

6 PACIFIC NORTHWEST PLANTS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

The largest of the American poplars, this hardwood tree was used by Native Americans for food and medicinal purposes.

Black cottonwood



PHOTO BY THEREIDSHOME/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Stinging nettle, known for the stinging hairs on its stem and leaves, has a long history of medicinal use.

Nettle



PHOTO BY UWVE H. FRIESE/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The state flower of Oregon, this shrub bears small yellow flowers in the spring followed by purplish-black berries (see Page 5) in the late summer and fall.

Oregon grape

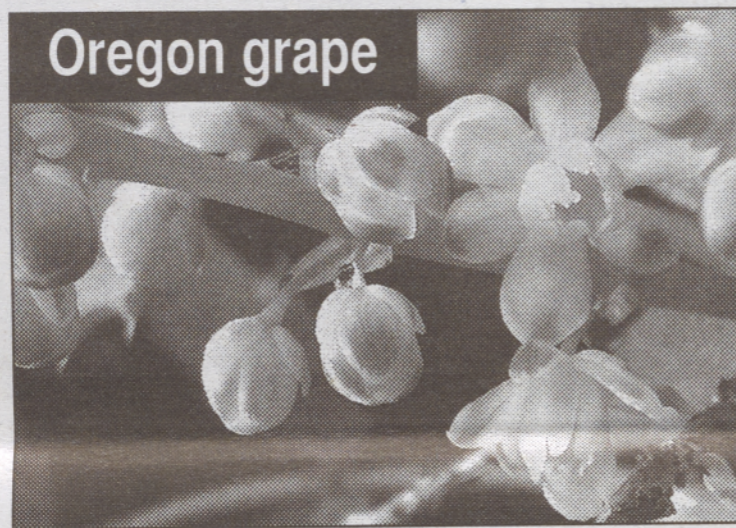


PHOTO BY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This wild plant with yellow flowers has long been used to help relieve mild to moderate depression.

St. John's wort



PHOTO BY FIR002/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

This arborvitae – not a true cedar – is known by some tribes as the “tree of life” or “life giver” because it was used to make shelter, food and medicine.

Western redcedar



PHOTO BY ALAN CRESSLER/WILDFLOWER CENTER DIGITAL LIBRARY

Several tribes used this common plant for medicinal purposes, including as a pain reliever, a fever reducer and a sleep aid.

Yarrow



PHOTO BY KIMBERLY KLINE/WILDFLOWER CENTER DIGITAL LIBRARY

Wildcrafter

The author of ‘Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants’ touts nature’s potential to heal our bodies and our spirits

BY EMILY GREEN
STAFF WRITER

Scott Kloos has a profound affinity for plants.

He’s the founder and director at The School of Forest Medicine, a founding member of Portland’s Elderberry School of Botanical Medicine, and the owner of Cascadia Folk Medicine, a producer of small-batch herbal extracts.

He’s spent the past two decades working with the native flora of the Pacific Northwest, immersing himself in the botany and medicinal qualities of regional vegetation and studying at the Herb Pharm in Williams and with other master herbalists, such as Portland’s Matthew Wood.

But it’s the natural world that’s been his greatest teacher. Kloos said learning directly from plants was common among our ancestors centuries ago, but along with humanity’s connection to nature, it’s a practice that’s faded away over time.

His new book, “Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest and Use 120 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness,” is an approachable guide to regional herbal medicines – and to becoming reconnected with nature.

At the heart of Kloos’ methods is his deep-rooted respect for plants and their surroundings, evident throughout his book.

In addition to teaching readers how to find, harvest and use medicinal plants, Kloos imparts his philosophies of ethical and sustainable harvesting, becoming attuned to the natural world and open to its lessons.

His book, released May 17 by Timber Press, aims to teach beginners the techniques of “wildcrafting.”

Kloos will be at Powell’s City of Books on West Burnside Street at 7:30 p.m. Monday, May 22, for a book signing and to talk about medicinal plants.

