

ENCHANTED LIVING

ISSUE NO. 67 SUMMER 2024

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The **FLORA & FAUNA** *Issue*

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WITH LLEWELLYN



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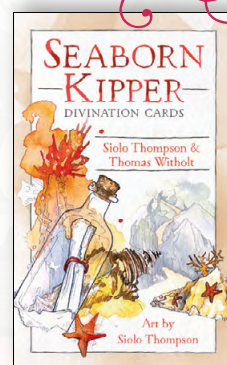


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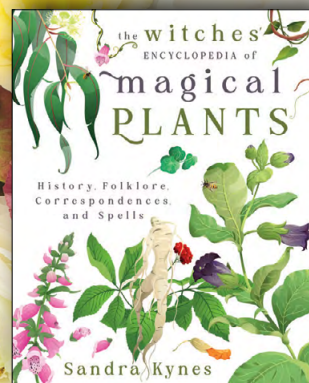
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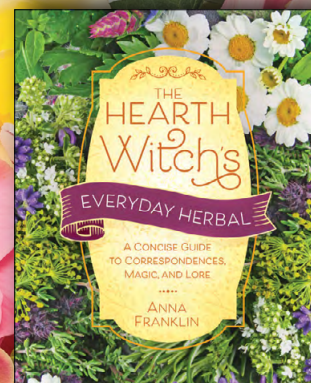
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little over a year ago, our friends at Vaughan House told us about an epic summer solstice shoot they were planning with gown maker extraordinaire Chotronette and the astonishing Molly Katherine in their magical bloom-filled Virginia greenhouse. “Have you seen her before?” Megan wrote. “She’s an elf queen goddess!” Of course we’d seen Molly with her endless red tresses, flitting across our various social media feeds under the moniker Scarlett O’Hair. The captures that emerged became the basis for this loosely themed summertime Flora & Fauna issue.

We began a mammoth, shapeless draft with pages of deer and foxes and flowers, and we added and subtracted favorites until themes began to assert themselves and obsessions began to form. We loved Megan’s shape-shifting, effervescent images of Molly, who appears first as a queenly figure and then a fairy and finally, a fae creature with delicate horns, as if she herself were in the midst of a midsummer night’s dream. Then several articles appeared from our regular contributors of deer women and flower women and cat women and the flower magic that might turn a man into an ass. And Susann Cokal wrote about the odd, manifold ways we interact with flora to create secret gardens and elaborate mazes and hanging gardens from which webs of scent float down and entangle passersby.

When contributor Lauren May suggested the following, I was dazzled: “I want to do a spiderweb cake. I want to have a dark green frosting, almost hunter green. Then I’m going to attempt to make two spiderwebs, clear and like a rain-soaked web. There will be no spider, just cobwebs and fresh flowers with the green background. Very garden after the summer rain.” Yes, please!

I thought that we shouldn’t forget the tiny creatures, the insects, and then suddenly our draft was populated with artists like Bridget Beth Collins, with her own obsessions with spiderwebs and dewdrops and moths, who reminds us of the magic just outside our doors: “Wander into the garden or put your nose in the little tuft of wildflowers along the pavement and look: The daisies have their crowns, the beetles have their armor, the snails have their forever homes swirling around them.”

And then art director Lisa Gill and I were spending hours searching old fairy art for images of cobwebs and dewdrops and insects with shimmering wings, and homing in on artists like Ann Carrington, who was inspired to create massive spiderwebs from brass and steel after observing a spider weaving a web nearby as she worked, and Giacomina Ferrillo, who encourages even non-artists to wander outside with sketchbooks and pay careful, exacting attention to the details of the world around them.

We re-fell in love with the strange paintings of relatively unknown Victorian fairy artist Amelia Jane Murray and her tiny fairies riding on the backs of bees and moths and dragonflies ... and found a painting we’d never seen before from Walter Jenks Morgan, of fairies fending off a spider within a giant web. What a strange, lovely idea, we thought, that if we lean down and really pay attention to the world that exists right alongside us, that is where magic is and has always been.

And so we continued to fill this issue with wonders in this vein, and we dedicate it now to stories of transformation, to the art of seeing the beauty that exists right in front of us, and to all the most gorgeous, strange, and glittering dreams of midsummer.

We hope you enjoy it.

Love,

Carolyn Turgeon



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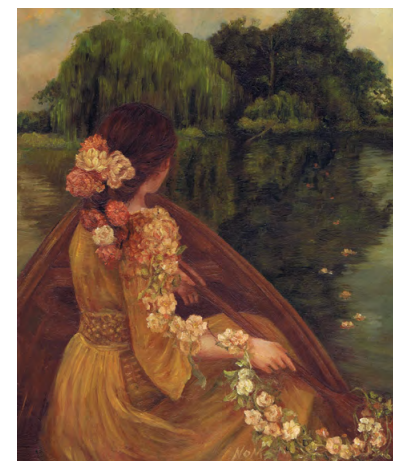
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Eric Brown

Eric Brown grew up in the north woods of Maine. His publications include books on Milton, Shakespeare, and insect poetics, as well as essays on Renaissance literature, film, animal studies, and fairy tales. He's been an English professor at several U.S. universities and a Fulbright scholar in Norway, and currently serves as executive director of the Maine Irish Heritage Center in Portland. "I wrote 'Song of the Hamadryads' specifically for the Flora & Fauna issue of *Enchanted Living*," he says, noting that the tree-bonded nymphs are a unique blend of our two title elements. "I was inspired in part by a childhood memory of seeing foxfire for the first time in the forest behind my home."



Giacomina Ferrillo

Italian artist Giacomina Ferrillo has worked as a set designer, interior designer, and editorial designer, and as an editor and stylist for fashion magazines. She's published more than ten children's books in Italy and abroad as illustrator and author that have been translated into English, Chinese, and Korean. In 2015 she went to England and fell madly in love with botanical art, having already been primed with a love for flowers and plants transmitted to her by her father. She has dedicated herself to botanical art full-time ever since. Her sketchbooks, always indispensable companions of her work and creative process, have become a very personal tool for her work.



Kelly Louise Judd

Kelly Louise Judd, a.k.a. Swan Bones, is an illustrator living in the Midwest with a flock of chickens, a clowder of cats, and two very smart dogs. She's inspired by flora, fauna, and folklore, and she has a deep appreciation of the Arts and Crafts movement. Her illustrations have been featured on novels, in botanical and children's books, in magazines, and on clothing. She can often be found outdoors, tending her garden or simply staring at plants. When we asked her, in our summer 2020 Magical Beasts issue, how she stays enchanted, she replied, "I go outside and look at all the tiny things growing and moving around me. A single blade of grass enchants me."



Mary McMyne

Our poetry editor, Mary McMyne, is a writer and professor fascinated with the representation of women in folklore, history, and literature, as well as the history of magic. Her books are *Wolf Skin*, an award-winning poetry chapbook about fairy tales, and the novel *The Book of Gothel*. Her second novel, *A Rose by Any Other Name*, recounts the story behind Shakespeare's sonnets as told by his Dark Lady. It will be released in July. She says, "The people in Shakespeare's England were obsessed with many types of magic—plant lore, herbalism, alchemy, astrology, spirit summoning, and more. Back then, the disciplines were not separate but interconnected in a beautiful, celestial whole."



Sucharita Sengupta Suri

Sucharita Sengupta Suri is a watercolor artist based in Mumbai. Art has been an intrinsic part of her life's journey since a very young age, but it was not until 2020 that she got the opportunity to fully immerse herself in her art practice. Since then, she's created a large personal portfolio and worked with various international brands and publishing houses. The art she creates is an extension of the world that resides in her mind, as she draws inspiration from the beauty, oddities, and anomalies of nature. Intrigued by cabinets of curiosities, fables, and many other forms of folklore, she aims to evoke a sense of wonder and curiosity through her work.



Megan Vaughan

Megan Vaughan is half the team behind Vaughan House, featured in our cover story and home to a magical greenhouse, monarch waystation, micro-wedding venue, and new enchanted cottage Airbnb. She is also the photographer and visionary behind that story. As we documented in our 2021 Magical Spaces issue, Megan and her husband, Mitch, created Vaughan House after a devastating miscarriage that led Megan to crave an abundance of living plants around her. "It was our faith in God that got us through," she says. "I know everyone believes different things, but for us, our faith is so important to our journey!"

CHARMS, PORTENTS, AND LUCKY TALISMANS

The Magic of Everyday Flora and Fauna

BY SUSANN COKAL

This season, we invite you to look around yourself for luck. Some of the most ordinary flora and fauna are the most potent bringers of good fortune—as long as you treat them with proper reverence.

- Why is a four-leaf clover such good luck? You can count off the blessings in an old rhyme: *One leaf for fame, and one leaf for wealth, and one for a faithful lover, and one to bring glorious health.*
- The Romans believed that spiders were lucky. (So do we!) They carried tokens of engraved or cast-metal arachnids to ensure prosperity. To kill a spider is still unlucky in many parts of Europe, but to see one is good luck, unless it is injured. A spider spinning a web is a particularly good omen; it means you're about to come into some money.
- Foxglove is the fairies' favorite flower and can bring good things if you sow it as a seed. The fae like their "good people's glove" (*maneg ellyllon*, in Welsh) to stay put, however. Transplanting one brings bad luck.
- Cats sometimes get a bad rap, but they're among our dearest familiars. If you have a cat with double claws, take very good care; it brings extra good fortune. And if any cat asks you for help and you turn it away, bad luck will be yours.
- Two herbs are especially beneficial for lovers. Lavender keeps sweethearts happy, so an engaged person should keep bags of it among their clothes to make sure true love runs smooth. Rosemary helps lovers (or anyone) parted by distance. A sprig of it will keep you in your dear one's thoughts.
- Swallows nesting in the eaves of your home are good luck and must not be disturbed.
- The old-fashioned lady's mantle is useful in home remedies. Its cup-shaped leaves collect dewdrops, and the dew is good for strengthening magic elixirs. It may even help alchemists turn base metal to gold.
- In England, if two or more sheep appear at the precise moment a wish takes shape in your mind, that wish will be granted.



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OUR COVER STORY

A Web of
SUMMER
MAGIC

BY SUSANN COKAL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEGAN VAUGHAN
WITH MODEL MOLLY KATHERINE

Our Cover Story

Susann Cokal

Summer is for shape-shifters and surprises, flower spells and animal portents. For dreaming and doing and reveling in the steady surge of life—the ferns that leaf out of control, the rose that blooms and blooms, the fawns who find their legs and begin to explore this messy, gorgeous, ever-changing world. It’s the season for reading Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and experiencing *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for digging up your favorite selkie story or writing one yourself. It’s for falling in thunderstruck love with the flora and fauna at home and in nature. They will transform you in ways you would never expect.

This summer, lose yourself in a forest, in a gown the color of Irish moss—like this one here, by Chotronette—with a crown like a halo of needles. In time you will come upon a cottage, or maybe a greenhouse, nestled in among the trees, as happens in the very best seasons. The door is open, and the display of potted plants inside tempts you to shed your crown. Wings unfurl from your shoulder blades—you become a fairy, seeing and smelling and touching the wonders around you as if for the first time. And then maybe the queen’s gown is too much, so you shimmy out of it and choose something you can run in. Shake out your hair and you’ll feel a surge: The hard white antlers sprout, the sign that this version of you too is at home.

There is no place better for living out tales of summer magic than Vaughan House, the site of this issue’s cover shoot. You might remember the story from our “Magical Spaces” issue in summer 2021: When owners Megan and Mitch Vaughan suffered a miscarriage, Megan fell into depression—and a testing of faith—until a friend’s gift of a potted daffodil somehow struck a hopeful chord. Gradually a new interest in horticulture drew Megan out of her sorrow. It inspired Mitch to build—in their backyard and with his own hands—a rustic greenhouse that Megan could fill with her favorite potted plants.

Today the greenhouse brims over. It is a sanctuary for Megan and Mitch’s young family, and it has unexpectedly transformed their lives. Their property is now a popular micro-wedding venue, and they are putting final touches on a new space, a cottage complete with a turret right out of a fairy tale. As they promise on their website, “We are the folklore hidden in the woods.”

Romantic love is most at home in summer—perhaps with unexpected consequences. Consider *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: If you fall asleep in the forest, you just might find yourself enamored of the first person you see upon waking, if the fairies are around to sprinkle your eyelids with the juice of a wild pansy called love-in-idleness. Or in a most unfortunate transformation, you might wake up with the head of an ass ... and discover that

the person who’s been sleeping near you is perfectly happy with the new you.

Every fairy is a shape-shifter. So are the Scandinavian *nisser*, so are naiads and dryads, goddesses and witches ... and mortals such as this issue’s mascot, Arachne, who was so renowned in life for her tapestries that she aroused the wrath of Athena—and then defeated her in a weaving contest. After a beating with Athena’s shuttle, Arachne repented of her pride and hanged herself. Athena showed mercy by resurrecting Arachne as a spider, and the weaver returned to work on the spot, albeit on a much smaller scale.


“Weaving spiders, come not here,” chants Shakespeare’s First Fairy, protecting Titania’s sleep. “Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence.”

But wait—we’d like to extend those spiders, most humble fauna, an invitation. They are beneficial for the garden and for the home; their only crime is being so good at what they do. In tribute, look for spiderwebs throughout this issue; you’ll find them made out of all sorts of materials, glinting or wisping in sometimes unexpected places.

Take our cover, for example. Our personal Titania, glorious model Molly Katherine, pays homage to Arachne in a golden detail. Molly is a bit of a shape-shifter herself. She says that designing costumes comes naturally for her: “I’ve always had an extensive range of styles, and a lot of times I get consumed by the aesthetic of whatever I’m into at the moment—whether that’s a show, music, or anything else.” Getting into character for a shoot is “really just embodying someone that I already feel like or want to be, so it is a great way for me to channel the different ways I feel on any given day!”

Molly’s long locks are clearly a signature feature. They’re also surprisingly versatile when it comes to transforming herself. “I have endless options,” she says. “If I want to let the outfit shine, I can do something really simple with my hair, and the image will still have that ethereal, fantasy, or Renaissance-painting look I’m going for.”

In Molly’s pictures on these pages, we spot allusions to Pre-Raphaelite painters John William Waterhouse and John Everett Millais, and to stories of enchanted deer, and to the powers of gardens and greenhouses to soothe and inspire and even heal. Most of all, we see in these photos—as with this issue in full—a celebration of summer’s hope and the power of flora and fauna (and very, *very* long hair) to inspire and beguile.



Susann Cokal is the author of four novels, the latest of which is Mermaid Moon. Visit her online at susanncokal.com.



Photographer/Styling: Megan Vaughan @vaughanhouse
Model: Molly Katherine @scarlett.o.hair Dresses: Chotronette @chotronette
Wings: Wearable Whimzy @wearablewhimzy Gold crown: Verdessa Fairy B.Contrary @verdessa_fairy Antler headpiece: @thefloramystica
Florals: Mary @loveisintheairevents Venue: Vaughan House Greenhouse @vaughanhouse





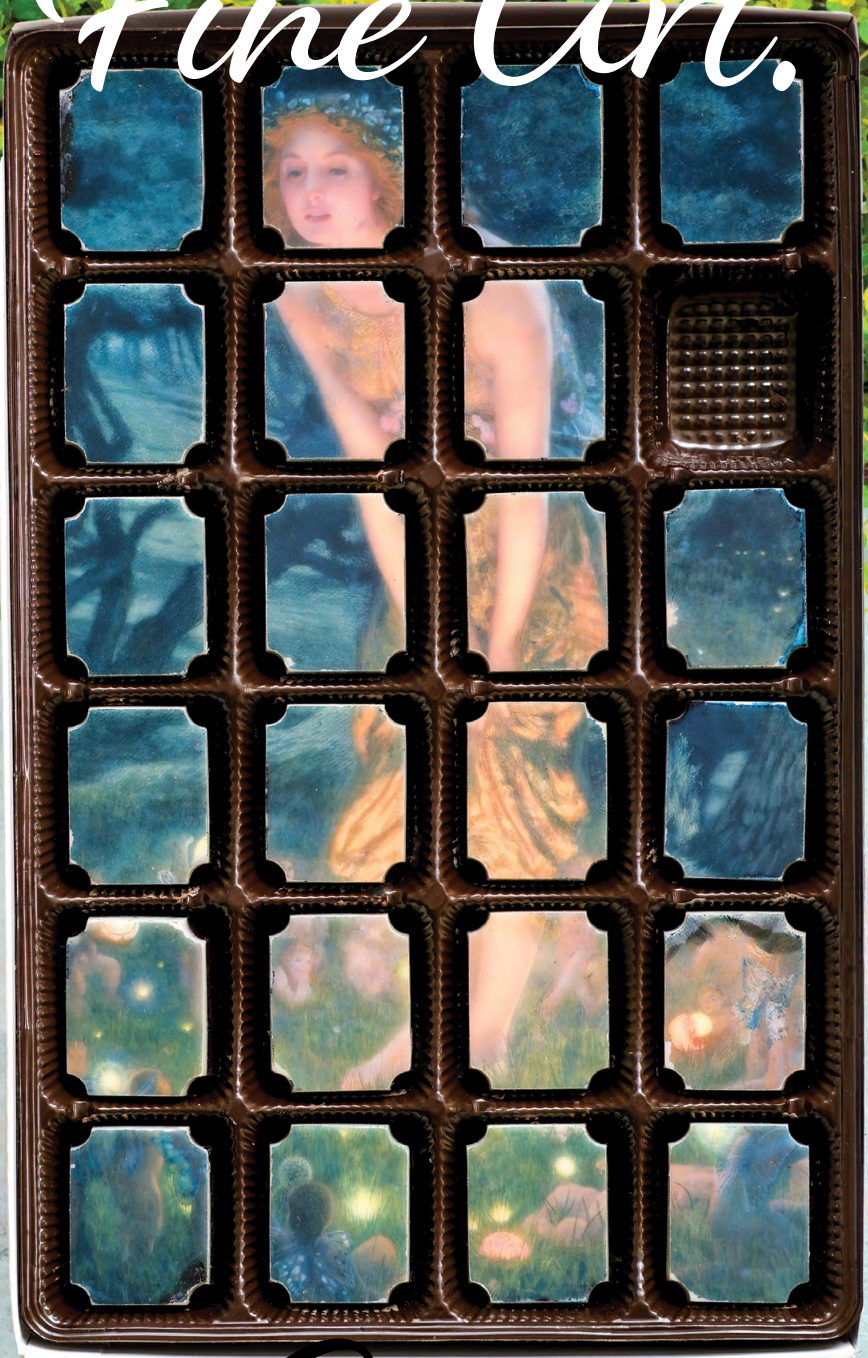


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"Weaving spiders, come not here," chants  
Shakespeare's First Fairy, protecting Titania's sleep.  
"Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence."  
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Gossamer Herb and Flower DRYING RACK

BY SUZANNE LEMMON
A.K.A. THE WITCH AND THE GODDESS

Summer is finally here, abundant and alive—yet so fleeting. Its magic lies in its impermanence, how it urges us to savor each sun-soaked day.

Summer joy for me means gardening and weekend trips to the farmers market. By midsummer my herb garden is overflowing with parsley, basil, chamomile, lavender, mint, and more. A mix of herbs and flowers makes a magical summertime bouquet that you can enjoy fresh for a few days and then hang up to dry. I harvest herb bunches, tie them into bundles, and hang them up to dry too.

If you want to dry your own flowers and herbs, you'll need something to hang them on. An herb and flower drying rack can be anything as simple as a peg in the wall, but if you're like me, simple isn't always enough. I want to make everything extra pretty and extra magical, and if it attracts a fairy or two, so be it! Whether you gather from your own garden or choose to harvest from the farmers market, this tutorial will show you how to create a gorgeous herb and flower drying rack to dry—and show off—all your most shimmering garden delights!

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- One 12- to 15-inch stick, 1 to 2 inches in diameter
- Dried and preserved moss
- 6 to 8 stems of dried and preserved ferns, caspia, baby's breath, or other greenery of your choice
- Dried flower heads
- A crystal of your choosing, measuring from 1 to 3 inches
- 1 package or roll of natural twine
- Hot-glue gun and glue sticks
- 4 wooden clothespins
- Scissors

INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1: With scissors, cut 4 separate lengths of twine measuring about 36 inches each.

Step 2: Loop one length of twine around the stick, using what is called the lark's head knot: Fold the twine over itself to form a loop. Pass the loop behind your stick. Take both ends of the twine and pass them through the loop. Tighten around the stick.

Step 3: Repeat step 2 with the remaining lengths of twine. Position the lengths of twine an equal distance apart along the stick.

Step 4: Make a bouquet of greenery, filler, and herbs approximately 8 inches long. Layering different kinds of greenery and filler will give it a full, natural look. Tie the stems together with cording. With scissors or floral shears, trim the stems so that an inch is visible.





Step 5: Arrange the bouquets with stems in the center of the stick and overlapping. Both sides of the stick will now be covered with greenery.

Step 6: Cut 10 inches of twine and wrap twice around the center of the stick and stems. Secure them in place by tying a tight knot with the twine, then trim the excess twine.

Step 7: Hot-glue a cluster of moss in the center to conceal the knot.

Step 8: Add a generous amount of hot glue to the bottom of your crystal (here I used an amethyst cluster) and press down in the center of the moss, holding in place until it feels secure.

Step 9: Hot-glue flowers around the crystal however you like. You can add as little or as much as you want.

Step 10: Make the hanger for your drying rack. First, cut two separate lengths of twine, each measuring 28 inches.

Step 11: Using the lark’s head knot described in Step 2, loop each length of twine to one end of the stick.

Step 12: Bring the ends of the twine together, then tie them. Pull tightly to secure the knot.

