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I absolutely adore it. I adore growing it. It's one of the few flowers my grandkids love harvesting, and I love sharing about it with people because a lot of people know it more for the party trick, and you know it's such a showstopper, but saying, no, this is—this is actually—has some botanical benefit for you. I'm gushing. I fangirl over butterfly pea, yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love it. I'm definitely getting fangirl vibes here, love it.

Clarenda Stanley:

It's—it's been such a beautiful path and I'm glad that life directed me in this direction.

Welcome to the Herbs with Rosalee Podcast, a show exploring how herbs heal as medicine, as food, and through connecting with the living world around you.

I'm going to admit something upfront on this one. I've been kind of dismissive of butterfly pea flower. So, of course, I know it's a flower. It turns your tea blue, and so I kind of just filed it away as like, yeah, that's what it does, right? It's like a little party trick.

When Clarenda Stanley, who many know as “Farmer Cee,” chose it as her plant for this episode, I thought, “Alright, show me.” By the end of our conversation, I changed my mind. Cee talks about butterfly pea as a companion for mood, for the seasons of perimenopause and menopause, for skin and hair, and as a plant that makes everything else in the blend taste better without ever trying to take over. That's an important part. She also talks about growing herbs in a way that sustains the person growing them, which turned out to be one of my favorite parts of the whole hour. Cee is passionate about herbs and just life, and it's so infectious. I know you're going to love this episode as much as I loved sitting down with her. If you enjoy this episode, please give it a thumbs up so more plant lovers can find us, and be sure to stay tuned until the very end for your herbal tidbit.

Cee, thank you so much for being here. I'm really excited to dive in with you.

Clarenda Stanley:

Likewise.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I've been kind of obsessed with your social media. You have so many awesome videos, like so many gems, like—this was me. I was like, “Okay, one more,” and then they had so many great intros to them so I'd be like, “Okay, just one more,” and then one more, one more. So many great visuals, and so I feel like we've been hanging out for a while—it's been one-sided—but one thing I don't know is how the plants called you on this path. I don't know your plant origin story and I'm excited to dive into that.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yeah, let's talk about it. So, let me say that being an herbalist and an herb farmer were not on my dance card. I had no intention of it. I spent a significant portion of my childhood, my teenage years with my maternal grandparents. My grandfather was a farmer. My grandmother was an avid gardener. It was more of—I had to shell peas in order to be able to go to the basketball game. It was more of a chore. Definitely, my grandmother grew beautiful ornamentals just for the joy of it. I did absorb some of that and some of the best times we spent together were walking in her garden. She's telling me about her four o'clocks, and all these cool plants that she grew. That was always a special time, but my grandparents did not encourage us to go into agriculture. We were in the Black Belt of Alabama, which was a pivotal location in the Pigford case, and it was very, very difficult for farmers across the region, and especially so for black farmers. We were always encouraged to go to college. You get a good job that has a pension, and you stay there for 30 years. That's not the path I followed.

When I left the farm, my plan was, first thing smokin', never, ever, ever are you going to catch me on a farm again. I didn't even want a house plant for years. And then I went on, built a

career, tried a few things out, spent some time as a teacher, spent some time as a mental health clinician, ultimately, ended up in marketing and fundraising. Most recently, before going into farming full time, I was a global environmental fundraiser. Flew all over the planet, basically speaking with high net worth individuals, matching their philanthropic objectives with work that the organization was doing, and it wasn't a good space for me energetically for many reasons.

I eventually found myself having physical symptoms. I was—I got sick. I was having serious issues with my stomach. I was dealing with upset stomach all the time, but also pain. I was having issues with sleeping. I was having issues with what I thought were heart palpitations and—and issues with breathing. So, I'm going to the doctors, I'm getting these tests done, and we're crossing things off. It's not this. It's not this. It's not this. And then one day, my doctor sits down. She says, "I just want to have a conversation with you and ask you about some things." And so, I start pouring all these things out. It's just coming out. At the end of it, she said, "I think you're dealing with anxiety." Anxiety? What—I'm not walking around scared. I had a—idea of what anxiety was. She shows me, "Here are a lot of the symptoms of how anxiety can manifest into physical symptoms in your body." There was a moment that I actually—I'm a person who has dealt with a lot of challenges in life and have overcome a lot of trials. I had bought into this, "You're strong. You're—you're a strong black woman. You can carry whatever burden life throws your way." I actually looked at this anxiety situation as a weakness for a while. Even though I have a background in mental health—in the mental health profession, I still felt like I was weakened.

