

Interview with David Winston

For Nature's Path - The Quarterly Journal of The Association of Master Herbalists

By Gina Carrington & Kelly Holden

During our trip to the American Herbalists Guild Symposium in November 2005, we were fortunate enough to interview the well-renowned Herbalist David Winston over lunch. David is part Cherokee and is trained in the Cherokee, Chinese and Western/Eclectic Herbal Traditions. He has over 35 years of experience as a Practitioner, Researcher and Educator. He is author of "Saw Palmetto for Men and Women" and is co-author of "Herbal Therapies & Supplements - A Scientific & Traditional Approach." David serves as a traditional ceremonial leader (didahnewisgi) for his community.

NP: Do you teach in the Cherokee tradition?

DW: I teach all over the US, the UK, Europe and Canada. What I teach is a combination of three traditions. I'm trained in Cherokee, Chinese and Western Eclectic medicine. I might teach a class on Eclectic medicine, or on Cherokee medicine, or TCM. In clinical practice once you understand a medical tradition and the energetics of the plants, you can use western plants for a TCM diagnosis or Ayurvedic plants for a Western diagnosis even if they're not traditionally used that way. My school, David Winston's Center for Herbal Studies is a two year program and it's in its 25th year. In the school I teach an introduction to Chinese medicine, Cherokee medicine and Eclectic medicine. Over the two years, we cover 300 plants in great depth, their energetics, taste, constituents, primary clinical uses, secondary uses, herb-drug interactions, preparations, dosage, traditional use and relevant clinical studies.

NP: 300, wow!

DW: 300, yes I think that's a beginning herbalist level.

NP: Are they all North American herbs?

DW: No, Chinese, North American, European, African, South American - the plants that I use, and that are available, as opposed to obscure herbs that people aren't going to be able to access. We also teach a module in beginning on phyto-chemistry, introductory plant pharmacy and field botany and we do a lot of diagnostics, including Chinese tongue diagnosis, an introduction to pulse diagnosis, facial analysis, Western physical diagnosis, clinical skills and a great deal of case work; so that's pretty much what we do over the two years. And then every once in a while, I offer a 3rd year program, which is all clinical skills. Just for people who are trying to make that transition into an actual clinician. That is what our program is about and I think it's a very good program. At least 6 or 8 of my students are here at the conference, and they are excellent clinical herbalists, I guess the proof is in knowing that you've trained people, and that they've turned out to be really good clinicians.

NP: So do you have other teachers with you as well or do you teach the whole course?

DW: I teach most of the program. I have somebody come in who does the phyto-chemistry module and Herbal Pharmacy. I usually have a couple of guest lecturers per year - if Christopher Hobbs is in town, he'll come teach.

When Christopher Hedley was in the States a few years ago he taught a wonderful class. Alan Tillotson a superb Ayurvedic practitioner teaches an introduction to Ayurveda. I teach 80% of the classes and am always looking for other good teachers to share the load.

NP: So have you always been interested in herbs and herbal medicine? Was it always a tradition in your family like Christopher's?

DW: No, I ... this is going to sound a little bit strange... I was born visually impaired, and slightly brain damaged, and did not fit into the dominant culture. I'm Cherokee but I grew up in the dominant culture, in American society. I started having visions when I was three years old; I didn't know it was unusual, I just assumed everybody did this. Eventually I figured out it was unusual and I started talking to plants and they started talking back to me.

One of my major visions happened when I was about 11, and that's the one when I really developed this keen relationship with the plants, and at that point started trying to read everything I could, and of course there weren't many good herb books at that time, so I read many poor quality books. I taught myself field botany. I'd go out and identify plants, and I'd bring them home, and take them in large quantities to see what they did. I made myself sick innumerable times; Senna was an interesting experience!

And when I was a teenager, I started spending my summers in North Carolina with my relatives, who lived on the reservation (Qualla Boundary). One of my uncles, and then one of my aunts and her aunt were my primary teachers, so I started learning Cherokee medicine as a teenager. I started leading herb walks when I was 16 years old and giving people herbs when I was 17 or 18.

Then in the mid 1970s I moved to New York City, and lived there for some years, and apprenticed with a Chinese doctor. In 1976 I studied with William Le Sassier, a truly great American Herbalist. I also attended university taking classes in Anatomy, Physiology, Cellular Biology, Pharmacognosy, Pathology, etc. I started my practice in 1976/77 and maintained a clinical practice for over 20 years. I'm 50 now, so it's been quite a while, but I'm still relatively young for what I've done and it's been my passion for 38 years. I never thought, someday I'd be a well known herbalist who actually made a living doing this!