Step 13: Clip a clothespin to each length of twine hanging down. These will allow you to quickly and easily hang bundles of flowers and herbs to dry.

Now go forth and gather your own favorite herbs and flowers to hang for this beautiful, fragrant—and practical—home decoration!

Suzanne Lemmon has just published her first book, The Cottage Witch’s Guide to Magic: 25 Enchanting Projects to Make Your Home More Sacred. A seasoned nature artist and witchcraft practitioner, she’s the creator behind the popular Instagram account and Etsy shop @thewitchandthegoddess and currently lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She regularly updates her shop with new magical offerings at etsy.com/shop/thewitchthegoddess.



Photo by Bridget Beth Collins
@flora.forager

Here I Am to Rescue You
by Walter Jenks Morgan (1847-1924)





SHIMMERING *in the* SHADOWS

by Bridget Beth Collins, a.k.a. Flora Forager



We've been enamored of the work of Bridget Beth Collins, a.k.a. Flora Forager, for some time. She's a self-described petal painter, light seeker, magic weaver, and flower nymph, as well as the author of several books, including *The Fairy Journals*, *Flora Forager ABC*, and the recently released *Moth Dust*, which she describes as "an Edwardian, flowery, starry smorgasbord of everything I love." We asked if she'd write something for our theme, "about the magic of flowers and webs and dewdrops and what have you." Below is what she sent us.

There is a place I like to go when the world becomes too big. I shrink down down down in my mind, to where no human eyes can see me. Dewdrops sparkle as giant orbs; diamonds drift in a muted landscape of blue-green. A flower unfurls and I clamber inside.

The moon brightens its petals until I'm wrapped in a glowing lantern of light. Fresh, curling air fills my lungs, which have felt clamped until this very moment. Like an elixir in a dry desert, the sweet-smelling newness of growing things delights me. Here, anything is possible. I could shimmer into stardust, or hold tight to the ruby feathers of a hummingbird as we flit through the sweet peas. I could dust my cheeks with the rainbow mist from a waterfall, or fall madly in love with a summer breeze.

Somehow, I always get tearful in this dreamy state, thinking of how easy it is to forget the enchantment of this world. I think the shift in perspective comes from remembering what truly matters. Why am I fretting over the worries of the material world when the magical one has so much to offer me? And here's the most beautiful secret: It is real too.



Wander into the garden or put your nose in the little tuft of wildflowers along the pavement and look: The daisies have their crowns, the beetles have their armor, the snails have their forever homes swirling around them.

The flora and fauna of our world are but a mirror of your own glimmering soul. You have a kingdom, shining armor, and a crown at your disposal if you have the eyes to see them. Surely there are fairies crafting iridescent wings for us each time we view something extravagant or precious in nature ... Haven't you ever felt your heart soar?

Sometimes it can be too hard to see beyond the veil of this ordinary world, which as children we could brush aside and tumble through. Life draws a curtain of sorrow and drudgery that can be hard to look beyond. But that doesn't mean that magic isn't there right now, shimmering in the shadows, waiting for our return.

Sometimes just the thought of it waiting beyond my window is enough to get me through.

See more of Bridget Beth Collins's work at floraforager.com and visit her on Instagram @[flora_forager](https://www.instagram.com/flora_forager).



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ROSE CAKE *with* GOSSAMER WEBS

BY MUST LOVE HERBS

I grew up in the sprawling countryside where all manner of flower grew bright and wild and an orb weaver spider found her way into our garden every summer, crafting her loveliest, most intricate gossamer web among the dew-drenched blooms. There she'd remain throughout the warm months, perfectly positioned to observe her kingdom.

Now, on my own property, I have a new line of orb weavers enchanting passing fairies and catching dewdrops each morning. Last year one of them spun a shining silver web that was almost nine feet tall and lasted into the early fall—an impressive feat even by orb weaver standards. This rose cake is my ode to those lovely orb weavers of my childhood and all the ones who've come after.



ROSE CAKE (with dairy- and gluten-free alternatives)

2 cups all-purpose flour or 1:1 gluten-free mix

1½ cups granulated sugar

3½ teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

2 to 3 teaspoons rose powder, depending on desired flavor potency

½ cup melted butter, dairy or plant-based

3 eggs (at room temperature), or ¾ cup unsweetened applesauce

1 cup milk (at room temperature), dairy or plant-based

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease four 6-inch round cake pans and line with parchment paper. Set aside.

Combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and rose powder. Sift to combine. Add the butter, eggs, and milk. Mix by hand or with an electric mixer until evenly combined and lump free. This should take 1 to 2 minutes.

Divide the batter evenly into the four cake pans. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out cleanly.

Allow the cakes to cool in their pans for 20 minutes before carefully transferring them to a wire rack as you begin working on the frosting.

BUTTERCREAM FROSTING (with dairy-free alternatives)

1 cup unsalted butter (softened), dairy or plant-based

5 to 6 cups powdered sugar, depending on desired consistency

¼ cup heavy cream or full-fat coconut milk

Food coloring (optional)

Fit your standing mixer with the whisk attachment. Put the butter in the bowl and turn the mixer on low. Add in the powdered sugar, ½ cup at a time. Once you've mixed in 2 cups of sugar, add a splash of cream. Add in food coloring, if you choose. Continue adding sugar until desired consistency is achieved. If the frosting is too thick, you can add more cream.

GELATIN SPIDERWEBS

3 envelopes plain gelatin

5 tablespoons water

Food-safe marker

Parchment paper

Plastic squeeze bottle or thick pastry bag fitted with a fine icing piping tip

Using a food-safe marker, draw spiderwebs on a piece of parchment paper. Set aside.

Combine the gelatin and water in a medium saucepan. Turn to medium-low heat and allow the gelatin to dissolve; this should take around 1 minute. (It took me a lot of trial and error to figure out how to get the gelatin to harden, but not harden too quickly!)

Once it's dissolved, carefully pour the mixture into a plastic squeeze bottle or piping bag fitted with a small pointed tip. Pipe the gelatin out onto the drawn spiderwebs by tracing them carefully. Do this for as many spiderwebs as you'd like to create. I did three different designs. Make sure to pipe as quickly as you can because the gelatin sets up fast.

Now, if you are vegan or using only plant-based ingredients, gelatin will not be an option for you. But you can always use nontoxic school glue! This idea actually came from my years as a schoolteacher making glue spiderwebs in the classroom: I wanted to make an edible version of them!



Follow Lauren May on Instagram @mustloveherbs or mustloveherbs.com.

A Softer Kind of Wild

BY EMBER MARKUSSEN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHEL MADRIGAL



Once upon a time, the world was quiet and open. Wet earth gave way to mossy hills and twirling vines. In burrows and glens, life re-created itself, loved, lived, died. Misty mornings drifted toward moonlit nights and we emerged, soft and open. We lay still in the bosom of the earth, allowing her to moisten us with rain and comb our hair with wind. We received. Once upon a time, when time did not exist.

We wake now in a frenzied haze. Encased in metal and concrete, hard and edgy and claustrophobic, we numb ourselves in the safe monotony of our bunkers with information streaming through faster and faster as we wonder why we feel so uncomfortably far from ourselves. Still we build. In the bulldozed earth we smell the raw clay, the roots, the bedrock. A feral knowing is activated in the body. Do we heed it? A familiar call pricks our ears. Do we know it? The wind that raises fine hairs on our back, the sudden splash of the rain, the petrichor ... do we follow it to the dewy slopes of the wild?

Here there are no rules, no polite small talk, no business casual. Here there is no concrete; here there are no walls. The earth stretches on forever, an endless green vastness. How long have you felt the yearning, the desperate hunger to run without stopping, to stop without running, the urge for freedom? The time has come to merge with the soft creature inside you. The time has come to return home.

Here we open as flowers, release the sweet scent of our desire, unfurl ourselves into long, trembling lines. Beneath the sun's rays we allow our juices to warm, alchemizing nourishment to nectar. As lazy blossoms, we sway alluringly on the breeze, invite the bees to visit us, tickle us, deliver our love letters, and beg us for more. Growth is not a scream but an effortless unfolding, the energy surging down from our tips to our base to create more, more, more. We grow heavy with our own love, sweet and ripe, drooping lower and lower from those dizzying heights, reaching back toward that sweet smell of earth before we kiss the lips of the doe and stain her tongue purple.

Ah, the circle, the cycle. The constant ebb and flow of life, the giving and receiving, the opening and closing. And yet we grow

back, over and over, embracing the slippery moments between lifetimes as we cast ourselves to the sun.

Do you remember how to open?

Here, hooves in the grass, the doe moves slowly, sweetly. In the dappled shadows of the undergrowth she fades away, silently traversing the space. Each vibration searches for the sweetgrass, the low berries, the teeth.

Everything in this world is part of her, as familiar as her mother's tongue. Her sentience extends from

the buzzing heat of the sky to the cool thud of the ground. The doe feels every

movement of her herd, invisibly snuffling among the soft clover, their consciousness gently caressing her own. They meld together, thirty bodies in one breath. Her breath. Antlers rise like the trees and thrust into the air, reminding her to listen, listen ... hear the earth.

Do you remember how to listen?

Do you remember how to breathe?

Once you too were a flower, tucked into your genie's bottle of perfumed pink light, waiting to shower the earth with your beauty. Once, you too were an animal, crawling or hiding or leaping, grasping the delicate flesh of fruit with your teeth and tearing it from the stem. Do you remember? Do you recall being earth and sky, complete, whole, because there was no other way to be? Whole and wild and free.

Our hands are still marked with clay, our skin still tingles with knowledge. We still hear the call. We are drawn back to those bodies, the full flowering, the united breath. We long to welcome the earth as our lover. We are ready to tear down the concrete walls, let the vines curl around the ruins of our superhighways, and throw ourselves with reckless abandon into the wild once more.



Ember Markussen is a healer and creator in the coastal canyons of Southern California, dedicated to helping each of us live our story and our truth. Find her musings at The Story Priestess wherever you prefer to virtually socialize, or visit her at thestorypriestess.com

See more of Rachel Madrigal's work at twinflamephoto.com.



Featured Artist

ANN CARRINGTON

British artist Ann Carrington was welding in her studio a couple of years ago when she noticed, over a two-day period, a spider steadily weaving its web nearby. It was, she says, “a thing of beauty and a privilege to watch.”

She did a bit of research and learned, among other things, that spiders’ silk is five times stronger than a steel wire of similar diameter. “If human sized, a spiderweb would be tough enough to snag a jumbo jet!” she marvels. She began imagining a spiderweb made from steel, snagging perhaps not jumbo jets but supersize bugs and neighboring spiders! Eventually she put the piece she was working on aside and started making a web instead.

She has by now produced more dazzling webs than a cluster of spiders—and they can be huge, measuring five feet or more across. Hers are made primarily of a welded-steel base onto which she’s woven additional webs fashioned from old necklaces, beads, and bracelets; she attaches handmade or found brass bugs from old ashtrays, trinket dishes, ornaments, butterfly brooches, and vintage necklaces. She thinks of the bugs and insects she attaches as lucky charms or amulets. The beads on the webs are suggestive of dew.

Though her body of work is vast and varied and wonderful, she keeps returning to her favorite motif. The effect of all the brass and found objects and painstaking work is, in the end, quite delicate, even transcendent, just like that first inspiring gossamer web.

“I find beauty in mundane objects that other people might pass by,” Carrington says. “There is magic all around. You just have to stop and pay attention.”

See more of her work at anncarrington.co.uk and visit her on Instagram @anncarringtonart.



BLODEUWEDD

The Woman Made of Flowers

by Theodora Goss

She opens her eyes. What does she see in the first moments of her existence? The *Mabinogion* does not tell us, but we can imagine. She is standing in a forest glade, surrounded by the detritus of her construction: oak branches stripped of their blossoms, the prickly stems of broom, the smooth stems of meadowsweet. She was made from their flowers, which sounds very romantic. But to be honest, it reminds me of either Ikea furniture or Frankenstein’s monster. In that forest glade stand the men who made her: Math son of Mathonwy, king of Gwynedd, and his nephew Gwydion son of Don. Both are powerful magicians. Here is the official description from the *Mabinogion*, as translated by Lady Charlotte Guest: “So they took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw. And they baptized her, and gave her the name of Blodeuwedd.” But what does Blodeuwedd see with her newly opened eyes? She has no idea who she is, what men are, or why she has been made. She must be so confused.

As you might be at this point, if you are not familiar with Welsh mythology. So let’s go back a bit, because the story of Blodeuwedd (pronounced *Blo-dey-weth*) is a small part of a larger story that begins before her creation. That story starts with another woman, Arianrod, Gwydion’s sister. As so often happens in Welsh mythology, Math lives under a strange condition: Except when he is at war, his feet must rest in the lap of a maiden. In the fourth part of the *Mabinogion*, which is named “Math son of Mathonwy,” Gwydion’s brother Gilvaethwy falls in love with Math’s lap-maiden, Goewin. Through an elaborate ruse, Gwydion tricks Math into going to war, and while Math is away, Gilvaethwy forces himself on Goewin. When Math returns, Goewin tells Math that she is no longer a maiden and angrily recounts what Gilvaethwy and Gwydion have done. Math takes her as his wife, and to punish the brothers, he turns them first into a pair of deer, then into a pair of wild boar, and



finally into a pair of wolves. Meanwhile, he must find another lap-maiden. Gwydion suggests his sister Arianrod. Why does Math listen to anything Gwydion says at this point? Your guess is as good as mine, but trickster figures like Loki, Hermes, and Gwydion always seem to get their way. Math summons Arianrod and, to test if she is indeed a maiden, tells her to step over his magical wand. She steps over the wand and immediately bears a son, as well as what the *Mabinogion* describes as “some small form.” Angry that she has been exposed as not-a-maiden, Arianrod storms out of the room. Gwydion scoops up the small form and hides it in a chest. One day he hears a cry from the chest—it is a second child, which begins growing very quickly. When this second son is old enough, Gwydion takes him to Arianrod and introduces him as her offspring. She is so furious at this reminder of her shame that she lays a curse on the boy: He shall never have a name unless she names him. Of course Gwydion tricks her into giving the boy a name, Llew Llaw Gyffes. When she curses him again, saying that he will never have arms and armor unless they come from her, Gwydion tricks her into giving them to Llew. Arianrod curses Llew a third time: He shall never marry a human woman. This is where the story of Blodeuwedd begins.

The most beautiful description of the creation of Blodeuwedd was written by the Irish poet Francis Ledwidge, in a poem titled “The Wife of Llew”:

*And Gwydion said to Math, when it was Spring:
“Come now and let us make a wife for Llew.”
And so they broke broad boughs yet moist with dew,
And in a shadow made a magic ring:
They took the violet and the meadow-sweet
To form her pretty face, and for her feet
They built a mound of daisies on a wing,
And for her voice they made a linnet sing
In the wide poppy blowing for her mouth.*

*And over all they chanted twenty hours.
And Llew came singing from the azure south
And bore away his wife of birds and flowers.*

This is even more romantic than the description in the *Mabinogion*, but Ledwidge’s reference to “birds and flowers” hints at the darkness of Blodeuwedd’s story, which will end with a very different kind of bird than that famous songster, the linnet.

Imagine that from the moment you open your eyes as a sentient being, you are told you have been made for a particular purpose: to be the wife of a man you’ve never met and certainly did not choose for yourself. How could Math and Gwydion have thought this would end well? Blodeuwedd marries Llew, but one day while he’s away from his castle, she sees Gronw Pebyr, the lord of Penllyn, out hunting. She invites him and his men to spend the night in the castle, and as they sit together by the fire, she falls in love with him, and he with her. But how can they be together? There is only one way, Gronw tells Blodeuwedd: She must find out how Llew can be killed, and Gronw will kill him. Evidently, killing Llew is a complicated matter. When Blodeuwedd asks him how to do it, ostensibly so she can guard against any such thing happening, he tells her that he cannot be killed either riding or on foot, either inside or outside a house. Additionally, he can only be killed by a spear made over the course of a year on Sundays during the Mass. Sure enough, Gronw, who must have a lot of patience, starts making the spear.

A year later, Blodeuwedd tricks Llew into demonstrating the conditions under which the spear could do its dastardly work. He goes to a bathing hut in which there is a tub, stands with one foot on the edge of the tub and the other on the back of a goat—and Gronw throws his spear. With a scream, Llew rises up in the form of an eagle and flies away. Gronw takes over Llew’s land and castle, and the lovers live happily together—or so I presume. In the *Mabinogion*, we are never told what Blodeuwedd thinks or feels. What did she think of her husband Llew? Why did she fall in love with Gronw? Is she happy to be with him, after Llew has flown off in eagle shape? Does a woman made of flowers think and feel the way a human woman would? I wish we could get inside Blodeuwedd’s head. What would the world of medieval Wales look like to her?

Whatever happiness she has with Gronw lasts only a year. Gwydion finds eagle-Llew perched in an oak tree, summons him down with three short poems, and turns him back into a man. Together, they ask Math to help Llew regain his territory and revenge himself on the lovers. When Blodeuwedd hears they are coming, she flees, but she is overtaken by Gwydion. Once again she stands in a forest glade, facing the trickster-magician. He says, “I will not slay thee, but I will do unto thee worse than that. For I will turn thee into a bird; and because of the shame thou hast done unto Llew Llaw Gyffes, thou shalt never show thy face in the light of day henceforth; and that through fear of all the other birds. For it shall be their nature to attack thee, and to chase thee from wheresoever they may find thee. And thou shalt not lose thy name, but shalt be always

called Blodeuwedd.” He turns her not into the linnet Ledwidge identified her with, but into an owl. The *Mabinogion* goes on to tell us that “Blodeuwedd is an owl in the language of this present time, and for this reason is the owl hateful unto all birds. And even now the owl is called Blodeuwedd.”

Here we have lost something in translation. In the original Welsh, the woman made of flowers was Blodeuedd (without the w), meaning literally “flowers,” and in transforming her, Gwydion renames her Blodeuwedd, “flower-face”—a term that also refers to an owl. Lady Guest omitted this change in spelling. Perhaps she didn’t understand the pun? I have referred to her version because it’s the most poetic, as well as the one most readers are familiar with, but it’s not always accurate to the original Welsh. Like a good Victorian, she elided certain episodes that would have discomfited middle-class drawing rooms. In the original, Math’s punishment of Gwydion and Gilvaethwy includes turning them into opposite-gender animals (for example, a doe and a stag), who must bear a series of young together. Lady Guest’s version does not mention this odd instance of brothers coupling as animals. Gwydion and Gilvaethwy simply return to court with a fawn, a boarlet, and a wolf cub, which are turned into young men by Math’s magic. In Blodeuwedd’s story, Lady Guest’s spelling mistake may simply have been an oversight, but it erased an important part of the narrative. In the *Mabinogion*, a name is a character’s identity—Gwydion turns Llew back into a man by naming him three times. However, by changing Blodeuedd’s name into Blodeuwedd, he fixes her forever in owl form.

So the flower-woman becomes a bird-woman, condemned to fly at night. Gwydion does not seem to think much of owls, but I find them quite beautiful, and appropriately they are flower-faced. The way their feathers spread outward on their faces, from their sharp beaks and watchful eyes, makes them look a bit like winged orchids. What sort of owl is Blodeuwedd turned into? The most common owls in the United Kingdom are barn owls, tawny owls, little owls, and short- and long-eared owls. All of them have faces shaped like hearts, appropriate for a woman who is punished for loving the wrong man. But if Gwydion intends to punish Blodeuwedd, he does not do a very good job. Instead of taking her back to Llew, which would have been a punishment indeed, he turns her into a mysterious creature of the night, whose cry—*Hoo! Hoo!*—is the voice of darkness itself. He gives her wings and freedom.

The fourth part of the *Mabinogion* is about the men: Math, Gwydion, Llew. It focuses on their wars and rivalries, to the point that it could be renamed “Men Behaving Badly.” Even Blodeuwedd’s story ends not when she is turned into an owl, but when Gwydion fights and slays Gronw. The two men agree that, turnabout being fair play, Gwydion may throw a spear at Gronw. But because Gronw claims that “the wiles of a woman” induced him to conspire in Llew’s death, basically saying it was all Blodeuwedd’s fault, he is given the right to protect himself from the spear-throw with a slab of rock. It doesn’t work—Gwydion’s spear goes right through, piercing both the



Night Flight
by Kelly Louise Judd
@swanbones

rock and Gronw’s chest. I have no sympathy for him. This section of the *Mabinogion* could also be called “Men Blaming Women for Their Actions.” The most interesting characters in “Math son of Mathonwy” are the three women: Goewin, Arianrod, Blodeuwedd. I wish I could retell the story from their perspectives—what did they think and feel, while the men were absorbed in fighting one another?

Blodeuwedd, in particular, is such a fascinating character that she has flown out of that tale and into others. Most famously, Alan Garner’s novel *The Owl Service*, published in 1967 and broadcast as a television series in 1969–70, turns the story of Blodeuwedd into a cyclical myth that must be re-enacted in every generation. Three teenagers spending the summer in Wales are haunted by the story of Blodeuwedd. The girl, Alison, finds a porcelain dinner service on which the floral design can also be seen as owls. She begins behaving strangely, drawing that design on paper and folding her drawings into the shapes of owls, which disappear as though they have flown off by themselves. The two boys, her stepbrother Roger and Gwyn, the housekeeper’s son, also experience strange phenomena. It seems as though the three are re-enacting the triangular relationship of Blodeuwedd, Llew, and Gronw, with its passion and hatred. In the end, Alison must be saved from a mysterious force that seems to have taken possession of her, leaving claw marks on her body as though she has been scratched by owls, while a storm rages outside—even the elements have taken on a mythic dimension. The possession ends only when Roger reminds Alison—over and over, until it seems as though Blodeuwedd hears him—that she is supposed to be flowers, not owls.

