
MWSHS Student Newsletter

Summer 2020

WH Graduate Profile: Lisa Kofakis

Lisa Kofakis enrolled in the Master-Herbalist Diploma Program in December of 2018 and graduated from the Western-Herbalism module in the early part of the present year. But, what prompted her decision to enroll with MWSHS?

"I started seeing an herbalist many years ago to help me detoxify after finding out I had been exposed to toxic chemicals while I had been in the Marine Corps when I was in my 20's," she reminisced. "I finally felt that I had an avenue to keep myself healthy. I began taking random herbal workshops whenever I could find them. In 2018, I changed the direction of my career from being a Tattoo Artist (since 1991) to managing the studio I had built up. I knew this was the right time to get serious about herbalism. However, I researched quite a bit before I settled on MWSHS. I believe in signs and two of them presented to me. The first was that I had already purchased the textbooks I had needed many months before I even knew about the School. The second was that I discovered that the herbalist who had helped me with my detox was a former student of MWSHS! MWSHS is also a member school of the American Herbalists Guild. That sealed the deal for me."



What does Lisa especially appreciate about MWSHS' Master-Herbalist Diploma program? "I love the structure. The remote learning mixed with in-person workshops is great for me. I also enjoy that I don't have to be in front of the computer for my lessons. I also like the hard copy binders, because I study better with paper than when reading from a screen. I also like that I can determine my own pace. That is really important to me, since I'm a small-business owner and my schedule can vary greatly."

Asked as to which methods and techniques helped her to move successfully through the Western-Herbalism module, Lisa explained: "My most helpful study tools were a good highlighter and a pencil, a comfortable spot to sit, and minimal distractions. I tried to have one spot to do my lessons, but I found that I did better if I moved around the house; depending on the day, I found I did better in one area or another. I also did much better if I had a set day on which I always studied."

Many students become nervous when thinking about doing their exams, but Lisa found a solution that worked for her: "When I was studying for my exam, I made note cards with questions on the front and answers on the back.

This was a great study aid and I could carry those cards around with me everywhere. Any chance I had to look them over, I would. It was really helpful!"

What would Lisa say to those considering becoming a student with MWSHS? "The benefits are a great program that is challenging and organized. I really like how in-depth it is. I also appreciate learning about the history of different herbal practices: knowing who has come before me can only strengthen my knowledge and what I can do as I move forward. I also absolutely *love* the in-person workshops! Meeting other herbalists and students who are all at different places in their program is wonderful. It's so refreshing to be in a space with others who are just as excited as I am to talk about plants. The plant walks are so informative and full of inspiration. The rewards to me are endless."

Like many of our graduates, Lisa is pursuing a variety of herbal business options. "I'm currently handcrafting herbal oils and balms from plants that I'm growing on our farm or have wild-harvested from our property. I've been focused on skin care because of my background in tattooing and my experience in dealing with skin for over 25 years. I sell through my website and through Etsy and I also have a few wholesale accounts at other retail locations. I also have a small apothecary on our farm where I offer my skin care line, along with other herbal products etc. I'll be hosting some community education workshops and plant walks on the farm this fall and into 2021. My website is: www.silvercreeksprings.com You can also find me on Facebook and Instagram under the title: Silver Creek Springs."

She also has some long-range goals: "I'd eventually like to offer consultations and workshops and to expand my product line and apothecary business."

In conclusion, Lisa tells us: "I would like to thank MWSHS for providing this top-notch program. I continually confirm that I've made the right choice in the Master-Herbalist Diploma Program. The support and networking I have experienced because of you has been priceless. Thank you so much! I look forward to being a part of this community for a very long time."

We certainly hope so, Lisa, as it has been our great pleasure to work with you in the wonderful realm of healing plants!

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WORKSHOP CREDIT OPTIONS

Except where noted, all of the below-listed events qualify as Workshop credits toward the 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 workshops are boxed, below.**

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

Note: Covid-19 Restrictions Have Largely Limited Workshop Selection for 2020. Otherwise, This Page Would Be Filled with Workshops, As Is Usually the Case During the Summer!