"Back in the late 1960s", I'd tell my students "When I first started this, all my friends were interested in just one herb, and I was interested in all the other ones!" It was something I just loved to do. I find myself in the somewhat unusual position of being an herbal elder in the United States, because there isn't a generation older than us practicing as herbalists; Doctor Christopher was the generation before us. I took classes from him as did most of my generation. But really there was no one else in that time frame who was nationally known. There were other herbalists (Evelyn Snook, Norma Myers, Tommie Bass, Catfish Grey) but they were mostly known in their local regions, and not beyond that; Dr. Christopher was the only person out really publicly doing what he was doing, and so I have great respect for him for keeping herbal medicine alive, at its lowest point in the United States. Thirty eight years later I am in the fortunate position of having learned three different systems of herbal medicine.

Each is unique; each one has similarities, and in a sense it's like having 3 separate boxes of tools - if you need a saw, you don't want to use pliers, and if you need pliers, you don't want to use a hammer, so having various sets of tools really gives you the ability to see things that would not fit into another paradigm and fit the treatment to the patient in a very specific way.

So if a man comes to me, and he is complaining of chronic low back pain, he is always twisting his ankles, his wife complains that he has premature ejaculation, from the Western perspective those are multiple things that have nothing in common; but from a Chinese perspective, they're all signs of deficient kidney yang, so it's very clear how you treat that. Now I can treat it using Western herbs or Chinese herbs or anything else, because I understand the energetics of all of them, I understand the pattern.

Somebody comes to me, and they're dealing with something that makes sense to me from a Cherokee perspective, that's how I treat them. If somebody comes, and they have congestive heart failure, I'd probably treat them from more of a Western perspective. So I have multiple ways of seeing things, and while they all overlap, they also each have insights that the other systems never achieved. This is because each culture has its own view of the world, there is not a right way, there're just multiple ways of perceiving and knowing things. I really believe dogma is unhealthy. Nobody can say they have the best way of practicing. If they do, I would think they are arrogant and are very misinformed; one technique may work better in a given situation, but the reality is that there are many ways of practicing herbal medicine and they all work; one may work better for this person, or in this specific situation, but they all work.

Yesterday, when they asked us to introduce ourselves and say what our favourite herb was, what do they mean our favourite herb? There are so many wonderful herbs; if you're asking what's my favourite herb as a cardiac restorative? Hawthorn - no doubt about it. But I have at least 5 or 6 herbs that I like to use frequently for the heart, Selenocereus. Dan Shen, Convallaria, Astragalus, Dang Gui, Motherwort, Tienqi, etc. And if you ask me what's my favourite restorative remedy for the nervous system, I would say Avena - fresh milky Oat but I also really like St. John's Wort, Scutellaria, Tilea, Bacopa, Mimosa Bark and Chamomile. It is really hard for me to narrow down my favourite herbs, because I probably use somewhere between 500 and 700 plants on a relatively routine basis and each one I see as having a personality, each one is unique, and so I don't look at a plant and think, 'we need a nervine here.' Well I might decide I need a nervine, but I'm looking at which nervine is most appropriate for this person, with their energetics, with their specific symptom picture, so when somebody is so stressed out (the American term is fried) they're so fried that they're crispy, they've become emotionally labile, any little thing triggers them. That specific symptom picture is for Avena, fresh Oat; nothing will work better than that. On the other hand you get somebody, when they get anxious, they start having nervous tics, and spasms, then you want to think about Scutellaria, because that's indicated for that symptom picture. If you have somebody who's so emotionally distressed that they start crying at the drop of a hat, then you're looking at Pulsatilla, and each herb has specific qualities to it that indicate that that's really the one for that person at this moment. It might change later on. Later on they might use something different, but now, and under these circumstances, that's the herb that you really want to use. And so I really enjoy learning about what I perceive as the personality of each plant, and how to really use it with specificity for each person.