We were looking at treatment plans. There's medications that you can take. I'm not an anti-medication person necessarily. I think that each person's wellness program is unique to them just like your thumbprint is to you. And so for me, however, I did try some of the—the medicines prescribed and I—I didn't feel better. It took away some of the physical symptoms, but it replaced them with some other things that were symptoms of the medication. I started looking into herbs and started dibbling and dabbling at first, and at the same time that all of

this was happening, I was in a—a partnership that also included some legal vows that we had taken. I like to say I was legally entangled at the time.

We had purchased—I'll say “we” to be politically correct, I guess—but we had purchased this land that Green Heffa Farms is now on. The idea was to definitely grow hemp flower, which had just become online to a pilot program in North Carolina. And I, because—remember earlier I mentioned I grew up on my grandparents' farm, I had actually inherited farmland in Alabama. One of the requirements to get a license in North Carolina was that you had to have previous farm income. So, I actually had previous farm income so I got the license on a technicality. Still, in my head, I'm not going to be a farmer. I'm—I'm a, you know, high power fundraiser. I'm doing all these very important things in the world.

That relationship fell apart and I had this—ended up with the land, and I'm dealing with all of this anxiety and trying to figure herbs out. Two things happened: as I'm learning about herbs, I also discovered—which I later found out is a thing—horticultural therapy. I'm starting to work in the land. I'm starting to put my hands in the soil. I'm starting to put my feet on the ground and I'm grounding. I'm experiencing all of these energetic engagements with the land as I'm also learning about plants and traditional uses. I learned about the nervines, the alteratives, and adaptogens. There's this whole world that's opening up, and I began to utilize these plants to help myself. As I'm doing it, I'm also learning how to cultivate these plants at the same time.

And so, as I'm doing all of this, I actually begin to—this may sound woo-woo—but some of the plants actually speak to me like, “Yeah, I really enjoy being with you. I enjoy growing, you cultivating me.” Then there are plants that I have attempted to cultivate and the—the energetic alignment—it just wasn't there. And so, that's basically how I got started. My own traumas and dramas that led me to the plants, but it's been such a beautiful path. I'm glad that life directed me in this direction.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I was going to offer up that reflection. It definitely seems like you were directed, which I feel like a lot of plant people are. Also, I love the ancestral tie that was like, nah, due to circumstances and just the way things are in this world but you got pulled back into it.

Hey, there. Just a quick note: if you'd like to hear from me in a more personal way, I'd love to have you in my free text community. I send a couple of texts every week, things like behind-the-scenes updates, herbal thoughts that I'm chewing on, and little sparks of joy I don't always share anywhere else. To join, just text the word ROOT to 1-509-383-8398, and if you ever want to break up, no hard feelings. Just text STOP to the same number and you'll be opted-out immediately. My goal is to make it so juicy and so fun that you look forward to getting my texts each week. Okay, now back to the show.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'm curious. Was there—do you remember a moment where you just realize—officially setting down the fundraiser role, and you just realize, “This isn't me anymore. Now, I'm this new being.”

Clarenda Stanley:

Well, I was doing both for quite some time. It was a tough job. I was the first black senior frontline fundraiser the organization had ever had. I was in situations not only where I was the only—with the organization but in rooms—oftentimes, I heard a lot of things, experienced a lot of things that really were designed to be spirit-breaking. I was at this really interesting crossroads. The organization essentially asked me to stop speaking out against equity for different groups. Essentially, “We pay you a lot of money to raise a lot of money for us, and we need for you to just do that. Don't worry about the injustice over here or how women are doing. Just focus on bringing in a lot of money.” And that's just not how I had built my career. I've always been a voice for those who weren't in the room. So, eventually, they fired my ass, and that was a situation where, “Okay, now I've been fired, I've got this land. I've started this farm. It's time to make it a go.”

