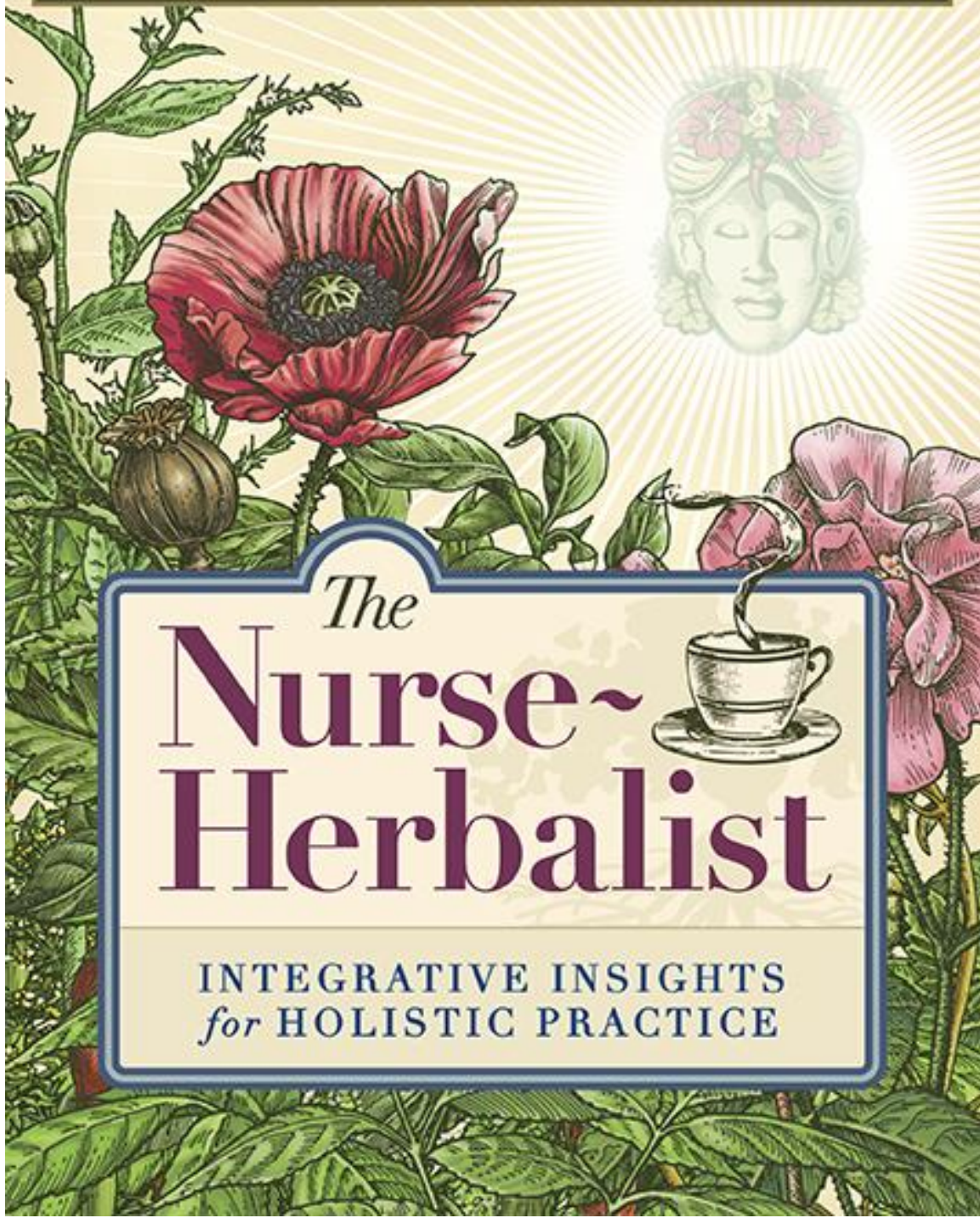


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Award winning author of *Herbal Diplomats*
and the *Integrative Herb Guide for Nurses*