Let's talk about depression for a minute, there are a lot of different causes for depression; any good herbalist in my mind doesn't treat depression, they treat a person who's depressed, and there's a big difference. So if you have somebody who has GI related depression - as you probably know, most of your Serotonin's manufactured in your gut - probably the best herb I know is Evening Primrose, not the oil, the herb. So Evening Primrose, the flower, the leaf, the root bark, is very effective for GI related depression. In addition, Culver's Root - what the eclectics used to call Leptandra - is very useful for GI related depression, as well as Hypericum. All three are useful, although the Oenothera is probably the best of the lot, but they also work well together. If you have somebody who has what I call stagnant depression (a type of depression where a traumatic event occurred, a year, 5 years or 10 years ago and you're still emotionally there, unable to move on in your life) - Rosemary, Lavender, Holy Basil and Damiana are of great use. Damiana has an even more specific effect; it's for someone who sort of has stagnant depression, where the main symptom is actually loss of libido. It's not an aphrodisiac, but it's useful for depression where loss of libido happens to be a major symptom. So with depression (and just about any other condition), the more you can differentiate it and treat it based on the specifics of the symptom picture, the more successful you're going to be.

NP: And in diagnostic, when somebody walks in through your door, do you use the diagnostic things, tied in with the medicine that you're going to use, or is it very largely intuitive, or a mixture?

DW: When a person walks in, I often have an impression right off the bat of what's going on, and I note it and put it aside, and then I do all the diagnostics. I look at whatever they brought; their blood work, tongue diagnosis, pulses, facial diagnosis, German iris diagnosis and Western physical diagnosis. Then I look at what I've found and at my intuition, and they're often the same, but not always. I'm sometimes wrong; nobody's right all the time, so I use both, but I think you want to use objective measurements as well as subjective and I trust intuition the most, when it comes out of long experience. I have a real problem with people who are intuitive but have no experience - somebody who is just starting to learn herbal medicine, and they're trying to be intuitive. Unlike somebody who's been doing it for thirty years, and wants to use their intuition. I have a lot of respect for that but I still think you want to use your objective measurements in addition. That way, if for some reason you're just not in a clear space that day and you're wrong, you say, 'oh gee, none of this matches up, so maybe I'm just not correct in this situation.'

As I was saying before, I have an issue with people who get dogmatic about things; there's no diet that works for everybody, there's no religion that works for everybody; there's no practice of herbalism that's the right one for everybody. I think that you really have to look at the uniqueness of each person, and so for one person a vegetarian diet may make them very healthy, for another person it may make them very sick. One person may find Christianity to be absolutely perfect, and for them it is, another person might turn to Buddhism. I happen to be Cherokee, that's what works for me. We believe that in Cherokee medicine, being dogmatic is a disease. We think that hardening of the mind is worse than hardening of the arteries.

NP: Do you journey with the plants some days?

DW: No not like that. We have a whole technique of communicating with plants called the language of plants, and almost all indigenous cultures have one. It involves a physical language which deals with colour, odour, taste, where it grows, how it grows; and it deals with understanding the personality of the plant. It also deals with intuition, and we use them altogether. The whole concept of journeying is foreign to us, we talk with plants and plants tell us things, but the whole kind of journeying thing, that's really based on Michael Harner's work, and I'm not saying it's right or wrong, it's just not part of native North American tradition. But we talk to plants all the time.

I use many plants that nobody else uses, or plants that people use, but not in the way I do. Now some things I have learned from reading the eclectic/physiomedical literature, as well as worldwide ethnobotanical studies. There are times I'll be reading and I'll go, 'Oh wow, that's some interesting piece of information, I'll have to try that and see if it works', but a lot of the best things I've "discovered" the plant told me.

About 12 or 13 years ago I had a patient with degenerative kidney disease, who had about 16% kidney function. Within 6 months she'd be on dialysis. It's in August, I'm sitting out by my barn near a big Nettles patch and I'm thinking about this person, thinking, 'this is a shame, because once you're on dialysis you're life gets pretty miserable.' And all of a sudden the Nettle plant starts moving. Now in our tradition, when a plant starts shaking, it's a sign that the plant's trying to communicate with you, but first of course, I'm looking at it thinking, 'is there a bird in there?' And I'm looking around - nothing else is moving, so it's not the wind, there's no bird, there's no squirrel; so I'm looking over at the plant, and the plant says to me, 'I can help that lady'. I know Nettles very well and I said 'I've already tried using Nettle leaf, and it wasn't helpful', and the plant says 'No not my leaf, my seeds'. Now I've never heard of using Nettle seeds anywhere. I'd never read about it, I've never heard of the use of Nettle seed, and I thought, 'Well, I know the seeds aren't poisonous, I have nothing to lose, and really this lady has nothing to lose'. So I gathered some of the Nettle seed, made a tincture out of it, and gave it to her.

