

# **Herbal Apprenticeship**

**An Educational Weekend Retreat Series**

**2020**

With Nathaniel Whitmore, Herbalist, Shiatsu-shi

The Herbal Apprenticeship consists of once-a-month weekends (May - October) in Glen Spey, NY that will cover the medicinal uses of herbs in the traditions of Chinese medicine and Native American medicine with a focus on local wild herbs. Alongside botany walks and medicine making opportunities, classes will focus on local herbs as they were used by Lenape and other Native tribes and how local herbs are used in Chinese herbal medicine. Clinical assessment is an additional focus, which includes abdomen, tongue, and pulse diagnosis in the style of the Far East. The Catskill Apprenticeship weekends are May 29th - 31st, June 26th - 28th, July 17th - 19th, August 28th - 30th, September 18th - 20th, and October 9th - 11th. If you are not already on my e-mail list and want to be notified of Apprenticeship developments and other events, let me know by e-mail: Nathaniel Whitmore wathakes@gmail.com

The apprenticeship focuses on traditional uses of the *materia medica* with classes on Native American ethnobotany and traditional Chinese medicine. Familiarity with the herbs will further be developed during identification and harvesting walks, as well as through opportunities to make herbal preparations with a variety of fresh local herbs. *Materia medica* is a primary focus of the apprenticeship, as herbs are the focus of herbalism and the weekends in the Catskills provide the ideal atmosphere to deepen awareness of herbs and expand familiarity towards improvement in clinical abilities. Because continued education of the seemingly infinite *materia medica* is a necessity for the herbalist, the classes are intended to be opportunities to learn about local herbs in new light, particularly common local herbs, invasive weeds, and unique medicinals that are little-known to modern American herbalists. *Materia medica* classes include **Doctrine of Signatures, Leni Lenape / Delaware Ethnobotany, Iroquois Ethnobotany, Cherokee Ethnobotany, Dine / Navajo Ethnobotany, Moxa & Meridians, Toxic Medicinals, Classic Chinese Formulae, Local Chinese Herbs, Native Medicinal Herbs, Invasive Medicinal Herbs, Common Local Herbs, Antimicrobial Herbs, and Tonic Herbs.**

Clinical assessment skills and knowhow are also major areas of study in the Catskill Apprenticeship. Because diagnostic skills like pulse assessment, tongue assessment, and hara (abdominal) assessment take time and experience, the apprenticeship offers classes to study the material with hands-on practice. Diagnosis classes include herbal indications and with them woven with *materia medica* studies, a truly holistic approach to herbal medicine is being offered.

Additionally, chi kung and tai chi chuan classes are offered in the mornings in order to expose students of herbalism to a more complete understanding of the range of Chinese medicine.

The meridians of Chinese medicine are also a focus of the apprenticeship, being introduced during the tai chi classes and with a few classes on the specific subject of meridians and pressure points. These four studies, *materia medica*, diagnosis, meridians, and chi kung offer a comprehensive study of Chinese herbal medicine for the clinical herbalist or clinical herbalist to be.

Because of our location, the apprenticeship focuses on Native American herbalism. While “ethnobotany” can have an association with history, these classes are offered in the spirit of “living herbalism” and with the understanding that Native people have had a mastery of herbal medicine and that Native American herbalism is very much alive today with much to offer. Since ancient times herbal medicine has revolved around humankind’s relationship with the environment and the plants growing there. More than ever in known history it can be said that people have grown away from the natural environment and the local plants. The Herbal Apprenticeship is an opportunity for herbalists to connect more deeply with the green beings around us to understand how medicinal herbs can help us heal. We turn to Native American herbal knowledge, wisdom, and lore to better understand the medicinal herbs of these native lands, including the little that has been recorded (see Recommended Reading List).

The Apprenticeship covers between 67 and 83 herbs (if taken in full) as the *materia medica* study and core of the program. Classes covering *materia medica* specifically can be found (in green letters) in the outline below. Class descriptions follow the outline. Then a summary of the *materia medica* covered in each class and class hours follows. The selection of herbs is based on those native to and otherwise wild in our area that have relationship to herbs used in the quite solid system of Chinese herbal medicine.

