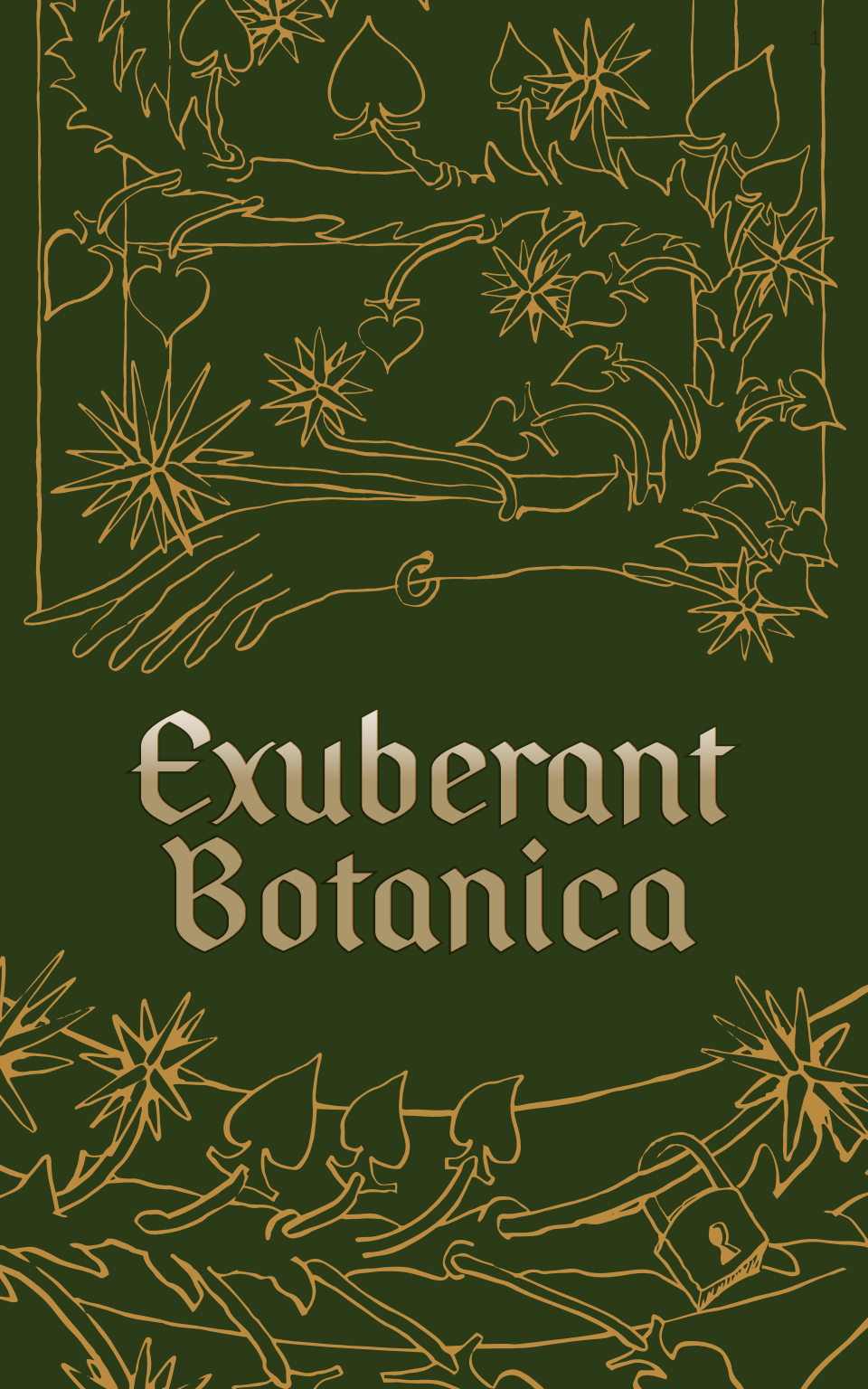

Exuberant
Botanica

Part II:
Exuberant Botanica



Aaron McIntosh

This project's creation unfolds in Tio'tia:ké, unceded territory now called Montréal, which was and remains a gathering place of many Indigenous peoples. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation are recognized as custodians of these lands and waters. To learn more about on whose lands you might a guest, visit ***native-land.ca***

Hot House / Maison Chaude *is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Concordia University, and the Oak Spring Garden Foundation.*

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada
Canada

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hot house maison chaude

is both a series of related artworks, as well as a structural and theoretical container for them. The project references the greenhouse, or "hot houses" of the 19th century, projecting "world-building" potential into a structural form built to simultaneously protect and nourish growth of rare species. ***Hot House*** is of course also a reference to the climate crisis we grow closer to everyday. We must figure out more imaginative, sustainable and reparative ways to live better with our non-human companions.

Informed by the Biosphere and Jardin Botanique here in Montréal, but queering the concept of cultivation and propagation, this ***Hot House*** is envisioned as a fertile space for initiating new queer dialogues. LGBTQIA2S+ archives and botanic libraries are two conservation communities that rarely intersect, but imagine the ferment that might percolate between those who tend to the peculiar natures of "hot house flowers." The project aims to travel to archives, botanic gardens, community centers and sites of queer nightlife, which continue to fertilize, cultivate and nurture queer communities.

Hot House/Maison Chaude interrogates how the natural world has been "built" in terms of knowledge production that centers heterosexual relations and reproduction. How might unjust legacies of biological determinism[1] be dismissed by looking at the queerness, sexual difference, gender variance and pleasure evident across the plant and animal worlds? How can we distort common understandings of the "natural" and articulate queerness using a spectrum of non-normative, non-reproductive sexual and gender capacities expressed in the plant world?

Recognizing the implications for queer "worldmaking" as it encounters the heteronormative, colonial imperatives of botany,[2] this project is informed by critical readings in ecofeminism, queer ecology and ethnobotany. For those of us from a settler background, it is time to acknowledge the deep relationships across the living world sustained by Indigenous and Indigiqueer knowledge, and ask tougher questions about who is centered in queer reclamations of nature spaces.

[1] The belief that human behaviour is directly controlled by an individual's genes or some component of their physiology, with no regard to the role of the environment. Biologic determinism is responsible for movements in science and society including eugenics, scientific racism, the basis of sexual orientation, and medical assignment of gender to intersex babies upon birth.

[2] See Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan's Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World, UPenn Press, 2007. Also, The Botany of Empire in the Long Eighteenth Century, edited by Yota Batsaki, Sarah Burke Cahalan & Anatole Tchikine, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2017.

hot house exists in three acts:

1 = creation of "queer compost," transformed and dispersed from personal LGBTQ2+ ephemera of contributors across North America

2 = cataloguing companion plants of the natural world that have intertwined histories with human sexual and gender evolutions, along with a series of botanic drawings and lithographic prints of speculative plant "herbals" for healing contemporary queer issues

3 = fabrication of a mobile greenhouse structure housing plants both speculative and real, being nourished by the "queer compost" from various contributors

The first act, ***qMatter***, has been a delightful success, with engagement from over 40 collaborators between Canada & the US. These participants were sent the first installment of this zine series, with an invitation to contribute an item of personal resonance that is of organic matter and could be added to a growing compost heap of queer connections. We received a wide variety of materials (such as t-shirts, torn up zine storyboards, hormone therapy packaging, cut hair, dried plants, shredded booty shorts, and sundry bits and pieces) and these have now been shredded and pulped into sheets of paper, that are then cut into assorted shapes or "traces" from LGBTQ2S+ archive sources, resembling dried leaves in a compost pile.

qMatter is ongoing, and if you are interested in participating, please send a message through the project Instagram account **@hothouse_maisonchaude** *and we can send you a compost starter packet.*



EXUBERANT BOTANICA

With this second act, ***Exuberant Botanica***, I am gathering knowledges of living plant forms that have co-evolved alongside human sexualities and gender-oriented medicine. Alongside this research, and with contributions from other queerfolk, we are responding with a series of fantastical, speculative plant forms that project specific nodes of queer "worlding" towards healing.