In *The Owl Service*, the story of Blodeuwedd shows its dark, menacing side. But for modern pagans, she is a Celtic goddess of spring and rebirth. Her identity as both flower and bird reminds me of two other goddesses. The first is Flora, Roman goddess of flowering plants, whose festival, the Floralia, was celebrated around when we celebrate May Day. Women have historically been associated with flowers—in Botticelli’s *The Birth of Venus*, the winds blow flowers toward the goddess of love, emerging on her half-shell, and nymphs wait to wrap her in a flowered garment. But women have also been associated, in a more complicated way, with birds. The second goddess Blodeuwedd reminds me of is Ishtar, as she is depicted on a stone plaque in the British Museum. The plaque, which comes from ancient Iraq, depicts a woman with wings and clawed feet. She stands on the backs of two lions flanked by two owls, like an owl-lion-goddess-lion-owl sandwich. She is nude and does not look in the least ashamed of it. Her hair is looped up in an elaborate hairstyle that was probably the latest thing in ancient Mesopotamia. Her official name on the British Museum website is “Queen of the Night.” I saw the plaque myself, several years ago. It was smaller but also more powerful than I had expected. It reminded me of other bird-women,

such as the Greek sirens and harpies.

If Blodeuwedd is indeed a goddess, or if we want to consider her one, I think she must have two sides. She can be the goddess of flowers and springtime. But she must also be the goddess of darkness and perhaps even death (although followed by rebirth). We don’t need to make the choice presented in *The Owl Service*, because Blodeuwedd is both: flowers and owls. And in a sense, aren’t we all? We have our bright and dark sides, and we would be diminished if we tried to choose one or the other. I like to think that when Blodeuwedd flies out of the *Mabinogion* on owl wings, she flies into her own story, which will go however she wants to tell it.



Art page 42: *Blodeuwedd* (1925-30), by Christopher Williams
© Newport Museum and Art Gallery / Bridgeman Images

Theodora Goss is the World Fantasy, Locus, and Mythopoeic Award-winning author or editor of eleven books, including the short-story and poetry collections The Collected Enchantments and Snow White Learns Witchcraft, as well as her trilogy that began with The Strange Case of the Alchemist’s Daughter and ended with The Sinister Mystery of the Mesmerizing Girl. Follow her on Instagram @theodoragoss.



FLORA & FAUNA DECOR

by Rona Berg



Found & Foraged Kitchen Towels

Imagine the most deliciously soft kitchen towels, made from 100-percent flour-sack cotton, screen-printed with eco-friendly inks. Then conjure a pattern of lovely foraged wild plants like horsetail shoots, leeks, sweet clover, and ostrich ferns, also screen-printed, on the long-lasting, generously sized 25-by-26-inch towels. Prepare to be delighted by the Found & Foraged Flour Sack Towels, which you can find in *Enchanted Living's* Enchanted Kitchen Collection! enchantedlivingmag.com

Purple Vanda Flower Bowl

Gazing at the handcrafted Emilio Robba Purple Vanda Flower Bowl from Belle & June Home Decor creates a moment of pure joy and brings a Zen tranquility to any room. Robba, known as the “sculptor of flowers,” is a photographer and floral designer who creates stunning floral designs in collaboration with designers, architects, and luxe hotels. The thick glass bowl is available in three sizes and comes in a precious gift box—because it is a perfect gift! belleandjune.com

Sin in Linen in Your Dreams

The mise-en-scène embroidered on the Forest Witch Duvet Cover (shown above) from Sin in Linen is a botanical image with a golden-thread spiderweb, spider, moth, insects, and foliage that took many thousands of stitches to create on an eggplant-colored background. In rich gem tones that evoke a sun-dappled forest, which was the inspiration for this dreamy vision, with spiderweb shams in 300 thread count, 100-percent cotton sateen. sininlinen.com

From baroque to biophilia and every period in between, interior designers have been influenced by the pull of nature to create spectacular—and soothing—indoor environments that connect to the natural world. The Victorians were masters, relying on earthy pigments mixed from plants and dark woods such as mahogany, burl walnut, oak, and rosewood, and a mad obsession with collecting, cataloging, and mounting colorful butterflies, insects, and bones in glass boxes.

Biophilic design, extremely popular over the past few years, is a way of connecting indoor spaces with nature by incorporating elements that evoke the calming aspects of the outside world: terraces and gardens, fountains and indoor plants, oversize windows that frame views of the landscape outdoors. Here are some lovely decor items inspired by the world's flora and fauna.

Linebaugh Studios Suncatcher

The Linebaugh Studios Corner Hanging Spider Web Suncatcher (shown at right) holds and refracts the light coming through the window to create a gorgeous kaleidoscopic effect. The asymmetrical piece features iridescent clear glass in a variety of textures, made with lead-free solder and an antiqued zinc frame with two loops for hanging. An intriguing piece that plays with light in a uniquely magical way! linebaughstudios.com

Victorian-Style Kim Seybert Arbor Placemats

The Kim Seybert Arbor Placemat Set (shown at right) from Alchemy Fine Home might be over the top in its hand-beaded gorgeousness, but that is why we want it immediately—and you will too! Inspired by the romance of Victorian greenhouses that have been abandoned, the Arbor Placemats (set of two) feature exquisite work with glass and acrylic beads and sequins, hand-folded to create a three-dimensional effect. They need and deserve to be treated very gently, but they're worth the extra care! alchemyfinehome.com

Needlepoint From Beth Russell

Designer Beth Russell creates the loveliest needlepoint kits based on nature designs from William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. We love the Acanthus & Birds cushion in a dark or light palette, and her interpretation of William Morris's famous Strawberry Thief fabric for a chair seat or cushion, and the Bee Miniature from the Rose Garden collection for pollinator fans! Create something truly special, stitch by stitch, with one of these needlepoint kits. bethrussellneedlepoint.com



BRINGING THE OUTDOORS IN

Living in the forest, in the mountains, or along the beach is a beautiful way to connect with the sights and sounds of nature. But most of us are not that fortunate. Nonetheless, taking natural flora and fauna as inspiration, it is easy to be creative and dream up lovely design ideas that will bring the outside in. Here are a few to think about.

- **Natural Collection** When you find yourself in a local park or at the beach, keep an eye out for pretty rocks (heart-shaped stones are my favorites!), bits of beach glass, pine cones, and shapely twigs. Arrange them in a wooden tray and put them on display to remind you of where you were and how you felt when you were there.
- **Pure Palette** Take inspiration from colors found outdoors, in nature: forest green, rose red, sunshine yellow, moss brown, sky gray, lavender purple, mesa orange, and cloudy-day gray. Use them for accents and pops of color for throws, pillows, and rugs.
- **Add Texture** Woven baskets, rugs, poufs, floor cushions, and screens made of jute or woven fibrous materials add depth and texture to your home. Baskets can also help you get organized when used to hold books, magazines, blankets, and throws. Bring in strong and sturdy elements such as a rattan chair or stone bench.
- **Natural Scents** Add an extra-sensory dimension with natural aromatherapy scents in an essential-oil based reed diffuser—sandalwood, pine, cedar—or a flower-scented candle in the living room or bathroom.
- **Soft Materials** Look for natural fibers—linen, organic cotton, Tencel—to adorn your bed, chairs, sofa, throw pillows, or cushions. Sheets or blankets made of soft natural materials without synthetic fibers or chemical additives can provide a better night's sleep.
- **Let the Sun Shine In** The sun can brighten up any space, though of course it can also fade the furniture. If you have a bright, sunny spot, add a plant or two, along with a comfortable chair—in a neutral shade. Voilà, a sunny and cozy reading nook!



Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg

THE MAGIC OF THE FAE

by Susan Ilka Tuttle, a.k.a. *Whisper in the Wood*

As you wander through the forest, the enchanting melodies of the birds and the gentle rustling of leaves guide your steps deeper into the realm of the fae. Every breath fills you with the essence of the deep wood, connecting you to its ancient energy. The dappling sunlight creates a dance of shadows and light, painting the forest floor with shifting patterns of gold and green. You feel a sense of wonder and reverence for the vibrant life all around you, knowing that you are stepping into a realm where magic is tangible and alive.

“A lady, with whom I was riding in the forest, said to me, that the woods always seemed to her to wait, as if the genii who inhabit them suspended their deeds until the wayfarer has passed onward: a thought which poetry has celebrated in the dance of the fairies, which breaks off on the approach of human feet.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson

In numerous cultures, the idea of nature fairies—faeries or fae, in more archaic spellings—has fascinated humans, and this affinity has been reflected in religious and spiritual practices, and in various forms of art and storytelling. Timeworn folktales of the fae interacting with human beings have been passed down from generation to generation, across continents.

The English word *fairy* comes from the Latin *fatum*. It means “fate,” as do other derivatives around the world, including the French word *fee*, the Italian *fata*, and the Scottish variant *fae*. But however you prefer the word, you can entwine your fate with the fae this summer, if you wish.

A Brief Fairy History

When you hear the word *fairy*, what kind of vision comes to mind? Do you imagine a tiny feminine sprite with delicate gossamer wings and a gauzy tunic bedecked with sparkle and shine? A kindhearted being that grants wishes, waving a wand with pixie dust trailing behind it? Just like other mythical entities of old—unicorns, dragons, elves, and mermaids—faeries have been morphed by popular culture into modern versions that only vaguely capture the enchantment and splendor of their original forms.

The first “fairy” tales emerged in Greek mythology, where faeries are depicted as fierce protectors of the natural world. The gods and goddesses who created Earth also created these alluring, tiny nymphs of the meadow, forest, trees, and water, each designated to care for their respective natural environments. The masculine nymphs, known as satyrs, are depicted as both good and evil, while the feminine nymphs are portrayed as pure and innocent. Similar creatures can be found in the folklore of other cultures, and are particularly prevalent in the lore of the Celts. Some are benevolent, helpful faeries like pixies and elves; others can be mischievous and spiteful—

especially if they become upset—like leprechauns and Celtic brownies. Other Celtic faeries include the grogochs, merrows, korrigans, dullahans, pookas, and bean sídhes. This collective of legendary, magical beings serves as a foundation for later faerie myths.

During the medieval and Renaissance periods in Europe, the concept of faeries and the belief in them was strong, especially in the British Isles. Like their earlier counterparts, they were associated with nature and believed to inhabit and watch over forests, gardens, and bodies of water.

In the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras of the 16th and 17th centuries, a growing fascination with faeries took place in artistic and literary circles. In his work, Shakespeare portrayed faeries as graceful, otherworldly beings that dwelled in enchanted realms, separate from the world of humans. This concept progressed into the Victorian era, where the idea of faeries became more whimsical and romanticized, as featured visually in artwork by John Anster Fitzgerald, Richard Dadd, Sophie Gengembre Anderson, and numerous others, and musically in Tchaikovsky’s “Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” from *The Nutcracker*. Cicely Mary Barker, beloved artist of the early 20th century, adopted a more idealized view of these creatures in her illustrations, portraying them as innocent and childlike with strong connections to nature.

Modern adaptations of the 20th and 21st centuries present faeries as magical beings filled with mystery, some benevolent, some tricksters. Think of J.R.R. Tolkien’s writings about Middle-earth, where the terms *elves* and *fairies* are used interchangeably. And of course, there is the *Harry Potter* series, where we see Neville Longbottom in *The Chamber of Secrets* with electric-blue Cornish pixies—mischievous, winged creatures flying through the air, wreaking havoc.

Are Faeries Real?

You will have to decide for yourself, but recognize that there have always been and continue to be non-physical, non-tangible mysteries and enchantments that cannot be explained by materialistic thinking or science. As Shakespeare wrote in *Hamlet*, “There are more things in heaven and earth ... than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” Think of fairy rings of mushrooms, spiritual sites like Stonehenge, and intricately designed crop circles.

Connecting With the Fae

Spirits of the faerie realm can be felt strongly during the warmer months, when flora are blossoming and wildlife is thriving, and when much needs tending to after awakening from a long winter’s nap.

In my personal experience as a psychic medium living in the



Titania (1866),
by John Simmons

© Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives / Bridgeman Images

J. Simmons
1866

woods of rural Maine, I can say that fae energy takes on many forms. Some entities are very small and commune in clusters. I’ve had the gift and pleasure of witnessing fae inside my home that look like green phosphorescence. Other spirits are grand and may watch over the trees. Garden fae will help you design and tend to your gardens, especially more natural, wilder gardens with native plants that support all life in that habitat. For example, I once asked the fae for help with a magnolia tree, and that year it grew a foot and sprouted new branches. Another year I had wild blue vervain pop up out of nowhere in one of my gardens at the edge of the woods. It turned out to be an herb that my body was in need of. Have *you* ever noticed surprise flora popping up in the soil?

The fae can enter dreams, daydreams, and thoughts. They especially like to enter my thoughts during the summer months (I invite them in), generously helping me on my foraging expeditions. In one early-morning vision, I was shown an area of a forest nearby filled with ripe, fruity chanterelle

mushrooms. When I went to the spot, to my surprise it was just like my dream—lush with these edible mushrooms! On another foraging expedition for medicinal usnea, or beard lichens, I felt taken by an invisible hand in the forest and led to a tree, where I heard the words, “Look up!” I did, and attached all over the tree branches was an abundance of usnea. I’ve also been led to edible and medicinal mushrooms by a black butterfly whose wings were edged in white.

To attract your own fae guides, first spend time with the spirits of the trees. I hug trees if they are willing. I talk to them and thank them. If you listen, they will speak to you. I have a journal filled with wise messages from the trees.

If you make a genuine effort and commitment to connecting with fae energy, you will notice many benefits. Your mood will be uplifted and your inner child will be awakened through feelings of playfulness, wonder, and a sense of freedom. The fae are inspiration for magic, for making art, and for any kind of creative endeavor.

Specific Ways to Honor and Care for the Fae Around You

- To honor and care for the local fae, you can make outdoor offerings in the form of physical gifts, as well as nonmaterial offerings. Traditional tangible offerings include but are not limited to mushrooms, homemade bread, wildflower honey, fresh milk, butter, or cream, wine (I’ve left wine in tiny acorn caps), cool spring water, small cakes or pastries, unwrapped candy, bouquets of wildflowers, roses, violets, primroses, leaves, feathers, bones, apples, berries, mint, thyme, rosemary, clover, mugwort, ferns, coins, and crystals. Leave the treats out for a day to give the faeries some time to absorb the energy of your offering. Compost the gifts afterward.
- Consider building a faerie house, or adorning a part of your garden with tiny twinkling lights.
- Nonmaterial offerings include tasks like tidying up your garden or picking up refuse in your neighborhood. Put out bird and bee houses, birdbaths, and feeders. Plant bee- and butterfly-friendly flowers. When you choose your plantables, please avoid large chain stores that sell neonicotinoid-treated plants—they actually kill bees and butterflies.



An Exercise for Connecting With the Fae

Visit a favorite natural spot and get comfortable. Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths. Breathe in the energy offered by the setting. Feel your own energy mixing with it.

The fae spirits of the land will connect and present to you in a natural way of their choice. Open yourself to their wise messages, in whatever manner they decide to communicate with you. You might feel bodily sensations, see light, colors, or hear words or musical sounds. Stay open and observant.

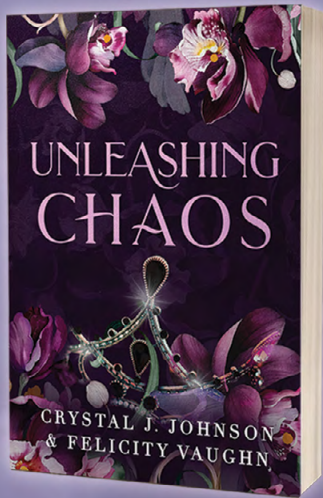
After your session comes to an end (you will feel when it does), give thanks to the fae for their messages and envision yourself disengaging from their energies. Take some time to reground yourself (deep breaths, or a bite of a snack you bring with you). Reflect on the messages you received from the generous nature spirits. Keep those insights in a special journal. Incorporate their guidance into your daily life.

Painting: *Take the Fair Face of Woman* (1869), by Sophie Gengembre Anderson. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.



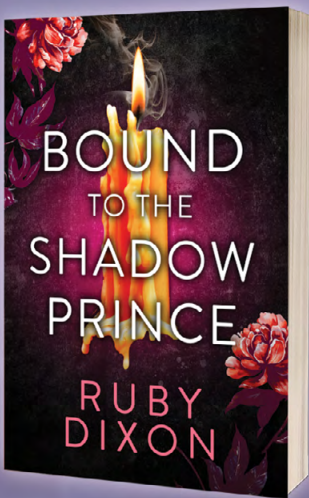
Susan Ilka Tuttle is a green witch, herbalist, spirit medium, author, and photo artist living in rural Maine. Enjoy her book *Green Witch Magick*, where she explores thirteen essential herbs for the witch’s cupboard through herbalism and magick-based projects. Visit her botanicals shop at inthewoodbotanicals.com, learn about her spirit-mediumistic readings at susanuttlespiritmessenger.com, and follow her on Instagram @whisper_in_the_wood.

Get swept away by these captivating *romantasies*



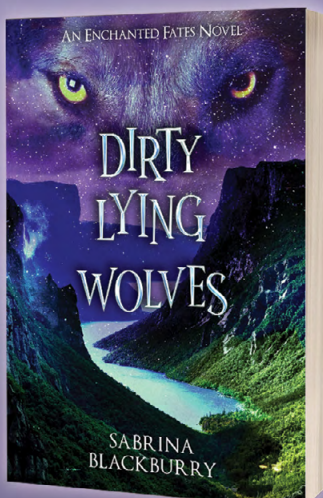
Sparks fly when a demon princess and a mortal man collide

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Featured Artist

MARISA ARAGÓN WARE

Sharp leaves unfurl from either side of a ram’s skull, where horns curve up and out. Small insects and hummingbirds alight on stems and flowers. Veins curl like coral from behind rib cages. A bird’s talons grip an arrow that ends in feather wisps. A spider waits in its perfect web, gold spinnerets jutting from its abdomen.

It’s almost impossible to believe that these are sculptures, handmade from something as ordinary as paper, using an X-Acto knife and glue to achieve incredibly fine detail.

According to multidisciplinary fine artist Marisa Aragón Ware, creating these intricate, three-dimensional sculptures is a painstaking process that can be laborious and often feels like trying to solve a puzzle. “Not everyone can relate to oil paints or marble,” she says, “but everyone has handled a piece of paper. What I find most profound about the art form is that an artist can take something so commonplace and everyday as paper and turn it into something extraordinary.”

Ware currently teaches in Colorado, where she was born and raised and where she garnered a deep appreciation for nature from a childhood spent roaming through forests and meadows with nature-loving parents. Her scientist father helped develop her talent for observation by encouraging her to crouch down and study subtle differences at eye level. She went from recording the individual veining on a single flower’s petals to helping injured wildlife with her mother, who loved every little bird and raccoon.

“I learned,” Ware says now, “how to pay attention and appreciate the ordinary beauty all around us.”

See more of Ware’s work at marisaware.com.



Elizabethan FLOWER MAGIC

A look at the magical roots of Oberon's trick in
A Midsummer Night's Dream

by Mary McMyne

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine."
—Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Act 2, Scene 1

Shakespeare's plays are full of magic: the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the witches in *Macbeth*, the ghost in *Hamlet*, the spirit-summoning in *Henry VI Part 2*. Although his work doesn't necessarily illustrate a belief in the supernatural, Shakespeare often made use of common beliefs about magic as plot devices, turning folklore and written magical tradition into stories his audience would find entertaining.

The magic in Shakespeare's plays becomes more fascinating when examined alongside the folklore and manuscripts of learned magic that were circulating in early modern England. Historians agree that belief in magic during this period was widespread. It wasn't only famous occultists and alchemists like the queen's astrologer, John Dee, who collected these texts, but also other learned people, such as nobles and physicians. Secret grimoires like *The Sworn Book of Honorius* were rare, but practical magical manuscripts were more common. With the rise of literacy, the charms and healing spells cast by cunning folk and village wisewomen began to be written down too, although elitism and male privilege caused those practices to be viewed by some as lesser.

A Midsummer Night's Dream, one of Shakespeare's most fanciful plays, owes much to astrology, folk wisdom, and mythology. The title and setting of the play derive from the legend that the magical powers of flora and fauna were at their highest on Midsummer Night, when the fairies who haunted bluebell forests came out to dance. To a modern reader, Oberon's reference to "a bank where wild thyme grows" might seem like a throwaway sylvan detail, but thyme, like bluebells, was associated with fairies. According to Richard Folkard's *Plant Lore, Legends and Lyrics*, a bank of thyme was a common location for fairy revels. An oil derived from the herb, when rubbed on the eyes, was said to grant second sight. Emily Carding notes

that period herbals and grimoires categorized most of the other flowers in Oberon's speech—oxlips, violets, woodbine, and musk roses—as being ruled by the planet Venus, evoking the play's focus on love.

Of course, the most famous magical aspect of the play is the love potion Oberon uses to make Titania fall in love with the next person she looks upon, who happens to be Bottom. The potion is made from a flower Oberon calls "love-in-idleness." Period herbals list this as a folk name for wild pansy, which was commonly used in love potions of the day. Oberon asks Puck to fetch the flower because he is angry with Titania and wants to play a trick on her. He explains the power of "love-in-idleness" as follows:

*The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
Will make or man or woman madly dote
Upon the next live creature that it sees.* (Act 2, Scene 1)

After they apply the potion, Titania awakes and falls in love with Bottom, a man temporarily cursed with the head of an ass. It's worth noting that this "trick" has two male characters give a woman a drug to make her love a man, and that this is played as comedy. The gender politics of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are by far the least charming aspect of the play.