Sept. 11th-13th, 2020. “37th Annual Breitenbush Herbal Conference,” **Detroit, OR.** For More Info, See the Website at www.herbalconference.net. The Website States that “Registration Is Temporarily Closed” As the Covid-19 Situation Is Being Monitored and Urges Interested Parties to Periodically Check Back with the Website for Updates.

"Where Do I Find Qualifying Workshops in My Local Area?"

Aside from the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, which lists resources from around the country of which we become aware, you can check holistic newspapers that are available in many larger cities. In these areas, as well as in less populated communities, you might check local, independently-owned health food stores and food co-ops, which may have bulletin boards or knowledgeable staff who may be aware of local teachers of holistic-assessment skills, herbal-medicine-making, or who may lead wild-plant walks. (Local nature centers, plant nurseries, greenhouses, horticultural clubs, and native-plant-appreciation societies may know of local wild-plant-walk instructors as well.) Finally, check the phone book for local naturopaths, herbalists, acupuncturists, and other holistic-health professionals who may be willing to mentor you on some of these skills or allow you to “shadow” them as they see clients.

Oct. 15th-19th, 2020. “31st Annual Symposium of the American Herbalists Guild.” This is a *Virtual Symposium* This Year. For more information or to register, visit www.americanherbalistsguild.com.

Oct. 2020. [Tentative, Depending Upon COVID-19 Status and Restrictions] “MWSHS’ Wildcrafting, Processing, & Medicine-making Workshop for 2020,” 1:20 to 5:20 PM. **New Brighton, MN.** \$50 (\$45 if Paid 8 Days or More Before the Event). See Our Website, Under “Events,” for More Information or to Register. (Use the Password “HerbStudent2003” to Log in.)

Nov. 2020. [Tentative, Depending Upon COVID-19 Status and Restrictions] “MWSHS’ Assessment-Skills Workshop for 2020,” 1:20 to 5:20 PM. **New Brighton, MN.** \$50 (\$45 if Paid 8 Days or More Before the Event). See Our Website, Under “Events,” for More Information or to Register. (Use the Password “HerbStudent2003” to Log in.)

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America's Environmental Pioneers...

Our Debt to Them

by Matthew Alfs

As we've noted in our Master-Herbalist program and in *Student Newsletters* past, conscientious souls like Euell Gibbons and Rachel Carson powerfully sounded the alarm in the 1960s regarding the headlong rush into environmental destruction that was occurring at that time. What is especially sad, however, is that their informed warnings have largely gone unappreciated: In the fifty years since their time, greedy industrialists and technocrats have worked tirelessly to turn our once lovely planet into an ever-growing garbage dump. Then, too, every day, many miles of wild habitat are lost to the bulldozer. Between such pollution, habitat loss, and other thoughtless activities like hunting merely for sport, the natural rate of animal-and-plant extinction wound up increasing by a *thousandfold* in just the twentieth century alone!

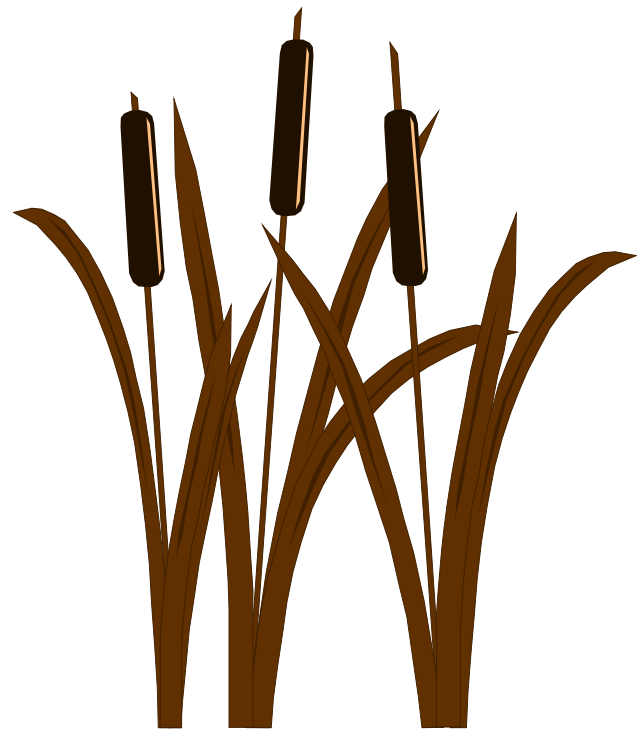
The irony of all of this was highlighted by American astronaut Frank Borman who, reflecting on his sojourn into outer space, observed: "When you look at our earth from two hundred forty thousand miles away,...you see that our planet is the only thing in the universe that has any color in it....We share such a beautiful planet....the overwhelming wonderment is why in the world we can't appreciate what we have."