Exuberant Botanica toggles between past and present, knowledge and absurdity, all in the service of rekindling long-held human connections with plants and healing. The project also dawdles into a precarious uncertain future for queer people. By speculating on the kinds of herbs we might wish were readily at hand to combat xenophobia and queer violence, can we craft plant charms, talismans and folk remedies to get ahead of the depressive unraveling of many well-established basic human rights?

I invite you to join me in this speculative exercise. How would you design your own herb(s) for healing a specific contemporary LGBTQIA2S+ ailment?

The project takes its name partly from the work of biologist Bruce Bagemihl, whose ground-breaking text, *Biological Exuberance*, catalogued multitudes of animal kingdom instances of same-sex relations, from sexual pleasure to pair-bonding and parenting (Bagemihl 2000). Bagemihl scoured every scientific journal and paper he could lay his hands on for references to homosexuality, bisexuality and polyamory in animals. Tucked away at the end of long and erudite texts, or consigned to footnotes and appendices, he found that homosexuality had been observed in no fewer than 1,500 species, and well documented in 500 of them. He found the earliest mention of animal homosexuality around 2,300 years ago when Aristotle described two female hyenas cavorting with each other.

Notably, *Biological Exuberance* was cited by the American Psychiatric Association and other groups in their amicus brief to the United States Supreme Court in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the 2003 case which ultimately struck down all sodomy laws across the United States.

Eurocentric nature studies have tended to enforce a patriarchal, Christian and colonized worldview that centers biparental (male and female) reproductive capacity and genetic fitness, neglecting the vagaries of sexuality, desire, pleasure that are detached from procreative reproduction, as well as instances of hermaphroditism, self-fertilization and polyamory. These "natural" histories (and convenient omissions) have informed our social contexts for sexual and gender variation. Until the late 20th century, homosexuality, intersexuality and non-binary gender expressions were considered "unnatural" and either criminalized or institutionalized to bolster the "natural order" of humankind. Despite a long history of scientific observation of queer non-human behavior along the lines of Bagemihl's, the very fields of biology and medicine would be used to pathologize the queer body and codify homophobia.

Exuberant Botanica proposes that this paradigm be flipped to imagine queerness as differently informed by nature-based undercurrents, and in tandem with the sexual and gender-variant dynamisms already present in the plant world. Mining the field of ethnobotany, the project seeks out plant species that might have co-evolved alongside humans for the mutual benefit of expanding gender and sexualities. Further, the project speculates in queer futurity and invites collaborative ideation for imaginary plants or herbs that might provide remedy for contemporary ailments.

Hot House / Maison Chaude is an access point for LGBTQIA2S+ individuals to view themselves as integral to nature's non-linear web of interactions. By creating an index of actual and fictional queer plants, the project discursively critiques the inherent power of taxonomy: the hierarchal classification and categorization of species, but also of bodies. Referencing scientific educational models, these herbal plant inventions that participants contribute will be translated into exquisite botanical illustrations, three-dimensional botanic sculptures, and exhibited within a mobile greenhouse structure, all of which centers queer histories and futures in new dialogues within nature studies. The project skews the educational diorama, and blurs the contours of accepted scientific knowledge.

PLANT KINSHIP

Our connections to plants are profound, hardly accidental, and often exquisite examples of co-adaptation. As science writer Michael Pollan offers in his *Botany of Desire*, "the offspring of the ancient marriage of plants and people are far stranger and more marvelous than we realize."(Pollan xviii)

Plant evolution is much, much older than that of animals and humans; the plant genome includes a dramatic range up to 50x larger than the human genome. "While [humans] were nailing down consciousness and learning to walk on two feet, they were, by the same process of natural selection, inventing photosynthesis, and perfecting organic chemistry. As it turns out, many of the plants' discoveries in chemistry and physics have served us well. From plants come chemical compounds that nourish and heal and poison and delight the senses, others that rouse and put to sleep and intoxicate..."(Pollan xix). By producing these enticing chemicals, plants coevolved alongside humans, animals and insects primarily because they cannot move or defend

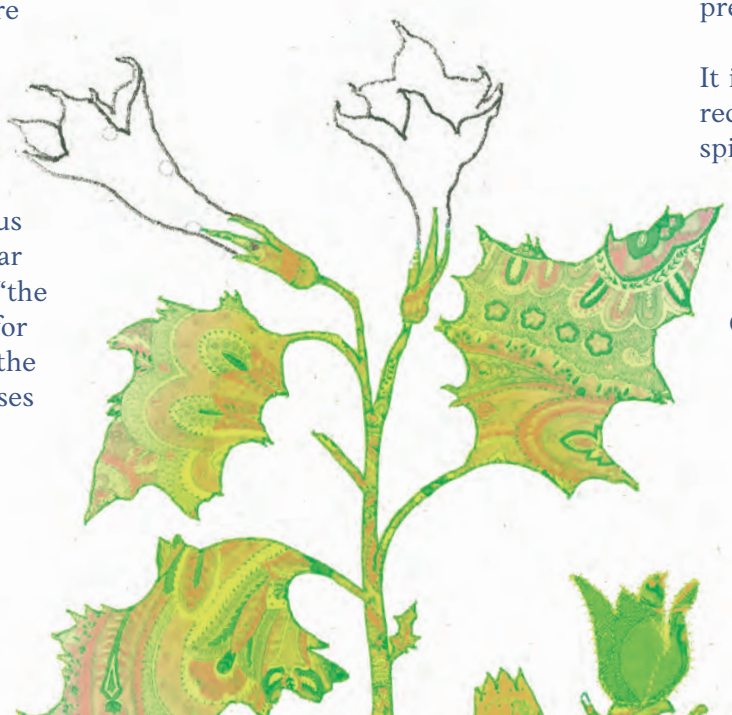
themselves, and need help in spreading their genetic material as far and wide as possible, using those of us who can locomote to disperse.

One of the ideas Donna Haraway has espoused in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* is that of innate and reciprocal plant intelligence. She offers that the "sublime aestheticization of plants leads us astray from their role as earth-making companion species. Plants are consummate communicators in a vast terrain array of modalities, making and exchanging meanings among and between an astonishing galaxy of associates across the taxa of living beings." (Haraway 122)

These ideas are supported by recent science fact, such as that in the work of Peter Wohlleben, a forester and botanist whose *Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, makes the case for highly sophisticated communication between trees' root networks. His research is supported by studies which demonstrate that plants have sensory communication via mycorrhizal networks with other plants of the same or different species. Mycorrhizal networks allow for the transfers of signals and cues between plants which influence the behavior of the connected plants by inducing morphological or physiological changes. The chemical substances which act as these signals and cues are referred to as infochemicals, and help trees exchange nutrients, and communicate between one another about weather changes or potential herbivore predation. (Wohlleben 2016)

Yet, our relationship to plants has been structured in Western traditions not as one of mutual admiration, but as one of hierarchical domination. Plants are primarily understood as being here to serve us and our needs; respect and reciprocity for all that plants offer humankind has been lost for most people.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, in her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, explains how our very language – at least European languages – has produced this estrangement to plants. In English, we only assign personhood to people, and our pronouns follow this principle accordingly; while people might be assigned a gender or honorific, plants, animals, rocks and other non-human beings are referred to as "it." English is obsessed with nouns and thus naming or classifying the world through this lens of passive identity. Nouns for most living things other than humans and pets are inanimate, undeserving of possessive pronouns much less their possibility as a verb form. Robin Wall Kimmerer tells of learning her native Potawatomi word for fungi, Puhpowee, which translates as "the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight....The makers of this word understood a world of being, full of unseen energies that animate everything." (Kimmerer 49) For speakers of Potawatomi, the concept of "it" unbraids a living thing from kinship ties; "we use the same words to address the living world as we use for our family. Because they are our family."(55) Wall Kimmerer refers to this recentering of personhood to the more-than-human world within Indigenous languages as a "grammar of animacy," in which "the language [is] a mirror for seeing the animacy of the world, the life that pulses through all things." (Kimmerer 55)