I just poured myself 100% into Green Heffa Farms and building the wellness brand, as well as building the farm. The decision was kind of made for me. I'm sure I would have come to that conclusion, but there was a security there with having that full-time position. You hear all the horror stories, right? About farms and the fact that so many farmers are economically struggling and having a hard time. I wasn't interested in that part of farming. There—there was that security there about holding on to that job, and then when that was no longer there, I could have gotten another position. It's a career path that there's always a demand for a good fundraiser and I'm pretty darn good at it, but I decided, no, I'm going to—I'm going to grow something else. Let's—let's see what we could do with this, and then there was a little part of me in the beginning. That—that energy is now invested in a different direction, but there was a little part of me that wanted to show folks that—you know, because there were so many people who were like, "You'll never be able to do it. You don't know anything about farming. You're single. You're a woman. You're trying to grow all these weird plants. Who's going to make money growing dandelion, of all things? No one grows dandelion." So, there was a bit that was like, "You know what? I want to show folks that, yeah, I can do this!" And so, there was a bit of that too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I like that. I like—I have a bit of that energy in me as well. Tell me I can't and then we will solidify that I'm going to do it.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yeah! Aha!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I can appreciate too this is so cliché, but it is like the one door closes then you just walk through this other one, and-

Clarenda Stanley:

Yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And you've done it in such a wonderful way, an empowering way. I love that you weren't ready to sign up for, as you said, you were like, "I didn't want to sign up to be poor and struggling," and this has become a big part of who you are—is showing how to be successful, which I think is such a gift as well.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yeah, yeah. I've had, of course—I don't want to put on rose-colored glasses, but I do grow roses. I did have some times where I had to figure things out quickly. There were building projects. I bought raw land. I didn't buy a farm that already had buildings or any type of infrastructure. I didn't even have utilities. I didn't have a well. I had to figure all of these things out as I'm going. There were some times that I'd wonder what in the heck have I gotten myself into. "Clarenda, you have to figure out all of these things *and* figure out how to keep plants alive?" I'm learning—I'm learning the herbs as well. I'm learning about how to build an effective tea. I'm learning about branding. My background was in marketing and branding, but I had never necessarily created a product line, so I'm learning about all of these things. There were times that I just thought to myself, "You've really gotten yourself into a pickle here now," but I truly do believe that everything is figure out-able I think because I've always figured out a way to get out of some really challenging situations. There comes a point that you have to just realize, "I figures everything else out. There—there is a solution. I just have to give myself grace as I make space to allow that solution to unfold."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's beautiful. That's something that's very much infused through you in the short time I've known you because we had tech problems before we got officially started, and what did you keep saying? Everything is figure outable. You kept your cool and you just figured it out.

Clarenda Stanley:

Always figure outable. Take a sip of tea.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I also appreciated that on your social media too. You said, “I don’t want to put on rose-colored glasses.” You share some really raw shit on there like digging up your internet line. You weren’t hiding that. You were just like, “We should have”—and you took responsibility for it too. You’re like, “We should not have tried to do that by memory. We should have called before we dug.” You were very explicit in that too. It was free to do it. You just took so much responsibility on that. I hope someone out there watches and calls before they dig, so they don’t have to go through what you did.

Clarenda Stanley:

Call before you dig. To add extra to that, one of my son-in-laws works for a utility company. I could have so easily not had—prevented that from happening, but I think I needed that reminder too to not just in that instance to call before you dig. I think that applied to a few other areas of life I needed to “call,” so to speak before I start digging in, so it was a good reminder.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I like that you’re seeing the other layers on that. Sometimes we get the gentle lessons so we don’t have to get the really hard lesson later.

Clarenda Stanley:

Exactly.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Hey, it’s Rosalee. You know, creating this podcast has been one of the most rewarding parts of my herbal work, and if you found something meaningful here, whether it’s a new perspective, a favorite recipe or just a sense of calm, I want to let you know there’s a good

way to go even deeper. It's called the Podcast Circle. Inside, you'll get access to live classes taught by some of my favorite herbal teachers, behind-the-scenes updates, and a beautiful library of herbal resources that we've gathered over the years. But more than that, it's a space to connect with fellow plant lovers who care about the same things you do, and truly, your membership helps make this podcast possible. It's how we keep the episodes coming and the herbal goodness flowing. So, if you're ready to be part of something more, something rooted in connection, head over to HerbalPodcastCircle.com. I'd love to see you there.