That is an "overwhelming wonderment" indeed! Nevertheless, not all persons have shamelessly promulgated environmental destruction. An 'ecological renaissance' has long been underway, spearheaded by earth-loving individuals, which has proven at least somewhat successful in slowing down the cruel crusade against our wild lands. Carson and Gibbons were part of it, but they were not its progenitors. Before their day, other brave and insightful souls were sounding the alarm—nature lovers and ecologists who served as the inspiration for Gibbons and Carson. Some of these, like Henry Thoreau (whose contemplative work *Walden* has long been a household classic), John Muir (who founded the Sierra Club), and John Burroughs (advisor on conservation to the U.N. and for whom the John Burroughs Medal on conservation was named) are well known to nature lovers. But the story of other important environmental pioneers has seldom been told. I would like to share some key portions of that story now, outlining the invaluable contributions of three important conservationists.

John Chapman (1774-1845)

John Chapman's story begins in northwest Pennsylvania in the year 1797, when he began sowing the

seeds of a large variety of fruits, vegetables, and healing herbs throughout the expanding frontier. Because he had an especial fondness for apple seeds and was once seen paddling down a river with two canoes full of them, he came to be known as "Johnny Appleseed." But, as mentioned, Chapman sowed a large variety of seeds, including those of healing herbs like motherwort, pennyroyal, catnip, mullein, wintergreen, horehound, and even dandelion! A favorite of his, however, was mayweed [dog fennel] (*Anthemis cotula*). Chapman emphasized this particular plant since it had gained the reputation of being a fighter of feverish viral contagions (similar to the reputation garnished by boneset—*Eupatorium perfoliatum*—to which it is related and shares a similar chemical profile, including immunostimulating sesquiterpene lactones).



But what motivated Chapman's passionate trek? As a nurseryman, he planted ahead of the expanding frontier with a mind to business success. But, as a devout theist, he possessed a powerful reverence for life and a

missionary zeal to convey that to others. And so, he often appeared on the doorstep of a new settler's home with a sermon in his mouth and healing herbs in his hands.

Feeling a genuine kinship with all creation (he was once seen talking to both plants and animals as he trekked), Johnny wanted to do as much as he possibly could on nature's behalf. He even rescued aged horses that were abandoned and paid any farmers he could find that would take care of them. Once, when he freed a wolf from a cruel trap, he was followed by that grateful animal for quite some time.

His kinship with nature also endeared him to the various Indian tribes of his area. Memoirs from settlers who knew Chapman well convey the thought that many Indians held him in high regard and that his marked zeal in serving others led them to believe that he was imbued by the Great Spirit. These Indians even invited him to sit in on their councils. Johnny also did what he could to mediate disputes between the Indians and settlers living in their area. All in all, he was quite an amazing individual--a true ecological hero!

George Marsh (1801-1882)

A small-town lawyer, farmer, and lumber dealer who became Lincoln's ambassador to Italy, George Marsh saw clearly how, as he related in his 664-pg environmental classic *Man and Nature* (published in 1874 and reprinted in 1882 as *The Earth Modified by Human Action*), "the ravages committed by man subvert the relations and destroy the balance which nature had established." He discerningly noted that "the earth is fast becoming an unfit home for its noblest inhabitant and another era of equal human crime and human improvidence...would reduce it to such a condition of impoverished productiveness, of shattered surface, of climactic excess, as to threaten the deprivation, barbarism, and perhaps even extinction of the species."