And so, it is not so farfetched to imagine plants as our kin, as animate beings with their own agendas, sometimes intertwined with ours. Within various Indigenous traditions, plants – like all beings—are considered ancestors. Mary Siisip Geniusz, a Cree and Métis ethnobotanist from the upper Great Lakes region, was an apprentice of the late Ojibwe healer Keewaydinoquay, and has captured the teachings of plant ancestors in a compendium titled *Plants Have So Much to Give Us, All We Have to Do Is Ask: Anishinaabe Botanical Teachings*. She relays that "there is a Midewiwin teaching which says that every plant has one chief virtue to share with the rest of Creation." (Geniusz 181) She also states that we must "talk to the plants if we want to obtain their help in the healing of ourselves or of another being....When one accepts the gift of the plant, one is asking that plant to become him or her [or them]." (Geniusz 22) What if the chief virtue of many plants has been to aid and comfort queer trauma, and yet remains unknown because of heteronormative pressures wrought by colonization and religion?

It is worth nothing that these fundamentally-reciprocal plant kinships were once part of European spirituality before the dominance of Christianity. As gay counterculture historian Arthur Evans explains, "early rural pagans and later medieval witches viewed their sensuality as the key to who they were as people, and not something to be repressed as Christianity mandated... Their very survival depending on being in touch with their bodies and knowing how to communicate with plants and animals...theirs was a world of enchantment with natural feelings." (Evans 1978) These older ways across diverse cultures offer clues to the connections between sexuality, pleasure, queerness, and plants.

HERBAL LORE

Whether passed down through oral tradition or recorded in a type of book, our knowledges of plants and their medicines are referred to as herbals, and are the predecessors of modern-day pharmacopoeia. Herbals from across the globe document our earliest human endeavors to record medicines of the natural world and the host of ailments they might remedy. The ***Exuberant Botanica*** project is also a queer herbal—an exploration into the connections between healing plants and queer people. It conjures historic plants or herbs that queer folk ancestors might have used to cure ailments specific to a marginalized social status, divergent identities and secretive sexualities, and also aid pleasure where it could be found. Scouring Medieval manuscripts, Renaissance herbals, Victorian catalogues on the 'language of flowers,' Appalachian folk remedies and various other pharmacopeias, I have looked for instances where certain described ailments and their remedies might have applied to same-sex lovers or gender non-conformists. Particular herbal knowledges, like those pertaining to women's health, offer insight into how gender was a significant preoccupation of medical herbalism in pre-modern eras.



The earliest known botanical-medical texts date to the classical period, and offer not only guidance on medical, toxic or hallucinatory properties, but also magic powers and legends associated with specific plants. According to botanical historian, Lucia Tongiorgi Tomasi, these "were based on an even more ancient knowledge of the healing virtues and poisonous properties of different plants. Mastery over these powerful substances—believed to be subject to astrological influences and often connected with magical practices—was considered to be the special prerogative of women. It is no coincidence that a knowledge of plants in the ability to brew lethal poisons, miraculous cures, and palliative nostrums were traditionally attributed to witches and signore della erbe, or women versed in plant lore." (Tomasi xxvii)

The structure and typology of herbal manuscripts, in which a textual description of a plant is followed by its virtues, likely began with *Historia plantarum* by Theophrastus of Eresos (c. 370-288 B.C.). Following in this path created by Theophrastus, the physician and rhizomatist Crateuas (111-64 B.C.) produced what is likely the first illustrated herbal, *Rhizotomikon*, which Pliny the Elder recorded as being illustrated in color, but which is lost. The most notable herbalist from Antiquity to leave a mark on the form is Dioscorides Pedanius of Anazarbus in Anatolia (present-day Turkey) (A.D. 40-90). In A.D. 65, Dioscorides produced *De materia medica*, a first of its kind herbal that listed over 600 plants and over 1,000 medicinal preparations. Translated into many other languages, "it served as the primary source of botanical knowledge and terminology throughout the Middle Ages and well into the Renaissance." (Tomasi xxix) In A.D. 512, Dioscorides original text and copies of Crateus's illustrations were assembled into the *Codex Vindobonensis*, which is the oldest illustrated herbal to have survived from Antiquity.

During the Dark Ages, Muslim scholars contributed more to botanical knowledge than Europeans, and incorporated important medicinal plants from across the Ottoman Empire, from Persia (present-day Iran) to India. The most illustrious of these scholars was the scientist Abdallah Ibn al-Baytār (A.D. 1197-1248), who added 300 to 400 additional herbs to the classic herbals of Theophrastus,



The Voynich manuscript is a 15th century codex created by an unknown author, using an undecipherable language. Stylistically, it clearly references Medieval herbals with 112 fictitious plants, but also contains astrological charts, plumbing diagrams and fantastical illustrations of absurd human rituals. It is named after Wilfried Voynich, a book dealer who purchased it in 1912. It is now held in Yale University's Library

Crateus, and Dioscorides in his text, *Compendium on Simple Medicaments and Foods* (الجامع لمفردات الأدوية والأغذية).

In this time before so much natural knowledge was concretized, the space between observed science and fantastical mythology was slippery. Even within John Gerard's famous 16th century compilation, *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, is a listing for the "Barnacle Goose": a barnacle [3] thought to transmutate into a small goose found in Northern Europe.

Perhaps the most exuberant of these is the *Voynich manuscript*, which offers an incoherent catalogue of imaginary plants, with flowers of alien morphology and root systems that mimic bathroom plumbing or mechanical devices. While some of the plants depicted in the Voynich manuscript have been identified as having Central American origins, the vast majority remain as undecipherable as the cryptic language in which it was written.

The Late Medieval concept of the 'doctrine of signatures' is another moment in herbal history at the intersection of herbalism, majick, and divinity. Proposed principally by Giambattista della Porta, a scientist, traveler, playwright and botanical astrologer, the doctrine proclaimed that God

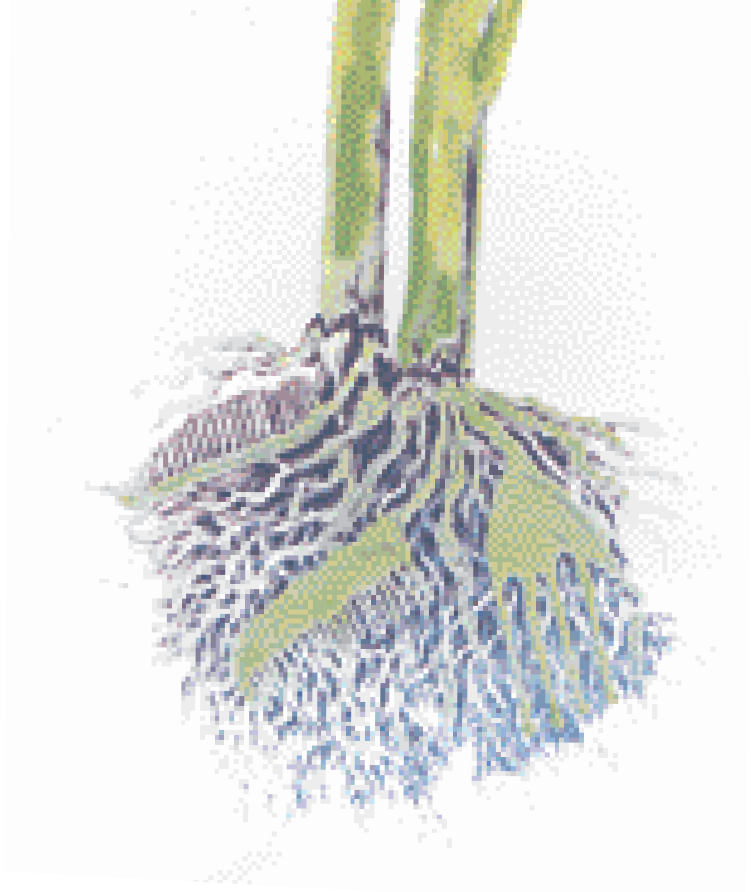


3 Until the 17th century, European botanists and herbalists considered barnacles and corals to be with the plantae taxa.

had provided hints as to the medicinal properties of plants by shaping certain plant parts to correspond to the human body. His *Phytognomonica* (L. 'Plant Indicators') listed examples such as, "those with heart-shaped fruit or bulbous roots were suitable for the treatment of cardiac troubles, those with yellow sap for sufferers of jaundice; while scaly objects such as toothwort, pomegranates, and pine-cones relieved toothache." (Blunt, Raphael 141)