Camping is available, as are nearby accommodations. Friday evening is potluck. Other meals will be provided, made from local ingredients in a health-promoting way. Campfire tending is encouraged, both for the practical necessity of keeping the fire going, and for the opportunity to learn of yang energy and commune with the ancient traditions that centered around fire (What better way to learn of the the symbol of water and fire as yin and yang than to see the natural rivers and circle around the fire?). Additional help will be requested on occasion, but mostly it is just expected to observe common courtesy in the sharing of a retreat space.

Medicine making sessions will include a guided workshop, such as tincture making or the crafting of some other form of herbal preparation, for those desiring instruction or just simply wanting to enjoy the group experience of making herbal medicine. The time is also set aside to give participants the chance to make whatever they wish from herbs they harvest or from our shared harvest (we will bring herbs from farms and previous wildcrafting). You can also choose to take or skip classes instead of or for medicine making.

**Apprenticeship course outline :** \_\_\_\_\_ class titles in **bold**, *materia medica* classes in **green**.

**Friday night:** 5/29: \_\_\_\_\_ 6/26: \_\_\_\_\_ 7/17: \_\_\_\_\_ 8/28: \_\_\_\_\_ 9/18: \_\_\_\_\_ 10/9: \_\_\_\_\_

4:00 **Herb Walk (1.5H)**

6:00 - 8:00 potluck dinner

8:00 Ethnobotany **(1.5H)**

**Doctrine of Signatures**

**Lenape Ethnobotany**

**Iroquois Ethnobotany**

**Cherokee Ethnobotany**

**Dine Ethnobotany**

**Importance of**

**Ethnobotany**

**Saturday:**

5/30: \_\_\_\_\_ 6/27: \_\_\_\_\_ 7/18: \_\_\_\_\_ 8/29: \_\_\_\_\_ 9/19: \_\_\_\_\_ 10/10: \_\_\_\_\_

6:00 **Do-In & Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan (1H)**

7:00 breakfast

9:00 **Herb Walk (2H)**

11:00 **Medicine Making (1.5H)**

12:30 lunch

2:00 **Medicine Making / Beginners Chinese Medicine: (2H)**

**Yin/Yang Theory (Theory of Fire and Water)**

**5 Flavors of Chinese Medicine**

**Organs & Body Systems**

**Pulse & Tongue Assessment**

**Doctrine of Signatures**

**Intake & Assessment**

4:00 **Medicine Making / Advanced Chinese Medicine: (2H)**

**Pulse, Tongue, & Hara**

**Moxa & Meridians**

**Toxic Medicinals**

**Classic Chinese Formulae**

**Local Chinese Herbs**

**Pulse Assessment**

6:00 dinner

9:00 **Native Herbal Lore at the Camp Fire (1.5H)**

Sunday: 5/31: \_\_\_\_\_ 6/28: \_\_\_\_\_ 7/19: \_\_\_\_\_ 8/30: \_\_\_\_\_ 9/20: \_\_\_\_\_ 10/11: \_\_\_\_\_

6:00 **Do-In & Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan (1H)**

8:00 **Herb Walk (2H)**

10:00 brunch

12:30 Local *materia medica* (2H)

**Local Native Herbs**

**Invasive Herbs**

**Common Herbs**

**Local Chinese Medicine Herbs**

**Antimicrobial Herbs**

**Tonic Herbs**

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**Recommended Reading / Reference List:**

Planetary Herbology by Michael Tierra

The Energetics of Western Herbs by Peter Holmes

Western Herbs According to Traditional Chinese Medicine by Tomas Garran

Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica by Dan Bensky

Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology by Chen and Chen

Native American Medicinal Plants by Daniel E. Moerman

Folk Medicine of the Delaware and Related Algonkian Tribes by Gladys Tantaquidgeon

Iroquois Medical Botany by James W. Herrick

Plants of the Cherokee by William H. Banks

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# Herbal Apprenticeship

## Class Descriptions

### Friday Night 8:00 Ethnobotany

#### 5/29: **Doctrine of Signatures**

An introduction to one of the oldest and most widespread theories in traditional herbalism. This ethnobotany class will focus on Native American application of the Doctrine and examples of our local plants.