The
**Nurse~
Herbalist**

INTEGRATIVE INSIGHTS
for HOLISTIC PRACTICE

Introduction

Herbalism, the study and application of medicinal plants, is a nursing tradition. The modality of herbalism is not a passing fad that some nurses may choose to occasionally use *with* conventional nursing practice. Herbalism *is* nursing practice. Herbal remedies—like touch, compassionate communication, diet therapies and creating a healing environment—is one of the essential elements of nursing and midwifery care. Historically nurses have championed, promoted, and protected the American public’s safe use of herbs for centuries.¹ Nurse-herbalists partner with plants to explore the clinical applications of providing human comfort with plants as a catalyst for change. They are guided by principles and practices from science and the healing arts, demonstrating their commitment to providing counseling and care that flows from the center of a living ethic. Nurse-herbalists’ work is informed by knowledge, experiences, and beliefs about healing plants as well as by the insight that comes from their personal relationships with plants. They use herbal remedies today when caring for clients in their community hospitals, public health facilities, hospices, outpatient clinics, schools, skilled nursing and psychiatric facilities. All of these concepts are presented throughout this book as an opportunity for your consideration and exploration. Step-by-step, element-by-element, this book guides you in the creation of your own nurse-herbalist practice plan rooted in the knowledge, experiences, and insights gleaned as a result of the guidance provided herein.

¹ Martha Libster, *Herbal Diplomats: The Contribution of early American nurses (1830-1860) to 19th century healthcare reform and the botanical medical movement* (www.GoldenApplePublications.com: Golden Apple Publications, 2004).

People are most often familiar with the television portrayal of nurses as hospital workers and supporters of physician practice. Therefore, they may assume that nurses' uses of herbs, historically and contemporarily, reflect the way herbs are used by physicians. Nurses, however, have their own history of herbal practice that is distinct yet complementary to that of physicians and other community and traditional healers. It is important that nurses who partner with plants mindfully actualize that distinction so that nurse-herbalist science and healing tradition is not only preserved but advanced. I know the necessity of this work because I am a nurse-herbalist who has partnered with plants in the care and comfort of people, families, and communities for twenty-five years. My research continues to be focused on that goal of defining and distinguishing nurse-herbalism.

Though sometimes arduous, I love this work. Plants are my joy and inspiration and the perfect chalice for carrying the love of my heart to those in need of healing, light, and understanding. Plants are also my teachers. In this book, you will learn what they have taught me as a nurse and as a person. I am their student, called time and again to enter their green and flowery world, only then to re-enter the world of people in need of healing where I share what I know about plants. The first thing I know is that it is possible for people to have a personal relationship with a plant, even a single plant, that will bring them so much understanding of the beauty of the Creator and the creation—human, animal, and plant—that healing can occur at all levels of being. It is possible to heal spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically from an experience with a single plant. I know this because I have been healed many times and I have witnessed other's

healings from plants, many times. Some of those stories are included here. I hope that they make you smile.

I also hope that they help you to remember your own personal connection with plants and how you think about and relate to them. How have you learned to care for yourself and others over the years? What do you believe and think about healing plants? Do you recommend plants—such as the juice of an orange—when someone asks you how to care for a cold? Do you drink orange juice yourself because you think that it is a “good source of vitamin C”? Have you ever thought about how plants manifest in your life and in the lives of your clients? This book is a guide for deep reflection on your experience of healing plants, flowers, and trees and for creating your own unique nurse-herbalist practice plan. It is a guide for nurses who “stop and smell the roses” and mindfully enter the plant world in a new way. Many have forgotten our history with roses and the nursing profession’s momentum of healing with flowers and plants not to mention their own history of plant partnerships. It is time to restore our healing tradition. People need it. We need it.

Throughout this book, you will find instructions for developing yourself as a nurse-herbalist. There are opportunities for reflection, herbal experiments, and readings that complement the content you read. They are included to deepen your understanding of the nurse-plant relationship and for your own healing and delight as you make your way through the elements of care represented in this guide.

Reflection: Creating a Safe Place for Reflection

Before beginning herbal experiments of any kind, you must have a “safe place” for doing your scientific work – within and without. Find a physical space in your home or elsewhere where you can close your eyes and know that you will be completely safe and not be interrupted or disturbed. Take a comfortable position and close your eyes. Place your fingers on your radial pulse and notice the rhythm of your pulse. Then move your awareness to the center of your chest and your heart – the heart that beats as pulse. Using your memory and imagination, find and/or create a place in your mind in which you are completely safe ... and by yourself. Carefully note all sounds, shapes, colors, smells, sensations, and tastes associated with your safe place. Take your time. Notice any plants in your safe place.

