding with compassion



## **THE ART OF JOURNEYING** ( Into the Imaginal )

Every time we image we take a journey into non-physical realms. Mostly, we have not developed this into a practical skill with a clear intention. In some ways journeying is a highly focused and intentional act of dreaming, and the depth to which you can seek wisdom in journeys is related to the strength of focus and clarity of intention. It is also of key importance to know how to ask the right questions!

- Basic navigation, (start, middle, return)
- Relationship with drum / led journey
- Own style of journeying (visual, tactile, auditory, short, long)
- Developing relationship with inner world places/beings/items
- Working with plant energies within the journeying
- Journeying to own ancestors

## **NAVIGATING THE OTHERWORLD** ( Maps of the non-physical )

We can all access our imagination, but it is rare that we have been guided into skillful and meaningful navigation of these dream-realms. I provide you with enough guidance to help you develop your personal map of this otherworld in a way that allows you to access it at will, but more importantly provides a solid foundation for further exploration.

This is a map of distinct consciousness spaces. Within this course the focus is on the consciousness space inhabited by plants, but we also draw on those inhabited by our ancestors, the elements, the seasons and sacred places.



## **VULNERABILITY**

If we wish to enter into deep relationship with anything, be it human or plant, we need to let ourselves be seen and speak our truth. This often means learning how to let go of layers of social armour and move into a place of deeper truth and vulnerability. Whilst we can learn about plants whilst fully armoured, it is only in our vulnerability that we can receive the deeper teachings.

## **THE HEALING PROCESS**

Healing is not curing, healing is not fixing and all too often medicine is not healing. Healing is walking the path of our truth, learning from our bodies and illness and deepening the expression of this truth in the world.

- Familiarity with Spiral of Healing / Growth
- Understanding qualities of Nurture and Challenge
- Understanding the value of Witnessing



## INTUITION

Intuition is a skill that I believe can be learned. Gradually, we clarify the distinctions between head, heart and gut (crown/heart/hara) and the different qualities of information flowing from each. With practice we learn to discern intuition from projection, transference, emotion, reflex, instinct, thought or fantasy.



## SKILLS OF LISTENING

Generally, plants speak to us in a language that is a hundred times quieter than the noise levels of the world we are used to. To appreciate this difference, consider the difference between passing through a landscape on a train and walking through it, camping rough as you go. We take the slow road and appreciate the tastes, sights, sounds and smells on the road!

- Develop experience of taste, smell, vision, auditory and tactile
- Appreciation of roles of tastes (Sweet, Sour, Bitter, Salty, Pungent, Astringent)



## ELOQUENCE

Once we have a rich inner connection with a plant, it is wonderful to be able to share it. I call the skill with which we express our relationship 'eloquence'. For some they might speak lovingly of the plant, some may draw it, some may photograph, some may create a mandala to honour it, some may express it through their skill in gardening. Eloquence is our way of sharing the richness of our truth with others.

## TRANCE

Every day for every human is a pastiche of mild trance states, be it making a familiar drive from home to work, or entering into the shared dream of a relationship. Mostly these are fairly unconscious, but by using the skills of focus and intention we can create intentional trance states that allow us precise access to distinct consciousness spaces (for instance that of a plant). As this skill develops, we can visit these places at will, ask questions and seek insight.

# Course structure

The Three day classes run from Wednesday evening 5.30 to Saturday 5.00. Please treat this whole time as a sacred space, ensuring that there are not too many distractions (obligations/social) in the evenings. Many people find it useful to write a journal in the evenings to help review each day.

**In advance:** Please read through this leaflet, and give some think about each of the headings. In advance of the course I will also email out three meditations to you. These meditations are foundation stones for the work we do, and thus the earlier you start to build a relationship with each the more you will get out of them.

I will also send out a group email shortly before we start. This will have the names of everyone attending. Please take a moment to read each name, thinking of these people as fellow journeyers on a path we will be travelling together.