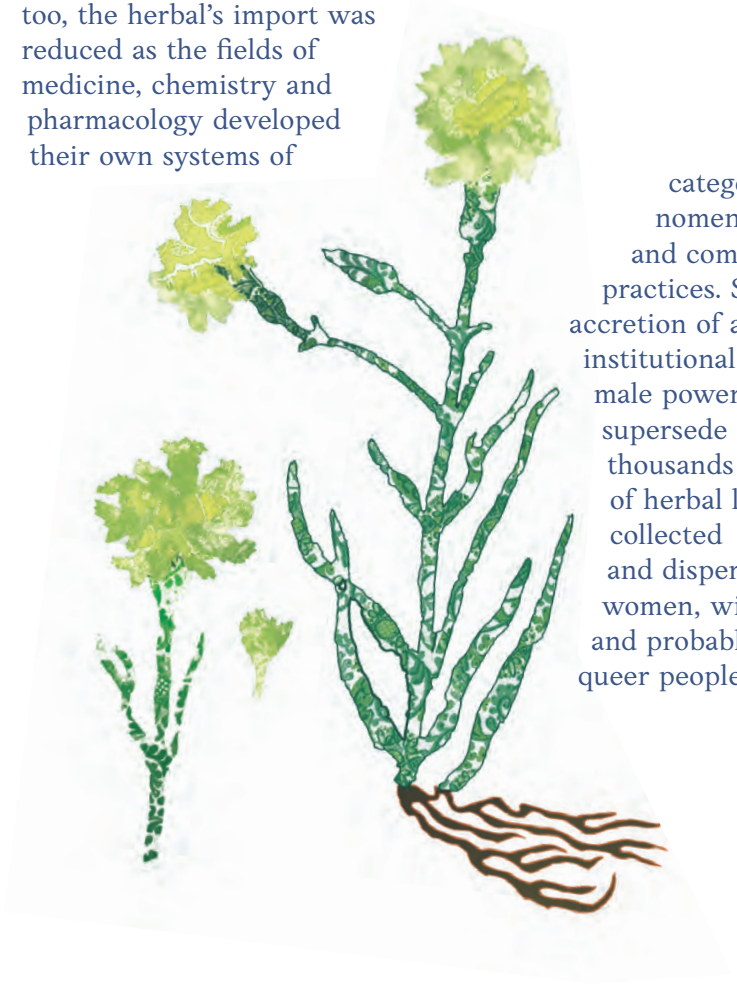
Spending time with these various herbals, I became fascinated by the ancient illustrations. At once decorative, expressive and naïve, they show me an era that was genuinely intrigued by plants' virtues and human-kinship possibilities, as well as respectful of the power of plants, as documented in the mandrake root legends. Humans were less preoccupied with how to capitalize plants, and more interested in understanding plants' mysterious powers.





In these early-science times, the role of the illustration was more symbolic or metaphoric than representational. Before the Renaissance, "the codification over time of beliefs in the therapeutic properties of specific plants led to a reluctance to modify their descriptions or illustrations in any way, and knowledge was transmitted through the passive copying of text and illustrations from one manuscript to the next. Gradually the images underwent a process not only of simplification, but also of symbolic stylization, and as a result the connection between the drawing and the plant as it actually appeared in nature sometimes was lost." (Tomasi xxviii) Still, these herbal manuscripts were each highly unique, and captured the subtle personalities of the writer and the illustrator.

The advent of the printing press, with its ability to systematically replicate accurateness, would shape the Western world's relationship to verity and truthfulness in the printed word. The Renaissance and later Enlightenment would force the hand of herbal illustrators to represent plants drawn from observation, and the older stylizations became relegated to decorative motifs. The ensuing history of botanic knowledge-keeping and illustration would move through a multitude of new waves—precipitated principally by empire-expansion and colonizing expeditions—all of which favored the "faithful reproduction" of plant life. The herbal would eventually be entirely replaced by the botanic catalogue. Gradually too, the herbal's import was reduced as the fields of medicine, chemistry and pharmacology developed their own systems of categorization, nomenclature, and compounding practices. Such an accretion of academic, institutional and male power would supersede the thousands of years of herbal lore collected and dispersed by women, witches, and probably queer people.



TOWARD A QUEER HERBALL

For the majority of these pre-modern knowledge-keepers, "the herbal was nearly always viewed by its owner as a 'living text,' a work-in-progress that could be carried along on herborizing [travels] or consulted in the workroom, to which [they] would add annotations and glosses based on [their] own observations." (Tomasi xxviii) The "unfixed" nature of these herbal guides finds resonance in our very contemporary moments of self-determination, reconciliation, and realignment of societal norms. Such built-in temporality of the form has inspired me to craft this speculative queer herbal, full of plants that defy natural histories. But I do not want to labor alone, monk-like in my cell. So I invite you to create with me new herbals, within queer community, and speculate on our futures together.

Some of my guiding questions in this project:

* What are historic plants or herbs that past queer folk might have used to cure ailments specific to a marginalized social status, divergent identities and secretive sexualities, and also aid pleasure where it could be found?

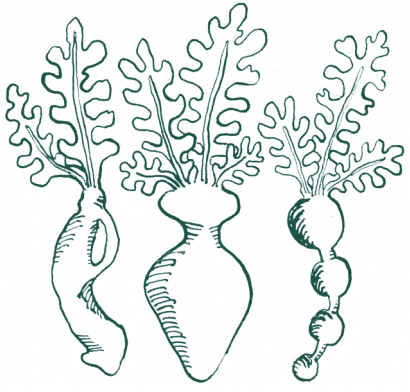
* How does the history of European 'herbals' – classical guides on the medicinal and social use value of plants – codify heterosexual relations? How might searching the archive of herbals reveal gaps or surprises in knowledge that support older queer herbal remedies, even if speculative?