After your creative reflection try to synthesize this reflection of creating a safe place into one word that represents the essence of the safe place. Note the name of your safe place in a journal dedicated to nurse-herbalism and your plant experiences and experiments. Be sure to explore any plants that you found in your safe place. You might ask an herbalist about the plant or read about it. Record what you learn about the plant in your journal.

You can re-create this safe place at any time of the day and anywhere you go. Lock it in to your memory now for future reflection.

As technology-based practice has grown, as manifested primarily in the reliance on pharmaceutical drugs, herb use has waned and in some industrialized countries fallen out of use by professional nurses, particularly those who practice in hospitals. *The Nurse-Herbalist* shows how nurses can create a practice in which herbalism is re-integrated with

nursing. The premise of this book is that humans rely on plants for their existence and therefore partnership with plants is essential to holistic nursing comfort and care. The scope of herbal practice varies from nurse to nurse but general re-establishment of partnership with plants is fundamental nursing and midwifery art and science.

Unlike urban communities and highly industrialized nations, nurses and midwives in rural communities and developing nations often continue to partner with plants. While herbal remedies may be perceived by some as crude, outdated medicine and therefore lesser care; there are countries around the globe as well as cultural communities within industrialized nations that continue to apply herbal remedies. Nurses in those communities are often quite versed in medicinal plant use. Developing nurses' knowledge and capacity to continue to utilize healing traditions in nursing, such as herbal remedies, is a global health need. This book addresses that need. *The Nurse-Herbalist* details ways in which herbalism can be integrated with contemporary nursing science, art, and practice in support of global health while furthering the professions' long-standing values and history of successful practice that contributes to the promotion of health and peace.

According to the last World Health Organization (WHO) study in the 1980's on the subject of traditional healing, 80% of the world's population still used their traditional methods of healing, including the use of medicinal plants.² In my international experience, this statistic is accurate today if not a bit low particularly in rural areas where medicinal plants grow. However, reporting is a bit more complicated than it might seem.

² N Farnsworth et al., "Medicinal plants in therapy.," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 63, no. 6 (1985).

Herbal application is often so common that when asked about their health practices, people may not even think of the cup of coffee or tea they drink each morning as an “herbal remedy” per se, which in fact it is. In addition, communities are quite reticent to reveal their herbal beliefs, knowledge, and practices to others who may not understand let alone value their cultural beliefs and healing practices.

Nurses also may not think about the plant-based dietary recommendations, remedies, and topical applications they use and recommend in client care as “herbalism” either. But nurses, as well as the public, continue to employ herbs in care. For example, a compress of the distillate of the bark of the witch hazel tree (*Hamamelis virginiana*), is often used by nurses in care of post-partum women to astringe swollen peritoneal tissue and relieve discomfort. Though often under-acknowledged, even a large percentage of the pharmaceutical drugs administered and prescribed by nurses, midwives, and advanced practice nurses are developed from the knowledge of the chemical structures of medicinal plants and sometimes even derived from actual plant material. Acknowledgement and participation in nurse-herbalist practice, as will be outlined in this book, is often a matter of degree rather than an overall question of practice. Herb use is nursing practice and science but the degree of use – the art of nurse-herbalism - is determined by the individual nurse.

For the purposes of this book, I use the term “nurse-herbalism” to identify nurses’ practice of partnering with plants in providing holistic care. The use of a hyphenated term should be interpreted as emphasizing the connection between herbalism and nursing, which is the focus of this book, and not construed as suggesting any separation between them. Nurse-herbalism has existed for centuries. This is not a nostalgic ideal; its presence

is demonstrated in publications that include primary sources which I have found in my research in the archives of communities such as those of European and American nurses dating back to as early as the seventeenth century.

Nurse-herbalism, as will be shown throughout this book, also exists in present day practice of nurses around the globe. There is evidence that nurses apply medicinal plants in the care and comfort of others because plant remedies are accessible, inexpensive, empowering, and effective. Plants not only play an important role in the healing arts. Plants provide us with food, spiritual inspiration, and oxygen and therefore are intrinsic to life itself. Plants are also essential to the design of a holistic nursing practice that is to support and nurture life. This book is organized according to the spheres of holistic nursing and elements of nurses' nature care—spiritual (fire), mental (air), emotional(water), and physical(earth) recorded in nursing history.³ Nurses, who integrate whole plant remedies such as juices, extracts, compresses, poultices, teas, syrups, soups, plasters, or baths in their care of clients, are demonstrating the art and science of an enduring holistic nursing tradition.