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**Wednesday evening:** Meeting and sharing food, introducing ourselves, short meditation. We start at 5.30 and finish by 8.30. You will find it beneficial to stay in quite an inward space after leaving without too much social interaction

**Thursday:** The first day is generally a mixture of introducing/reawakening the range of skills of perception that we use, and in this way is quite a structured day compared to the following days. We will do lots of work in pairs and as a group to help everyone open up to each other and the space. It is good to understand that we travel deeply into this work with the herbs as a group, and we can only travel as deep as everyone feels safe to go within the circle we create.

**Friday / Saturday:** Where we go in our journey with the herbs is so different each time it is impossible to plan. The main factors that direct our course are the healing that each person is open to receiving, the season/weather and of course the herbs that choose to reveal themselves to us in this time.

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**Follow up:** I will generally post out a short handout which reviews the three days about 2 to 3 weeks after the course. When you receive this, please take a moment to review how this work can/might/does integrate with you life. Often the course is full of quite intense experiences, so it can be really helpful to ground these in everyday reality over the following month.

If you feel drawn to to further exploration with me, there are two paths for this, either the **Year Foundation Class** or else **1:1 Tutorials**. Both of these then lead on to the Seasonal Deepening Classes which are a wonderful time to reconnect to the plants and to other people walking this path.

# Practicalities

**Accommodation:** Unless you live close by and can ensure a peaceful and undistracted home environment, I strongly recommend making space and time for yourself by camping or B+B. Here are a few low priced recommendations which I have chosen because they all know about and appreciate the work we do with herbs.

Camping ( <£10 )

**Stroud Slad Farm:** Sarah or Paul on 01453 763 893

**Thistledown:** Ryan on 01453 860 420

Simple B+B ( £20-£30 )

**Dawn Morgan:** Woodside, Stroud, 01453 750 608

**Stroud Slad Farm:** See above

**Rob and Jehanne:** Bisley Old Road, 01453 763 943

**What to bring:** Please note that the Apothecary is quite a small place, so don't bring too much or too bulky items! However, a light blanket, a notebook, loose clothes and any artistic materials would be handy. Depending on the season you may also want thermals/waterproofs and boots for outside.

For the Wednesday evening shared meal, please bring some food that *preferably* you have prepared yourself. To accommodate typical food limitations try to not be too heavy on the wheat or dairy, and please avoid sugar altogether.

I provide tea, dried fruit and nuts as snacks. There is an excellent cafe thirty seconds away where a lunch can be bought or packed lunch can be eaten outside.

**Personal preparation:** You may find it helpful to keep any addictions (sugar, caffeine, nicotine, alcohol) to a minimum for a week before the course, and try to avoid eating too much sugar as snacks during the course (it is quite effective at smothering emotional responses!).

**Please tell me in advance:** If you are on any medications, have a history of psychiatric illness or have any reason to think you may be extra sensitive to the herbs (e.g. pregnant or allergic to compositae family)

## Booking

If it is possible to meet briefly in person that would be great, otherwise we need to at least have a short talk on the phone.

When you are ready to book, please fill in the booking form on my website and send a deposit of £40 (Introductory Class) or £200 (Foundation Year) made out to 'Ruskin Apothecary'.

I really recommend booking as early as possible (preferably at least 3 weeks in advance), since I have found that the process of opening awareness that this work provokes starts as soon as a commitment is made. The earlier you are able to book, the more you will be able to get out of the course. I also send out some simple and short advance meditations that will work best if given 3 weeks to work with them. If you do book later, I will probably recommend that you at least do some preparatory work in the few days before the course.

The Foundation Year has normally booked up during and by the end of November in the previous year.

### Address for posting:

#### Further training ( In development through 2013 )

We are currently developing an **Apprentice** level of training for people who wish to develop their skills further and work with herbs professionally.

Training as a herbalist takes a long time! My experience is that it can easily take 7 years to really internalise the skills and knowledge this vast field presents. However, much wonderful work can be done whilst exploring this path and my hope with all my teaching is to help people weave herbs as much as possible into their personal journey, be it as a healer, artist, grower or any one else drawn to this path of herbs.

[www.intuitiveherbalism.org.uk](http://www.intuitiveherbalism.org.uk)

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