
MWSHS Student Newsletter

Autumn 2016

Our Alumni in Action: Janet Munson, M.H.

Janet Munson graduated as a Master Herbalist from MWSHS in 2013. Yet, how did she begin her journey with MWSHS? Here's how she explained it: "I had been interested in herbalism for a long time, and had successfully used herbs to resolve various small ailments, but it took my cat getting sick (diabetes) for me to take the next step. After spending thousands of dollars on vet fees, tests etc and being very little further ahead, I decided that if I had to spend money I didn't have, it should at least benefit me in some way. I wanted an understanding of health and disease so that I could make informed decisions, and not just hand over money to 'authorities'. So, I shopped around for a distance program that delivered the best value for money, and discovered the MWSHS. Although I found the title 'Master Herbalist' to be a bit grand, the actual content was very thorough and substantial and seemed to me like the best value for money and energy to be expended."



Holy Basil
(*Ocimum tenuiflorum*),
Janet Munson's
Favorite Herb

Plan Now for MWSHS Winter Workshops!

(See p. 2 for details.)

Busy people tend to appreciate the self-pacing aspect of our program, as did Janet: "As an adult with responsibilities, going at my own pace was essential. I worked on it when I could, but sometimes set it aside for a while—months, in one case—while life happened. I would start in the morning with my coffee and do a little before breakfast—sometimes more, sometimes less."

As to how she dealt with challenges while studying with MWSHS, Janet explained: "I enjoy the challenge of finishing things, which motivated me while working on parts which were difficult or less interesting to me. Sometimes I would take a few hours at the weekend just for the satisfaction of completing a section—of course, it's always more engaging when you have a personal connection to the material being studied, whether it's your own health or that of a loved one."

As a Master Herbalist now, we asked Janet about her goals, and this was her reply: "I'm slowly accruing the clinical hours necessary for AHG (*Continued in Column Two.*)

First-Semester, 2016 Graduates

We offer congratulations to the following 1st-semester, 2016 graduates of the Western-Herbalism Certificate Program:

Nancy Crowell, C.H. (MWSHS)

Laura Caploe, C.H. (MWSHS)

Monica Landkamer, C.H. (MWSHS)

We look forward to hearing how these graduates will use the knowledge that they have gained from their herbal studies in the months and years ahead!

Our Alumni in Action, (*Continued from Column One*)

membership and still have a long way to go. I'm in no hurry to hang up a shingle, but life sends opportunities my way to challenge the herbal muscle, through people and their animals. In the fullness of time, I envision having a small clinic, attached to an extensive herb garden."

Here, then, is Janet's assessment of what she feels others could derive from the program: "The sheer size of this program can be daunting, but anything less isn't enough; besides, satisfaction will always be proportional to the effort which has been expended. You will learn a lot, and be empowered. If this kind of knowledge was widely known, current health care systems could look very different—for the better. It has always been sensible to cultivate self-reliance with regards to our health, but even more so in these times, when not to do so seems like folly. Take the program—it will change your life. There are many other ways out there to learn about herbs—especially by using and interacting with the plants themselves—but this has been a rich and solid background from which to continue life-long learning, and I have not regretted my choice. Be advised, though: this is rigorous work, not a diploma mill."

Janet's closing words of wisdom? "Learn from the plants themselves: Get out in nature. Make your own medicines. Eat lots of weeds. Book learning is only one half of it."

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WORKSHOP CREDIT OPTIONS

Except where noted, all of the below-listed events qualify as Workshop (Course-Eight) credits toward the 2-year Master-Herbalist program. Each hour of *verified* attendance (per instructor-completed workshop-credit slips as supplied by MWSHS counts toward an equivalent hour of Workshop Category #3 credits (up to the student limit of 20 hours), unless another category is specified or unless one attends a particular workshop at one of these events that is *strictly* in one of these other categories. **MWSHS-sponsored workshops are boxed.**

Workshops, Conferences, Lectures, & Events in Herbal Studies Across North America

Tentative Dates for Upcoming MWSHS-sponsored Workshops

(Look for Confirmation and Details Soon on our Website, under “Events”)