Within two weeks, her kidney function starts improving, and her creatine excretion starts improving, and I thought "this is really interesting", because what I used to be able to do, using Chinese medicine, I could plateau people; I could get somebody at 18% and keep them there for a while, maybe a year, 18 months, and then they'd start losing function again, but that was the best that you'd see.

Well, after 6 months she's up to 28% kidney function. That doesn't happen, so I thought, 'This is incredible'. But the problem was, at that point, I didn't know whether what happened was actually just for her or whether it would have a more universal effect. So six months after that, an Indian woman called me up saying she's basically dying of kidney failure. Was there anything I could do? I said, 'Well, I had this herb that worked for someone else, do you want to try it', and she says, 'sure'. So I give it to her and it works for her too. After about 5 or 6 years I had 30 case histories; 28 out of 30 respond, which is vastly better than anything I could have expected. So this is a case where I learnt about it from the plant, and at this point I've been teaching about it for 10 years; other herbalists are using it, (Christopher Hobbs said he got someone off dialysis using it) and the results are phenomenal. I didn't discover it, the plant told me, so is that journeying? No it's communicating with the plant, and the plant telling me how it can be used for medicine.

We have a story; it's a very long story. In the beginning of the world we lost our harmony and balance with the rest of the world. We'd go to plants and we wouldn't ask permission. We'd just take them and we'd kill them all, and we'd kill insects and animals. We weren't following the rules that were set up for how we're supposed to behave. So the insects decided that they were going to take revenge on us; they created disease and it killed most of the people in the world. All people got sick and most died, but a few people were strong enough, even though they got sick they survived and started to recover, and the insects realised that if they gave us time we'd reproduce almost as fast as they did and that we'd be back doing the same things again, and so they went to the green people and asked them to help the insects wipe us off the face of the earth. The green people prayed about it, but they disagreed with the insects. They decided that if we came to them in a sacred manner, they'd give us the cure for every disease those insect people made. We believe this is a true story, and that's why when we go to those plants we know that they can tell us things, and they can give us the cure for things, anything. We may not know it yet, but they do.

NP: You mentioned very early on that you were born visually impaired and brain damaged. What happened there, because you're obviously not now?

DW: I had 3 surgeries on my eyes by the time I was 5, and the brain damage luckily was mild, but as a kid, I had all sorts of learning difficulties and I don't read like anybody I've ever met; I don't read by looking at the letters, I memorise the shapes of words. I'm dyslexic and when I was a kid my parents had to get me a special tutor because I could not learn to read. Back in the early 1960s in the US there was little or no special education or knowledge of learning problems.

NP: But sometimes, when people have something like that, it gives them extra strength in another way.

DW: We believe that when the spirit takes something, it gives something of greater value. We believe that someone who's born with those kind of visual defects, that they can see into the spiritual world. Somebody who's born with hearing defects can hear in the spirit world. I'm also partially deaf, so there was compensation; I can also do things that most people can't do.

NP: You often find that people who are born with some kind of disability become very extraordinary people.

DW: Often - if they haven't been so damaged by their family and community, and accepted the belief that they're somehow inferior.

NP: Being here, we feel a huge great power that herbalism is really alive and well in the United States, but what is the situation, from a legal point of view?

DW: Well, over the last 15 years, certain herbs have become popular here, but herbal medicine has not, most people don't know what herbal medicine is, they think herbal medicine is St. John's Wort for depression, or Echinacea for a cold, which is not really how I see herbal medicine at all. Also over the last 5 years, there's been a tremendous backlash. Herbs became very popular during the early 1990s, but since 1998, there's been constant negative publicity in the media, all of it based on seeds of truth, but still mostly untrue.

So it's scared a lot of people who were starting to think using herbs might be a safe alternative to the multitude of pharmaceutical drugs prescribed in the U.S. As for herbal practitioners we have no real legal standing. Mostly we fall in to a legal limbo, we cannot legally diagnose or prescribe herbs; that falls into the legal definition of practicing medicine. Yet we can educate clients (patients) on how to use herbs to enhance health and wellness. The reality is most herbalists in the US do some of both and as long as you know your limitations and respect medical boundaries there is little in the way of legal persecution. The fact that it could occur and that we have no legal standing has kept much of the American herbal movement out of the mainstream of American life and medical practice.