He also poignantly observed: "Man is everywhere a disturbing agent. Wherever he plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discords."

The solution? Marsh insightfully urged that man needs "to become a co-worker with nature in the reconstruction of the damaged fabric which the negligence or the wantonness of former lodgers had rendered untenable." He stressed the need for *education, enlightenment, and federal legislation* to accomplish these goals. Within 20 years of his death, that last hope of his would become a reality.....



Teddy Roosevelt (1858-1919)

Spurred by a deep friendship with naturalists like Muir and Burroughs and in reflection of joyful years spent in the wilderness as a youth, Teddy Roosevelt, as President during the early 1900s, made it his determination to powerfully bolster the then namby-pamby National Park System by incorporating *enormous* tracts of wild lands. Among the additions made under his presidential term was the Superior National Forest, gracing MWSHS' home state of Minnesota--some 1.4 million acres in size! Roosevelt also established over 50 bird sanctuaries and game preserves, spread out over a dozen different states. All of this, he did with urgency in order to thwart those whom he appropriately called "the despoilers of the earth for their private gain." He was really the first to wholeheartedly use legislation to conserve wild lands, even coining the term "conservation."

One marvels at the insight shown by these men--so far ahead of their time with reference to society's consciousness and ethics! But why aren't schoolchildren of today taught about the above-outlined exploits of Roosevelt? Why isn't a name like George Marsh a household one? And why is Johnny Appleseed painted as a kind of kook in school history books? It truly gives one pause to wonder.

Juliette de Bairaclı Levy: In Memoriam

by Matthew Alfs

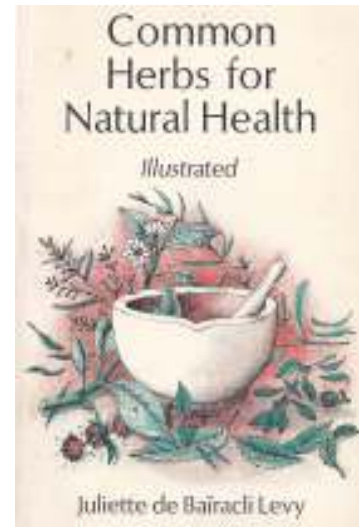
(Reprinted from the Winter 2009-10 Issue of the *MWSHS Student Newsletter*, by Popular Demand.)

For many years, the various books I've owned by herbalist Juliette de Bairaclı Levy have proven to be a source of much valuable information for me. I've also treasured the beautiful documentary of her life and teachings, entitled *Juliette of the Herbs*, that was produced in 1999 and released as a VHS edition in 2001. Since acquiring this video, I have many times viewed it before retiring at night, on which occasions I've found it to be so very soulful and enriching as I watched Juliette reveling in her love of nature on the lonely Greek island of Kythera, where she lived for some time.

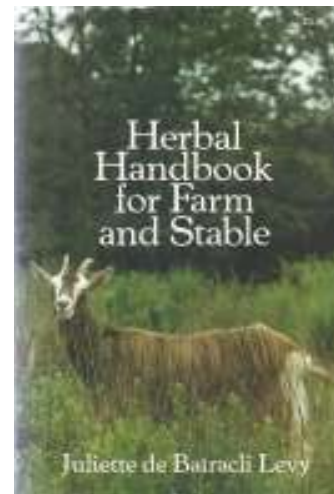


It is with great sadness, then, that I must report that, since the last issue of the *MWSHS Student Newsletter* was published, Juliette passed away, at the age of 96.

Her life story, however, is a testament to both her indomitable spirit and her love for all of earth's children. Born in Manchester, England on November 11, 1912 of Turkish parents, she found herself enraptured with nature at a very early age. Owing to her love of animals, she went on to study veterinary medicine at the universities of Manchester and Liverpool for a couple of years, but was frustrated by the evident lack of understanding of the psyche of animals at these venerated institutions of higher learning. Hence, in her early 20s, she began an odyssey in nature that found her successively dwelling in almost a dozen different countries, where she progressively learned how to use nature's medicine to truly heal mind, body, and spirit. Along the way, she lived for a length of time with Gypsies, to whom she gives the most credit for teaching her about the healing power of plants.