Well, thank you for sharing your story and a bit about you. We're going to talk more about your farm, your product line a bit later, your book. I'm excited to dive into all of it. First, we're going to talk about butterfly pea flower, which I'm super excited to hear about because—I'm going to be honest with you, I've been a little dismissive of this plant. Obviously, the plant is really cool. It changes your tea blue or magenta, if you want. But I just have felt like is it—does it have much more to offer than that? And so, when you were coming on to talk about butterfly pea flower, okay, now is its time to shine. and then again, I know I keep talking about your social media, but there I am, watching you harvest those flowers. They are so gorgeous. I've only seen them dried, really, not like this fresh, living, luscious flower-

Clarenda Stanley:

Aren't they?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Filling the basket, yeah, so I'm excited to hear about your love for this plant. I'm excited to hear the many ways you love this plant, so I'm going to turn it over to you to dig in.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes. Butterfly pea kind of snuck up on me. I had no knowledge about the plant, knew nothing of it. Maybe had a cocktail or two at a bar that maybe had blue color that could have been created through butterfly pea. A good friend at the time was a clinical herbalist, and she asked me, "Are you familiar with butterfly pea?" A thing about me, I love a functional tea. I

love the—the benefits of these plants, but I also, I adore an aesthetically-pleasing, looking tea. That is—that is so important to me. I want to see the life in the leaves. I don't want plant dust in a—in a cup. And so, I really love blooms. I was looking for a bloom. It was a tea that was going to be beautifying and balancing. I really wanted it to be very feminine. She suggested butterfly pea, so I started researching it. First of all, when I found out the binomial nomenclature, *Clitoria ternatea*, I said, “Wait a minute!”

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's feminine.

Clarenda Stanley:

I like that thing! Yes! There was something about that name that's appealing to me, and so I start digging in and realizing how—how much it's used in the global majority in the world. It's a calming blend. I learned about the antioxidants and the beneficial compounds in the plant, and then from the farmer standpoint, it's a nitrogen-fixing plant so it's good for my soil. I'm like, well, this is a win-win, and then I actually grew the plant. Oh, my goodness, the beauty. I'm like, “This is—is this legal to grow a flower this beautiful?” It's a trellising plant so it loves to grow up and over things, and it's just exquisite.

And then I love how—how harmonious it plays and blends. It doesn't try to take over. It finds its space. It's not a flavor that's overpowering or that's trying to be the main character even though it totally could be the main character. It could be a mean girl, so pretty. It could come in and be a mean girl, but no, it's just lovely and harmonious as far as flavors. It balances out flavors as well, so if I'm blending something where I have some bitters included, it takes the edge off in such a—such a unassuming way.

And then the color—oh, my gosh, the color! It's this brilliant cobalt blue. The longer you allow it to steep, it will turn this deep navy, sometimes purple. Of course, if you add anything acidic to it, you get that beautiful magenta color. I just—I absolutely adore it. I adore growing it. It's one of the few flowers my grandkids love harvesting. I love the fact that the bees love it. At

nighttime and at dusk, you go down our rows and we have some trellises where they're growing in archways. You just see all these cute little slumbering bee butts. It's adore—oh, my gosh, it's so adorable! I love sharing about it with people because a lot of people know it more for the party trick. You know it's such a showstopper, but saying, no, this is—this actually has some—some botanical benefit for you, so yeah, I absolutely love it. I'm gushing. I fangirl over-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love it.

Clarenda Stanley:

Butterfly pea.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'm definitely getting fangirl vibes here. Love it. Let's talk a little bit about the medicinal qualities for those people like me who are like, who are like, "It's pretty in a cup, but then what?"

Clarenda Stanley:

Yeah. One, it is beautiful for skin and hair, especially for those of us who are more seasoned, as we're entering our "seasoned" season. It also is really great for mood balancing. I love it for those of us who are in the season of perimenopause or menopause, and want to befriend some herbal allies to help us as we transition through these different phases of—of womanhood. It's also, in addition to helping with mood balancing, there are some that have shared that it's really helpful with night sweats and hot flashes. If that's something you're dealing with, it's definitely one to explore. It's very nutritious. It's full of nutrients. It is a—it's a pea. It does produce actual peas. It's even—some people eat the—the plant, the leaves and different parts as well. It's beautiful in a salad, so definitely wonderful if you're into adding blooms to your salad; a great way to add some nutrition, as well as some beauty at the same time.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Speaking of perimenopause and hot flashes, you did share a lovely recipe with us called “Herbal Cool Aid,” and so let’s talk about that a little bit. You have so many lovely plants in here: the butterfly pea flower, sage, lemon balm, peppermint.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes, so I love sage and I love to use pineapple sage, actually, when I make this. Purple sage is great as well. Find a sage that works for you. I’ve even made this with Cleveland sage, but you just got to be very, very light-handed with that Cleveland sage because it will take over. In particular, I love a good pineapple sage, the peppermint which we know is a nervine. It’s a cooling herb as well. You have sage which is known to be a drying herb that can help if you’re dealing with night sweats and symptoms such as that. We’ve got lemon balm which we know is nature’s Prozac. It’s going to calm you down. It’s going to help you really settle in.