#### 6/26: **Lenape Ethnobotany**

The Esopus were the local (Big Indian, NY) band of the Lenni Lenape, or Delaware, tribe. Although much was lost of the Lenape knowledge of this area and mastery of local herbalism, tribal members from Oklahoma and other places have passed down some lore that pertains to Native people of the area using native plants, this material should be studied by any serious student of herbalism. We start our ethnobotany focus with herbs used by the Lenape.

*Materia medica:* Sycamore, Sassafras, Oak, Black Haw, Elm, Sweet Fern (plus some listed elsewhere)

#### 7/17: **Iroquois Ethnobotany**

The Iroquois 6 Nations were centralized in New York state. They utilized many native herbs and also maintained an interesting medical system that was partially recorded in [Iroquois Medical Botany](#). This class looks at some of the beliefs and herbs of Iroquois medicine.

*Materia medica:* Bracken Fern, Larch, Bloodroot, Witch Hazel (plus some listed elsewhere)

#### 8/28: **Cherokee Ethnobotany**

The Cherokee remain one of best-known Eastern tribes. Having relations with the Lenape and an herbal medicine that uses many herbs we know locally, in addition to some influential herbalists of today (such as David Winston and Jody Noe who come from the Cherokee herbal tradition) and several books on Cherokee medicine. This class will look at some herbs and beliefs of the tradition.

*Materia medica:* Maidenhair Fern, Wood Fern, Spicebush, Smilax (plus some listed elsewhere)

### 9/18: **Dine Ethnobotany**

The Dine, or Navajo, tribe is one of the biggest and maintains a strong herbal tradition. Even today herbs are sold in markets (alongside the famous Navajo jewelry) and many Native people rely on herbal medicines. Although many herbs of the southwest are not found locally, this study of Dine herbalism will give a glimpse of western ethnobotany, including herbs known to commerce as well as some unique to southwest Native tradition.

*Materia medica:* Sagebush, Bitter Herb, Creosote Bush, Red Root, Juniper (plus some listed elsewhere)

### 10/9: **Importance of Ethnobotany**

While ethnobotany largely remains in the realms of history and anthropology, the study of medicinal plants by Native people still has much to teach the modern world. This ethnobotany class will wrap up the series with continued discussion of the herbs already mentioned as well as inspiring the herbalist of today to maintain connection with Native traditions and to learn from them towards a greater understanding and practice of herbal medicine.

*The purpose behind the Friday night ethnobotany classes is to present background information on local medicinal herbs of interest while also providing insight regarding the Native American herbal medicine practices and medicinal ways. The classes are materia medica focused and will expand students' knowledge of important medicinal herbs, including practical information for medicinal application.*

## **Saturday:**

### 6:00 Do-In & Wu Style Tai Chi Chuan:

Our main focus for morning exercise is Tai Chi Chuan (Taiji). We will be working with the 108 Long Form. As part of the warm up and for educational purposes, we will also explore the following subjects during the morning exercise time:

#### **Do-In**

Do-in (tao yin) is a daily method to move chi and promote health by meridian stretches, meridian tapping, self-shiatsu, hara breathing, and qigong practices that can be done at home upon rising and/or at other convenient times to promote health and diminish illness.

#### **Opening Posture / Standing Meditation**

The opening posture of Tai Chi Chuan is often considered the most important “move” or posture of the form and is the foundation of chi kung postures. Naturally, this class also covers fundamentals of posture which are applied to everyday life as well as diagnostics.

#### **Meridians & Tsubo**

Meridians and pressure points of Chinese medicine. Essential to daily health exercise is a basic understanding of chi meridians, which can enhance tai chi chuan practice as well as yoga, meditation, and other do-in practices.

#### **Healing Sounds**

Healing sounds, especially used according to 5 element theory, are combined with meditation and do-in to promote health and to heal organs and organ systems.

#### **Hara Breathing**

This class will focus on deep breathing exercises. Following the hara breathing will be some time to work on previous material and for questions.

#### **Karate**

Karate (originally “Chinese hand” before being changed to “empty hand”) originates from the kung fu and chi kung of China, and was developed in Okinawa and then Japan. Practiced since ancient times for health promotion, many of weak and sickly constitution proved the benefits of karate with long, disease-free lives.