Ten years ago, I wrote a book titled Delmar's *Integrative Herb Guide for Nurses*⁴ based upon my experiences in herbal art and science from wild crafting and botanical identification to cultivation, harvest, and plant processing, formulation, herbal applications in the care of clients and even a few years in spagyric experimentation. The book has been used as a reference and textbook in at least fifteen countries by nurses, herbalists, health practitioners, and the public. It is, as I have been told many times,

³ Martha Libster, "Elements of Care: Nursing environmental theory in historical context," *Holistic Nursing Practice* 22, no. 3 (2008).

⁴ ———, *Delmar's integrative herb guide for nurses* (Albany, NY: Delmar Thomson Learning, 2002).

unique in that it is a book specifically *written by a nurse-herbalist about nurse-herbalism*. Since writing the *Herb Guide* I have researched the history of nurse-herbalism particularly of those in the United States and Europe. I have worked and taught with traditional healers in Turtle Island (United States and Canada), Hawaii, Africa, and Central America, and continued to develop the science and art of nurse-herbalism and its translation in contemporary practice settings. I have also continued to develop the integration of Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine (TCM) practice and nursing, some of the results of which are shared in this book.

Because nursing is a unique discipline unlike others in which healing plants may be a focus such as medicine, herbalism, naturopathy, or pharmacy; the application of plants in nursing care and comfort is truly unique. This book seeks to define the unique qualities of nurse-herbalism by focusing on herbalism in terms of nursing scope of practice, nursing scientific theory, principles of holistic nursing, and the art of demonstrating nurses' nature care with plants as it has been conveyed throughout history. This book also includes stories from my twenty-five years of clinical experiences, lessons learned about practice, scientific understanding, and *integrative insights* from my nursing practice and research most particularly in nurse-herbalism.

“Integrative insight” is the phrase that I have used since writing the *Herb Guide*. The phrase was inspired by my scientific and creative work with plants. To learn about the ways in which a particular plant heals, I employ a number of ways of knowing which lead to integrative insight. I apply plants in practice with different people, grow plants and/or harvest them in the wild, make different remedies from the plants, and taste and apply the plants to my own body. I also read botanical research on the constituent parts of

plants as well as any clinical trial research done with the whole plant or its constituents. The depth and breadth of understanding that occurs as a result of the experience with a plant in which body, soul, and mind actively invite learning and remain mindfully receptive to outcomes that will often challenge any preconceived human notions of the natural world we may have is a cornerstone for integrative insight. Plants can teach us many things; yet they are non-verbal. Their “instruction” is perceived by us through different ways of knowing such as insight. Psychological science informs us that this way of knowing and communicating occurs in the non-verbal world—at the level of the subconscious and unconscious mind with all of its sense experience, patterns, and symbolism. Openness to integrative insight and a commitment to reflective practice are the invitation for a synergistic understanding of the plant world, an enlightening human-plant relationship, and a rich understanding of the healing potential that can emerge as a result of a shared space and shared consciousness with members of the plant kingdom.

The focus of this book is not encyclopedic or exhaustive; rather it is pointed to what I know best – my clinical work and research in partnership with some specific plants that I have come to know quite well because they have a very real affinity for the work and service that nurses provide people and communities. Nursing’s tradition has focused mostly on herbal teas, topical applications, such as compresses, poultices, distillates, baths, and floral waters, and other solutions such as syrups and alcohol extracts. *The Nurse-Herbalist* focuses on the integration of these traditional remedies with which we have had a successful history of application in care and comfort.

The impetus for this book has been to more fully respond to my readers’ and students’ requests. For decades, I have heard nurses say that they would use herbal

remedies in practice if they could just figure out how to do it legally, ethically, and safely. In 2000, when I published the *Herb Guide*, I thought that would help. It did to a certain extent. While many have found the *Herb Guide* to be a good practice reference, it did not seem to thoroughly address the needs of nurses who wanted help in actually creating a nurse-herbalist practice that is congruent with scope of practice and the tenets of nursing science. This book addresses this in much greater detail.

Wondering about - St. John's Wort's Story

Plant-human relationships inspire stories and stories inspire integrative insights. I will discuss integrative insight further on but think it important that the plant stories begin here. Plants have much to teach. They are wonder-full in that their stories sometimes evoke in us a wonder about this natural world which we call Earth. This story about St. John's Wort has had me in a state of wonder about the plant and nature herself for years. This is how the story goes.