I love this drink before I go to bed. I’ll make a solar infusion, and then I’ll strain all of the plant material and sweeten it a little bit very lightly, pop it in the fridge, and then at nighttime I’m ready. I’ll also—another little trick, I’ll make ice cubes with it. Maybe add a little frozen fruit to the ice cubes, so then when I’m grabbing my cooled Herbal Cool Aid out of the fridge, I’ll pop a couple of those ice cubes in so when they dilute, I’m still getting the—the goodness of the blend.

Yeah, it’s such a great way to—I won’t say that—I try to be very honest about plants. I know there are a lot of people out there that will say, “Hey, try this and it’s going to cure this or fix this,” or whatever. Those of us who work with the plants, we know that these plants are powerful. We know that they’re magical, but we also know that how plants respond to each individual person is going to be very unique. It’s going to be something that—we know that these plants need time to build up in our system and work and time to see where they can fill in some gaps. I find that this blend is a really great blend though for women. Maybe you have some other protocol. I’m not telling you to quit everything else that you’re doing, but this is

something that you should be able to add provided that you're not taking in medications that there may be some contraindications. I feel that once you add, you'll find that over time that these herbs really will provide some relief as well.

I've even made popsicles with—yeah, yeah. I'll add something—a sweetener. Make a simple syrup maybe or even a pineapple juice, and make some popsicles. That's a great way to sneak herbs to grandkids. A little chamomile and lemon balm so you can go nighty night. Don't you want a nighty night popsicle? I almost did that as a recipe. I was like, what about the nighty night popsicle? So, yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you. There are so many threads I want to pick up on there. One, this is such a beautiful blend that sounds so delicious. I loved how earlier, Cee, you said that you loved the aesthetics of tea and I'm so with you because a tea can taste great, but when you're looking at something that's like brown swamp water, there is something a little lost. I think as herbalists, we can get over it, but you serve it to other people and you're like, "Try this lovely tea!" and they're like, "Yeah, thanks. I don't want muddy swamp water."

Clarenda Stanley:

Exactly, exactly.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So, I appreciate this.

Clarenda Stanley:

Or even—we cut open some of these teabags and you see what's inside of them and it's disheartening! It's like, where's the life? Where's the chlorophyll or something?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah.

Clarenda Stanley:

And I've just always really wanted to provide our customers with something that's fresh, something that we're able to transparently share the journey of these herbs. Most of the plant material we sell we do produce, but we also have farmers that we partner with and source from, and loving—love to tell their story as well, letting our—our community know that these herbs are oppression-free. People have been paid well. People have been poured into.

And then even when I have a blend that in the cup may be is brown, etc., it's going to be pretty when you open that packet. Those roots are going to be fresh even if it's something like dandelion root or something that we would consider to be pretty unimpressive in appearance. There is a way—you can tell fresh from not fresh. We know those herbs that have journeyed far distances versus those that are available to us a lot closer, which is why one of the important things for us here at the farm, we try to incorporate as much native plants as possible, so growing things that are native to this area that want to grow here that don't require us to utilize a lot of resources and energy in order to get them to acclimate because it's not somewhere that they would normally grow. And so, that's the aspect too, I think, of the beauty of our plants and why we have a reputation for such beautiful blends.

We try to carry that through with all of our branding, with our packaging, the full experience because when I decided that okay, we're going to make Green Heffa Farms into what—what it is now, I really wanted to go the boutique route. I wanted to focus on boutique farming. With that, there is high emphasis on quality versus quantity. I'm not trying to grow hundreds and hundreds of acres of anything because nature does not exist in isolation, so anytime you have hundreds and hundreds of acres of something growing, that's not really how nature operates. Even at the farm, we have a lot of—we do have some rows, but we have a lot of movement. I allow the plants to pick their location. Where our evening primrose is growing, that's not where we had prepared for it to grow. We planted evening primrose on one side of the farm. I'm looking, I'm like, "Oh, no. The evening primrose are not going to come up," and then we turn around, the evening primrose have said, "You know what? That was a cute location but

we really prefer it over here. We want some—some shade. I know they said full sun, we actually like a little midday shade.” I listen to the plants and I think that’s part of the beauty as well that’s reflected in the plants.