The character of Oberon seems to have been inspired at least in part by a sinister spirit named Oberyon, who is described in several grimoires, most notably a 1583 magical manuscript entitled *Book of magic, with instructions for invoking spirits*. In this manuscript, Oberyon is described in terms that Shakespeare fans will find familiar:

He teacheth a man knowledge in phisicke and he sheweth the nature of stones herbes and trees and of all mettall. He is a great and mighty kinge and he is kinge of the fayries. (Folger MS Vb26, p. 80)

The manuscript also includes descriptions of a fairy queen and court. The invocation for Oberyon, similar to many spells in medieval and Elizabethan grimoires, reads like a prayer, with repeated references to "God's most holy name." It also contains a Catholic profession of faith. This is not uncommon; medieval and Renaissance magical texts are quite religious. Shakespeare scholar Barbara Mowat notes that Oberyon also appears in historical records: A 1444 court case calls him a "wycked

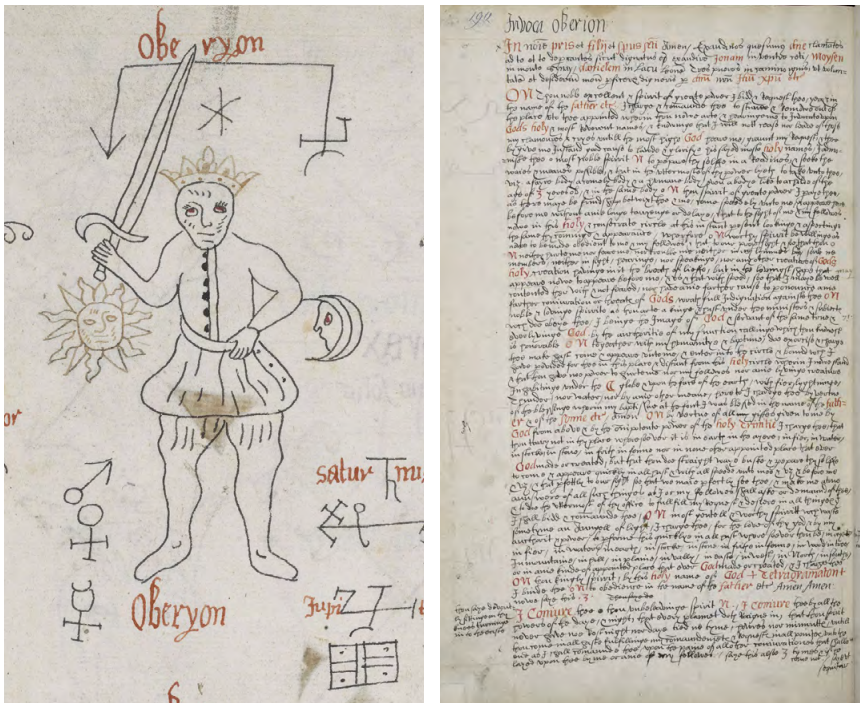
A Midsummer Night's Dream
by Arthur Rackham (1867-1939)



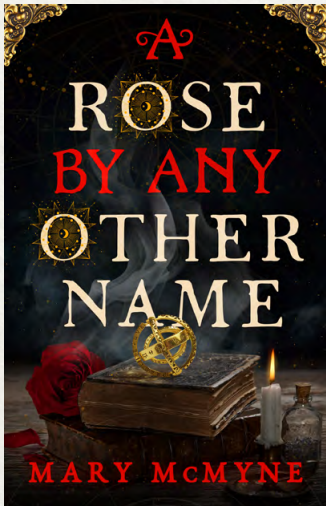
spyryte,” a 1510 register “a certain demon.” It may even be possible that Shakespeare’s audience would have been familiar with the name.

Elizabethan England was home to a complex brew of faiths: legally mandated Anglicanism, suppressed Catholicism, and ancient magical beliefs that were being syncretized with both. In Shakespeare’s plays, as in period herbals and grimoires, herbal folklore intermingles with ancient mythology, astrology, and written magical tradition. Suppressed Catholicism admixes with fairy folklore. These traditions, which may seem unrelated today, were not seen as separate. The flower magic in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* shows the early modern English belief that everything had a spiritual essence, which was swayed by the celestial circumstances. Physicians consulted an ephemeris (a kind of astrological almanac) before recommending treatment. Alchemists, apothecaries, and village cunning folk believed that the occult properties of herbs, stones, and metals came from the planets.

Everything, everything was ruled by the stars.



Left: Oberyon, in the anonymous *Book of Magic, With Instructions for Invoking Spirits, Etc.* Right: Invocation for Oberion in the same manuscript.



Mary McMyne’s upcoming novel, *A Rose by Any Other Name*, is the magic-infused story behind Shakespeare’s sonnets. Rose, the Dark Lady, is an astrologer and musician who casts spells from her mother’s grimoire for healing, sympathy, and love.

To write the spells, Mary drew inspiration from Shakespeare, Elizabethan grimoires and herbals, and astrology.

To the right are two spells from Rose’s mother’s grimoire—a benevolent remedy for ague, and a more sinister spell her matchmaker mother casts to make Rose love someone she doesn’t.

FOR AGUE

Ring a candle with blossoms of herb of the fourth star,
one cluster each night until moon is full.
Speak this following prayer by candlelight
while laying hands:
*O Regina Caeli, roudos—
fugite, mali
fugite, febres.
Fiat fiat.*

FOR RELUCTANT LOVERS

Take up red rose and hair from each lover.
Cut one barb each midnight by beeswax candlelight
until stem is bare, twining hair.
Drop oil of sea holly
in each lover’s drink. Recite this following prayer
each night by the light of the evening star:
*O Regina Caeli
huat haut haut
fugite, odium.
Fiat amor.*



Photography by Propelthemoon
@propelthemoon_photography

Model: @babyy_diamonddd
Wings: @thewingsua
Wig: @curlscurlsofficial
Horns: @aradanistudios



Make Your Own

GOSSAMER
DEW
NECKLACE

by Bridget Beth Collins,
a.k.a. Flora Forager

I've always wished I could wear strings of dew-laden spider silk, so I played around with some hot glue and cabochons to create this necklace you see here. It's my little homage to one of the most beautiful things in nature: a sparkly spider's web shimmering in the morning sun.

You'll need:

- Glue gun with glue stick
- Parchment paper
- Scissors
- Rhinestones or dewdrop cabochons
(I used dewdrop water droplets by Maitys)
- Necklace chains
- Pliers or wire cutters
- A clasp

This necklace is simple to make, but it looks like it was fashioned with magic!

Use a glue gun to create a web over parchment paper. You might want to sketch out the web on the parchment paper first and then follow your lines with glue, which will adhere as long as the glue is reasonably hot. Otherwise, you can

freestyle and see what looks good to you.

Either way, don't place the glue in perfect lines; weaving your web haphazardly will help make it look more natural.

To prevent each line from being gloopy, continue past where you want the line to stop, then cut the ends with scissors after they cool.

When you've finished your web, cover the glue with rhinestones or dewdrop cabochons, using a combination of small and large drops. If the gems don't already have a sticky backing, you can gently heat the web with the top of the glue gun and delicately place the ornaments on the reheated glue. This can be a tricky process; it took me a few tries to perfect this technique!

Attach the necklace chains with another dab of glue on each corner and then add the clasp.

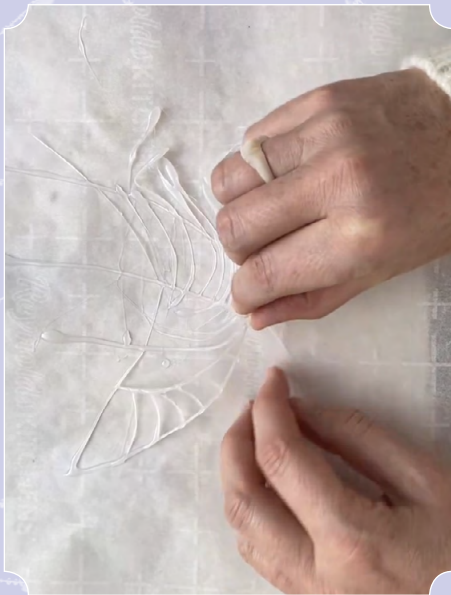
Once everything is dry, pull the glue web from the parchment paper. It should come right off!

Add sparkly beads to your chain for more dew around your neck.

Now you can adorn yourself with a gossamer necklace fit for a fairy queen!

It's fragile and may last only a little longer than the webs it imitates, so handle with care. But how beautiful a thing it is while it lasts!

Visit Bridget at floraforager.com or on Instagram @[flora_forager](https://www.instagram.com/flora_forager).



A SENTIMENT OF SUNFLOWERS

by Kirsty Stonell Walker

You are no doubt expecting me to expound on the romance of flowers in Victorian art, but I think I shall instead start with a splendid murder. In Agatha Christie’s 1932 short story “The Four Suspects,” Miss Marple and her friend Dolly Bantry solve a Secret Service murder by use of the language of flowers. When Sir Henry Clithering, former head of Scotland Yard, tells his friends about a murder victim who received a letter signed “Georgina” shortly before being bumped off, Miss Marple makes the following observation:

My sister and I had a German governess—a Fraülein. A very sentimental creature. She taught us the language of flowers—a forgotten study nowadays but most charming. A yellow tulip for instance means Hopeless Love, while a China Aster means I Die of Jealousy at Your Feet. The letter was signed Georgina, which I seem to remember is Dahlia in German.

In the language of flowers, dahlia means treachery and misrepresentation, and therefore Miss Marple and Dolly, avid gardeners, solved the case. For Victorian-born women like Miss Marple, the language of flowers was a way to combine science with secrets, exercising the brain while subverting the strictures that held women in their place. Floriography developed alongside the growing scientific interest in botany and the categorization of different plant types. Studying flowers appeared both remarkably educational and incredibly frivolous, which made it possibly the perfect Victorian pastime. The young women who cultivated the language of flowers learned Latin names and biological details of all the different plants because each part of the plant could send a different message. I see it in the same vein as fern mania (or pteridomania), which gripped Victorian England from the 1850s to the 1890s. (By

the way, ferns mean fascination in the language of flowers ...)

Obviously, in art, the language of flowers was a way to add layers of meaning to an image, not to mention a way to show off what a splendid still-life painter you were. In George Dunlop Leslie’s 1885 *The Language of Flowers*, two young women have gathered flowers to study. The young lady in black is looking a bit bored, but her friend, consulting a copy of the useful tome, is holding a sprig of love-in-a-mist. You would think a flower with that particular name had a romantic meaning, but according to the books it actually means perplexity. What—or more likely, *who*—has this young lady perplexed?

Likewise, we have an insight into the thoughts of the young lady who is sitting and pondering in the quaint and peaceful painting *A Quiet Moment* (1899) by Carlton Alfred Smith. The girl was reading but has become lost in thought—what is she thinking about? Beside her, daffodils tumble from her basket, hinting at unrequited love, so she is lost in a daydream about someone who is unlikely to be thinking about her.

Flowers represent love’s many forms, including the love from an artist toward the sitter. George Frederic Watts chose two floral signifiers in his honeymoon portrait of his young bride, actress Ellen Terry. In *Choosing* (1864), shown at right, Ellen bends to inhale the fragrance of a showy red camellia, often taken to represent worldly ambition and her stage career. In her other hand, cradled to her breast, she has a handful of violets, which are felt to represent innocence. Due to the disastrous nature of their marriage, many viewers use this painting as proof that the artist thought his bride was easily distracted by flashy nonsense while overlooking the true treasure of their marriage.

If we use the language of flowers,

however, there are less judgmental possible readings that might leave us feeling better toward both artist and model. The violets, sweetly smelling in her cupped hand, represent faithfulness, something Miss Terry holds close to her heart, but she is aware of the beautiful red camellia, which represents both admiration and excellence. Despite her young age, Ellen was already a stage star; she went on to be the greatest actress in England in the 19th century. I think her husband knew that her ambition and talent would, and should, win out. As the couple remained friends, I like to think he didn’t blame her for choosing her camellias.

Speaking of love, it was not unusual for an artist to hint at his less proper feelings for a model through the language of flowers. In his first formal portrait of his best friend William Morris’s wife, Dante Gabriel Rossetti painted Jane Morris sitting behind a vase of white roses, with pink and red carnations at her belt. White roses can mean either passion or virginal love, and carnations signify a woman’s pure love. This painting is seen as an expression of Rossetti’s growing obsession with Jane Morris, which would continue for the rest of his life. He also painted her holding snowdrops, denoting hope, and pansies, which could indicate that he was thinking of her and possibly that he imagined she was thinking of him. More likely it was a secret reference to the fact that when he stayed with the Morris family at Kelmscott Manor, Jane would leave a pansy on his bed if she wished him to visit her room at night.

It should also be noted that Rossetti painted all sorts of flowers in the hands of the lovely Alexa Wilding without having any sort of affair with her. One of the most beautiful is *La Ghirlandata* (1873), or *The Garlanded Woman*, which shows honeysuckle and pink roses, expressing love and devotion. Strangely,

Choosing (1864),
by George Frederic Watts

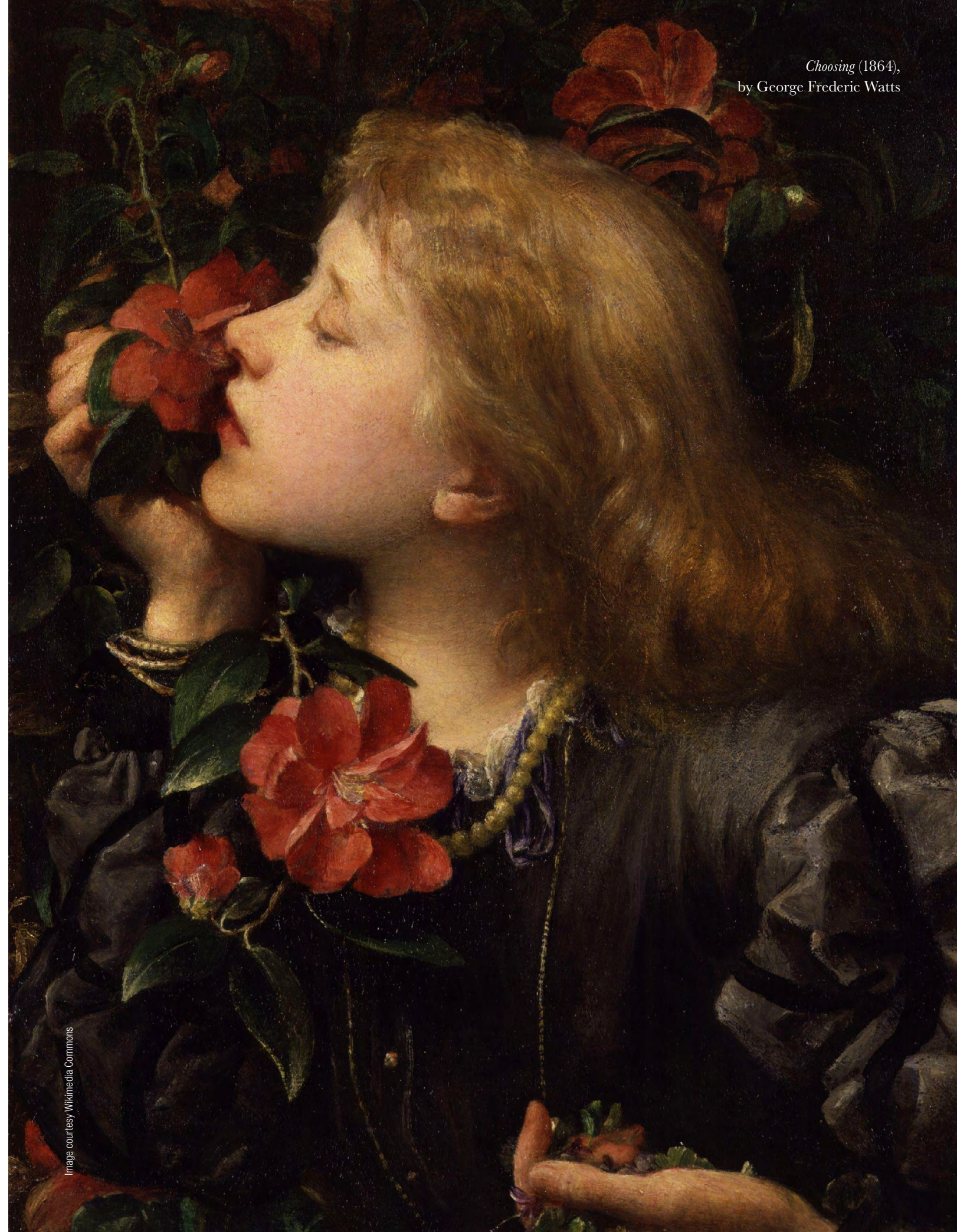


Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons

A Sentiment of Sunflowers

Kirsty Stonell Walker

at the front is monkshood, often read as a warning about the approach of a foe. It seems at odds with the image, and even Rossetti’s brother said he thought his brother meant to paint another flower there. However, meanings can differ between reference books, and some say monkshood could also represent a knight-errant’s courtly protection. So maybe the viewer of the painting is meant to be the knight protecting this beautiful, garlanded woman.

For the Victorian artist, ivy could be a marvelously communicative plant, denoting fidelity and loyalty. But different qualities lend different moods to a piece. Take Arthur Hughes’s 1859 painting, *The Long Engagement*: The couple have been in love so long that ivy has started to grow over the girl’s carved name in the tree, but that same ivy shows that she will be forever true to her fiancé, despite their very, very long engagement. Sadly, we also have Philip Hermogenes Calderon’s 1856 masterpiece *Broken Vows*. This is hardly a painting about fidelity, what with the young man philandering behind the fence while his eavesdropping beloved clutches her side in anguish. The ivy growing around her is there to symbolize her fidelity and loyalty as opposed to his cheating ways. At her feet is a sad, dried-up iris. If that flower were alive, it would mean “I burn with love for you,” but when a flower is dried up or dying, the meaning changes. In this case, her love for this cheating young man is also dying.

Far more straightforward is the Victorian love of lilies and the purity that they represent. The Virgin Mary was often seen with a sizable Madonna lily, and George Hitchcock had his Mary up to her thighs in a veritable forest of the blooms in his 1887 *Annunciation* (right).

As a sidenote, the Victorians loved pious women with appropriate flowers. Charles Allison Collin’s *Convent Thoughts* from 1850–1 shows a nun in a garden by some beautiful white lilies. The nun studies a passionflower—but before we all get overexcited, the passion it refers

to, with its crown-like center and three-pronged stamen, is a religious one. I think we can assume that her thoughts are innocent enough.

Arguably the most Victorian of flowers, particularly well-loved in art, is the poppy. Its association with laudanum makes it heavy in symbolism. In Evelyn De Morgan’s 1878 *Night and Sleep*, celestial figures rain poppies down upon the earth to lull us all into slumber. Similarly, Edward Robert Hughes’s *Night With Her Train of Stars* (1912) spreads the soothing gift of sleep in the form of red poppies, tumbling from the arms of Night. Interestingly, in *Night*’s wake flutters a cloud of tiny sparrows. You will be unsurprised to learn that the Victorians also had a “language of birds.” (I am beginning to suspect they had a language of everything.) In folklore, sparrows carried the souls of the dead, which makes the sleep that Night is bestowing seem a little more permanent. Many sailors had the tiny birds tattooed upon them so if they died at sea, the sparrow would carry their soul home.

An obvious pictorial link from poppies to death is Thomas Cooper Gotch’s *Death the Bride* (undated), whose subject sits surrounded by tall stems of poppies as she waves to us from under her black veil. While Gotch’s *Bride* is a spookily clear connection to eternal rest, the most famous poppy lover must be Rossetti’s *Beata Beatrix* (1870–2), painted over and over in the artist’s lifetime and inspired by his wife and fellow artist, Elizabeth Siddal. For Rossetti, this painting had many layers of meaning. By the time *Beata Beatrix* was painted, Elizabeth had already died of a laudanum overdose. In one version, Beatrice is given a white poppy at her moment of death, representing consolation and making peace with the past. The poppy in Beatrice’s hand is often interpreted as a reference to her death. Rossetti never could make peace with this tragic loss; he remained haunted for the rest of his life and through all of his art.



The Annunciation (1887),
by George Hitchcock

Leaving you on that mournful note seems unfair, especially when so much fun can be had with the language of flowers. If you really must, send the one you love a red rose to say “I love you,” but it is far more amusing to send someone you loathe an insult bouquet. The Victorians left very useful guides to these

in certain versions of their popular books on floriography, so if you really want to say it with flowers, send a foxglove, some lobelia, and a thistle-head—taken together, it means “you are insincere and malevolent, and I wish you’d leave.” Maybe it is kinder to deliver some home truths via a florist. Using a professional

also expands your vocabulary, because who else is going to find Japanese quince this time of year, so you can send a sprig to someone to tell them they are deluded? I shall leave you all with wood sorrel for joy and sunflowers for adoration and hope no one ever sends you any tansy ...



Kirsty Stonell Walker is a writer and researcher whose passion is bringing forward the stories of women who might have otherwise vanished in history. She’s the author of *Pre-Raphaelite Girl Gang* and *Light and Love and Stunner, a biography of Pre-Raphaelite superstar Fanny Cornforth*. Visit her on Instagram @kstonellwalker.