Many nurses I have spoken with over the years have strong ties to the plant world and have been really perplexed as to how to fully integrate plants into a twenty-first century nursing practice that often requires such extensive focus on high tech devices and drugs as well as systems of care that can seem so far removed from the earth elements—fire, air, water, and earth—the common bond that links human beings with the green and flowered world. I can really relate. Even after I had practiced for eight years (from 1984 – 1986 and 1989 – 1995) in holistic community clinics where I freely used herbs in my nursing care I moved to Colorado and worked in a hospital where my education, botanical knowledge and experience were really put to the test.

Many years ago an herbal teacher of mine had taught me what Paracelsus and other renowned teachers of plant medicine, including twentieth-century American herbalist John Christopher, maintained: that “the plant medicines we need grow outside our backdoor”. The theory seemed fairly abstract to me when I first heard it and I remember thinking that I would tuck it away in my mind and someday, somehow I would be shown evidence of the truth of the statement or not. A number of theories such as this are taught today as a routine part of herbal education. The backdoor theory was proved for me in a vivid experience when I was working as a nurse on a postpartum labor and delivery unit in a suburb of Denver, Colorado in the 1990’s.

Over the course of a number of weeks, physicians had delivered several babies on the unit by performing a fourth-degree episiotomy on the mothers. This really concerned everyone because it was not typical to do so many fourth-degrees and the women who had to undergo the procedure were so uncomfortable after delivery. I was also concerned because I knew that fourth-degrees were often avoidable. Over the years, I observed the results of deliveries performed by a British-educated nurse midwife who massaged the perineum of her laboring mothers with St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) oil to help relax the cervix. My observation was that the oil most often prevented the need for any episiotomy, let alone an extensive one. I had also prepared and used the oil in my nursing practice for many years in the healing of wounds and injuries to the nervous system and in trigger point therapy for clients with fibromyalgia. I knew the healing properties of the plant and thought that it would really help those women. As they came into my care at the hospital, I could not help but wish that I knew how to convince our labor and delivery team to consider another approach such as that used by the midwife I

had worked with. At that time, I was knowledgeable about nurse-herbalism but not so much about nurses' roles in creating change in hospital systems. Even though I cared so much about the women, I found myself very intimidated to speak up about my nursing knowledge.

One morning, I was parking my car behind the hospital (we parked near a field), and I looked up in the hazy sunlight to see an entire field of small, yellow flowers. Every year, I had wildcrafted St. John's Wort flowers to make oil and tinctures for my clients, family and friends. But that year, there had been no flowers. My herbal colleagues and I could find no plants in the mountains at all. It had been a very peculiar year in that regard. As you might imagine, when I went to investigate the flowers in the field, I found that the yellow flowers were indeed St. John's Wort. There was a huge field of the flowers growing literally outside the back door of the hospital just as the herbal teachers had said the herbs that we need do. Never before had I seen such a demonstration of a theoretical proving. The medicines we need really do grow outside our back door. I have seen it many times since then.

What was particularly interesting about this situation with St. John's Wort was that I had tried to find the flowers in the mountains as I had done in years past. There did not seem to be any flowers for harvest on the feast of St. John, June 24th as there should have been. By July when I discovered the field of plants outside the hospital in that suburb of Denver, it appeared to us as if all of the plants had magically come down from higher elevations to grow right outside that hospital unit where I had prayed for assistance from that very flower. It was such a powerful spiritual experience in understanding the consciousness and life force of healing plants, as well as my own

connection with the plant world which I had actually been aware of since early childhood. I remember speaking to the nurse manager about the presence of the St. John's Wort. But even with her support, we could not figure out a way at that time to create the change that we knew could help the doctors and nurses as well as the women facing episiotomy. I vowed to dedicate my life to figuring out a way to create that very system change and to tell this story —St. John's Wort's story— wherever and whenever I could.

