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Reflections along the Green Path

Eight Circles held in North Carolina

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November 2008

Elders Circle

Nov 9th

Sunnybank Inn, Hot Springs

In the morning a small group of us walked around hot springs and along the French Broad River gathering from the abundance and enjoying time together out in nature. That afternoon nearly thirty of us gathered at the Sunnybank in honor of the elders. The time went by quickly as we shared our stories and perspectives on living sustainably. A handful of the group held the elder roles sharing how they had come to Madison County as much as 36 years ago and engaged with the local people learning their ways. It quickly became apparent that we had many gaps to cross in order to communicate including age, landowners or not and years spent living in the mountains. Many amazing topics opened up and it was clear that another circle would be important to have to go deeper with these issues such as: preparing for old age, increasing resilience, how to live simply on land when land is so expensive, and more. It was suggested that next time we have a hands on project to do together while we talked. Since the meeting a supply cooperative has been started to help pool needs and supplies-contact Elmer at the inn for more information. The meeting was followed by a tasty meal made from Local and Wild foods. Stay tuned for another circle this spring.

Wild Food Families

Nov 12th

Appalachia School of Holistic Herbalism (ASHH), West Asheville

Though our circle was small we had a great time brainstorming 50 wild foods that we collectively knew and then listed the plant families in which they belong and discussed the general qualities that these families embody. By getting to know the plant families we can bring back into the living knowledge plants who we have collectively forgotten as food sources.

What Next?

Nov 14th

Pearson Community Gardens, Asheville

Four of us (Turtle, Mary, Mathew and I) facilitated an evening happening where we acknowledged the challenges facing us and asked the circle, what next? A great family vibe ensued with over thirty of us gathering. We explored together four areas: Community Responsibility, Practical Solutions, Environment and Spirituality. We started out writing down words that come up for us around these topics. Then we mingled amongst one another sharing our thoughts. Then together we listed ways we can be responsible as community members. For the environment we called out ways Gaia is telling us that things are amiss. We discussed how humans have talked about these issues and ways to address them. Then we pondered whether anyone had asked Gaia. With that we all went out into the garden area and engaged nature asking, "What next?" We came back and shared what we had heard. Wonderfully, there was a steady message that was shared: "Don't worry, everything is going along as part of a bigger plan and is part of our collective evolution." Night caught us a little early but we went out and surrounded an orb mobile constructed earlier and shared spiritual inspirations singing and dancing together. This was followed by a wonderful potluck highlighted by a big stuffed Kushaw pumpkin that had been cooked in the outdoor oven.

Harvesting from Nature's Abundance

Nov 15th

Around Buncombe and Madison Counties

A diverse group of 10 of us converged in Asheville to harvest from the wild and practice wild food preparation together with Mary and I facilitating. Our first stop was in a persimmon grove in suburbia. With the help of Fox climbing a tree we experienced the amazing experience of raining persimmons! Then we stopped along the French Broad to explore the abundance of wild greens there then up into Walnut to harvest nettles, grapes and more. Finally, we converged on Mary's cabin and processed food together and ate then one finally walk around that beautiful land there. May we have many, many more circles like that!

Plants and Healing Systems of Africa

Nov 16th

Appalachia School of Holistic Herbalism (ASHH), West Asheville

A small group joined Mary and I as we told the story of our exploration of southern Africa in 2006. We showed slides and discussed the plants and people and sacred places we visited. The healing systems of southern Africa are the oldest in the world but, ironically, are the least understood by westerners though they thrive in Africa and provide an impressive, extensive apothecary and collection of healing techniques.

Mycology 101 for Mycophagists

Nov 18th

Firestorm Bookstore, Asheville

An underground revolution was apparent as around 20 of us gathered in this collective run bookstore to discuss the wonders of mushrooms. Mathew and I facilitated a discussion on this kindom of beings describing basic taxonomy, how to hunt them, characteristics of common ones. We had samples to hold and tastes of Ganoderma tea. The circle had several other experienced people within it who added their insights. Hopefully an active mushroom explorers group will keep happening from this and converge in the spring to hunt together.

Emerging Planetary Medicines

Nov 19th

Appalachia School of Holistic Herbalism (ASHH), West Asheville

To an attentive circle of a baker's dozen I discussed what a masters in Holistic Science from Schumacher College is and how I applied its central principles into an analysis of what modern Western herbalists have currently brought into their practices and what still remains to be explored. By encouraging people to read my thesis (available at www.plantsandhealers.com) and engage in an ongoing discussion on ways to embody localizing healthcare, I hope to raise awareness of the lessons from the world.

Building Resilience

Nov 22nd

Pickard's Mountain Eco-Institute, Chapel Hill

We gathered to re-mind ourselves of the importance of community. After introductions we walked the land meeting the plants in their latter Fall forms. Then we had lunch of local and wild foods; good homemade food made from scratch. We had quality time with each other, the plants bringing forth our teachers and important books. In the afternoon we had a fermenting frenzy dancing in a three-ring circus through hands-on making of kim chi, a walk through making miso and a tasting with demonstration of how to make a house wild wine. Our numbers pushed thirty with hopefully the new being inspired and the experienced leaving with further points to ponder.