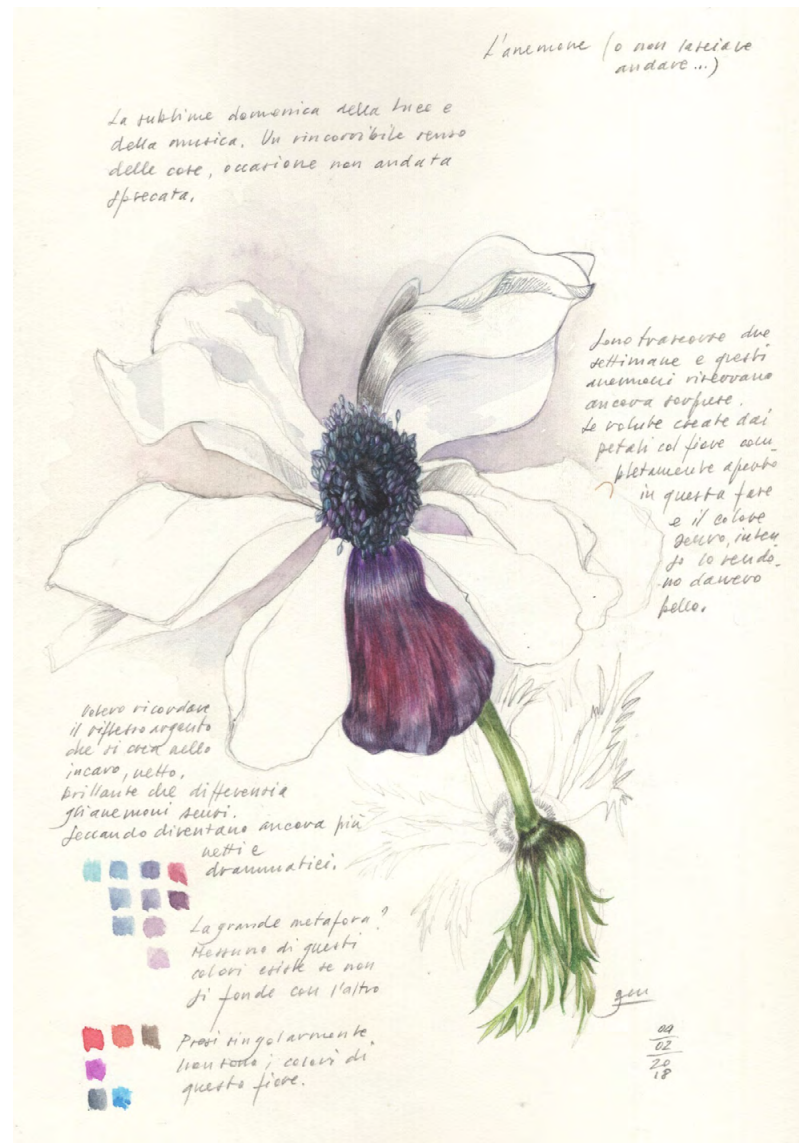
WHY YOU SHOULD SKETCH THE WORLD

by Giacomina Ferrillo

The sketchbook has always been my most faithful collaborator. I pass all my books, theater sets, and design and styling projects through the pages of my beloved little sketchbooks first—a practice that, for me, represents a profound connection with my creativity. By sketching freely in a notebook, I generate ideas and preserve them in their most authentic form. Without filters and without the threat of judgment, I feel protected and free, like a child. In fact, as an art teacher, I begin all my workshops by introducing this important practice. Fun inspires study, with a great advantage for the latter: You learn no matter what and have much more fun in the process.

At a certain point in my life, I had one of the happiest encounters in my artistic journey, with botanical art: A revelation, a magnificent discovery, love at first sight!

I was in London at the Natural History Museum, where the notebooks of famous plant hunters were on display, full of drawings that conveyed their sense of wonder in discovering previously unknown species. They'd noted the colors and shapes of each plant on yellowed, fascinating pages. Only a few days later, while visiting Kew Gardens, I came across the watercolors of Margaret Mee, a tireless explorer and creator of botanical



works that struck a chord with me.

Then the universe began speaking to me, and I began to listen.

I changed my way of using watercolors and, above all, my way of looking at things. Since then, my sketchbooks have become exclusively botanical and naturalistic in theme, and I've become a passionate promoter of this kind of sketching. It's become my mission to urge others to try keeping a sketchbook. I believe this gentle form of creative practice can exponentially improve our connection with ourselves—and with what surrounds us.

Therefore my advice is to *always* have a small sketchbook, a pen or pencil, a small box of watercolors, and a water brush in your pocket and *look*: Look at the world around you, no matter who you are or where you find yourself. I always tell my students to look with the attitude of a plant hunter.

There are many excellent reasons for this: Drawing from nature implies, first of all, a closer relationship with it, a slowing down of rhythms to the limits of meditative quiet. Observing something like the unraveling of the veins of a leaf, the intricate tangle of branches on a tree, or the structure of a tiny corolla puts you in the humble position of one who is always open to learning. It keeps your brain alive, paying such close attention to the world.

You'll probably start to spend more time outdoors. And even when there is no time or the weather conditions do not allow it, it is still possible to observe the immense, inexhaustible wealth



of botanical resources around us. Just open the fridge and look with new eyes at the vegetables you'll eat for dinner. Even the flowerbeds on city streets can reveal incredible treasures. This is part of the magic of botanical sketching: We finally start to see.

Let drawing become your daily practice. By doing it day after day, you become a person who can still be amazed—and everything around you can be a source of wonder. When you find yourself observing a tiny flower that, season after season, stands dignified and proud, you feel its incredible strength. You feel part of a miraculous process that is the life cycle permeating everything. What you may have absentmindedly considered a weed becomes the repository of a wonderful interconnection. You're driven to a devout form of respect and protection. Knowing nature through drawing and observation, you develop greater sensitivity toward environmental issues and a respect for all forms of life.

This process, analyzed from a technical-practical point of view, has enormous educational value. Constant practice develops greater mastery of the technique. You learn to manage

shape and perspective better, you become more sensitive in capturing and reproducing color, and you can create more harmonious compositions. Not to mention how beneficial it is to pay attention to details.

Drawing from nature may soon inform all your work, as the inherent joy of nature's forms creates joy in turn. The geometric or fantastic *divertissements* in my sketchbook are often observations of how everything is based on a common design, on a single large project. From this comes a sense of belonging that contributes to a sense of well-being.

Sketching is not just for those who are already good at drawing or those who aspire to become professional botanical artists. Anyone can try their hand at portraying nature. It's never too early and it's never too late to start. It's a nice thing to do alone or in company, perhaps with the whole family. The benefits are truly priceless. We all seem to need this kind of connection to the world—and the planet needs it!



Follow Giacomina on Instagram @giacominaferrillo.

BOTANICAL BEAUTY by Rona Berg

Isabella and the Pot of Basil (1867), by William Holman Hunt



For centuries, wise women have hand-plucked flowers, foraged for herbs, wild-crafted with plants, and pulverized nuts and seeds to extract fragrant essences and oils for beauty rituals that resulted in glossy hair and soft, smooth skin. The ancient Egyptians mixed animal fat and plant oils to create an early hair conditioner. In 16th century Italy, Catherine de' Medici relied on a moisturizer made with a mix of peach blossoms and almond oil; at the same time, Italian herbalists boiled rosemary in white wine to create a tonic for the skin. (And they drank it too!)

The power of plants is pure magic, which is why the women who knew how to use them were often accused of sorcery. Here are some tried-and-true beauty botanicals for skin, hair, body, and spirit.

ALOE VERA

What Soothes sunburn, moisturizes, and temporarily tightens the skin.

Where The American Southwest. It is thought to have been brought there in the 17th century from Barbados, where it covered the ground so thickly that Spanish sailors named the island for effect it created: Barbados means “bearded.”

Why It feels soothing partly because aloe is 99.5 percent water. But it also contains nourishing ingredients such as polysaccharides, glycoproteins, vitamins, and minerals that are moisturizing and anti-inflammatory.

GINGER

What Stimulates the circulation, tones and softens the skin, helps with stretch marks. Often found in lip plumpers and body scrubs.

Where Southeast Asia and Thailand, where a form of ginger known as *prai* is commonly used in beauty. The Ancient Romans considered ginger to be an aphrodisiac, and it is mentioned throughout *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Why It promotes blood flow and revs up the circulation.

LAVENDER

What Soothes inflamed skin, heals burns, relaxes tired muscles, and calms the mind.

Where France, where lavender fields are endless, along with other

areas of the Mediterranean. In the 1920s, French chemist René-Maurice Gattefossé burned his hand in the lab and mistakenly plunged it into a vat of lavender oil, thinking it was water. It healed so well that he began to research its medicinal properties and eventually coined the term *aromatherapy*.

Why Lavender is antibacterial, antimicrobial, and anti-inflammatory, and it calms the nervous system.

ROSE

What Moisturizes sensitive, mature, or dry skin; reduces inflammation; and works as also a gentle astringent. The scent is said to ease anxiety and promote feelings of love.

Where Ancient Greece, where rosewater was used to soften the skin, and throughout Europe, where women would massage hips and legs with rose oil to ease the pain of childbirth, perhaps by lessening anxiety.

Why Rose oil constricts small blood vessels and broken capillaries.

SAGE

What Controls excess oil secretion, regenerates skin cells, and kills bacteria that cause odor and breakouts. Good for acne-prone skin.

Where All over the Mediterranean and American Southwest. Native Americans use it in purification ceremonies and to cleanse a room, a practice known as

sageing. Sage was thought to cure disease by driving out evil spirits when disease was considered a spiritual affliction.

Why Sage is antiseptic, astringent, and detoxifying. It kills bacteria and microbes, which is why it was used to keep meat from spoiling before refrigeration.

CHAMOMILE

What Calms dry, sensitive, itchy skin; conditions and brings out blond highlights in the hair; reduces broken capillaries.

Where Southern and western Europe. The Victorians used it in a tea to calm women who suffered from “hysteria.”

Why Roman and German chamomile contain azulene, a potent anti-inflammatory.

SEAWEED AND ALGAE

What Moisturizes, nourishes, and restores minerals to all skin types.

Where The sea, especially coastal areas of South America and Europe. In France in particular, residents in some areas would “take the cure” from the healing waters and bracing salt air. Beauty treatments involving seaweed are known as thalassotherapy.

Why Seaweed is rich in vitamins A, C, and K; fatty acids; and minerals that replenish what we lose through everyday life. It also has antioxidant properties to protect from free-radical damage.



Follow Rona Berg on Instagram @ronaberg

GOOD FOR YOUR SKIN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The beauty of botanicals is that they are not only good for our personal health; they are also good for the environment. Think about it: Everything goes somewhere, and when you wash your cleanser, scrub, or bodywash down the drain, it eventually goes into our rivers, lakes, and oceans, where it can have an impact on flora and fauna. That’s one reason it makes sense to rely on natural products. Here are some seductive botanical brands.

AIRØ Created by master aesthetician Daphne Chapman, Airo is a beauty and travel lifestyle brand designed to restore skin on the go with lightweight but deeply penetrating products. Chapman has two great passions—travel and skin care—and she knows firsthand the toll that high altitudes, environmental stressors, and cabin pressure can take on the skin. The brand features two beautiful collections: the original Airo, formulated with healing desert plants such as aloe vera, prickly pear, and Joshua tree root; and sē, made from richly nourishing marine extracts.

Star products: Airo Jetsetter Recovery Mask, Airo Facial Recovery Oil, sē Apres Sun Serum

BOTNIA Botnia, an organic skin-care brand from aesthetician Justine Kahn, features products made by herbalists from plants grown on the Botnia microfarm in Sausalito, California. The name comes from *bot*, for botanicals and botanists, and *Nia*, for an imaginary land where plants work magically with our bodies. The line of small-batch face and body products is formulated by herbalists to harness the power of plants.

Star products: Chamomile Gentle Cleanser, Rose Geranium Hydrosol, Well Serum

LVNEA Lvnea sources its fragrant essential oils and extracts from an exotic garden. The Montreal-based company offers a line of heady natural perfumes, featuring exquisite blends such as Moon Moss (lavender, oak moss, patchouli) and Jasmine & Fig (jasmine, fig, pink peppercorn), as well as bath, body, and face care and candles.

Star products: River Bathing Ritual Bath Salts, Larmes de Rose Facial Serum, Jasmine Cardamom Damiana Floral Body Serum

OSEA Founder Jenefer Palmer went to the end of the earth—Patagonia, at the southernmost tip of South America—to research the most pristine seaweed she could find. Palmer discovered that the Patagonian *Gigartina* species was not only known for its high content of vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and trace elements, which are extremely nourishing for the skin; it also comes from some of the most pristine waters on the planet. An award-winning, innovative mother-daughter team, Palmer and her daughter Melissa now run Osea, based on the California coast.

Star products: Ocean Eyes Age-Defying Eye Serum, Vagus Nerve Bath Oil, Atmosphere Protection Cream

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The White Stag
by Annie Stegg
@anniestegg

ENCHANTED HINDS and CURSED STAGS

Fairy Tales of Deer and Transformation

BY SARA CLETO AND BRITTANY WARMAN

ou're walking through the woods one day, just as twilight stars begin to shimmer through the leaves. Everything seems quiet, still. Ahead, you hear the soft snap of a twig against a delicate hoof and look up into the gentle eyes of a doe. She is alone, as you are, but her stance betrays no fear. She gifts you with a steady, knowing gaze, then suddenly bounds away into the trees, vanishing as if she had never been there at all.

There's something deeply magical about an unexpected encounter with a deer—they're so much bigger than most of the other animals we tend to encounter on a regular basis, and yet they're also elegant, careful, solemn, and graceful in their movements. It's no wonder that these enchanting creatures appear so frequently in fairy tales, particularly stories of transformation.

In "Brother and Sister," a fairy tale told by Giambattista Basile, Alexander Afanasyev, and Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, among others, a young girl pleads with her thirsty brother not to drink from the enchanted springs they pass. The first spring murmurs that those who drink from it will transform into tigers and lions; the second promises that those who drink will become wolves. By the time they encounter a third spring, the brother cannot bear his thirst any longer. He drinks from the spring—and transforms into a deer. This fairy tale is a wild ride, involving a vengeful witch, a royal marriage, a ghost princess, a magical doppelganger, and an eventual restoration of human form to both the brother and sister (who is murdered and becomes a watchful spirit until her husband catches on). Read it, and you'll find that the boy's transformation offers many possible interpretations. Is it a punishment for his failure to listen to his sister, meted out by the evil witch that dogs their steps? Or is it a reprieve from responsibility or adulthood? His altered status could be a burden for his sister and freedom for himself. Or does it represent the children's connection to the wood that becomes their home and sanctuary?

We find another brother transformed into a deer in "The Glass Coffin," a story popularized by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and, later, Andrew Lang. Here, a tailor lost in the woods witnesses an epic fight between a great stag and a wild boar. After the stag wins, he scoops up the tailor with his antlers and brings him to a stone building that contains a glass coffin, inside of which lies a beautiful, very awake girl. The girl asks the tailor to please open the coffin and then reveals that the stag is actually her brother and the boar the wicked magician that enchanted them both. When the tailor and the girl emerge from the building, they find that the stag has been disenchanted, and they live happily ever after. Here the stag represents both power and dispossession. Once more, the form isn't chosen freely, but the brother is able to defeat the magician and recruit help while in that shape.

We see many young girls, even princesses, transformed into deer as well. In Madame d'Aulnoy's French story "The White

Doe," a princess is under a curse that forbids her from being touched by light for the first fifteen years of her life. When someone inevitably cuts open the coach that hides her away, she immediately transforms into a white deer and runs off. Her betrothed does not recognize her in her new form but becomes obsessed with chasing the new white deer in the forest. When he wounds her, he regrets his actions and brings her home, only to discover that she is his love—and she can transform back into her human self at night. He declares his love for her, the curse is broken, and they live happily ever after. Here, the transformation represents a barrier between the princess, her prince, and true love, one they must overcome together.

We see another beautiful girl transformed into a deer in the Scottish tale "The Enchanted Deer," which Andrew Lang included in his *Lilac Fairy Book*. In this story, a young man agrees to shoot a deer that has been eating the corn belonging to a poor farmer and his wife. Every time he goes to shoot, the deer appears before him as a woman with long, dark hair. Eventually he gives chase, and the deer leads him to the home of a band of robbers. When they find and kill the hunter, she is able to bring him back to life. The leader of the robbers is so mad that when they find the hunter alive again, he orders his men to slay not only the hunter but also the men who were originally ordered to kill him ... This continues until all the robbers are furious with each other, they get into an enormous fight, and all of them wind up dead. The hunter then comes back to life a final time through the help of the deer, and she takes him to the home of an old woman. Her curse is then broken, but the hunter falls into a magical sleep every time she tries to come to him in her human form, and she is forced to leave him after her third try. A *great* deal happens after the hunter and the deer-woman are separated, but the curse is eventually broken, they find each other again, and this story too ends happily. In a fascinating twist, the hunter must go on a long quest to recover his beloved, a plot usually reserved for women in Search for the Lost Husband tales.

Most of us long, on some level at least, to run free through the forest, to sip cool water from flowing streams, and to slip through the trees as silently as a shadow. Deer contain contradictions and possibilities. They're prey animals, but they're also strong and fast, delicate yet still powerful. Stories of deer transformation, even when they're stories of curses, allow us to indulge a fantasy of fluid forms; we imagine that we've suddenly sprouted antlers and long legs for springing through the forest.

Many of these tales mention specifically that once the human characters transform, they cannot overcome their new urges to run with other wild creatures, to become part of the natural world in a way they never could have done before. In that spirit, we encourage you to go explore the woods yourself, perhaps even run a bit... you never know what you might become.



Sara Cleto and Brittany Warman are folklorists, authors, and teachers, as well as co-founders of The Carterhaugh School of Folklore and the Fantastic, which you can read more about at carterhaughschool.com.

The Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man (1615)
by Jan Brueghel the Elder and Peter Paul Rubens

Image courtesy Wikimedia Commons

PARADISE GROWS

BY SUSANN COKAL





SECRETS, MAZES, POISONS, PARTERRES, AND OTHER OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY GARDENS TO SATISFY THE SOUL

Herein lie gardens to dazzle the senses and boggle the mind. Some are meant for a community, some just for you; in a few, you should not touch, taste, even breathe, lest ye be harmed ... Some you will have to fight for.

All are within reach if you want to try out your green thumb. Working your own plot can be a form of meditation; it connects you to the cycle of life and rebirth, gives a little aromatherapy, deepens your thoughts and your connection to both natural and human-made worlds.

Maybe we were created in a garden, maybe not. But something has always driven us to shape and prune and rearrange the plants we find in nature according to our varied ideas of beauty and convenience. That means a garden is not exactly “nature” in the sense of what’s growing wild and doing its own thing: It is *cultivated*, meaning that a human has decided what to grow, where to grow it, and how to keep it flourishing in a complex tapestry of plant life.

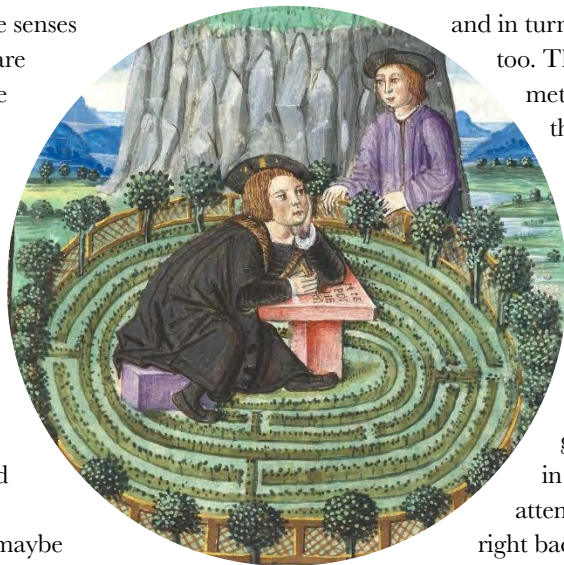
That’s not a bad thing. A garden can be every bit the artwork that the *Mona Lisa* is.

SECRET

First of all, you need a secret garden.

A garden that’s for you and only you—ideally growing where no one else can find it—is part of your self-care, your inspiration, your self-expression. It is the place where you relax and reflect. Secrets emphasize your independence and resilience; something that’s just for you can make you stronger. And, incidentally, that’s good for your community and your planet.

We come to our secret spaces in different ways. Perhaps you’ve stumbled upon a little plot of land somewhere, formerly well tended but now growing wild in an unhealthy way. You yearn to bring it back to its original glory. Let Frances Hodgson Burnett’s 1911 novel, *The Secret Garden*, be your guidebook. In the classic tale, an unloved, unwanted, and frankly unlikable orphan named Mary Lennox is sent to Yorkshire to be raised by a distant relative. There she hears tell of a rose garden lost behind a stone wall somewhere and neglected for the last decade. As Mary searches for the garden and then learns to restore it, her temperament improves; she makes friends and even solves a *Jane Eyre*-worthy mystery about the cries that tear through the manor at night. The garden makes her want to be a better girl,



and in turn she makes the manor’s menfolk better too. This book has long provided a handy metaphor for the way girls view gardens and their own bodies.

Secret gardens are very personal ... and synonymous with women and, metaphorically, their bodies. That high stone wall represents your virtue, ladies—or in more modern terms, it is your self, and you can choose how far to open it up to other people. Or you might struggle not to get stuck in a garden that’s imposed on you, like Alice in *Through the Looking-Glass*, wherein every attempt at taking a new pathway just leads right back to the house.