While elated at my personal plant connection, I was quite distraught at the outcome in the hospital. Unfortunately, the labor and delivery staff never could take advantage of the healing power of the St. John's Wort. My husband, friend and I harvested what we needed for our remedies and left the rest. When I went back the next year to the field behind the hospital, there was not a single St. John's Wort plant to be found. Although they had appeared at the hospital's backdoor wanting to help us, the door was not yet open to them. Since that time I have worked to open those doors for plant partnerships; but it is not easy. This experience and many others like it are the reason I refer to nurse-herbalism as plant partnership. My experiences have shown me that plants are sentient life and that their healing effects are expressed *in relationship* with people – a dimension of healing yet to be more fully explored in health science. Because they are sentient I try to be conscious about the language I use when referring to them. For example, I often say that nurses “apply” plants in the care and comfort of clients rather than saying that we “use” plants in practice.

My readers' questions have made me realize that although nurses go to continuing education workshops or take courses on herbal medicine, they often leave those

educational experiences without the knowledge of how, when, where and why to partner with plants in the creation of a nurse-herbalist practice. *The Integrative Herb Guide* addressed the professional, legal and ethical issues involved in the practice of nurse-herbalism to a certain extent; but it was not a how-to guide for designing a practice and therefore did not fully address important concerns of nurses who were ready for the challenge of creating change in their professional practice circles to include herbs from simple single-herb remedies (simples) to formulations.

This book, *The Nurse-Herbalist: Integrative Insights for Holistic Practice* has a two-fold purpose. First, this book seeks to educate and address the professional needs and concerns of those who are called spiritually and professionally to partner with plants in their scientific and creative endeavors in nursing comfort and care. In so doing, the second purpose is to dispel any lingering myths and misconceptions, ambiguity, and intimidation associated with herb use in nursing and midwifery perpetuated over the centuries that would impede the opportunity to freely experience the joy and healing that is available to those who enter the natural beauty of the plant world receptive to the potential for integrative insights which can guide holistic practice. I hope to accomplish this in this book that speaks to the heart of the matter by giving you experiments in which you can apply the content immediately in your own practice.

It is possible to make your use of herbs in nursing care congruent with nursing scope of practice and any ethical, moral, social, and professional obligations. Professional congruence is a key. The context for nurse-herbalism is nursing care. This means that the language used in describing herbalism, the treatment of clients from assessment to evaluation and scholarship all relate to nursing science and art. This book provides

examples and case studies and reflects the way in which I practice and teach nurse-herbalism – as professional nursing. I advocate for *nurse-herbalism* and differentiate it quite clearly from the practice of medicine, pharmacy, and herbalism. The practice described here is rooted in nursing scholarship, experience, policy, creative practice, theory and science. *The Nurse-Herbalist* also further delineates the work that I started in the *Integrative Herb Guide* to reveal “integrative insight” as an open door to health and herbal diplomacy.

Integrative Insight

The plant world is so very full of beauty, color, fragrance and extraordinary design. Entering the healing world of plants can inspire integration and insight. Integration is the ability to *embody* or make something a genuine part of our whole being. Being embodied is easy when we interact with a world that is beautiful and fragrant and there is no danger which would cause us to raise our defense mechanisms. Integration is also a quality of heart that supports the desire to broaden one’s consciousness to move beyond pre-conceived agendas that preclude us from including and affirming others who have their own ideas, feelings, and experiences. Insight is the understanding, sensitivity, heightened awareness and humanity that becomes possible as a result of this broadened state of consciousness. Plants are able to inspire integrative insight in us because, as I will show through numerous case studies and examples, they are sentient, living beings with consciousness and energy fields that interact with our own. The whole plant remedies used in nursing care are quite different from pharmaceutical drugs because they are alive!

Because plants are alive, there is a living ethic that accompanies the work with healing plants. It begins with acknowledgement that plants are sentient. They are

receptive and responsive. Some people, scientists to shamans, have concluded from their study of plants that they are also intelligent and feeling. Many of the accounts for how I too have come to know about the sentient nature of plants are recorded in this book.

Throughout my nursing career I have partnered with plants in helping people. But long before that, actually all of my life, healing plants have been by my side, in my thoughts and dreams, and connected with my spirit. They have healed me and are my source of inspiration for creating ways to help others. The beauty of the plant world raises me up when human suffering stifles my senses. Exploring them has given me some of the greatest scientific experiences and existential awakenings of my life. Therefore, I must caution you that this guide for nurse-herbalist practice is written not only from a human perspective. The “voice” of the plant world as I experience it is given an equal platform. For example, you will learn not only of the human regulations that govern your practice but also the laws that protect plant populations. You will be encouraged to commune and communicate directly with plants in suggested nurse-herbalist “experiments”.