I have a hard time if it doesn’t—if I can’t make it taste good. In that regard, some herbalists will shake their head at me. I—I’m a Libra. I need it to be beautiful. I need it to be delicious.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

There’s one of your social media videos, you have a reel saying why you don’t sell plant dust, and the graphics on that of just seeing the gorgeousness, the freshness, the aliveness of the plants that you sell is beautiful. What a thing to just be able to grow these plants, harvest them, prepare them, and then offer them as these beautiful teas. It’s just a—it’s a really beautiful thing from—from farm to cup. I do want to dive more—a bit more into boutique farming and your book.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Before we go there just to close the loop, is there anything else you’d like to share about butterfly pea flower before we move on?

Clarenda Stanley:

I will say that if you’re in a zone that allows you to grow butterfly pea to definitely give it a try. If you’re in space where you’re really trying to improve the soil, it is a great one for soil health as well. Yeah, I definitely—it doesn’t take a lot of space as a vining plant. You could even grow a couple of plants in a—in a pot and just make sure you have something for it to trellis because that’s when it’s happiest, and collect the pods at the end of the season and you’ll never be out of butterfly pea. I don’t want too many people growing it because I need you all to buy my Green Heffa Farms butterfly pea. But no, it’s—it’s beautiful-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

In your wonderful blends.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes, and it comes in different colors. We've started with blue. There's also a beautiful lavender butterfly pea, and this year, we had a plant start producing white flowers which we've never seen before. We're really excited about that, yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I keep saying that "I should grow the plant. I should grow it," and when I saw you harvesting it, those big, luscious blooms looked so beautiful, and then talking about putting them in salads, that sounds so lovely. I think the ice cubes might have done it for me though. That sounds so beautiful.

Clarenda Stanley:

Oh, it's so—they are gorgeous in ice cubes. If you're one of those hostess that love to do the mostest, they're fantastic in ice cubes and in drinks, and simple syrups. They make a beautiful simple syrup as well. I've even made a simple syrup with it and poured it over ice cream, so so many options, yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Cee, you have such an impressive bio. You've done so many things, won all these awards. Now, you've added a book to that as well. I would love to hear more about the book, your boutique farming, and just how this book serves your community.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes, so the book, basically, is all of the notes, all of the documentation that I've maintained since I started Green Heffa Farms. I wrote down the things that worked and that didn't work. I'm a big journaler, so I'm accustomed to writing and I will just pour my heart into these spiral notebooks, the lessons learned, and things like that.

I was in conversation with Jeff and Melanie Carpenter, Zack Woods. They were doing the newest edition of their organic farmer's handbook was—I can't believe I'm forgetting it. The medicinal—it's like the bible, so to speak, of growing medicinal herbs. They were doing a—redoing the first edition. They were preparing for the second edition, and they had asked me to contribute to it. I'm like, "Great, I'd be honored to contribute to it." In talking with them, I'm like, this whole writing a book thing, it's something that I've been told by people in my life, "You should write a book." If you're a good storyteller, people usually will say something, "You should write a book. You should write a book." Well, I'm contributing to this book, and so I'm like, "Tell me about writing a book," and they explained the process to me. They're like, "Hey, we really enjoy working with our publisher. We're more than happy to connect you to our publisher," and so connected me to Chelsea Green.

I tell them this wild idea I have of I have all these notes about my experience going into farming not necessarily just focused on herbs, but just things that I've learned about the industry as a whole, and things that are especially relevant to me and my experience being in the South, a single black woman in farming. Not just in farming, but I own a farm. I have a trademark brand. I've gotten certification—Certified B Corp. I've done a lot of things that aren't necessarily what people expect from a farming business. I don't know. Could that be a book? And they're like, "Oh, absolutely! We love it! Talk." They're like, "We'd love to publish your book, absolutely." I'm like, wow, this is awesome.

Then it was like, "We'd love to publish your book. It's a yes, but we're going to need you to go through the proposal route." I'm like, I'm a fundraiser. I've written proposals. A book proposal is a heck of a lot different than a funding proposal, and so it was good for me because it required me to really sit down and put some form to my thoughts and you have to submit your first chapter. Guess who didn't have a first chapter? I've got all these notebooks, and so I had to do a first chapter, the Table of Contents, and it was a good experience. They were really great to work with as a first time author and they get it. They get books that are for the

agricultural sector, books that are for herbalists, and people in the—the natural-making space.

I thought that maybe there would be some pushback because I was very intent on I want this to be the black girl's guide, not to be exclusive but because I'm committed to being inclusive. There are going to be things that I experience that's going to be unique to my identity and I want other black women to know. But the beautiful part of that, the book is for anyone who feels that they could find value in learning from a black woman's experience. We do it all the time when we read books. It's just assumed that we're learning from other experiences.