A personal garden was a lifelong project for landscape artist Mien Ruys (1904-1999) of the Netherlands. It was conceived over her lifetime as a series of “experiments,” occupying thirty so-called “rooms.” Each one of those rooms has an identity that was important to Ruys’s own growth, from her very first—a harmoniously composed “wilderness” laid out when she was just twenty—to a water garden and more. Both privately and professionally, Ruys celebrated perennial flowers and layers of color rather than monoculture lawns and single-species beds, and she popularized the “desire path”—a trail not planned but created naturally by the feet of animals and humans, meandering as the fancy takes them.

Many cities feature small horticultural gems hidden behind walls. You pass a courtyard door just as it swings shut, and you glimpse a miniature parterre, a formal garden with symmetrical flowerbeds, everything balanced and stately. Or in London, you make a pilgrimage to the Chelsea Physic Garden, founded in 1673, where you find five thousand healing plants behind a tall brick wall.

When you create your own precious sanctum sanctorum, you don’t owe anyone a glimpse of or a say in what you’re growing. That’s the idea. If you don’t have a wall, put up a privacy fence. Grow a tall hedge. Or just let the trees and bushes around your property go wild and create a thorny tangle. Use the space within for painting, writing, reading, dancing, meditating—whatever feeds your most secret self.

MAZE

A maze is perhaps more a garden feature than a garden in its own right—but have you ever been lost in one? The twists and folds of boxwood or yew hedge make the space telescope

to contain entire worlds. And they just might include a secret garden too.

A maze represents the path we take toward enlightenment. In Christian (and formerly Christian) tradition, labyrinths are a part of religious allegory, whether growing from hedges or laid out in stone on a cathedral floor. There might be just one path to the center, or you might have options. Either way, as you aim toward the peaceful space in the middle, sometimes you seem to be getting very close to grace and fulfillment, only to find another turn taking you back to the outer edge. Frustration and feeling lost are a part of the allegory you’re living—wait, I mean part of the fun. When you finally reach the center, you might find a fountain, bench, or tower in which to contemplate the journey and the future (or sneak a quick kiss or photo with the person who got lost with you). If you’re lucky, no one else arrives for a while, and it is your personal Eden.

A single fragrant rose blooming alone there is sometimes called the *rosa mundi*, the rose of the world (not to be confused with the garden rose of that name). The name is a nod to Rosamund Clifford, the alluring mistress of England’s King Henry II. Folklore says that to protect Rosamund from seducers and a jealous queen, Henry built her a castle that was also a knotty maze, with the beauty in a garden at the center. That single flower can also refer to the *Roman de la Rose*, an epic French poem of the 1200s in which the Lover seeks to find a beloved who is represented as a rose blooming behind a complicated stone wall. A labyrinth with love in the center is a powerful symbol for all sorts of quests, and for life itself.

Mazes are featured at several châteaux of the magical Loire Valley, which brims over with almost too many treasures. At Villandry—world-famous for all its gardens—the squared-off labyrinth follows a traditional Renaissance pattern and there’s just one path to the center. And at Chenonceau, the brightest jewel in the valley’s well-studded crown, a round maze is a short hike from the castle and a world apart. Surrounded by woods, it’s a get-yourself-lost puzzle.

The most famous garden maze in the world is at Hampton Court, near London, and it’s a notorious wedge-shaped puzzle that takes an average of twenty minutes to solve. Designed around 1700 at the behest of William III (a.k.a. William of Orange), it’s a star in its own right, having been featured in Virginia Woolf’s 1919 novel, *Night and Day*, and Michael Bond’s *Paddington Bear and the Marmalade Maze*. You’ll also recognize it from the movies *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* and *The Favourite*, the series *Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story*, and a dizzying array of other inked and filmed productions. Perhaps getting lost there is just what you need for your next big chapter.

HANGING

The second-most famous horticultural hotspot in history, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, were designed around 600 BCE

with the intent to make a tall building look like the mountainous landscape of a queen’s former home. Trees and plants were cultivated on a series of tiered terraces that rose toward the sky in a marvel of engineering and irrigation. Webs of scent floated down from all those blossoms, entangling passersby. They looked toward the sky, wondering ...

The Hanging Gardens were in fact one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—and they are the only such wonder for which we have no archaeological evidence, since they were lost to an earthquake in 226 BCE. Or maybe the evidence is all around. Seeds that blew off a rooftop sowed the surrounding area with flowers and trees that now are simply what grows.

A hanging garden (you have deduced by now) doesn’t so much hang as it rises. Its plantings are not rooted in the earth; it brings soil up onto a human-made structure. So those kitchen herbs you grow on your windowsill qualify, and so do the potted trees and plants on your rooftop or balcony.

Hanging gardens are some of the most spectacular—and planet-friendly—you’ll see today. For Willie Wonka-style dramatic impact, visit the Jardins Suspendus de Marqueyssac. Located in Vézac, France, on the grounds of a turreted castle, the site is the dreamchild of a military man who retired in 1861 and unleashed his creativity (beating his sword into a ploughshare, as the saying goes). There are fifty-four acres of otherworldly topiary, cyclamen, and secret nooks and pathways growing on terraces hewn into the cliffs above the Dordogne River. Not to mention dozens of peacocks.

In a more casual hanging garden on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, the High Line stretches for almost a mile and a half along an old spur of New York Central Railroad. The tracks almost vanish under plantings inspired by the weeds that once struggled along them; railroad ties emerge here and there as a flirty reminder of how this refreshing space emerged out of the arc of history, industrialization, and urban decay.

Like the High Line, your own hanging garden can create a green-lunged haven with a big environmental impact. In Paris, the bee and butterfly populations surged after a citywide push to grow pollinator-friendly flowers on rooftops and balconies. Urban green corridors like the High Line and the hanging gardens of Paris’s La Défense can reduce nearby temperatures by as much as ten degrees on a hot day. You can attract pollinators with plants like black-eyed Susans, cosmos, lavender, verbena, coneflower, and more. Choose organic plants and seeds to avoid chemicals toxic to the pollinators.

Here’s hoping that we can beat more swords into garden trowels.

POISON

Maybe you’re a modern-day Brother Cadfael who lingers for hours over an herb garden. You rub sweet, pungent basil and lavender between your fingers; you harvest lemon balm to

Paradise Grows

Susann Cokal

heal scratches, oregano for digestion, saffron for insomnia. I hope you also have a sizable patch of mint, because some people swear by it as an antidote to poison (no guarantees here). And somewhere just down the road, someone is growing mugwort, henbane, devil's cherries, and angel's trumpets, all with malicious intent.

As an idea, the poison garden is probably as old as horticulture or even agriculture. In the words of Renaissance physician Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, a.k.a. Paracelsus, "There is no substance which is not poison. The difference is in the dosing." This means that even the wonder drug that has saved your life could be the same substance that ends it.

It's a quick jump from a monastery's garden of healing to a witch's (theoretical) plot of malevolence. Medieval people looked on monastery gardens with approval, but any wisewoman's medicinal garden might be a plot full of ingredients to render a woman infertile, a man impotent, a cow dead of the bovine plague *Rinderpest*. And sometimes it did happen ...

Here are a few of the greatest hits we love to see in a poison garden:

- Foxglove, or digitalis: As a medicine, it can bring the beat back to a slow heart; in a different dose, it could speed a heart up so fast that it beats itself out. It also makes some very pretty flowers.
- Hemlock: This is the plant that sent Socrates off to his reward. Even if you never brew that particular tea, you should keep some hemlock growing as a monument to women and men who know too much and dare to ask questions.
- Belladonna: Popular for Ancient Roman murders, this *extremely* poisonous plant was ingested during the Renaissance—in small quantities—to dilate the pupils and make eyes appear bigger and brighter. At what price beauty ...
- Mandrake: The infamous root looks like a human figure, right down to the genitalia (which are usually seen as male, sometimes female). It is so potently poisonous that it must be harvested in the full moon. Don't be alarmed—it screams as it leaves the earth, yes, but that's just science.

You'll find all these plants and more in the Alnwick Garden in Northumberland, England, where the world-famous Poison Garden does not mince words or toxins. Over a hundred species of deadly, hallucinogenic, and narcotic plants grow behind tall iron gates. Entry is by guided tour and for intrepid souls only; although your guide will prevent touching and tasting, visitors have been known to faint from inhaling the air in which laburnum, hellebore, opium poppy, and much more respire in



deadly photosynthesis. The same warnings apply at Ireland's Blarney Castle, where the poison garden is intended to educate visitors about commonplace plants that turn fatal when cooked into something else—soaps, jams, teas ... It really is all in the dose and, in this case, the concentration.

A poison garden is perhaps the ultimate secret, or it should be. A very tall fence should keep out the most curious neighbors and help make sure that there's enough toxic material left for your needs.

RIVALS

Horticulturalists have a good reputation as peaceful people who spread love like mulch and cut a plant only so it will grow stronger. But competition among them is *fierce*. Just ask the man whose beloved roses came in fourth at a garden show.

People who love a garden want it to be *the* something: the biggest, the most visited, the most colorful, etc. I once stood nodding my head while a distinguished gentleman pointed out the extremely specialized "longest continuous flower bed in northern Europe." (King's Garden, Copenhagen. It is very pretty.)

And since you are now wondering about record holders ...

The world's largest botanical garden (meaning it's primarily a scientific collection, a living museum) is Kew Gardens, near London, which sits on 300 acres and features a marvelous Victorian glasshouse. 'Nuff said.

The title of biggest garden is usually claimed by Keukenhoff, in Lisse, the Netherlands. Each spring, more than 7 million bulbs bloom gloriously over seventy-nine acres of land. The Dubai Miracle Garden takes umbrage, however; it opened in 2013 with more than 150 million plants on seventeen acres and claims to be the biggest natural-flower garden. It is certainly the world's most quickly established major garden, having taken 400 people just sixty days to till, plant, and open its first phase. Its Guinness records include the world's largest vertical garden and tallest topiary (a Mickey Mouse).

Oldest: The Sigiriya Gardens in Sri Lanka date back nearly 1,600 years. They were lost for centuries until archaeologists discovered remains of the pavilions, pools, and walkways in the 1980s.

Most beautiful: How is it possible to decide? And yet people try. Here I'll give a shout-out to a few I haven't mentioned yet: Singapore's Gardens by the Bay (another contender for Biggest), Tokyo's Shinjuku Gyoen (cherry blossoms!), Monet's Giverny, the Taj Mahal gardens, Versailles (the fountains!), Schwerin Castle in Germany (a grotto *and* a floating meadow!), the

Psyche Entering Cupid's Garden (1904),
by John William Waterhouse



Image courtesy Art Renewal Center

Paradise Grows

Susann Cokal

Alhambra ... Fill in your favorite here. (Mine is to come a bit lower down.)
And that twisty path brings us to ...

DEATH

The ultimate chaos, the great unknown—there is a garden for that too. Because even the most extravagantly burgeoning foliage cannot conceal one simple fact: In the midst of life we are in death.
In the 19th century, Europeans and Americans decided to make the most of the balance between leafing forth and dying off, and find the space required for storing thousands of bodies in final repose. They moved their cemeteries—including the bodies buried there—out of the city churchyards, where they were contaminating groundwater, to fresh, well-tended green spaces on the edges of the city. These would be called garden cemeteries, newly conceived as places of recreation. In an era when exhausted factory workers had just one free day a week, civic leaders recommended that they spend Sunday in a cemetery, perhaps with a picnic. This was a way to recreate the workers and send them back to the factories with a boost.
Going to a fashionable new graveyard like London’s Highgate (1832) or Paris’s Père Lachaise (1804) was—and still is—like visiting an open-air museum of marble and bronze sculptures (heavy on the angels), a park with relatively clean air and walkways for exercise and socializing, monuments to cultural heroes, and more moral lessons than a church jamboree. Headstones were carved with scripture and poetry, the ultimate message of which was that, yes, our time on this earth is short, so we should be the best (hardest-working, most obedient) we can be until death finds us.

Some people considered the new practice morbid, but it caught on, and cemeteries are still popular tourist destinations. Père Lachaise and Highgate may get the most press, but there is probably a garden cemetery closer to you. Try Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Laurel Hill in Philadelphia; Brooklyn’s Green-Wood; Cincinnati’s Spring Grove; Hollywood in Richmond, Virginia; Lake View in Cleveland; Mountain View in Oakland, California; Fairmount in Denver; and Bonaventure in Savannah (that Garden of Good and Evil).
You might put together a nosegay for your sweetheart while the two of you enjoy your picnic. Use the Victorian system of symbolism, bearing in mind that some meanings are special to cemeteries. Here ferns mean sincerity; lilies, purity of soul; sunflowers, adoration; cornflowers, hope. Yew trees signify everlasting life and rebirth, while ivy says, “*I cling to you,*” and is a symbol of love that reaches beyond death. Bound together, this bouquet can be your way of saying, *Sincerely and with all good intentions, I adore you and hope to be together forever.* If your beloved is one of the departed, leave a dark red rose to indicate sorrow, and break the stem to show a life cut short.

(Of course you will not take flowers from bouquets left on any of the graves; doing so would send the worst kind of message and imperil your soul.)
If you live on an older property, there may be a grave somewhere among the overgrowth in a woodsy corner or two. Perhaps it could give you a head start on a meditation garden, even make the center of a maze. You can also use your own stones and statuary to create a mini-environment mindful of the cycles of life.

WILD

And now let us contemplate a wild part of the soul and the landscape—that bit of chaos and abundance we long for even as we snip away at our topiary and deadhead our bulbs. All over the world, as in Mien Ruys’s spectacular lifelong project, even the most formal grounds might include a “wild” garden—one where the straight rows, parterres, and other hard lines of civilization are artfully discarded in favor of a stream that meanders gently among trees, wildflowers allowed to bloom and propagate as they like, and trees branching any which way.
Well, not quite. The wilderness spaces are as thoughtfully planned and lovingly maintained as the formal gardens are, in a sort of benevolent pseudo-neglect.
Many of us have a particularly soft spot for this type of setting. At Denmark’s Frederiksborg Castle, for example, I find the formal baroque gardens breathtaking—but I *love* the Romantic grounds, where you can wander among canals and ponds, through glens and an impressive stand of two-hundred-year-old oak trees. The pathways and greenery have been planned, yes, but in imitation of nature, to create contrast and texture with spectacular views of the palace. And really, few sights are more Romantic than a beautiful castle rising out of tangled greenery: two types of grandeur in contrast. That’s where I sit down and dream.

Even those ancient oak trees are no happy accident. They were originally planted to produce timber for the navy. That’s typical of the woods around cities and castles, even stretching hundreds of years back; there’s very little wilderness left. If you wander around Chenonceau, you will admire the effect of white-trunked trees with a carpet of misty wildflowers underneath ... and come to a moment that stops you in your tracks, as you see that from a certain angle (or a series of certain angles), the white trunks fall into straight lines: This natural spot too was designed, not born.
In the days when castles were living organisms and the land around them made miles of green space perilous to humans, forests were as utilitarian as just about everything else. They were habitats for the animals that royals and aristocrats would hunt and eat; they were also resources for the wood that made buildings and cookfires. As the post-medieval European population spread and devoured more and more wood, old-



Photo by Tea & Morphine
@teaandmorphine

growth forests within reach died out, and trees became another crop. A few exceptions kept the dream of the wilderness alive, and in that dream, our fairy tales unspool. Little Red strays from the path to Grandmother’s house; Hansel and Gretel are lost; the Erl-King preys upon another innocent girl.
To get a sense of how historical concepts of the wilderness garden differed from our ideas, ponder this: The carefully engineered maze at Hampton Court used to be part of that palace’s designated wilderness, and it is the only surviving “wild” bit.
We celebrate the difference between nature and nurture, chaos and control, the true wilderness and a cultivated garden. And we rejoice that there are so many gorgeous, fragrant, elegant, wild, and artful statements to make with a garden, no matter how big

or small.
In a mindset carried over from the Victorian age, to tend a garden is to be tidy, nurturing, and domesticated, the sentimental Angel of the House transplanted to the outdoors. Working our gardens teaches us much-needed self-discipline and makes us ... ordinary.
The people who thought that one up just didn’t know exactly what we are capable of growing behind those high walls.
Image inset, page 72: *The unfortunate lover*. Miniature, 15th century. Image inset, page 74: *Wake Dearest* (1905), from *The Book of Flowers* by Edward Burne-Jones. Wikimedia Commons.
Susann Cokal is the author of four novels, the latest of which is Mermaid Moon. Visit her online at susanncokal.com.



Featured Artist

SUCHARITA SENGUPTA SURI

In Sucharita Sengupta Suri's jewel-toned watercolors, roosters' crests and tails become sprays of botanicals while an octopus's arms transform into trails of floating kelp. Eyeballs stare out of flowers. Crab legs are flowering cacti. The tails of two chameleons curl into fiddlehead ferns, and a long-crested eagle is adorned in branches, mushrooms, snails, egrets, and kingfishers. Hers is a world from a fairy tale, and inspiration can, she says, come in any form—"a certain curve of a hound's head, the soft feathery texture of a bird, the hard shiny coat of a beetle, a velvety moss blanket, a wild bloom in a meadow, the smell of vintage books, a cross-stitched tablecloth, or an old tin box from a secondhand shop ..."

Sucharita lives in Mumbai, a place where strange, dazzling contradictions are the norm. "I live where the busiest part of the city intersects with the mangroves," she says. "A quiet walk through the mangroves and outskirts of the city during heavy monsoons can offer wonderful sights and sounds." She often photographs what she sees, and as a child she would gather odd-shaped fruits as well as leaves and flowers into a treasure chest. In another time, she says, she would have owned a cabinet of curiosities.

Now her charming pieces are curio cabinets in their own right, combining all manner of richly observed flora and fauna into fairy-tale tableaux. This is how she stays enchanted, she says, "by keeping alive the deep sense of curiosity and wonder about the world around me."

See more of Sucharita's work at sucharitas.world or visit her on Instagram @sucharitas.





Amelia Jane Murray's Fae Langour

BY CAROLYN TURGEON

From the early 1820s until 1829, young Manx artist Amelia Jane Murray (1800–1896) rather obsessively painted fairies—smartly dressed and not overly active tiny creatures, that is, who reclined on feathers and stems and leaves as if they were chaise longues. Her fairies rode upon bats, bees, moths, and dragonflies; relaxed atop shells, on the backs of seabirds, and inside curving, flowering leaves that skimmed through the water; and occasionally swung in hammocks made of cobwebs strung among the blooms. They might perch on a snail on a rosebud, holding a leaf like a parasol. Like miniature Snow Whites (the Disney version), they are friends to all living creatures ... except every living creature is their chauffeur—because these miniature fashionistas do not like to walk or use their wings, ever. Why should they?

Murray herself was from a privileged background. Her family once held sovereign rights to the Isle of Man, where she grew up, and her uncle was governor there. We imagine she may have

preferred to hang out with spiders and snails and owls. Or not. No one knows much at all about Murray's inner life, except that she created this exuberant art in her twenties. She stopped in 1829, when she married a man twenty-nine years her senior and moved to Fife, Scotland, to live with him and his six children.

Amelia, now Lady Oswald of Dunniker, ended up having two children of her own and long outliving her husband. She never (as far as we know) painted fairies again. But who can say what she might have left sealed in an attic, being guarded by an eclipse of moths, covered in cobwebs?

Her art passed through four generations of descendants before it was published for the first time in 1986, in a small, unassuming volume called *A Regency Lady's Faery Bower*, alongside a short history of her family, snippets of poetry from Shakespeare and the like, and eternal questions such as this one: “Why, it is pertinent to ask, should a young lady in her twenties be so drawn to this unusual subject?”



Photo © Peter Nahum at The Leicester Galleries, London / Bridgeman Images

The Moth Fairy (1860), by Amelia Jane Murray

FLOWERS FOR HANNEDY

by Mariah Lamour

Art by Rosie Emerson

I'm definitely not dead, she decided, feeling her lungs expand and contract as she breathed deeply—in through the nose, out through the mouth. Functioning normally.

Hannedy's bedroom was covered in flowers. Bright pinks, yellows, reds and whites, purples and oranges; lilies, tulips, carnations, asters, roses, and daisies. The flowers seemed to grow right out of the floor, bunched closely together like a rapt audience.

Hannedy sat up, and more flowers tumbled off her chest, landing in a soft cushion of chrysanthemums. She straightened the collar of her heather-gray nightgown—the one with the worn cuffs and a little pink bow sewn onto the yoke—which had gotten twisted in the night, and combed bony fingers through the gray streaks in her thick, mousy brown hair.

No, she was certainly not dead, but there was another matter at hand: She was terribly inconvenienced. "How am I to get all the way over there," she asked the flowers, gesturing to the far side of the room and her bedroom door, "if I don't want to step on you?"

The flowers, of course, did not respond.

Hannedy was nonetheless determined to get on with her day. She had a rain garden to plant and buckthorn to cut, and she wasn't about to fuss with the Nature Center's plans on account of some rogue florist. Hannedy rather disliked florists. Flowers were meant to stay in the ground, happy, alive, and in their proper region of the world.

Hannedy eased out of her blankets, gently tossing about another assortment of blooms, and dipped her toes into the sea of vibrant colors. As her slender feet sank to the floor, she



realized the flowers were indeed rooted there. Hannedy glanced around, wondering if she and her bed had somehow gotten moved outside.

The window was open, but she was on the appropriate side of it. The cheerful call of a chickadee accompanied airy morning sunlight. A gentle breeze rustled the curtains.

"Nonsense," she muttered to herself, grasping bundles of nightgown and hoisting the hemline up to her knees.

Hannedy waded through the flowers, careful to damage as little as possible. She might have to speak with some of her colleagues about this. *Might be*

best to keep to hypotheticals, she thought, scrunching up her nose. The pungent scent

of the strongest florals grew stronger when she jostled them. *Thank heaven I'm not allergic*. She could almost see the pollen clinging to her legs. She felt quite like a bee.