Feb. 26th, 2017. “*1st Holistic-Assessment Skills Workshop for 2017,*” **New Brighton, MN**, sponsored by the Midwest School of Herbal Studies, www.midwestherbalstudies.com

March 26th, 2017. “*2nd Holistic-Assessment Skills Workshop for 2017,*” **New Brighton, MN**, sponsored by the Midwest School of Herbal Studies, www.midwestherbalstudies.com

April 7th-9th, 2017. “*Southwest Conference on Botanical Medicine for 2017,*” **Tempe, AZ**. Over 30 lectures plus field studies. Registration fee is \$285 if paid by March 1st, or \$359 if paid afterwards. For more info or to register, call 541-482-3016 or visit the website at www.botanicalmedicine.org.

April 23rd, 2017. “*3rd Holistic-Assessment Skills Workshop for 2017,*” **New Brighton MN**, sponsored by the Midwest School of Herbal Studies, www.midwestherbalstudies.com

May 21st, 2017. “*How to Find, Wildcraft, Process, and Prepare Wild Plants into Herbal Medicines,*” **New Brighton MN**, sponsored by the Midwest School of Herbal Studies, www.midwestherbalstudies.com

Workshops: Where to Find?

Aside from the workshops listed in the *MWSHS Student Newsletter* and on the MWSHS website, another way for M.H. Diploma students to fulfill workshop requirements for category #1 (Assessment Skills) is by arranging with a local naturopath, Western herbalist, Oriental-medicine practitioner, or Ayurvedic practitioner to sit in as a silent observer—especially on initial consultations with patients, where the lion’s share of assessment is made. By tactfully explaining that you are a serious and enrolled student in an herbal-therapy school and that you promise you will only *quietly observe* (or “shadow,” as the term is used in the health-care field), you may find that your efforts will be fruitful. As for workshop category #2 (Wild-plant Walks), you may wish to contact local park naturalists, horticultural clubs, and community-educations centers to find qualified persons who regularly lead wild-plant walks. And as for Workshop category #3 (Misc. Workshops on Herbal Therapy), you may find that community-educations centers, community colleges, holistic newspapers, and health-food stores are great resources for locating talks and events in this category. Remember, with any such attendance at any workshop of any category, you need to present documentation as to the date and hours spent in the event. (The School can supply you with generic forms for documentation, as an email attachment, at your request.)

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Euell Gibbons

The Man and His Message

by Matthew Alfs

All MWSHS students are familiar with the name of Euell Gibbons, who was discussed in both Part One and Part Two of *Western Herbalism* as a pioneer in the nutritional value of wild-plant foods. Yet, few under the age of 45 actually remember him as a media personality from his heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. Even those over the age of 45 may only remember him from a couple of contexts, such as his hobby as a wild-foods forager, his authoring of a book called *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, his TV commercials for a popular breakfast cereal, and his appearances on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*.

However, Euell Theophilus Gibbons (1911-1975) was an educator, survivalist, natural-ist, and environmentalist of the first rank and truly one of the most important figures of the late 1960s and early 1970s! Careful historians have associated him with Rachel Carson as one of the harbingers of the ecological renaissance that occurred during this time, because his inspirational and knowledge-able writing and workshops encouraged people to relinquish the previous generation's notion of "conquering nature" and to start *living in harmony with the wilderness*. In short, his work helped spur the "back-to-the-land" movement that occurred from this point onward.

In appreciation of his powerful educational and environmental efforts, Susquehanna University even awarded him an honorary doctorate, while Boston University developed a special collection of his many writings. Today, the Euell Gibbons Environmental Foundation continues the important wilderness educational work that he started.

However, being an ecological hero was far from Euell's mind back in the 1920s when he lived with his parents and younger siblings in central New Mexico. Far from dwelling on the fate of plant Earth back in those days, young Euell was simply intent on trying to keep his mom and siblings from starving! His family had been hit by a trio of calamities—the loss of credit, a terrible drought, and the death of their livestock,—and Euell's father had gone off on a desperate mission to find work. A dwindling sack of pinto beans was the only source of food left and

Euell's mother eventually wound up sick and weak from mal-nutrition as a result. Sensing the urgency of the situation, young Euell realized that *he must do something...* and fast!