In her lifetime, Juliette wrote almost two dozen books, most of them about herbal medicine and esp. veterinary herbal medicine, although she also wrote books about the use of herbs for people. (The book pictured above, *Common Herbs for Natural Health*, was her chief book about herbal healing for people in general, while *Natural Rearing of Children* [published in the USA as *Nature's Children*] was her best-known book detailing herbal remedies for youngsters.)



The great value in Juliette's published works lies in the fact that the herbal gems found within their pages came directly from her own, rich life experience in managing the health of her family, pets, and clients (both human and animal) with herbs over a period of scores of years. Truly, Juliette *lived* what she preached, and earth's human and animal denizens have been *so* very blessed as a result!

New, Revised, Edition of *Edible & Medicinal Wild Plants of the Midwest* (by Matthew Alfs) to Be Released in Early Autumn!

MWSHS Director Matthew Alfs' book, *Edible & Medicinal Wild Plants of the Midwest*, which was originally published in 2001 and then revised in 2013, recently went out of print in anticipation for a third, revised edition to be published in early autumn of this year. This time, the book will be published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press (MHSP).

A much appreciated feature of this new edition will no doubt be the integration of the many color photos with the text, whereas before the photos were gathered together in an appendix and keyed to the text.

Please note that this third edition is already up on Amazon.com and Bn.com for pre-order. However, we will also have copies available here at MWSHS and so may your local bookstore—the latter of which no doubt would very much appreciate your business in this era when visits to bookstores are progressively decreasing and such are struggling to stay in business.

In fact, MHSP will be sponsoring a number of book signings by Matthew Alfs around the Twin Cities area, where you would have opportunity to receive a personally inscribed copy of what is sure to become a widely read and much appreciated work.



Matthew Alfs Examining a Wild-Plant on an MWSHS-sponsored Wild-Plant Walk

Book Reviews

The Inspiring Works of Tom Brown, Jr!

Tom Brown, Jr. Is a Longtime Nature Teacher Who Operates a Wilderness-skills School in New Jersey. The Two Books of His That I Review Below Were Authored 27-35 Years Ago, but Are Still in Print and *Just As Relevant Now As When They Were First Published*. Get these books and read them—you'll always be glad you did! – Matthew Alfs

Grandfather, by Tom Brown, Jr. New York Berkley Books, 1993, 202pp., softcover.

Tom Brown, Jr. burst upon the scene in 1978 with his first book, *The Tracker*. That groundbreaking work related how he had acquired powerful skills in tracking and other survivalist techniques from a Lipan Apache elder and how he had wound up utilizing those skills to help others.

A number of books and thirteen years later came this thrilling read on the life of Tom's mentor: Stalking Wolf—leader, teacher, wild-foods expert, and medicine-man from a tribe that had remained in the wilderness when other tribes in the area wound up on reservations.

Assuredly, this fast-moving chronicle of a wise healer's life will bring a new song to your heart. It is one of those rare classics that you will dearly treasure and want to read over and over again (even as have I)!

Tom Brown Jr's Guide To Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants. Tom Brown, Jr. New York: Berkley Books: 1985. 241pp., softcover, index.

This is Brown's classic work on wild plants, detailing both edible and medicinal uses for them. The bulk of the book consists of monographs for 44 different species. Included here are little-known or seldom-used plants such as bunchberry, greenbrier, milkweed, & mulberry.

These monographs not only detail what Brown learned from his mentor, Stalking Wolf, about these plants, but how he has used them since that wise Apache elder passed. Aside from being highly instructive, they are easy and highly enjoyable to read.

The book's introductory material is philosophical and spiritual in nature, helping the reader to appreciate the ideal relationship that should exist between man and nature. It is actually my favorite part of the book, despite my great appreciation for the truly wonderful monographs.