* How might the pure biology of the plant world be more instrumental for modern-day human teachings about sexuality, polymorphous reproductive capacities, as well as expressive and extreme forms of sexual display? (innate hermaphroditism, asexual reproduction, plants switching genders depending on resources, etc)

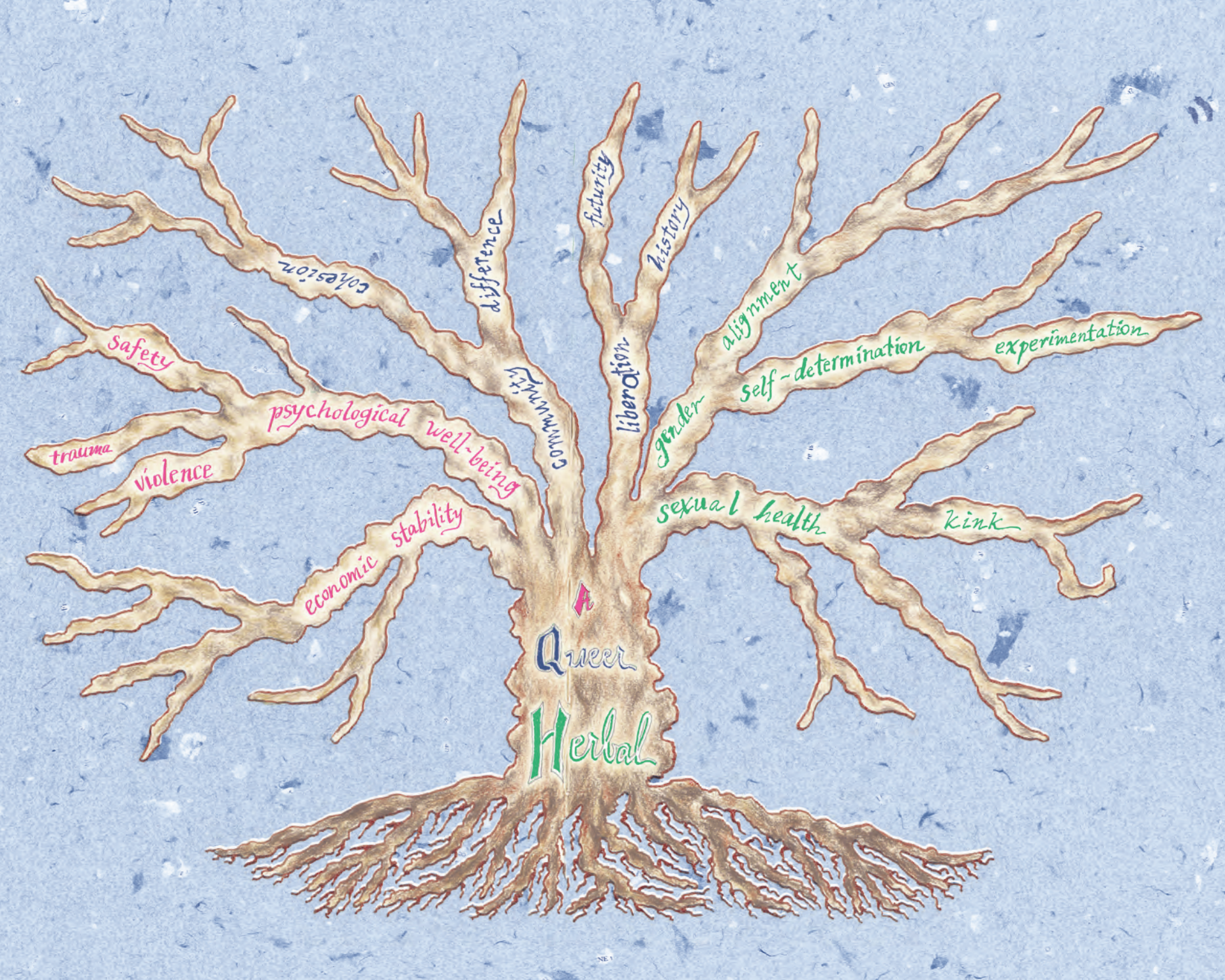
* How can the creation of inventive plant forms espouse greater respect and kinship bonds for the existing flora of the planet? With human-induced climate change and land development, we have not honored our plant family. In 2022, of documented plants that we know, there are 24,387 plantae species critically threatened or endangered,[4] with an average of 3 plants becoming extinct each year since 1900. Scientists suspect that deforestation of the Amazonian rain forest will also foreclose on the future discoveries of cancer-fighting drugs.[5]

* How might speculative queer herbals inform queer health of the future? Can imaginative plants lead science towards new fields of study, and also the development of hybrid plant functionalities (that do not resource unethical genetic modifications)?

* What is the resonance of a queerly-held 'doctrine of signatures' for plant-life today? If herbalists of yore found remedies in relation to morphological similarities between plants and people's body parts, what plants (real or imagined) correspond to your queer body and its needs?



4 IUCN Red List. International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. 13 November 2022. Online. < https://www.iucnredlist.org/search >.
5 McKie, Robin. "Plants hold key to developing future cancer treatments." The Guardian. 17 April 2022. Online. < https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/apr/17/plants-hold-key-to-developing-future-cancer-treatments >.


A
Queer
Herbal
cohesion
difference
futurity
history
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community
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self-determination
experimentation
sexual health
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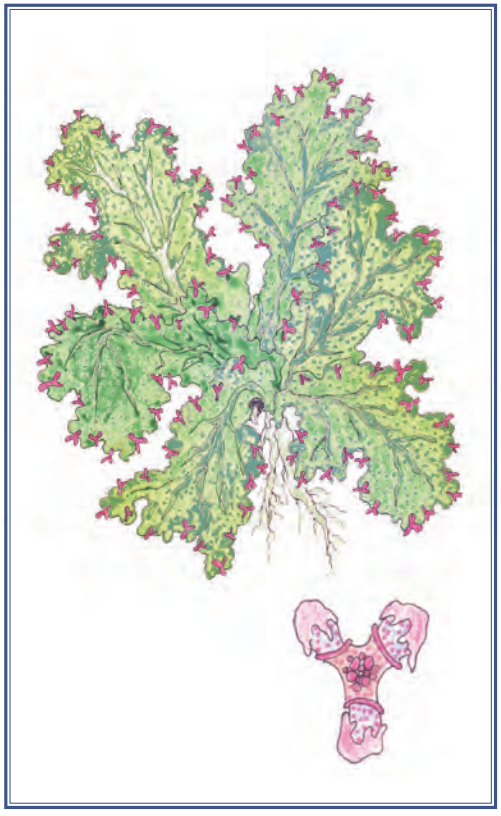
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

If one could design their own herbs for healing a specific contemporary LGBTQIA2S+ ailment, what would it look like? You will need to define an ailment, or what 'ails' you, as well as how the imagined plant offers a remedy. Where would this plant be found? What parts would be gathered from the plant, and how would they be processed? How would they be administered or consumed?

As a place to start, study the Tree of Ailments diagram on pages 24-25 for specific queer areas of healing that I have identified, which you might address. Additionally, the project commissioned three contributors to provide inspiration for your own speculative contribution(s). Burdock writes poetically about plant kinship and plant-based kink. Marcela Szwarc offers us some speculative plant majick for gender transitions. And Nipinet has created an informative reference of existing herbs for queer and trans healing.

Enclosed with this packet is a sheaf of herbal manuscript "blanks" for you to create your own speculative queer herb(s) to contribute to ***Exuberant Botanica***. While the formula is set-up in reference to the style of Medieval herbal entries, I welcome diverse approaches. Your contribution might take the form of a :

* drawn sketch
* collage
* photographic
* digital
* or material
* concrete poetry
* list of attributes
* essay
* painting
* flat-fold sculpture
* written description
* graphic illustration



*** The Name(s).**
What shall we call your herbe? How might the name also describe the plant's metaphoric properties? Play with Latin **gibberish!**

Centranthus testii
Common: Manswoort, Manswell

*** The Description.**
How would you physically describe your plant? How do its plant parts function?
lettuce-like, with broad leaves, flat to the ground and shallow roots; this genus produces small pink berries in the crinkles of the leaves

*** The Place.**
Where in the world(s) does your plant grow?
Lower Alberta, highest elevations; Prairies Zone

*** The Time.**
When to plant or harvest your herbe?
wild harvest in mid-June - late August

*** The Virtues.** What are the healing properties of your imagined herbe? Which plant parts are to be used? If medicinal or majickal, how is it prepared for use?
Centranthus manswoort, or Manswell, now grows in the Canadian Prairies, and is a coevolutionary result of pollution from municipal wastewater. The plant processes synthetic hormones leached in groundwater, and appears to compound them in berry form. These fruiting bodies have been tested as safe for human consumption. They are used as a natural hormone replacement therapy for transmen or transmasculine folk.