Out on the ordinary hardwood of the hallway, Hannedy breathed a sigh of relief.

Then, she giggled. Looking back at the small forest of stems and leaves and petals in her bedroom, she began to laugh with delight. The skin around her overcast-blue eyes crinkled, long deep lines branching out across her face as she smiled.

They really were lovely, if a bit unorthodox. It was like something from a dream.

"No one will ever believe me," she said.

But it was certainly a lot better than being dead.



Ebony (2015), by Rosie Emerson. All Rights Reserved 2024 / Bridgeman Images.

Mariah Lamour is a writer, costume artist, and collaborative storyteller from Minnesota, who enjoys the exploration of ambiguity and liminal spaces in relation to character motivation and psychology, and believes a good haunting should never be ignored. Discover more creative works at mariahlamour.com.

See more of Rosie Emerson's hand-painted cyanotypes and other art at rosieemerson.co.uk.



Dryads and Naiads
by Walter Crane (1845-1915)

SONG of the HAMADRYADS

by Eric Brown

Poe thought science had driven you out,
chased you from the wooded haunts of fawn,
gone like the midsummer dream of a poet
in the slumbering shade of a tamarind tree.
Yet study has not banished but enlivened you,
for now some mysteries are understood,
how golden-leaved Chrysopeleia knew her
burly oak would be carried away in flooding
torrents, not by prophecy alone, but by deep
signals under the soil, mycorrhizal raptures
that quivered her rhizomes, and sent shivers
that Arcas answered, great rerouter of rivers.

Though hot changing seasons have scorched
high canopies, and drought has roots eroded,
laid bare their sarsaparilla-red, you still are seen
in curling fern groves, brakes and copses green.
Emerging smooth as beech, hard as ashwood,
tenacious as black bryony, twining serpentine,
comes mulberry-laden Morea and Syce
with plump figs, flowery Cranea and lofty
Ptelea, furtive hazel-eyed Carya. No wonder
that naturalists called not only butterflies
but the cobra arboreal, *Hamadryas hannah*,
after you, who seem to float round trunks
of mangrove as if gliding spirits ethereal,
phantasms weaving through branches immaterial.

If one listens carefully now to the hollows,
to mossy logs laced with foxfire, and places
an ear against the dark, drenched humus
of sable glades and thickets, the hamadryads still
trill their sweet, tremulous song, holding on
to each other, hand in hand in hand beneath
the rough-trodden paths, their hewn cathedrals,
the clamor of humanity in forests primeval.



Journey Into Fallowmoor

An Interview With Nom Kinnear King

by Kambriel

The painted world of artist Nom Kinnear King is one where the soft linen of a gown can bloom forth into an abundance of living flowers, and voluminous sleeves may take flight aided by the wings of clever birds. Walls here are gateways to more bewitching realms. Lamps cast warm light from the fiery glow within ourselves. A remote landscape is dotted with labyrinthine, centuries-old country estates, where the women within revel in somber solitude, carry a sense of wistful wisdom, and are imbued with capabilities that transcend the everyday to reach a more whimsical place—a place hidden away from time somewhere just beyond the verdant hedge maze.

Kambriel: When was the first time you remember deciding to sit down and begin to paint a world of your own?

Nom Kinnear King: I used to draw and plan out a world of my own when I was a child. I'd fill notebooks with drawings of characters, with lists of their siblings, pets, languages they would speak. These grew throughout the years. It was after art school that I began putting them into paintings, creating portraits—the world around them growing over time.

K: Are there any favorite tales you read in youth that worked their way into your psyche and remained inspirational through the years?

NKK: Most definitely. Many of them still play in the works now: *The Secret Garden*, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, *I Capture the Castle*, *The Enchanted Wood*—they all bring back that magic when you think of them that opened the door to another world. Books still are such a wonderful source of inspiration. I'm reading a Brontë book at the moment, and it's perfect after a day of painting.

K: The vignettes you paint tend to be very much a celebration of our natural world. What are some of the comforts you treasure most in nature?

NKK: I always feel more at ease in the countryside, finding new spots to paint, also going back to those familiar paths I've walked since a child—seeing the familiar trees, knowing you mostly have it to yourself, that you're far away from the everyday world and able to gaze up at the light through the trees without your worries. Even when I paint a scene set inside, nature finds its way to creep in at the edges, as if my imagination is like an old estate that's become overgrown.

K: You seem quite inspired by place while still managing to filter this inspiration into a world purely of your own imagination. Are there particular parts of the landscape where you live, in Norwich, you find most enchanting?

NKK: I've revisited local spots here over and over again, mostly outside of the city. My favorites are Blickling and Felbrigg. This Christmas at Felbrigg they had an event called The Wolves of Wildwood Hall. They decorated the house with foliage and the sound of wolves resounded throughout the rooms. One room was entirely covered in plants, which made me think of my painting *All Fallows* (on page 89) come to life.

K: Where are some other favorite places you've spent time in—ones that left an impression on your mind's eye and perhaps even managed to weave their way into the atmosphere of your art?

NKK: We visit France every year to see my folks, and I've always loved the art and landscape there, so French trees pop into paintings. Places I've been have become scenes and settings for characters. Whenever we're en route to somewhere in the U.K., we try to stop somewhere new, and that often becomes a painting. Last year we went to the Peak District, which was beautiful, and places we found there grew into ideas. *Verdure* was a Norfolk holiday memory of me and my eldest rowing a boat across a lake. This year we're going to Cornwall and the Lake District for the first time, so I'm looking forward to seeing what ideas they bring.

K: The women in your work often have quite a pensive feel about them—as if they're somehow lost to the world at large yet belong perfectly within their own painted realms. Do you feel as if your work delves into places that are inspired by yet disconnected from the modern world?

NKK: I do think so, yes. Those figures have stepped away to a place where they can be with their thoughts undisturbed in another place and time, able to roam and play. When I think about the world in *Fallowmoor*, I see it as this area of countryside with grand old houses and secret gardens, a place that has been forgotten and somehow protected itself from the world.

K: Your paintings provide such a feeling of refuge. Do you also enjoy decorating your own personal corner of the world at home with a more romantically eccentric feel?

NKK: I do. My husband and I have the same love for old curios, and our house is filled with objects that appear in my paintings—dried hanging flowers, lots of candlesticks, and pictures everywhere. I would love to paint the stairs and create an old landscape mural on the wall of the bathroom with hidden creatures. I keep waiting till more time appears to start all these plans.

K: Are there any of your paintings in particular that you would most enjoy being able to walk into and explore, or simply get lost in for a while?

NKK: I would say *All Fallows*. I would love to step inside and join



the party for a while, chat amongst the dinner guests, sample their strange cuisine, then take a wander up to the house to explore. I imagine the festivities would go into the small hours—everyone running around the grounds in the moonlight.

K: There's an air of quiet solitude in much of your art but also a sense of real abundance within that solitude—whether it be a crowd of fauna familiars or lushly overgrown flora. Do you personally find a sense of luxury in time spent alone, or in those moments spent alone amongst the natural world?

NKK: I do treasure those moments I find myself alone, because usually I'm surrounded by the kids. When I get to sneak off to the attic for even a small amount of time with a book or go for a walk by myself, it feels so precious and, yes, like a luxury. Last year I had a swim in the sea at the end of the summer when everyone else had gotten out. I stayed for a while just enjoying the moment immensely, bobbing along the sea.

K: The subjects of your paintings often have closely integrated relationships with the wild animals surrounding them. Do you ever imagine they might have a dialogue with one another somehow, or share a deeper understanding?

NKK: I think they make good company for each other, that the people and animals can converse perhaps more in gestures than words, and feel contented around each other. They feel safe and secure in the fact that they belong to the same world.

K: What are some ways you believe humanity and the rest of the natural world can co-exist in a more benevolent, sustainable, and connected way?

NKK: We need to be aware at every age of how important it is to help, and to see that we are a part of the natural world. We must not see it as something separate. Teaching children from a young age to look after it, see the magic in it—we try to take our kids out to the countryside every weekend, and they have such a love for it. I hope that when they are older they will continue to see the importance of caring for nature.



View more of Nom Kinnear King's work at nomkinnearking.com.



Kambriel's fantastical array of couture and curios can be found at kambriel.com and etsy.com/shop/kambriel.





Venus and Anchises (1889-90), by William Blake Richmond

Beauty in Bloom

by Alise Marie, *The Beauty Witch*®

As exuberant spring blossoms into voluptuous summer, she transforms sweet girlish charm into full, womanly wiles. Her allure is at its peak, her beauty at its most beguiling, as she invites us to join her in celebration of the lusty, luscious *femme vitale*. Take her cue with a passionate embrace of earthly delights! Beauty is at her climax right now too, *mes chères*, with a garden of delicacies that await plucking by your delicate fingers: desirable fruits, rich and ripe, join a dazzling display of colorful blooms that anoint your heavenly body with syrupy, sensuous sorcery.

My offerings to you in *my* most beloved season—yes, I know, perhaps a shocking favorite among us broom riders—have been crafted in all the heady intoxication of summertime and conjured to elevate you to your most gorgeous selves. Each treasured gift of the goddess has been intuitively selected to transform your skin, enrapture your spirit, and heighten your botanical bombshell allure ... What are you waiting for? Get concocting, and revel in the pleasures as you reap the results!

I love these treatments most when conjured at a new moon and allowed to cure until the full moon, but they can be concocted at any time during the waxing phase.

Our Triple Goddess of Beauty this season comprises an honored witches' flower, flanked by a pair of Venusian favorites.

Folklore suggests that “where **yarrow** grows, there is one who knows,” and I couldn't agree more. This delicate yet highly protective flower grants courage, increases psychic ability, and attracts love. It allows us to relax fully, encouraging restful sleep and prophetic dreams. Taken topically, yarrow calms irritated skin, unclogs pores, and reduces breakouts, making it an excellent ingredient for summer skin-care woes. It also soothes sore muscles and aches, adding to its body-healing potency. Internally, yarrow lifts the spirit, banishes the blues, alleviates anxiety, fights inflammation, and aids digestion. However, use caution, as it is considered a very potent sedative, so it is best sipped in small doses to promote relaxation and a happy mood.

***Do not ingest yarrow if pregnant, breastfeeding, or menstruating. If you are taking blood thinners or have other bleeding disorders, please avoid ingesting yarrow.** A lovely magical substitution for yarrow is chamomile.

Joining the scene is the darling duo of strawberry and peach, both gorgeous gifts of Venus that bestow glowing skin: balancing, nourishing, lushly emollient, and abundant in vitamin C for boosting collagen production and cellular turnover. Add the magic of beauty, love, happiness, wisdom, and good health, and we have a stunningly delicious potion base, inside and out.

Enjoy every moment, *mignonettes*! See? Summer is fabulous.



Midsummer's Dream



Among the Flower Fae



Pleasures of the Flesh

MIDSUMMER’S DREAM
Elixir

Per serving
1 cup spring water
1 teaspoon dried peach
1 teaspoon dried strawberry
1 teaspoon dried hibiscus flowers
¼ teaspoon dried yarrow
¼-inch stalk of fresh lemongrass, finely chopped

For this potion, as with all here, please use only pure fruits, free of added sugars, and always choose organic wherever possible. Begin by creating a tea: Heat the water, then add the ingredients. Allow it all to steep for 5 minutes, then strain and allow to cool. Serve chilled over ice, garnished with fresh fruit, flowers, and a stalk of lemongrass.

Our next superstars are **hibiscus** and **lemongrass**, entering the dance with ancient beauty secrets from the East. **Hibiscus** was revered by the Egyptians for its hydrating prowess and is immensely effective for keeping skin firm and increasing elasticity. It contains inhibitors that protect skin from the breaking down of elastin—a key factor in keeping skin lifted. It is also rich in vitamin C, an essential nutrient in boosting collagen, which is beneficial to both skin and hair. **Lemongrass** wafts in by way of East Asia as a light, lemony note with a hint of spice. It is highly beneficial for digestion (which can be sluggish in summer), pain relief, anxiety, and fighting infection. It is antibacterial and antifungal for skin, helping ward off and treat breakouts. It carries the lunar magic of lemon, with love, happiness, and cleansing vibes.

This lovely and refreshing sip is pure summer sultriness that hydrates, quenches, and fortifies. And try it lounging outdoors—it’s fantastic!

Beauty Witch Secret: Create a cocktail or smoothie easily with this recipe! As it is, you can add a splash of champagne, white wine, St-Germain, or gin for a summery sip. Or add it to your favorite plant milk along with ⅓ cup of cooked quinoa and a hint of sweetener in a blender for a fortifying, yummy protein shake.

AMONG THE FLOWER FAE
Facial Masque

Conjures two treatments
3 slices of fresh peach
¼ cup fresh strawberries
¼-inch slice of fresh lemongrass, finely chopped or grated
3 drops yarrow essential oil
1 tablespoon coconut flour

Pulse the fruit and lemongrass together in a high-speed vortex blender or food processor until smooth. (If needed, add a teaspoon of spring water.) Pour the mixture into a beautiful bowl, add the



Reclining Nude in an Elegant Interior
by Madeleine Lemaire (1845-1928)

coconut flour and yarrow oil, and mix clockwise. Apply to a clean face, and massage in circular motions to create a gentle exfoliation, then let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes. It smells fantastic! Remove by first using a wet facecloth, then following with a rinse until all the masque is removed. *Mmm!* Your skin is revealed as firm, fresh, soft, glowing, and alive! Store unused portion in the fridge, and use within three days.

Adding **coconut** flour here brings forth a radiant moisturizing, a soft sloughing, and the heightened psychic powers of the coconut, in all its watery glory!

Beauty Witch Secret: Add a bit of Midsummer’s Dream Elixir for an even greater dose of beauty magic! Just adjust the coconut flour as needed for consistency.

PLEASURES OF THE FLESH
Body Oil

Conjures approximately three ounces
2.5 ounces sunflower oil
6 drops yarrow essential oil
1 tablespoon dried peach
1 tablespoon dried strawberry
1 teaspoon dried hibiscus
1 teaspoon dried lemongrass

At the new moon, combine all ingredients in a dark-tinted glass bottle. Place it on a windowsill or a safe spot outdoors until the full moon. Decant into a beautiful clear bottle so you can admire its beauty in your bath or at your altar. Massage liberally onto your body whenever lush moisture and magic are needed.

Glorious **sunflower** is my fave go-to oil for summer. The energy of the sunflower is one of exuberant life force:

Solar-powered and fertile, it grants wisdom, joy, and good health. Rich in linoleic acid, it helps build and maintain a healthy skin barrier, which thins as we age. This light, non-clogging oil contains vitamin E, which prevents damage to skin cells and protects from UV rays, warding off wrinkles while also nourishing your skin with vitamins A, C, and D.

Beauty Witch Secret: Use a dab to anoint your beauty altar, mirrors, jewelry, and sacred treasures.



Alise Marie is the author of The Beauty Witch’s Secrets: Recipes and Rituals for the Modern Goddess, available wherever books are sold. Find her at thebeautywitch.com and on Instagram @thebeautywitchofficial.



CAT WOMEN

by Regina M. Hansen

Women and cats have a long history together, an alliance that goes back to at least 2,000 B.C.E. and the ancient Egyptian veneration of the goddess Bastet. Patroness of childbirth and fertility and protector of the home, Bastet is depicted sometimes as a cat and sometimes as a woman with the head of a cat. She's also believed to be an aspect of the Egyptian lion goddess, Sekhmet, who predates her as a deity. Domesticated cats lived in Bastet's temple and also in many an Egyptian home, where they were petted and pampered for keeping vermin at bay. To intentionally kill a cat was punishable by death. In the centuries since, for better or worse, the fortunes of women and cats have continued to intertwine.

Cat goddesses appear in other pre-Christian cultures as well. Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt, was able to transform into a cat, as was her Roman counterpart Diana. Magically shapeshifting woman cats abound not just in myth and religion but in literature as well. In Madame d'Aulnoy's "The White Cat" (1698), the titular feline befriends the youngest son of a king, eventually revealing herself to be a beautiful woman. They marry, of course. "The White Cat" has been retold numerous times, most recently in the "The White Cat's Divorce," a 2023 short story by Kelly Link in which the cat runs a cannabis business. In George MacDonald's 1895 novel *Lilith: A Romance*, Lilith, the first wife of the Biblical Adam, takes the shape of a cat to trick and threaten the novel's protagonist, Mr. Vane. In film, Jacques Tourneur's 1942 *Cat People* tells the story of Irena Dubrovna, descended from the cat people of a Serbian village. As a result of their history of witchcraft, Irena and her neighbors are fated to become black panthers when physically aroused. On a tamer note, in the *Harry Potter* series, Hogwarts professor Minerva McGonagall has the magical ability to "transfigure" herself into a cat.

Journalist Akanksha Singh notes how often feline adjectives are used to describe women, especially when it comes to sexuality: "Women are called 'sex kittens'; women 'purr' seductively, and are described as having 'feline' good looks." Of course, there are some famous literary tomcats as well, from Puss in Boots to Felix and Garfield, but these characters are more often associated with practical trickery than magic or seductiveness. As scholar Maria Nikolajeva writes, "A tomcat is expected to be adventurous and mischievous. She-cats are ... connected to feminine witchcraft, shape-shifting, mystery, and sexuality."

That is certainly the case with Catwoman, the morally ambiguous sometime nemesis, sometime love interest of DC Comics's Batman. While Catwoman originated in the comics, she has been played on television and in film by Julie Newmar, Eartha Kitt, and Zoë Kravitz, among others. Unlike her literary and mythic counterparts, Catwoman doesn't magically transform into a cat at will. Instead, she dons her cat costume

"One day I was counting the cats and
I absent-mindedly counted myself."

Bobbie Ann Mason,
"Residents and Transients"

and displays catlike, usually non-magical but extraordinarily seductive powers. She is also just simply a woman with an affinity for cat-kind, which places her within a longstanding and sometimes dangerous historical tradition.

While the Egyptian reverence for Bastet elevated the domestic cat in cultural consciousness, women and cats would come to suffer for their connection to each other. Scholar Jody Berland writes, "Women and cats appear across periods and genres as a twosome denoting intimacy, sensuality, and watchfulness inflected with a wide range of dispositions: maternal, sentimental, magical, seductive, and malevolent." That malevolent image of the woman-cat duo can be traced to the Middle Ages and the widespread Christian belief that cats were emissaries of Satan, intermediaries between witches and the devil. Writer and veterinarian Elizabeth Lawrence notes, "In 1233 Pope Gregory IX officially proclaimed the link between cats and the devil and gave divine sanction for massacring cats, especially black ones." From the 11th through the 18th century, such superstitions concerning cats, Satan, and witchcraft were prominent throughout Europe. Cats would often be executed with accused witches as their familiars. Lawrence notes, "Owning a cat, especially a black one, was incriminating evidence against anyone accused of being a witch." Even now, when cats seem beloved throughout the land, black cats are 75 percent less likely to be adopted than other cats.

These superstitions persist in the stereotype of the crazy cat lady, for many a symbol of spinsterhood and lonely, eccentric old age, but devoid of a witch's supposed magical powers. The most famous contemporary image of the cat lady may be Big Edie and Little Edie Beale, the mother and daughter in the documentary *Grey Gardens*. The Beales lived for decades in the decaying house of the film's title, surrounded by cats. "Crazy" cat ladies have also appeared across the television landscape from *The Simpsons* to *CSI*.

And yet, in recent years, "cat lady" has become less an epithet and more a badge of honor. Singers like Katy Perry and Taylor Swift proudly use the term, and celebrities from Jennifer Lopez to Martha Stewart and author Alice Walker have been photographed with their cats. There are cat-lady dolls, games, and books as well, all suggesting a humorous reclamation and celebration of a centuries-old bond. Berland notes, "It is not clear whether the special connection between women and cats has been a cause of cat mistreatment or arose in sympathetic response to it, or more likely a combination of the two." Either way, women and cats are in this together, and somewhere, Bastet is smiling.



Regina M. Hansen is the author of the young adult novel *The Coming Storm*. Learn more at reginamhansen.com.



VERONICA VARLOW

Life of a Love Witch

As I type these words, tears are streaming down my face because something so intensely supernatural just happened that I am in shock. Yes, this issue is about flora and fauna. Yes, I wrote a whole article about the magic of mugwort that was supposed to go in this place instead. But sometimes a message comes through and you have to honor that. I sent both the mugwort article and this essay to Carolyn, so if you're reading these words right now, she chose this one.

It goes deep.

You and I met on the pages of *Enchanted Living* back in fall 2017. My longtime friend Sage and I were on the cover, and on the pages within, Carolyn wrote a beautiful article about the house that my former partner and I built together with our friends after a devastating fire destroyed our tiny cottage. There were photos of my familiar, Niney, a little chihuahua, and me in a vintage slip with the magic things I'd curated in the home. There were house spells that I shared and personal tips I wanted to offer to all of you. We called that place Magick House, and it was wonderful.

But what I didn't share—what the photoshoot or the article didn't show—was the deep sadness I was hiding in my heart. What I didn't show was the divorce I was going through at the time, which had shaken me to my core, or my devastation and my fears that I would fail to keep the new home together. I didn't show my creeping doubt in my own powers ... I mean, who wants to read about those fears and traumas in a magazine called *Enchanted Living*?

I threw myself into my own magick, going deeper, getting weirder, regularly speaking out loud to my deceased Grandma Helen for signs and guidance. I felt bold in having nothing to lose. I saw future visions and challenged myself to go after them. I started Witch Camp. I found strength and family in the women who worked spells beside me. My spirit felt reborn. I met a kind, creative man with a gentle soul who also loves to work magick. His name is David, and he eventually became my husband.