So the state of herbal medicine is interesting because as herbalists, in one way, we have succeeded more than we ever thought possible. Many herbs became wildly popular, but we haven't educated people as to what real herbal medicine is. What herb's good for arthritis? There is no herb that's good for all arthritis, but there are lots of herbs that are good for a person who has arthritis. So we still have a lot of work to do, to change society's perception and make a place at the table for herbalists.

NP: What about health insurance, does that cover things like alternative medicine and herbal medicine?

DW: Some aspects of alternative medicine are covered by some health insurance companies, acupuncture, chiropractic, sometimes massage, but not Western herbal practice or herbal products.

NP: What is the State of Herbal Medicine in the US?

DW: The herbal medicine community, as I said, mostly comes out of the counter culture movement of the late 1960s. All the elders of the American herbal movement, we're mostly a bunch of aging hippies! We did this because it was our passion, not because it was a career path. There was no career. We in a sense created ourselves, we had virtually no model to follow.

So it's the most amazing, eclectic group of people, very talented, musicians, artists, poets and herbalists. There is a strong sense among most of us in this group of, first of all, a respect for the earth, a belief in the sacredness of plants, and seeing healing people, animals and the earth as an avocation as well as vocation. These beliefs have infused the herbal movement here, since its reawakening, and so what you have here is a very small but growing community and most of the people today are really following the lead of what we created and set forth, which is a vibrant vitalist tradition of herbal medicine.

I remember when we first started in '89 (our first conference was in 1990). And in the first conference we had a whole contingent of people come from Australia and from the UK, and they were astounded at the energy of the conference; they'd never seen anything like this. And so herbal medicine in that sense is alive and well, but we have a lot of work to do, we need to spend the next 15, 20, 30 years educating people as to what herbal medicine truly is, and how it can be a part of their lives.

NP: Thank you so very much.

DW: I hope I have answered all of your questions, if your readers would like more information my website is herbaltherapeutics.net. It has many downloadable Eclectic/physiomedical/botanic texts from my library as well as information on my lectures, books, antiquarian books (for sale) and companies. I also have a website for my school herbalstudies.org, and I have a herb company called Herbalist & Alchemist, Inc. which is a quality manufacturer of herbal products.

NP: Does that have a separate website too?

DW: www.herbalist-chemist.com.

NP: How do you see Herbalists and herbs in the modern world?

DW: I'm one of the founding members of the American Herbalists Guild, and one of the things that the Guild has always stood for, is that we believe the diversity in herbal medicine is essential. We don't want everybody to be Western herbalists, or Ayurvedic herbalists, or Chinese herbalists or Wise-Woman herbalists. Our focus is to support and help people to be the best herbalists they can be, whatever tradition they practice. I believe that not only is herbal medicine the oldest medicine in the world, but it's everybody's birthright, and I feel that everybody should know something about herbs to be able to use them for themselves and their family. That doesn't mean that everybody has to become a clinical herbalist, but I think that what we really want to do is reclaim the power of plants in our lives, that everyone knows common edible plants, and everybody knows certain simple medicinals they can use.

And then you have community based herbalists who have another level of training, who you can go to, and say 'I have a headache', and they can give you something that, maybe you need a little bit more knowledge for than the average mum or dad might have, and I think that's a very important level of herbal practice.

And then we should also have clinical herbalists, who, when you're treating diseases that are much more significant - cancer, auto-immune diseases, acute asthma - have a higher level of training. I think they're all essential, and that's one of the reasons why, at the Guild, we don't believe in licensure, because we don't believe anybody should have a specific mandate, or a monopoly on what is basically the people's medicine; and I think it's important, as an herbalist, you know your limitations. You need to know what you know, and what you don't know, and when you get to a point that you feel is beyond your expertise, you call somebody else, somebody who knows how to deal with that condition.

So we need to develop good relationships with other professions. We all have skills that can complement each other and it's not about 'we're better, they're better'. We all have things we do better than other modalities, just like each company has things they probably make a little bit better. So I really see this as something that should be about co-operation, should be about not only helping to heal individuals, but helping to heal the planet.

You've all seen the diagram that's used to describe holistic medicine; you have three circles, body mind and spirit. From a Cherokee perspective, that is so woefully inadequate, it's not even a good starting point, and that, from a dominant culture perspective, is still considered radical.