He decided to undertake a wild-foods-gathering mission, a quest that he realized must not fail! Happily, it didn't: Long hours after beginning his trek into the wilderness, the determined lad returned with a knapsack stuffed with an assortment of wild edibles: Pignolias, wild potatoes, prickly pear, puffball mushrooms, and even a few rabbits! With tears of appreciation, his family welcomed his accumulated bounty as a Godsend. Perhaps it was, for that one-day ensemble provided food for the starving family for almost an entire month! Such timing was perfect, for Euell's father had found a job and was able to cable money back to them just when their cupboards were again running bare. Truly, the wild-foods interest that Euell's mom had imbued in him at a very young age had paid off!

As life moved on, Euell found that he had to employ that knowledge even more effectively, especially when hard times left him a hobo for a period of about five years. During that time, he honed his survival skills to the nth degree. Tough as those days were, he later in life saw this period as the blessing that it certainly was—as a sort of 'apprenticeship to nature.'



Eventually, Euell found work, but never in an avenue that was truly satisfying. This changed when, after obtaining formal education at the University of Hawaii, he became a schoolteacher. In this role, he found that he loved helping children to learn and to be all that they could possibly be in life.

However, Euell longed to be a novelist and he was frustrated when his efforts at publication kept failing. Yet, his second wife, Freda—whom he had met while at the university—encouraged him to follow the first rule of writing: "*Write about what you know.*" She urged, then, that a non-fiction book about wild foods was the way to go. Following this sage advice, Euell struck pay dirt with the publication of *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* in 1962, which was published by the David McKay Company and quickly became a bestseller.

Other books soon followed, including *Stalking the Blue-eyed Scallop* (1964), *Stalking the Healthful Herbs* (1966), and the *Beach-comber's Handbook* (1967). But, as the 1970s approached and Euell continued to evaluate his objectives amid his great success, he came to the realization that "great fame brings great responsibility." With that in mind, he began to structure his books and articles more along ecological lines. Here he was happy to find an avid readership for his rage against land "development" and his abhorrence of herbicides and pesticides. *Stalking the Good Life* (1971) and *Stalking the Faraway Places* (1973) powerfully preached his heartfelt land-stewardship ethics, aside from conveying a ton of information about wild foods, including even lab analyses of the nutritional content of the various weeds that Gibbons was increasingly having done at Pennsylvania State University.

Stalking the Wild Places also carried a chapter on Euell's time spent teaching survival skills at the Outward Bound Schools, which institution's powerful and varied wilderness educational activity was so near and dear to his heart. In fact, Gibbons' then-monumental publicity (including even an appearance on Johnny Carson's show, in which he ably traded jibes and witticisms with the seasoned comedian), did much to preserve and enlarge the Outward Bound program. The school also benefited from Gibbons' authoring of a small volume for it entitled *A Wild Way to Eat* (1967).

Gibbons' connection with Outward Bound even attracted the attention of *Life* magazine, which sent journalist Sandi Davis to personally experience his teaching at the school. Davis found herself enthralled by Gibbons' evident demonstration of his life passion of teaching children—not typical school

subjects, as he formerly had done—but that which he believed mattered most in life, communion with nature and harmonious living with it. Eventually, under Euell's instruction, Davis acquired enough confidence to undergo the school's baptism of fire, a 48-hour "solo" on a nearby island! Equipped with only a handful of Gibbons-allowed supplies—a sheet of plastic, a knife, a dozen kitchen matches, a fishline with hook and sinker, some clothes and foul-weather gear, and two tin cans (one as an eating utensil and the other as a makeshift stove)—Davis wrote (in the Sept. 23, 1966 issue of *Life*) that she had weathered the occasion quite well, owing to her instructor's careful—and oft-times humorous—lessons. Like some displaced epicure, she had feasted heartily on periwinkles, steamed mussels, seaweed, grasswort, and sea urchins (although soon after Gibbons had picked her up by boat, she confessed to having rushed into town to satisfy an intense craving for candy!).