Emily Green: *Why should we make our own herbal remedies when there are so many pharmaceuticals readily available?*

Scott Kloos: There’s a growing awareness around the limitation of modern pharmaceuticals, and many people are finding out, unfortunately through self study and self experimentation, that there are side effects. Ultimately, the theory behind pharmaceutical use is that there is a pathogen, and the way to healing is to kill the pathogen.

In herbal medicine, we think about things

holistically, and working with the whole organism – and pharmaceuticals don’t do that. So what ends up happening a lot is that when you take a pharmaceutical to do something, it then has another effect. New diseases ride in on these supposed cures. So you’re not creating the foundations for health, you’re treating a symptom in the moment.

When you work with herbal medicines, we are looking to create the space in the body where healing can happen, and the innate wisdom of the body can heal itself and bring a state of harmony back, and that’s what I think of as a true cure.

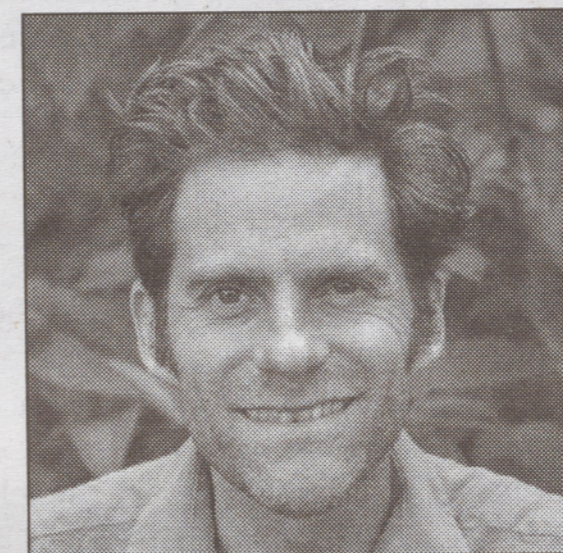
The wild plant population can’t sustain the world’s population, so we need cultivated plants as well, but wild plants carry different energy with them that connects us with wild nature and the environment where we live because they are shaped by the same forces. So because of that, there is a whole other level of healing which, for me, is the deepest healing, because I feel like a lot of our disease as a culture comes from a disconnect from nature. These plants not only heal our bodies, but they end up healing our spirit as well.

E.G.: *You have said that humanity has really come out of touch with its deeper connection with nature over the past 400 years. How might someone reconnect?*

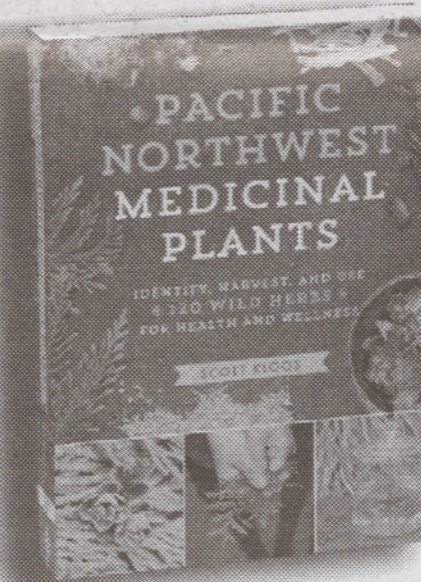
S.K.: Because of who we are as humans, and the way we’ve evolved with a deep connection in nature and with plants, it’s easier than people think. Sometimes people come to my classes and they say, “I can’t do this” or “I don’t know what I’m doing,” and they’re surprised with how easy it is.

Basically you just have to find a way to quiet the mental chatter and get out of that mindset, and what I recommend to people is to let your consciousness sink down into your heart. There’s a way of perceiving with the heart that is different from our minds that we are so accustomed to. Just spend time in nature, in that space – whether it’s sitting by a creek with your back up against a tree or while you’re walking – and just see what that feels like.

There’s these practices that are coming out now, I think in Japan they call it forest bathing (*shinrin yoku*). There’s all this healing potential just from spending time in the



Scott Kloos is the author of “Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants.”



See KLOOS, page 5