Plants require our attention and protection because they are a vulnerable population. Because they are non-verbal we must attune to them. Plant attunement is a foundation for integrative insight. In return for attuning to plants, they provide us with opportunities for healing. Plant remedies affect body, mind, emotion and spirit. This is why this book is a guide to *holistic* practice, one in which the heart and soul of people-plant partnerships are accessed in designing a practice to heal all.

A Plant Profile of Heal All

Although plants do not use a voice, they often communicate quite clearly with those who are willing and able to tune in to their patterns of non-verbal communication.

Plants communicate through behavior. Our ability to perceive and interpret that behavior is what determines whether communication occurs or not. We use our senses to interpret non-verbal behaviors that manifest as patterns of movement, sound, and energy. If you are having trouble imagining plant communication, start with human babies. Babies do not use formal language yet parents interpret their behavioral cues and vocalizations so that they can understand or communicate with their infant. As time passes since the day of birth, parents begin to recognize a pattern in their baby's cries, movements, and energy levels. For instance, a mother might recognize that her infant is beginning to get sleepy because the baby starts to yawn, rub its eyes and make short puffing sounds.

A major difference between plant and infant communication is that plants do not vocalize. Therefore one must become quite adept at observing their behavioral patterns over time. As we work with plant patterns we begin to understand the plant's presence and their abilities to help us in healing. The first step in mastering plant communication is to engage all of one's senses and use them to recognize and affirm the presence of plants. Plants are present everywhere! They are in the houses we live in, the food that we eat, and the medicines we use. They are part of our celebrations and rituals: holly at Christmas, horseradish at Passover, bay leaf in victory, and rose petals at baptisms. These examples represent the human perspective. However, partnering with plants in healing requires full communication as an open two-way channel.

Think about the presence of plants from their perspective that is without a connection to human events of any kind. Become aware of the presence of plants by becoming an active participant in their world. Use your sense to validate the patterns of their presence. This is a highly subtle process because this work is done in the non-

verbal world, the realm of the subconscious and unconscious mind. The process involves attuning one's self deliberately, consciously, and enthusiastically to plants.

Start with observation and simple acknowledgment of the plants in your environment and then as you grow in your plant communication connections you will understand more about this subtle world of plants and their power to heal. You will come to experience first-hand that the healing power of plants is much vaster than simply providing substance for human remedies. They are sentient life with a story to tell. That story is as healing, in my experience, as their chemical constituents and the chopped up fibrous material we put in capsules. They have the ability to heal—one and all—in a way that is quite unique. The best way to understand their healing ways is to be with the plants and to listen to the stories of people who have insight into their world.

This story I will tell you about the presence of plants starts in the country of the Wiyot People in Northern California. It is the story of a beautiful low-lying plant commonly known as “Heal All” or “All Heal” (*Prunella vulgaris*). The plant covers much of the hillsides in Wiyot country. It has been one of my favorite herbs since I first met it in the late 1980's. I don't really have “favorite” plants per se because I truly love them all; but I had an affinity for or recognition of this plant right away. Maybe I knew in some part of my mind or being that someday I would be writing their story in a book teaching about partnering with healing plants? I am a historian storyteller and it is the right time to tell this Heal All's story.

I think that I always liked Heal All so much because of its gentle beauty and its versatility in terms of its healing properties. The “signature” of the purple flower, (that is the reference to the geometric congruence with a human body part or system), is the

throat or more specifically the trachea. This means that the flower head actually looks like a trachea. In medieval plant science, a scientist named Paracelsus developed a theory called the Doctrine of Signatures in which it was presumed that there was a connection between the structure, color and smell of a plant and the body part or system it could be used for in healing. I have given the tea of the aerial parts (leaf and flower) of Heal All to children and adults with sore throats and they have felt *all* better. I also have given the tea to those with stomach upset and applied salve made from the flower in the healing of wounds.

When I went to Mohawk country upstate New York in 2005 to visit one of the wisdom-keepers for Turtle Island (United States and Canada) she and I went on a medicine walk together. We came upon All Heal at one point and she said that it was “one of her favorite plants”. I told her that it was also one of my favorites. We then shared stories about the ways in which we have harvested and prepared the medicine from the plant and how we have applied the plant in the care of others. When I went to Northern California, I thought of the wisdom keeper because All Heal was growing everywhere!