With orthodox medicine, they're very good at surgical and emergency treatment of the physical body. If you have bacterial meningitis, you want to be in the hospital with IV antibiotics. If someone's in an auto accident and something's hanging off, you want the best micro-surgeon you can find. Orthodox medicine is not so good treating chronic disease. The mind - they're still uncomfortable with psychiatric disease. When you're told you have a psycho-somatic condition, it is seen as a character flaw, "it's not real".

From a Cherokee perspective the whole idea of body, mind, and spirit within the individual is certainly important, but there's a whole other circle around those three circles, and that circle's called family. So if you're part of a family that's unhealthy, you're going to be unhealthy, and around that circle's another circle called community. Human beings are by nature tribal, we need other people in a way that goes beyond what most people have in their lives, and if you have a dysfunctional community, you're probably not going to be healthy as well. And then around that is another circle we don't draw, because it has no beginning and no end. We call that *unehlanvhi*. You call it god, or spirit, and so to us, being holistic or being whole is not only about the relation inside yourself of body, mind, and spirit, but it's about your relationship back to your family, whether it's the people you were born to, or the people you create as a family. It's about your relationship to community; it's about your relationship with earth; it's about your relationship with spirit. Cherokee medicine is really like a societal medicine, and so for me, what I like to see is more of that mindset come into the practice of Western medicine. Alleviating disease and making people feel better is good and important. I think that's great, but if I'm going to help you to feel better so you can go back to your work, drilling for oil in places where oil shouldn't be drilled, is that really a good idea?

NP: Do you ever tell people to change their job, or to move away, or even to come out of a relationship?

DW: As an herbalist, you're limited as to what you can do, because people don't come to most herbalists wanting emotional/spiritual counselling, but I don't practice as an herbalist any more. I'm a Cherokee "Indian doctor". So therefore somebody can come to me, and under those circumstances their expectation is very different. I can and do say anything that I believe is necessary to help them. So when somebody comes to me, and they're in a bad relationship or a horrible job, I can say, 'well I can help heal your gastric ulcer, but if we get rid of it something else is going to happen, because your job is your problem, or your relationship is your problem, the fact that you hate yourself is your problem or that you haven't found your purpose in life is the problem'. The reality is, that there are people in the world, who are deadly to the earth, and as a medicine priest my responsibility is not to the people, it's to the earth. I'm here to be a care-taker, so I have to look at that picture first and see if it serves the great life, and if it does, great, and if it doesn't, then I say, 'I don't think I can help'.

But to me, herbal medicine is a part of this, and David's (Hoffmann) talk last night, if you heard it, was wonderful, because he came not from the perspective of a medicine priest, he came from the perspective of an herbalist; but what he said was remarkably close to what I believe, and what I already do. And it's nice because if I was saying that, people say, 'yeah, he's Cherokee, and he does this' so that's fine, but I don't know how to integrate that into a Western perspective, or a dominant culture perspective, and David did a wonderful job of not only explaining it, but also of planting seeds in people, and saying 'I can be conscious, I can be responsible; I have a choice as to what I do.'

And in many ways I agree with him. We've created tremendous destruction on the planet, and in ways we don't even recognise. Our technology's not going to get us out of this. So we have a choice. We either remake ourselves, becoming human, and by doing so change the world around us, or we just keep going, and at some point, things will get extremely bad. I saw a bumper sticker one time -the best bumper sticker I've ever seen in my life; it said 'dead planets are bad for business'. This is the only home we have; we're not going to live on the Moon, or on Mars, or Venus; this is our only home, so we have to treat it with respect. We have to treat the plants with respect.

I'm one of the advisors to an organisation called 'United Plant Savers', which Rosemary Gladstar envisioned and founded. It's basically to save the plants, and it's not about saving them so we can use them, it's about saving them because they are. And that mindset of saying 'these plants are valuable just because they're living beings, let alone that they serve us and give us food and medicine and everything else', that kind of mindset I think needs to be reintegrated within religion and within politics. Will it happen, I don't know?

NP: I think we'll destroy ourselves, before we destroy the planet.

DW: We won't destroy the planet, but we can take a big chunk of life as we know it with us. I think herbalists can be one of the groups of people who are the connection between the earth and the plants; and work not just individual health, but for community and societal health. LET'S GET TO WORK.

NP: Thank you so much.