My soul yearned to open a new chapter of my life's book, and as painful as it was for me, I relinquished my partial ownership in Magick House to my former partner and co-builder. While we are on cordial terms, it was just too hard to share it and he was not willing to let it go.

I didn't expect that process to hurt as much as it did, and walking away from a home that I'd also built with my own hands felt like leaving a loved one behind.

In spring 2021, New Orleans called to David and me with her blooming jasmine, the sweet smell of magnolia, and the sound

of the blues in the air. She called to us with her flickering gas lanterns and her colorful Creole cottages from the 1800s. We found a tiny little 600-square-foot home from 1850 at the end of an alley, and we made an offer.

We did what witches are known to do—we cast a spell. David had found a child's dinosaur toy abandoned in a gutter, and he had it in his pocket. The homes in New Orleans are all raised, so you can easily access the dirt underneath. We took a pinch from below the house we wanted to buy and put it in the dinosaur's mouth. We then hopped onto our bicycles and went to a local park where a centuries-old magic tree exists. David scooped up some of the dirt from the base of the tree and mixed it with the dirt from the house. He told the spirits of the tree that we also wanted to create roots in New Orleans, and in return, we would give offerings back to the community. We would create joy. We placed the tiny dinosaur under the empty house and cast the final spell. "This or something even better," I said, as I say in all my spells. But I was certain this *was* the very best thing. It was going to be ours.

We didn't get it.

We went back to New York. I couldn't believe our spell hadn't worked. Was my magick broken? I didn't understand what had gone wrong. We kept returning to New Orleans to do Witch Camp, and every time we left, I cried. We gave up our dream of getting a home in New Orleans and went back to our normal lives.

Years passed and in 2023, we were in New Orleans for Valentine's Day, preparing for Witch Camp that spring. As I've done every year for the past decade, I wrote Valentine's Day cards for strangers and passed them out on the street.

Valentine's Day has a deep significance for me. When I was a little girl, my Grandma Helen called me Valentine. It was my very own special name. Since she passed on, she finds a way to give me a gift or a sign on Valentine's Day from the Otherside.

One of the most notable gifts arrived on Valentine's Day in 2020, when I received my signed contract and check for my book, *Bohemian Magick*.

So on Valentine's Day in 2023, I was handing out valentines to strangers in New Orleans with David at my side. There was joy! There was dancing in the street. There were two 80-year-old women who kissed me on my cheeks because they'd forgotten it was Valentine's Day altogether!

As the temperatures that day started rising and we were down to one last valentine, we decided to take a turn down a different street. Instantly, I saw the sun beaming down on a beautiful

Victorian cottage whose mint-green color was the *very same* shade as my old cottage—the one that had burned to the ground over a decade earlier! It was as if a magnet were drawing me to it. As we walked closer, we noticed a small sign stuck in a planter: "For Sale."

I stopped in my tracks and looked at David. I looked down at the last valentine I was holding in my hand. It had a dinosaur on it. The *exact same* kind of dinosaur that David used in the spell to summon a home that we'd cast two years before. "*This or something better...*" The words came back to me. We looked at each other and back at the cottage. On Valentine's Day, we found our home at last. It called us to it while we were passing out valentines, giving back and bringing joy to the community, just like we'd promised to do in our original spell.

One month later, we moved into our new home—an 1898 Creole Cottage Double, which means that there are two front doors and two side-by-side residences under one roof. We decided to live on one side of the house and turn the other into a place to welcome creative and like-minded magick friends to stay!

We excitedly started working on it, and then out of nowhere, an extended-family health issue brought us back to New York for several months. Our mint-green cottage stood empty and shuttered. Our new life together was on hold. We knew that we were doing the right thing being with family in a deep time of need, but the circumstances started to make us question ... Maybe this was the wrong time to start a home in another place. Maybe, because of the circumstances, we should sell this house in New Orleans. Maybe it just wasn't right.

After we'd spent months away and family circumstances stabilized, we finally returned. I flew in during a thunderstorm that rocked the plane so violently I wondered if I'd even make it back to New Orleans. In the midst of all of this, I asked my Grandma Helen to please give me a sign and let me know the right thing to do. Instantly, the sound of the pilot's voice came over the loudspeakers. He announced that the plane might be diverted because the weather was so bad: "We might not be going to New Orleans at all." Ugh. That was not the sign I was looking for. We circled on a bumpy sky as they waited to hear back from the tower. Ten minutes later, the speakers crackled. "It looks like a miracle, folks. We were meant to be in New Orleans after all. The storm has eased up and we just got landing clearance."

David and I spent the month side by side, painting and repairing and honoring our mint-colored home. My dark hair is splattered with sunshine yellow, petal pink, and deep raspberry from the paint. We had a deadline because our friends, Amanda and Jessica, a touring world-class photographer and celebrity makeup artist respectively, were coming into town to stay with us and do photoshoots in our home. (Fun fact: We originally met on a shoot that was in last spring's *Enchanted Living*!)



Photo by David Varlow

Having Amanda and Jessica here gave new life to the cottage. Art was created. Each woman they photographed felt uplifted and powerfully beautiful, leaving this cottage with their shoulders back and their heads held high. The mornings had us gathered in the petal-pink vintage kitchen, laughing and telling stories. Jessica braided people's hair and local author and friend Tonya Brown came up with ideas for how we can make the cottage thrive with our supportive community of mystical creatives making all forms of art. The house felt alive with the laughter of witches. It became real with the unique magick that we all made together.

Amanda left at dawn this morning on a flight to Phoenix. Moments ago, I walked into the backyard in my pajamas, holding my coffee. The morning was quiet as the sun hit the disco ball in the garden and lit up the grass with tiny dancing rays of light.

And suddenly, it hit me. I realized that I'd received the sign that I'd asked my Grandma Helen for. Tears started rolling down my face.

The first two women who had stayed in our home since we finished it?

Jessica and Amanda.

Their last names?

Saint and Valentine.

Magick is real. This is where we belong. Happy summer, my friends.



Veronica Varlow's best-selling book, Bohemian Magick, is now available everywhere—packed with secret spells and rituals passed down from Grandma Helen. Read more about it, as well as about her Witch Camp and Love Witch Tarot School, on lovewitch.com. Find Veronica on Instagram @veronicavarlow.



Photography by
Alexandria Corne

GIFT OF BUTTERCUP

Energetic Healing With Flower Essences

by Monica Crosson

He was a small child the first time she heard the voices. Whispers that came from within the forest and from the flowers that surrounded her grandmother’s country home. The sounds never frightened the girl as she wandered through the kitchen garden or woods, but instead they gave her comfort in a world that sometimes felt lonely. She wasn’t the type to care about the latest fashion trends or the dreary drama of the day. She felt no need to play with the other children or care about the unkind words they sometimes said as she passed by. During the long weeks at school, the girl dreamed of the flowers in her grandmother’s garden, and this was all she needed to keep her content.

Summer was her favorite time of year because that was when the garden was most vivacious. The flowers shimmered with insects, releasing an intoxicating perfume. The girl and her grandmother spent hours together among the blooms. “You’re definitely not crazy, my dear,” her grandmother told the girl over tea one evening as the sun descended behind the forest, leaving long shadows across the garden.

“But I no longer just hear the flowers talk to me. Their very spirits walk with me,” the girl said.

“Are you frightened, child?”

“Not at all.” The girl sipped at the chamomile tea, which always felt like a warm hug from within.

“You know,” her grandmother said quietly, “I see them too.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Some revelations we must stumble upon alone. Besides, people might think me a bad influence.”

The girl smiled. “Does everyone see them?”

“Everyone who sees with their heart, my dear.” The grandmother rose from the small table, empty teacups in hand.

“A rare gift these days, I’m afraid.”

The girl felt blessed to be among the few to see the world in such a unique way. And as the years passed, she came to know the flower spirits by name. There was Fern of the cool deep forest, a quiet spirit of the green who taught her to trust her visions and showed her how to appreciate her interconnections with the natural world. Mallow and Hawthorn shared the hedgerows and opened her heart, then filled it with warmth. Through them her passive disdain for others turned to empathy and understanding. She even made a few friends.

Nasturtium of the garden gate was a handsome fellow who always winked when she saw her. He encouraged her to be spontaneous and fun. Fireweed, who thrived in those areas where no one else dared to grow, taught her to bloom where she was planted and reminded her that there’s no shame in starting over. Lavender kept her company on those warm summer days when the very best thing was to curl up among the herbs with a good book. Every bloom of every plant from forest, meadow, and garden had a story or lesson to share.

But of all the many beautiful blooms, Buttercup, whose yellow flowers brightened the shady edges of her world, was her favorite. Buttercup walked with her through the fields, along the forest and streambanks, and up to the garden gate, for her boundaries were larger than those of the others. Her brilliant light held the girl up when she was feeling down, and her joyous nature reminded her to find beauty in the mundane.

“Tell me about it. Don’t hold back,” the spirit said one afternoon as they dipped their toes into a nearby pond.

“Not much to tell.” The girl had experienced her first breakup and was certain that not even Buttercup could cheer her up.

“You know,” Buttercup said, “whoever he is, he’s not worth the tears.”

“How’d you know I was talking about a boy?”

Buttercup gave the girl a playful shove. “Come on. You’ve been talking about him for weeks. And frankly he didn’t seem to be a very kind human.”

The girl shrugged. “I suppose.”

The spirit picked a blossom from the very flower she was the essence of. “Hey.” She tilted the girl’s downtrodden face gently toward her own. “Lift your chin.” “Why?”

“Because I want to see if you like butter.” She held up the buttercup bloom and smiled.

“No, no, no.” The girl laughed as she playfully fought off the spirit.

But as always, Buttercup managed to produce a yellow glow under the girl’s chin and exclaimed, “Yes! The girl still likes her butter. Now let’s get out of here.” “Where to?”

“I’m sending you to Rosemary because you, my dear, need a little mental clarity when it comes to love.”

Seasons passed and the girl grew into an intelligent young woman. She was offered a scholarship to a fine school far away from her grandmother’s garden where the spirits of nature dwelled. She’d worked hard for the honor. But as she and Buttercup walked for the last time along the edge of the forest, where the spirit’s blooms were at their most radiant, the girl wept.

“Oh, dear child,” Buttercup said. “Why do you cry?”

“I thought I wanted this. But now I’m uncertain.”

The spirit held her close. “I don’t understand. You’ve worked so hard.”

“I’m not sure if I’m worthy of such a school.”

“Would they give a full scholarship to someone who was unworthy?”

The girl sniffed. “I suppose not.”

“You’re going to accomplish great things, dear girl.”

“But I won’t have you to guide me. I won’t have any of you.”

The spirit of the flower turned and gathered as many buttercups as she could hold, then motioned for the girl to follow her to the garden shed. “Go,” she said. “Go to the others and ask them to gift you some of their petals.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You’ll see. Now go.” The spirit waved. “And get some amber bottles and brandy from your grandmother’s apothecary while you’re at it.”

When the girl returned, the spirit had already filled various tins and jars from a rain barrel. She instructed the girl to float each type of blossom atop the water in a separate container, and then the spirit of the buttercup enchanted the vessels with a charm: “Earth to nurture, air to feed, sun and water impart power for a soul in need.”

The spirit then removed the petals and filled the small amber bottles with the charged water and brandy. When she finished, she presented the bottles to the girl. “There you go.”

“I don’t understand.” The girl picked up the bottle marked “Buttercup.”

“You now have our very essences to take with you. So whenever you’re feeling unworthy or lonely, just place a few drops of any of our essences under

your tongue and you’ll feel us with you.”

“Thank you.” The girl wiped the tears from her cheek.

“Now, go. Go and take on the world.”

School was everything (and more) the girl thought it would be. She excelled in her classes, made friends easily, and eventually found a career that she loved. But when times got tough or she felt her confidence falter, she pulled out her flower vials and, more often than not, placed a few drops of buttercup essence under her tongue.

And then she was transported to a radiant, buttercup-filled landscape. There her favorite spirit held up a flower, smiled, and said to her: “Let’s see if you still like butter.”

A GUIDE TO THE VIBRATIONAL ENERGY OF FLOWER ESSENCES

- Angelica: Protection and guidance by spiritual beings
- Black-Eyed Susan: Acknowledgment of the self, a release of what no longer serves you
- Blackberry Blossom: Focus and manifestation of will
- Bleeding Heart: Ability to love others unconditionally
- Buttercup: Radiant inner light and confidence
- Calendula: Healing warmth and receptivity, open-mindedness
- Chamomile: Emotional balance, release of stress
- Cherry Blossom: Innocence, openness, joy, and exuberance
- Columbine: Creativity and inspiration, self-esteem
- Dandelion: Physical energy and expressiveness
- Dogwood: Grace and harmonious movement
- Echinacea: Integrity and a strong sense of self
- Evening Primrose: Awareness, openness, and healing
- Fireweed: Recovery and rebirth
- Hawthorn: Open-heartedness, courage, and bravery
- Hibiscus: Warmth and sexual openness
- Honeysuckle: Acceptance of life’s situations, release, and moving forward
- Impatiens: Harmonious flow with life’s daily rhythms
- Lavender: Spiritual sensitivity, calm
- Lilac: Rejuvenation of the soul
- Lotus: Expansive understanding and spirituality
- Mallow: Open-hearted sharing and warmth
- Morning Glory: Understanding of life’s natural rhythms, feeling awake and refreshed
- Mugwort: Intense psychic or dream experiences
- Mullein: Inner light to guide us along our path
- Nasturtium: Glowing vitality and spontaneity
- Nicotiana: Awareness of the earth’s heartbeat, inner peace, and emotional well-being
- Peppermint: Mindfulness and clarity
- Peony: Celebration of life
- Queen Anne’s Lace: Spiritual insight and vision
- Red Clover: Calm and steady presence
- Rose: Joy and commitment to life’s sacredness, energy clearing
- Rosemary: Warmth and mental clarity
- Sage: Wisdom derived from life experiences
- Saint John’s Wort: Light-filled awareness and solar strength
- Snapdragon: Lively, dynamic energy
- Sunflower: Radiance and individuality
- Sweet Pea: Commitment to community, a strengthened sense of self
- Vervain: Moderation, tolerance, and balance
- Violet: Highly perceptive sensitivity, elevated spiritual perspective
- Yarrow: Openness to others while still self-contained

FLOWER POWER

Flowers cultivated in the garden or discovered along a forgotten path never cease to bewitch the senses with their color, scent, and beauty. But some believe that the power of our floral friends goes beyond the aesthetic, and that their very essence carries the power to heal through a vibrational signature—that is, an invisible emotional and physical rate of vibration unique to each being. Using vibrational energy in healing practices is not a New Age fad but a tradition that dates back thousands of years. Think of acupuncture, reiki, or acupressure. Flowers also have a long history of use in energy healing that can be traced to ancient Egypt, Australia, China, and India.

It was Dr. Edward Bach, a conventionally trained physician and visionary healer, who in the 1930s found that his patients’ physical symptoms were deeply connected to their mental and emotional states. In his search for a simple, natural way to balance his patients’ physical and emotional systems, he looked to the healing properties of the essences of flowers. He developed thirty-eight flower remedies that he thought could help overcome fear, depression, and anxiety. Today, many naturopaths make and use flower essences as a gentle approach to healing and mediative practices.

Flower essences work on principles similar to homeopathy. Practitioners believe that the energetic qualities of flower essences present themselves through their color, shape, habitat, and growing patterns, and that we can transfer their vibrational signatures to water by steeping the delicate petals for several hours under sunlight. After straining the flowers, we can then dilute and bottle the infused water.

Flower essences differ from essential oils, as the petals used in making a flower essence contain only small traces of actual physical substance and have no direct impact upon the body’s biochemistry.



Thus they are nontoxic and can be used internally or externally. Essential oils are created using various parts of a plant and contain molecular compounds that are physically transferred into the body via the respiratory, olfactory, and integumentary systems. They are commonly used for perfumes and topical

oils, and for remedies that address physical and emotional ailments.

Flower essences offer a way to work with a plant on an emotional level. They are wonderful to use before meditation or divination, to gain self-knowledge, to facilitate self-love, or to feel a better connectedness to our natural world.



HOW TO MAKE FLOWER ESSENCE

- You will need:
- Spring (or purified) water
 - Brandy (or vinegar or vegetable glycerin)
 - Glass bowl
 - Enough blooms to cover the water’s surface
 - Clean glass jar
 - 1-ounce amber dropper bottles

As with any harvesting for spiritual practice, ask the plant for permission and state clearly that you are seeking the plant’s wisdom. Also, it is very important that you identify each plant correctly. If you are unsure, consult an expert.

Avoid coming into contact with the petals. Instead clip a few blooms into a basket.

Place the blooms in a bowl of spring or purified water in a spot where they will receive full sun for three to four hours.

Carefully remove them without letting your fingers touch the water. Mix with an equal amount of brandy (or vinegar or vegetable glycerin) and pour into a clean glass jar. This is your mother essence, the one that you will store, later to make stock essences for use.

Label and date your mother essence. Store in a cool, dark place. Essences made with brandy will keep for approximately five years. Essences made with vinegar or vegetable glycerin should be used within six months to a year.

When you are ready to make stock essences for daily use, add five drops of mother essence to a 1-ounce dropper bottle and fill with equal parts water and brandy (or vinegar or vegetable glycerin).

You can apply flower essences with a dropper directly under your tongue. They can also be added to your drinks or smoothies, mixed into your skin-care products, or used as part of your bath or shower.

Monica Crosson is the author of several books, including Wild Magical Soul: Untame Your Spirit & Connect to Nature’s Wisdom and her latest, A Year in the Enchanted Garden. Learn more at authormoniacrosson.com and follow her on Instagram @monicacrosson.

See more of Alexandria Corne’s work on Instagram @alexandriacornephotography.



On Velvet Wings
by Annie Stegg
@anniestegg

FROM OUR READERS

FOR THIS ISSUE, WE ASKED, “HOW DO YOU ENJOY FLORA & FAUNA DURING SUMMER?”

On the morning of the summer solstice, I wake up early to gather the morning dew from the flowers in my garden. I pat the dew over my face and take a moment to let it dry in the morning sun as I meditate on gratitude and the magic found in nature. At midnight, I have a clandestine picnic with candles, cake, and wine under the low-hanging branches of the willow tree in the community garden near me, making sure to leave some for the fairies.

—*Pamela Chermansky*

My favorite part of the warmer months of summer is collecting flowers from my garden to use in my kitchen. I adore adding homemade violet syrup to a glass of lemonade; I watch as it magically turns to pink. Or collecting lavender to bake into scones, or dandelions to bake into shortbread. Midsummer is the start of a whimsical, floral adventure in our house!

—*@thewaters_and_thewilde*

During summer, I welcome all my old tree friends, whom I have seen wear the brazen ruffles and frills of white flowers during spring. They're stately in the dark greens of their more mature months (not knowing the second youth of flamboyant reds and golds is yet to come). This year, I bought elf ears and wine glasses decorated with flowers, and I hope to have a little picnic under the trees. Then I will watch the stars, which is both exhilarating and frightening to me because they have seen the deaths of billions—and the birth of gods.

—*Marzanna Bilka*

I dig my fingers deep into the dirt, I gently stroke my lavender buds, I stick my nose inside the petals of barely opened rosebuds. —*Caria L Martins*

I spend summer evenings wandering through flower meadows, listening to the hedgerows twitter as they call in the nighttime. I take walks along the marshlands too—watching swallows weave their magic in the skies and just skim the grass tops as they pull close to the estuary waters. —*@wisteria.wild*

In the summer I love being where the trees stand tall with lots of branches for shade and the ground is covered in soft green moss. I make sure my camera has a lot of space for photos and my shoes are laced tight! So much hiking to do in Oregon! —*Shannon Hughes*

Picking strawberries and talking to the squirrels! —*@coyotedancer*

I love the fullness of summer, its resilience to being less. —*@stormygreyskies_*

I float like a sea otter on the glassy surface of the sparkling Pacific on a late summer's afternoon, just beyond the breaking waves, watching for dolphins, skates, and mermaids. —*@capoppyfields*

Oh, the fireflies! Watching a field of them shimmer and blink up into tall pines, then blend into a sky of stars. It's such splendor, my heart bursts! Nights like this remind me of lines from a James Agee poem: “High summer holds the earth ... Sure on this shining night.” —*Laura Whitney*

I'm in Southern California, and while all the sunshine and heat gets old real fast, I do enjoy seeing some of the spring sage and buckwheat blossoms on the trails. Toward the end of summer, the buckwheat blossoms dry up as the plant goes dormant; the flowers start to turn a vibrant red color while the leaves stay evergreen. It's such a beautiful contrast! Datura also blossoms around this time, and it's always special to come across one. The fauna is also pretty active, and I enjoy seeing lots of ground squirrels, lizards, and scrub jays.

—*@sylvias.sketchbook*

I set up my hammock in between two grand pines in my yard and lie there for hours, hanging out with the squirrels, chipmunks, and birds. Most of them know me by now, so we all just chill, peacefully. —*Harmony D*

Summer is one of my favorite seasons. I'm looking forward to swimming in the ocean like a siren, gardening flowers and plants, and walking through the woods.

—*@purplefaerie_*

I listen to the birds while I sip my morning coffee, tend to my garden, drink sun tea that I've infused with herbs, plan picnics with friends, make wine with garden strawberries, visit my town's flower farm, and watch the lightning bugs cast their all-too-short glow. —*@acandlelitgarden*

I enjoy visiting my favorite crystal-clear mountain lake, where I collect smooth, colorful stones to sculpt flowery fairy cottages. It's a wonderful way for my favorite place on earth to have a starring role in my art! —*Jenny Darchuk-Sorensen*

Photography by
Michaela Ďurišová

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