Upon receiving them, your contributions will take several different iterative pathways. Some will be translated as large-scale botanical drawings and/or lithographic prints. Some will be translated as life-scale sculptures or botanic "teaching models" with opposable and interchangeable parts. Some will become quilted appliqué textiles. I intend to collaborate with each contributor as their ideas become translated into components of the ***Hot House/Maison Chaude***. I will communicate with each contributor along the way about how their contribution might be shared, whether in a printed form or via social media. Finally, all contributions and their translations will become part of a larger Queer Herball to be bound as a proper manuscript in the coming years.

To stay connected with the project please follow us
@hothouse_maisonchaude

BURDOCK

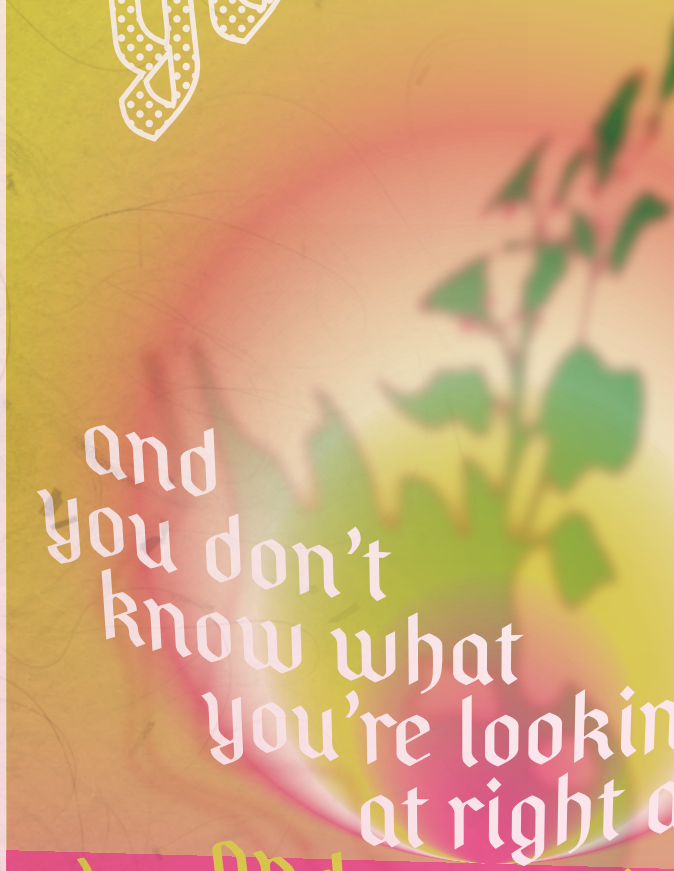
Burdock is a creature residing in the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh people, aka Vancouver. It completed its BFA in 2020 at Concordia University in Tiohtià:ke/Montréal, where it played the oboe in drawing classes, ran weeds through the photocopier, performed orangely with WHORANGE, and called spilled coffee a painting. In vancouver it lives in a collective house with many loved ones, plays noise and punk "music" on the oboe, and tattoos other human creatures. You may find Burdock in a garden, mosh pit, or naked in a cold body of water.

Instagram: **@m_u_d_d_** &
@mudd.puppyy.tattoo

Website: **mmuudddd.wordpress.com**

turning to goo

you know when you look at something



and you don't know what you're looking at right away.

and sometimes you don't ever find out.

we are walking in
the forested River
Valley. our eyes catch
a Burdock plant, and
we say Hello. we notice
that Burdock displays a sort
of gooey grey-pink mass on
one of their leaves, seemingly inhabiting. not resting
on top of the leaf but living through. Fleshy, as if
animal, fungal, or some combination.

five days later, we
wander in an open
field behind a Real Canadian
Superstore. and we find a large
patch of Burdock in the middle of the
open grassy plain. six plants at least as tall
as we are. we hear a Hawk cry overhead but we
do not see them. near the Burdock patch, we come
across the bloody bones and glistening entrails of
a Rabbit resting on the ground. No organs are
punctured, the Rabbit cleanly disemboweled
by the invisible Hawk. we find this image of
entrails strikingly similar to the greyish pink
growth on Burdock leaves in the River Valley.

for the weeks
to follow, our fascination
grows. this image of internal
organs shining in the sun and a formless
animal/fungal entity, both associated with
our friend Burdock. it seems that some Familiar
Creature is showing themselves to us. or perhaps
we are crossing paths without purpose.
(a fine line between chance and intention.)

July 21 2022, “vancouver”

nothing created nothing lost

i. it is in my nature to die. i cannot escape death.

we have a feeling that something’s been lost.
someone we never had the chance to know.
we grieve every day.
Burdock, are you afraid that you’ll never find your home?
maybe it’s worth a shot.
maybe someone will pull me up and weed me out.
Burdock, are you afraid to let your roots take
hold?

refusals. fits and starts. i am so sorry.
and many days i wish to collapse into
nothing.

Burdock, are you afraid that you are not enough?

ii. ill health is in my nature.

i cannot escape illness. sore feet.
sick and tired.
suffocation by concrete.
i have a yeast infection.
imbalanced serotonin
in the midst of ecocide
sixth mass extinction
monoculture
consumer culture
diet culture
i have no culture.
Lopuch, odkud jste?
Burdock, where are you from?
i have no answers.

iii. if ill health is in our nature, it follows that medicine is also in our nature.

to the shit disturbers, the ground-holders, and the convivial soil-makers: thank you for your good, true and beautiful work in this world.
We will structure a new world within the shell of the old.
a nighttime walk along the grassy boulevard, a muddy disturbance with our friends, a paper bag full of burrs.
scattering across manicured gardens,
bare soil.
you may not last long out there
where you'll surely stick out like weeds.



litter bug / time capsule (may 12 2022, "montréal")

iv. it is in the nature of my loved ones and cherished belongings to change. i cannot take them with me.

return and wandering
we see you everywhere. no wonder we accepted your name as our own.
you are what you see you are what you eat you are what you hear

here
today, gone tomorrow

* hitch a ride in time capsules *
with someone trusted
someone who got close enough

hold on tight!

>>>>>>>>>><<<<<<<<<< or,
this was never mine.
release[d] [from] our possessions

belongings propagate.

nests in nooks and crannies
soothing seeds drop,
soaking into moist crevices
*
* *
* * *

what came from the
curb, goes back to the curb.

Ich habe Genug.

*
++

MARCELA SZWARC

Marcela Szwarc (b. 1992) is a multidisciplinary artist working within the intersections of painting, illustration, self-publishing, writing, performance, and puppetry. Born to Polish immigrants in New York, their upbringing has been influenced by a mix of Slavic cultural practices, which are often a muddied duality comprised of Catholic rituals with pagan backbones. Recently, their research has brought them to investigate the symbolism of plants and trees for the Western Slavs, and apotropaic magic (or protective magic) as it was practiced by commoners in the Middle Ages.



Anxiety Blooms, 2022.