I read a lot of books that were out there. There was nothing that really focused on building the brand piece. There are lots of books that tell you how to cultivate, tell you how to take care of the soil, tell you how to do a lot of the operational things, but when it came to actually creating a sustainable brand and creating that demand for your product and creating that community and that customer base that's going to really allow for the economic sustainability aspect of your business, I couldn't find anything that I felt was truly relevant to my experience.

I didn't want to do farmers markets, okay? One, there are people there. I don't necessarily feel like people-ing all the time. I am very much an ambivert. I can go and people, but then I'm peopled out and I'm done. I didn't want to set up tents and tables. I wanted to stay on my farm in my beautiful tea cabin. I wanted—I didn't want to not prioritize my well-being, and that's one thing I notice with a lot of people in agriculture. It's like I'll give you the shirt off of my back, well then, I'm walking around with no shirt. No! I'm a farmer. Why am I giving you the shirt off my back? I know a fiber farmer over here. Or better yet, how about if I'm making enough money, if there's enough resources, let's go buy you a shirt. We can both have a shirt. I realize that that's not necessarily the conversations that are being had in a lot of room with farmers. It's like you're supposed to almost be this martyr. You toil for the soil and give, give, give. I met so many people that when I connected with them and I'm finding out that they're having a hard time financially. We've got farmers on food stamps and other forms of social

services that they need because there's this—this comfortability in America with poor farmers and I didn't want to be a part of that. I also did not want to be a part of a system where I felt I had to cut a corner because I've got an ROI I've got to meet. I've got investors or loans.

Another part of my boutique approach—and it's unique for each farmer, but for my approach is I grow slow so I don't owe, and that allows me to have grace with learning and without feeling the pressure of having to pay this person or meet this person's expectations. I'm just wanting to exceed my customer's expectations. I don't want to be in a space where I'm miserable while I am producing what is supposed to be healing power.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I was just going to say that. I don't want the herbs in my cup to be put together by someone who is suffering in that way.

Clarenda Stanley:

Miserable! We're eating so much food by people who are absolutely miserable. I didn't—I didn't want to contribute to that. I call this my “customize joy factory.” I absolutely try to create so many pockets of positivity here at the farm. We have little signs all over the place. I love art. We have a mural on the tea cabin and other—other artistic additions. I wanted this to be a place where I felt like this is my little nugget of belonging in this world and what comes from it is a reflection of that. To me, that's very boutique and so that means I'm not growing lemon grasses for the masses. I have my community, my customers, people who care about the well-being of who's producing what it is they're enjoying, people who care about the planet, people who care about people, people who believe in the efficacy and effectiveness of plant medicine—those, those are my people.

I wrote this book for those who also want to connect with their community and who want to grow in a way where we define wealth for ourselves. I, at one point, previous careers, I allowed society to tell me what success was. Now, I've built a life where I can say I define success for myself and how I define success may look very different from how you define

success. I'm also a realist. I need a retirement account. I need to be able to have access to resources for a quality of life, and so balancing that or rather—not even balance, finding the harmony within those spaces. That to me is the epitome of what boutique is.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, my gosh, I love your passion and I love kind of just your raw, no BS attitude about it as well, and just calling stuff out. I so appreciate that. I believe so strongly we need more boutique farmers out there.

Clarenda Stanley:

We need more boutique farmers.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I have a local vegetable farmer here, friends of mine. I have watched them thrive and succeed and watched other farms just come and go. I talked to them about it once like, “How have you been here for so long?” and they said it was all about the brand. The wonderful thing about that is they grow their vegetables and they create these amazing products that, we, as the community, absolutely love and thrive on. It's just this wonderful reciprocal—I would say it's “my farm.” That's how I refer to it, as my farm not in an ownership way but just I feel invested. That is—these are my people. These are my foods. It's such a beautiful thing and to get more and more of that in herbalism because like you said, plant dust. You open up those—these teabags that have been shipped from far away with poor quality herbs. That's not healing. That's not healing in your cup, but it's not healing for the planet in a way that you've been talking about how you invest in people who are putting all of this together in beautiful ways. We need—that's herbalism. We need more of that.