2:00 [Medicine Making](#) / [Beginners Chinese Medicine](#):

**5/30: Yin/Yang Theory (Theory of Fire and Water)**

This class introduces yin/yang theory, particularly how it is applied in Chinese medicine. This is foundational material that students of herbal medicine will constantly consider and refine. We will look at general associations of yin and yang and the body, the alchemical metaphor of fire and water and how this relates to chi and the body, and basic yin/yang characteristics of herbs.

**6/26: 5 Flavors of Chinese Medicine**

The five flavors are at the heart of the classification of herbs in Chinese herbalism, the understanding of their properties, and the formulation of medicinals. Learn about the flavors of herbs - what they mean and when they are indicated.

**7/18: Organs & Body Systems**

This class will explore the organs and body systems as understood in Chinese medicine. Still uncertain about what the “spleen” does according to Chinese medicine, or what the “liver” is in Chinese medicine beyond what you know from modern physiology? This class introduces all the basics of organs and body systems in Chinese herbalism.

**8/29: Pulse & Tongue Assessment**

Pulse assessment is the quintessential form of touch diagnosis in Chinese medicine. Tongue assessment is a primary form of visual diagnosis in Chinese medicine. Together they represent the main focus of two of the “four pillars of diagnosis”. Alongside symptoms, pulse and tongue qualities are primary in clinical assessment and selection of herbs and formulae.

**9/19: Doctrine of Signatures**

The Doctrine of Signatures is a universal theory, used by essentially all traditions of herbal medicine. Though often represented as historical, the Doctrine of Signatures is very alive and relevant today. Learn about the signatures of herbs and how to connect more deeply with the plants through their signatures.

**10/10: Intake & Assessment**

This class will wrap up the previous material on diagnosis and cover some basics about health intake and clinical health assessment. This “putting-it-all-together” class will help beginner herbalists to take comprehensive assessments for herbal consultations.

4:00 [Medicine Making](#) / Advanced Chinese Medicine:

5/30: **Pulse, Tongue, & Hara**

This class will review some of the fundamentals of pulse, tongue, and hara assessment and will present some more advanced material. Beyond the basics, this class will include hands-on practice and plenty of time for questions.

6/27: **Moxa & Meridians**

Learn more about the various species of Mugwort and their use in moxibustion (Mugwort-burning treatment). Alongside acupuncture, moxibustion is one of the most important practices in Chinese medicine, though relatively little-known today for several reasons. This class will cover some basic moxibustion techniques, including hands-on practice. Meridians and acupoints will also be covered.

7/18: **Toxic Medicinals**

Explore the scary subject of toxic medicinals. This class will cover some common herbs with (perhaps unknown) mild toxicity, following the spectrum to the most poisonous herbs known.

*Materia medica:* Aconite, Coltsfoot, Peach Pit, Rhubarb, Hellebore, Iris, Elder, Poke, and more

8/29: **Classic Chinese Formulae**

This class will present a number of traditional Chinese formulae that are well-known today or otherwise relevant, such as representing herbs in the Catskill Apprenticeship *materia medica*.

9/19: **Local Chinese Herbs**

This advanced class will cover some details regarding the use of local herbs used in Chinese medicine and will introduce (if introduction is needed) a number of wild plants of our area that should be better understood by herbalists of the area.

*Materia medica:* Mugwort, Japanese Pagoda, Wild Ginger, Willow, Amaranth, Peach, Clematis, Violet

10/10: **Pulse Assessment**

As the quintessential diagnostic method of Chinese medicine, American herbalists of all levels need additional study time. This class will answer questions and include hands-on practice.

## **Sunday:**

6:00 Morning Energy Exercises: See description for Saturday morning exercises.

### 12:30 Local Materia Medica

#### 5/31: **Local Native Herbs**

This class will cover some of the most important native herbs of our area. Native uses will be covered as well as the energetics of Chinese herb classification. Closely related Chinese herbs will be compared.

*Materia medica:* Sassafras, Calamus, Partridge Berry, Oak, Boneset, Jack-In-The-Pulpit

#### 6/28: **Invasive Herbs**

Many invasive plants are very medicinal and it is every herbalist's duty, in initiating balance in people and on earth, and in the name of holistic health, to better understand the invasive herbs.