Exercise for A Long and Healthy Life!

by Matthew Alfs

Those of us over fort-five years old no doubt remember the long-running television exercise show starring Jack La Lanne (1914-2011). Dressed in black leotards, La Lanne lead countless throngs of folks at home in daily calisthenics and stretches—for some thirty-four years (from 1951-85)! I have fond memories of watching La Lanne's show at my grandma's house, but I especially became a fan of his when I learned of his life-long devotion to *strength* training, a longtime interest of my own. At age 40, for instance, La Lanne did a staggering 1,033 push-ups in 23 minutes, on national TV! At age 70, when most folks are content to pass their time in the nearest easy chair, he swam across Long Beach Harbor towing two large boats by a neck collar... *handcuffed!*

In his early 90s, I watched Jack crank out a series of chin-ups on yet another TV show. Now, students, *imagine being as fit as was Jack La Lanne in your eighth or ninth decade of life!*

However, such a state of health can be more than mere imagining. How so? Well, much of Jack's sage philosophy on health can be found in his book, *The Jack La Lanne Way to Vibrant Good Health*, which is one of many treasures in my several-thousand-volume home library. In this book—and in the many interviews with him I've watched or read—Jack attributed his health to four chief factors: Vigorous exercise, a whole-foods diet, a lifetime of not smoking, and plenty of clean living!

Now, none of those things are beyond most of us. But, having detailed the many benefits of a whole-foods diet in a previous issue of this newsletter and in your herbal-studies program, I would like to focus now on the incomparable benefits of exercise. Let me begin by presenting a round-up of research testifying to what Jack La Lanne already demonstrated by his life-long devotion to physical fitness....

The Life-extending Benefits of Exercise

- ◆ A study at the Harvard School for Public Safety (Sesso et al, 1999 *Am J Epidemiol* Aug 15; 150[4]:408-16) showed that middle-aged women (mean age of 45.5 yrs), free of heart disease, who walked ten or more blocks a day cut their risk of getting heart disease by a whopping 33% over women who walked less than four blocks a day!
- ◆ In a related Harvard School of Public Health study (Tanasescu, 2002 *JAMA* Oct 23-30;288(16):1994-2000), men who walked briskly for 30 minutes daily were 18% less prone to experience heart disease than controls. The same study showed that men who lifted weights for thirty minutes or more weekly had a 23% lower risk of heart disease than those who did

not do so. (This may at least partly be so because weight-lifting has been shown to raise HDL, the so-called “good” cholesterol associated with heart health—Ullrich, 1987 *South Med J* Mar;80[3]:328-31)

- ◆ Yet another study (Wueve et al 2004 *JAMA* 292[12]: 1454-61) showed that regular, long-term physical activity, inclusive of walking, enhances cognitive function and reduces decline in older women.
- ◆ An excess of 100 published studies have demonstrated an *antidepressant* effect for exercise! (This is at least partly attributable to the endorphins released by such activity) One of the studies (Partonen et al, 1998 *Psychol Med* 28[6]:1369-64) powerfully demonstrated that exercise in full-spectrum lights improved mood in even *chronic* cases of depression, as well as increased *vitality*.



While these studies highlight just a few of the many benefits of regular, vigorous exercise, research and experience also show that “sloughing off” into a sedentary lifestyle *counters* the good effects accrued from exercise, and that in a *very pronounced* and *rapid* way, even as astronauts can testify: After a mere month in space, they typically lose a staggering 33% of their *muscular strength* and the earthly equivalent of over *four years of bone!* In fact, over *half* the good results of six months of muscle building from weight lifting can be lost in just *three months* of inactivity! Or as Bob Hoffman, one of the pioneers of weight-lifting in twentieth-century America, used to say: “Muscles don’t wear out—they *rust* out!”

So, then, let's always bear in mind, *and exemplify* in *our own lives*, the benefits of vigorous exercise. But, we must also remember that, even as is true of our herbal studies, *willpower* and *routine* are crucial to maintaining progress and its many benefits. Milo of Croton, the legendary founder of weight-lifting, put both of these principles into play by initially lifting a newborn calf above his head and then continuing to lift it, *each and every day*, until it was a *full-grown cow!* This *methodic devotion* to his newfound sport made him the strongest man of the ancient world, proving that *diligence* pays off—in spades!