Instagram: @marcela_szw

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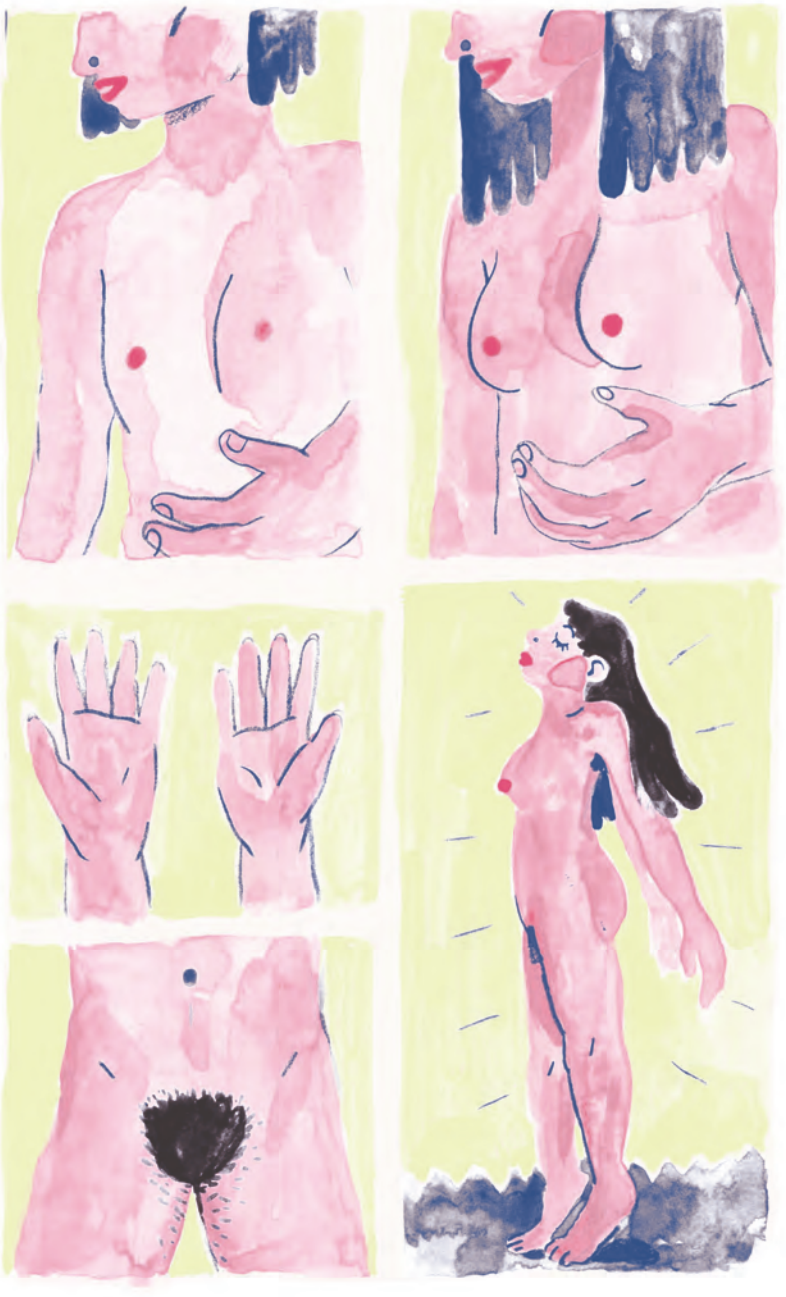













That's more like it!!




END

NIPINET'S QUEER HERBAL RECIPES

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a friend pressed a small amber bottle into my hand. "I have more if you need it," they said, "or if you know anyone else who does." Elderberry. Immune support, a step towards warning off the virus we still knew nothing about. I asked them where they got it from, and they said a friend of theirs made it and distributed it. A network of people, none of them doctors, spreading medicine across the city for those who need it. I gave them a tincture of motherwort in return.

There are so many ways that our plant relatives can help us– they feed us, treat our wounds, heal our sick, mark the passage of time, and show us myriad forms of beauty. They are our community members, our kin. It's worth getting to know them like you would any friend. Let me introduce you to a few. Before I go on, I need to introduce myself. *Taanishii kiiyawow, Nipinet dishinakaashon. Michif pi Anishinaabe niiya, Ashkibagi-ziibiing oschi niiya maaka Teejop niwiiken.* My Ojibwe name is Enaamibiigaadagaad, or the one who swims underneath the water's surface. I go by Nipinet. I'm Michif and Anishinaabe. My father is from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa in so-called North Dakota, as is his mother, and her parents. I grew up on Dakota territory just outside Saint Paul, Minnesota, and currently live on Ho-Chunk Land in Teejop, so-called Madison, Wisconsin. All of these plants are relatives I know well, and the recipes are those I personally have experience creating and using. I did not invent them, they were passed to me by friends, relatives, elders, mentors, and community members, and so I in turn pass them to you.

You can contact me at **giige.co**

RESPONSIBILTY & FORAGING

During the pandemic, I noticed that many people in my city were looking for ways to get out of the house and foraging got pretty popular. It's a great way of getting to know your surroundings, which is vital to having a healthy relationship with the land, but be careful when foraging especially if you are a settler on Turtle Island. Plants are not just something to be used. They are members of our communities in their own right. Settler society relies on devaluing the world around us, puts a monetary value on everything, makes you think of everything in terms of how much you can take and how much you can get. Traditional medicines are becoming harder and harder to find due in large part to settler interest– for example, goldenseal is consistently used in Anishinaabe medicine, but it's now endangered due to overharvesting.

If this fact makes you feel defensive, please take a minute to examine why before we continue.

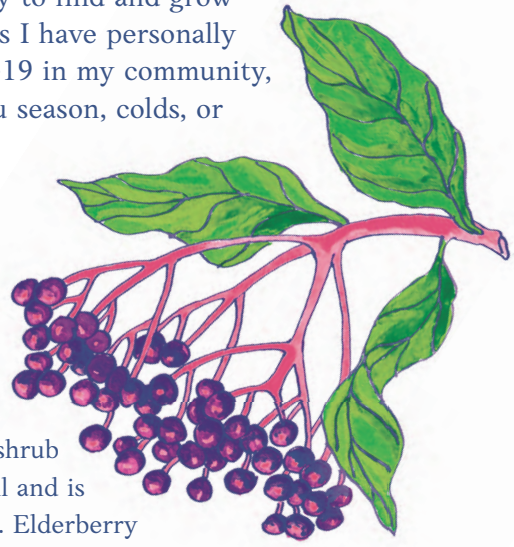


Here are some guidelines for ethical harvests:

1. Know what you need and how much before you forage.
2. Never take the first plant you see.
3. Take only what you know you need, and harvest at most 10% of what you find in any given area: this allows the plant to continue its life in the area you found it.
4. If you can, find somewhere to plant the seeds after you harvest the plant.
5. If you're a settler and you know a plant is endangered, even if it's highly sought-after, find an alternative.

Community Care

Here are some useful plant relatives for taking care of your loved ones. I try to always have them on hand– they're pretty easy to find and grow plentifully. All of these herbs I have personally used while treating COVID-19 in my community, but they're useful for any flu season, colds, or even allergies.



Elderberry Tincture

Sambucus canadensis, a shrub or bush that grows over 6ft tall and is native to most of Turtle Island. Elderberry tincture or syrup is useful to prevent or treat common colds, flus, and other communicable diseases. It is high in vitamin C and stimulates the human immune system, so don't take it if you're on immunosuppressants. I keep it on hand to give to elderly relatives especially who would be most at risk for COVID-19.



Mullein

Verbascum thapsus, a biennial plant that can grow up to 6+ ft tall. It was introduced in Turtle Island and prefers disturbed soils. In the first year it grows as a rosette of soft hair leaves, and by the second year puts up a tall stalk with yellow flowers. Don't harvest from a mullein plant whose stalk splits into multiple prongs– that's a sign the plant is mutated by something in the environment. Similarly, if the leaves have any kind of dark goop on the bottom side of them, it's absorbing toxins from roads or construction nearby and should be avoided. Mullein is used in a steam to treat bronchial issues, asthma, and coughs. You can also make tea or syrup with it. In the early pandemic, I mailed mullein that I grew and dried to a friend with chronic bronchitis with a recipe to treat their throat.