*Materia medica:* Japanese Knotweed, Reed, Garlic Mustard, St. John's Wort, Teasel, Wild Rose, Kuzu, Tree-of-Heaven, Air Potato

#### 7/19: **Common Herbs**

This class covers the commonly known, though sometimes overlooked, herbs. Particularly unusual uses will be presented and novel perspective to gain deeper understanding of common herbs.

*Materia medica:* Dandelion, Burdock, Yellow Dock, Plantain, Self-Heal, Ground Ivy, Oregano, Fennel, Privet, and more

#### 8/30: **Local Chinese Medicine Herbs**

This class will cover some of the most important Chinese herbs that are found locally.

*Materia medica:* Mulberry, Peony, Ginkgo, Schisandra, Rush, Horsetail, Cattail

#### 9/20 : **Antimicrobial Herbs**

The thorough understanding of antimicrobials and how to use them is one of the most important areas of mastery for herbalists. This class will cover the herbs and practical information regarding their use.

*Materia medica:* Barberry, Goldthread, Echinacea, Toothache Plant, Goldenrod, and more

#### 10/11: **Tonic Herbs**

This class presents an overview of the various kinds of tonic herbs and covers in detail several of the most widely used.

*Materia medica:* American Ginseng, Reishi, Chaga, Hawthorn, Licorice, Astragalus

**Lodging:**

Participants are encouraged to camp for free on site. This will avoid extra travel time during the weekend, assist with “cell phone detox” (location is out of range), provide full shinrin-yoku (forest bathing) benefit, and help ensure that you are on time for classes. Camping is part of the experience and was enjoyed by all last year.

If you desire a room close by, there are several options. Of course, you can look up rooms on your own. The Starling at Pond Eddy has offered a 20% discount to participants. Their beautiful spot is just over 2 miles away from the apprenticeship location and overlooks the Delaware River. Pond Eddy and Glen Spey share a border. Check out: [thestarlingpondeddy.com](http://thestarlingpondeddy.com) Two local homeowners have also offered to rent rooms. The one in Glen Spey is on the bordering private preserve, just under 2 miles from the apprenticeship location by road. The other is also in Pond Eddy.

**Food:**

Friday night’s dinner is potluck. Please bring something to share. All other meals are provided at no extra charge and are part of the experience.

Food is predominantly vegan. Eggs are used here-and-there, and are standard at breakfast (all locally purchased and truly free range). Bonito (shavings of dried fish) are commonly used in preparing soup broth and flavoring various dishes. If you desire to avoid fish and/or eggs, it will be very possible. If you desire to eat meat, you are free to bring some along and cook it yourself over the fire. Much of the cooking happens over the fire. We also utilize an outdoor propane stove and have camp stoves. This is all available as long as it is not being used for primary cooking.

Vegetables are all acquired from local, small scale organic farms and are very fresh. We also used wild vegetables. If conditions allow, we harvest wild mushrooms throughout the weekend to use in meals. We also purchase mushrooms from local farmers to supplement wild ones.

A variety of tea is available and we encourage participants to explore the various types of tea. Herbal infusions and decoctions (“tea”) are also always available. We have a number of dried herbs for study, but generally use the fresh herbs that we harvest during walks or that we have picked to be used during the weekend (for beverages as well as medicine-making). If you desire coffee, please bring it along and feel free to use our equipment to prepare it.

**TOTAL : 18 Hours (per weekend) x 6 weekends = 108 Hours**

Certificates to be awarded:

**Catskill Herbal Apprenticeship**

**Catskill Herbal Apprenticeship Advanced Studies**

Variations include:

Adaptations for one or more weekend (but less than 6)

Medicine Making Focus (if attending both Sat. afternoon medicine making sessions)

Academic Focus (if attending both Beginner's Chinese Medicine and Advanced Chinese Medicine on Saturday afternoons)

*(class hours adjusted accordingly on certificate)*

**COST:**

\$1800.00 for full series, paid in full

\$350.00 per weekend

Full participation is encouraged, but not necessary. Alternatively, come to one or as many as you can or would like to. Attendance of beginner and advanced classes and medicine-making sessions (regarding Saturday afternoons) is by choice of the participant.

**Catskill Herbal Apprenticeship**

With Nathaniel Whitmore

In Glen Spey, NY

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