Other than the local herbalists, the people I spoke to about the presence of Heal All did not seem to notice it. Its ubiquitous presence begged the question if there was some reason that the geographic area needed the qualities of the All Heal plant. I found that it really did. In 1860, there had been some white men who had massacred most of the Wiyot people on that land. In a meeting with one of the tribal leaders I mentioned the All Heal. I told her the story of All Heal as I had come to know it. She smiled and we talked about the plant’s ability to heal all of the wounds of people and wondered about

the plant's presence on the land as a way of healing the place as well. On two occasions I, as a white woman, had been given the opportunity to communicate and connect with an Indian elder because of All Heal. The plant represented not only potential for human medicine but also an encounter with the land that could ultimately heal through the transmutation of the prejudice that resulted in historical records of death and destruction.

Our readiness to perceive and seek to understand the presence of plants seemed to be a match for the plant's readiness to communicate and teach us their healing power. It was the foundation for opportunity. Recognizing the importance of Heal All to the healing of land as well as people occurred as a result of communication over time with a plant that is living medicine. I define that communication as meaningful and recognizable experience of patterned energetic exchange that does not include verbalization.

The story seems so simple; but in truth, I have witnessed so many missed opportunities for communication as human beings ignore and even dismiss the healing *presence* and patterns of plants. It also seems a bit surreal as to the power of the presence of Heal All in my life and the lives of others. Perhaps that is how it got its powerful name – *Heal All*? But plant-human communication is an acquired skill. Experiencing plant patterns in the subtle world is a skill rather than a phenomenon. That skill has to do with the ability to enter the green world, the plant world, where the vibration of existence is very different than that of humans. That vibration is gentle, quiet, and delicate in comparison with the human world. This description holds true even when referring to the presence of gnarly vines or to trees with the toughest of barks. One must change vibration to enter the world of plants. Vibration change and communication occurs as a result of change in consciousness. This skill is not unknown to people. The ability to change

vibration can be observed in adult to infant communication. But just as I witness that some people do not really seek to enter the world of an infant and appreciate and validate them for whom they are, many do not appreciate the sentient world of plants, even when representatives end up on the dinner table or outside the backdoor. Human relationship with plants is most often unconscious if not non-existent.

The holistic nurse-herbalist heals in many ways and is not simply a master of dosing out plant supplements. Understanding and communicating with plants and sharing their stories are foundational to nurse-herbalism. It is in the story, the history, that we learn the healing power and properties of plants. This is a book about realizing opportunities to master skill in partnering with the world of healing plants. Nurses of previous generations have had this relationship with plants. They have cultivated and treasured their knowledge of healing plants. Their knowledge has been preserved in receipt (recipe) books, domestic guides, and sick room management books.⁵ Nurses have so many opportunities today to carry on the nurse-herbalist tradition in rural and international nursing services, hospice and home health agencies, parishes, tribal nations, school health, and private practices.

The plant kingdom is a vibrant, colorful, aromatic, and quiet world of sentient life that has provided some of the most simple and yet powerful remedies, which nurses have used in professional caregiving practices throughout the centuries. Plant remedies are an extraordinary chalice for healing expression and therefore require a different experience in education and scientific exploration. This book is an introduction to that practice which takes place in gardens, fields and forests with the plants themselves; for they are the most

⁵ ———, *Herbal Diplomats: The Contribution of early American nurses (1830-1860) to 19th century healthcare reform and the botanical medical movement.*

appropriate teachers. This book will guide you element-by-element, fire, air, water and earth to commune with plants as you create a holistic practice that adheres to the laws of man, nature, and plants, and of professional nursing standards. The book also prepares you to engage the plant world and interact with people in other disciplines such as horticulture and ethnobotany in order to create and sustain an informed practice that resonates with the joy and beauty of the plant world. *The Nurse-Herbalist* seeks also to inspire you to enter the ether, the fifth element of nature care, where you may experience a change in consciousness and experience integrative insight, peace, and loving kindness because of powerful plant partnerships.

Welcome to the vibrant world of the seeds and sound, fruits and fragrance, leaves and colors, flowers and flavor, roots and textures that will amaze you. Connect through your senses to them and the plants will lead you where you need to go and to what you need to learn. Enter the garden, meadow, forest, desert, ocean, or river and you will find them—the plants—awaiting connection and quietly and eagerly ready to show you what they can do to help and heal - all.

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