Euell's great love of children burned inside him and he seldom missed an opportunity to nurture their inborn sense of wonder. The prolific naturalist John McPhee was a personal friend of Gibbons and, in writing the foreword for the Alan C. Hood reprint of *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, he described Euell's passion in this regard, relating how he would sometimes literally lasso a whole school-roomful of kids—exhibiting this once-necessary skill from his earlier life as a cowboy—and drag them off to a stream valley to introduce them to the joys of wild-plant foraging and fishing.

Children loved Euell's method of survival fishing: He would tell them that they didn't need a fishing rod, just an old soda bottle and some fishline, and then demonstrate what he meant: His unique method, vividly illustrated and portrayed in a special article written by Gibbons for *National Geographic* (Aug. 1973), was simply to wind fishline around the waist of the empty glass bottle, attach a sinker and a hook baited with a grub, and then swing the weighted part of the line ever faster above his head. When he felt that the time was right, he would point the base toward the water and the line would unravel toward it with a z-i-n-g! as if ejected from the fanciest of fishing rods! Euell would retrieve the line from his makeshift rod by twisting the bottle crosswise.

To the extreme sadness of those who knew him, Euell Gibbons departed the earthly scene on December 29, 1975, at the age of 64. His last book—and the one that wild-plant foragers generally find the most practical—was completed by his widow and his foraging friend Gordon Tucker and published posthumously in 1979. Entitled *Euell Gibbons' Handbook of Edible Wild Plants*, it was a guide to over 400 edible wild plants of North America, with detailed botanical description and uses. Ironic in view of this comprehensive work, as well as his many previous works and his universally acknowledged expertise in the field of wild foods, enemies of Gibbons' nature-loving ethic started a rumor that Euell had died from 'eating a bad plant'! Of course, this was not the case: He had fallen victim instead to a circulatory blowout, having for many years been a cigarette smoker and having pushed himself beyond limits to keep up with his countless fans and his many commitments to sponsors. But, when a man heralds wild-foods foraging as "a creative protest against the artificiality of our daily lives," as Euell did, slurs from status-quo worshipers were only to be expected.

Although Euell is no longer among the denizens of planet Earth, many wilderness enthusiasts feel that this beloved teacher looks down on us from that Great Foraging-Ground in the Sky, smiling with his characteristic broad grin and bestowing a blessing to nature lovers everywhere: "Live long... and *eat well!*"

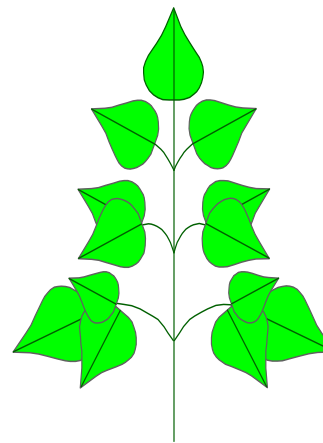
Editor's Note: The above article has been reprinted from an earlier *Student Newsletter* by popular demand.



Director Matthew Alfs with Students on an Herbwalk.
(The next herbwalk is just 6 short months away!)

"I Read Each & Every Newsletter Straight Through!"

That's what one student told us, adding: "Reading the *MWSHS Student Newsletter* reminds me that I'm part of a large family of students and educators, which increases my zest to master my studies. It's also a powerful reminder of how hard the MWSHS staff works on my behalf to keep me informed on current research and events in the herbal realm. Thank you so very much for this valuable resource."



Do you also take time to read through the entire *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, dear student? As the official organ of communication between the school and its student body, the Newsletter's announcements and articles can be most crucial to your academic success.

For example, the current issue provides information relative to MWSHS' upcoming "Assessment Skills" Workshop in the Twin Cities and offers a series of suggestions on how to find and complete workshops outside of Minnesota. It also contains an in-depth article on the vital role that Euell Gibbons played in educating the public about helpful wild plants. All of this *in one issue*, and at *no extra cost* to you; it's one of several valuable "perks" of your student membership.

We hope, then, that you will agree with the student above and always take time to read through each and every issue. (Student contributions to the *Newsletter* are also always encouraged. Please inquire for guidelines and specs. if you would be interested in submitting an article.)

In Coming Issues

* *Student & Alumni Profiles*

* *Book Reviews*

* *News & Views*

**Informational Articles*

**Midwest School of Herbal Studies
P O Box 120096
New Brighton MN 55112**

To:

First Class Mail