Catnip

Nepeta cataria, another mint relative. Catnip is found all over, in people's gardens, and growing at the edges of fields and prairies. When brewed as a tea it is a very good fever reducer, and safer for children than anything on the market. Most fever reducers work by bumping your fever up a degree before taking it down, which can be very dangerous when treating high fevers and the very young. Catnip takes it down without bumping it up first.

TRANS * HEALTH



Cranberry

When I went on testosterone, another transmasc friend of mine called me up and told me to make cranberry tincture right away– he and his roommates took it every day, portioned out into teaspoons and served in a chipped teacup, as a preventative measure taken against UTIs, which are more common when your hormone levels are fluctuating.

Cranberries (*vaccinium macrocarpon or vaccinium oxycoccos*) grow on evergreen shrubs found in wet habitats, bogs, or near lakes in the Northeast. I buy them from the store, because I don't have a place to wild harvest cranberries near where I live, but if you do find them, wait until they are ripest in September and October to harvest them

FOR THE TINCTURE:

1. Get rid of any stems and berries that have gone bad. Wash your berries.
2. Make sure your jar is sterilized (soak in boiling water, then let completely air dry.)
3. Crush berries, add to sterilized jar.
4. Cover to about two inches above the berries with a solvent: you can use 80-100 proof vodka or food grade liquid glycerin. I used brandy when I made my tincture, because it was what I had on hand.
5. Let sit in a cool, dark area for a month or two. Shake occasionally.
6. Strain into an amber glass bottle.
7. For preventative measures: take half a teaspoon of the tincture once daily. To treat an infection, take it more frequently, such as once an hour. You can mix the tincture into a glass of water to make it easier to take.

The shelf life of this tincture is 3-4 years if you use alcohol, 2-3 if you use glycerin.

Yarrow

is a close friend of mine. I run into them in people's landscaping, along pathways, on the side of the road. Sometimes I find an entire yard where the short grass has been replaced by yarrow's feathery leaves. It always makes me happy to see, and it's a better ground cover than lawn grass anyway. Its colorful variants are often used as decorative landscaping.

Yarrow (*achillea millefolium*) is an herb that is circumboreal, found naturally around the globe in North America, Europe, and Asia. It has so many uses I could make an entire zine about just yarrow. When applied topically as a poultice, yarrow can staunch blood flow; when taken internally, yarrow can stimulate blood circulation. It's an abortifacient so make sure to keep that in mind when taking it. Yarrow generally flowers from May to June, but I've found it blooming all the way through July down here. It's usually found in mildly disturbed soil, along paths, in grasslands, and at the edges of forests. It's a liminal plant, which I find comforting as a trans person.

To make medicine with yarrow, harvest the leaves and the flowers while they're blooming. Yarrow is known as a cure-all, but I'm going to focus on yarrow as a treatment for acne. If you've gone through any period of hormone fluctuation, you will be familiar with the way acne manifests.

1. Harvest the leaves and flowers of yarrow and make sure they're clean and free of debris. For this recipe they can be fresh or dried.
2. Boil a pot of water on the stove. Add yarrow leaves and flowers.
3. Drape a towel over your head and lean over the pot, allowing the steam to cover your face. The warmth opens your pores and the antimicrobial properties of yarrow reduces the infections that lead to acne.
4. The longer you can stay the better, but give it at least ten minutes.
5. For additional help, make tea with the leaves and flowers and drink it afterwards.
6. Do this once a day.

Rosemary and Mint

This one isn't trans-health specific, but I'm trans and I use this all of the time because I can be extremely vain! This is a recipe for an oil that keeps your hair healthy and protected, and also encourages growth. It includes rosemary, mint, and coconut oil.

Rosemary, or rosmarinus officinalus, is an evergreen shrub native to the Mediterranean that people generally grow in their gardens or landscaping in most cities in North America. It's easy to find and on the shelves at every grocery store. In terms of hair care, rosemary is full of antioxidants, which protects your hair from bacteria and sun damage. It also can help keep your hair follicle clean and healthy.

Mint, or basically the entire *mentha* genus of plants, is an aromatic herb with square stems (best way to identify something from the mint family: roll the stem in between your fingers!) found all over the world. It's also commonly grown in gardens and sold in grocery stores. You can use any mint for this recipe– you just need the boost of stimulation that mint provides to your scalp. It promotes hair growth!

TO MAKE THE HAIR OIL:

1. Acquire or harvest your rosemary and mint, and give them time to let them dry. Use coconut oil as the basis for this because it can penetrate the hair shaft.
2. Sterilize your jar.
3. Fill jar with herbs and cover with coconut oil.
4. Set in a warm spot for two weeks to a month and let steep. Shake every couple of days.
5. Strain the herbs.
6. Once a week, massage a teaspoon of oil into your scalp and all the way down to the ends of your hair. Use a small amount of oil on the ends of your hair daily to keep frizz down.

The oil keeps for six months when stored in a cool, dry place.

Dandelion

An additional acne-clearing and generally mood-boosting friend is Dandelion. They grow everywhere, from cracks in the sidewalk to your backyard. Dandelion, or *taraxacum officinale*, is a common species generally believed to have been introduced by settlers in 1600s. They're edible and medicinal, but make sure you harvest them from places you know haven't been sprayed with pesticides or contaminated with street or agricultural runoff. Finding a safe place to harvest dandelions can be the hardest part of finding them.



To make medicine with dandelions, you can use the whole plant, or save the leaves for salads. Chop them up into small pieces to increase surface area and add them to a tincture. Ideally, you want to harvest them in early spring or late fall, when the roots are at their most potent, but if you're using the flower and leaves too any time is fine. Dandelion tincture can help treat UTIs, clear acne, and boost mood, energy, and endurance if taken in the spring as a way to wake your metabolism up after a long, cold winter.

Take half a teaspoon of tincture daily.

MENTAL HEALTH

The final section of plant medicines I want to touch on in this brief guide is concerning those plant relatives who can help support mental health. Certain plants have calming and stabilizing effects on the nervous system and can help regulate depression, anxiety, stress, and insomnia.

Blue Vervain *(Verbena hastata)*, or swamp verbena, is a bushy candelabra-looking perennial with purple flowers that grows in wet, marshy places. A tea of blue vervain calms nervousness, alleviates depression symptoms, and treats headaches. Avoid blue vervain if you're on hormones– it regulates estrogen and progesterone receptor binding.

Skullcap , or *scutellari lateriflora* (among several), is another herb that was recommended to me by queer community as a way of mitigating anxiety and improving sleep without relying on medicines that interact with SSRIs. Skullcap is native to Turtle Island and grows a long stalk with blue flowers at the end. It works as a mild sedative, so it increases feelings of calm and helps you get to sleep. You can make it as a tincture or a tea.

Valerian *(Valeriana officinalis)* is a tall flowering plant with a distinctive smell. The roots are used to treat anxiety and can be made into a tincture or brewed as a tea. Valerian interacts with some forms of medication so be careful when using it. I personally do not use Valerian as I'm on SSRIs, but I've grown and harvested it for others in my community.

Rose There are a lot of different kinds of roses, but I use *rosa arkansana*, a prairie rose native to my part of Turtle Island. So long as your roses haven't been cultivated with pesticides, any rose is good medicine. Rose is a gentle helper, that soothes and strengthens your spirit and your body. I find just the scent of roses calming and uplifting, which makes sense as roses are a nervine, or a class of herb that works on your nervous system. If you're tense, anxious, or wound up, rose tea can help calm you down. You can make a tea of the dried petals, or of the fruit. Rose hips are also great for immune support and treating common colds, as they're chock full of vitamin C. Dried, they're one of my grandma's favorite teas to push on me whenever she thinks I'm getting sick. They also make delicious jam. Rose is also considered a medicine for grief. The soothing nature of it grounds you and helps you loosen some of the tight emotions that come with the grieving process, providing you with a soft and supported place to land.



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