Clarenda Stanley:

That's herbalism. People would think that herbalism is just about the plants. To me, they—you miss the plot. Herbalism is about all of the energy that cumulatively and collectively go into creating the plants, and then even the connection that whoever is handling the plants

and cultivating them has. I have a rule: basically, if you're in a bad mood, then we're going to put you working on something—something else. I don't want you out there harvesting and pouring all that angst into the plants. We're not going to do it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

[crosstalk]

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes, yes! There's something else you could be working on. Our plants—my plants have playlists. They—they have different musical taste. The butterfly pea like a little jazzy vibe. The moringa, the hemp plants, they like a little hip-hop. They like a little dance music. My calendula, they tend to like a little pop. Everybody has—has their musical flavor. Herbalism is about the whole that goes into producing the herbs that we enjoy.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

This has been so lovely, Cee. I feel your passion is just like infusing me with a lot of joy and excitement, so I appreciate that. I've already gushed over all of your social media. We'll put links to that everywhere so folks can join you there and they can check out your book and just stay in contact with you because I'm going to guarantee that a lot of people are going to be like, "That was too little of Farmer Cee. I'm going to take some more time."

Clarenda Stanley:

I love it! I love it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thanks again for sharing this recipe, the Herbal Cool-aid. People can download that, look for the—look in the show notes for the link for that. We have a beautifully illustrated recipe card. Before you go though, I have one last question if you don't mind.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes, absolutely.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

My question is, what mistake have you made with herbs that has ultimately made you a better herbalist?

Clarenda Stanley:

My mistake that I made: I thought I needed to know what every plant does. For example, when I first got into herbalism and I'm learning about the different categorizations, I thought I needed to know all the nervines. I needed to know about Chinese—Traditional Chinese Medicine. I need to know about this Indigenous culture and that Indigenous culture, etc., etc. I didn't give space for the plants to find me. I was just out there. I'm looking at different books, and this book says this and that book says that. I'm having all of this—this angst around “I need to know everything” and I don't. I have learned to know the plants that I grow. I know the plants that I grow and I research the plants that I grow. For me, that is enough.

When people ask me about this particular root or this particular flower, I'm okay with saying, “I don't know. That's not a plant that I'm familiar with or that I've studied.” That has allowed me to really sink into and enjoy the depth of the plants that I am meant to know. I don't feel the pressure of—there's tens of thousands and thousands of plants that have so many beautiful benefits. It's impossible for anyone to know everything about all of these plants. I focus on the plants that either we're cultivating or that I am interested in cultivating right now.

Few years ago, we added *Camellia sinensis* to the farm so we grow true tea. A lot of people don't look at tea as being a medicinal plant. They just look at it for the flavor. I'm in the South. You get your sweet tea. Growing the plant, learning about all of the different tea forms, the fact that this one plant can produce black tea, white tea, green tea, oolong, matcha—it is absolutely amazing! The fact that these plants last—these trees last 20, 30 years, this is a

legacy that we've planted. They're perennial. They're so great for the root system, and—and they're great for the health of the soil. I'm deep diving on that and giving myself all of the space to learn all that I can about this plant, and being okay with not being an expert, and so many other beautiful plants.

That's why it's so important to create community. I don't have to know everything because collectively, we bring all of our knowledge together and then that's where the real magic happens.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, you just gave me goose bumps. That was beautiful! I was thinking where you're talking about you now know to allow space for the plants to find you, I'm so glad butterfly pea found you.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

This *Camellia sinensis* sounds so exciting. This is—you've just exuded so much love and passion. It's been just beautiful getting to know the art of who you are.

Clarenda Stanley:

I love—I love my life. I—I am very, very happy to have the honor to grow these plants and to be in communion with them and the land. I was in my high tunnel earlier speaking to my 17 garden orbs that—I would have been terrified of these spiders before. Now, I'm in there. I name them. I talk to them. I tell them how great a job they're doing because I see them as part of my integrated pest management plan. I didn't have to buy them. They came. They chose to be here. I'm—I'm just really—I really love being able to show up in this way, and it's so fulfilling. I have found a life that sustains instead of drains, and that is such a gift. That's a gift and I'm grateful.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Not only a gift to yourself, but to your community and all that you're doing to—to show the way. This has been such a pleasure. Thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate it.

Clarenda Stanley:

Thank you! I appreciate you and thank you for the invitation, and the patience. The tech was worked out, so I really-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That was more than worth it.

Clarenda Stanley:

Yes, I really appreciate this. Thank you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you.

Thanks so much for listening. You can download your illustrated recipe card from today's episode. Just head over to herbswithrosaleepodcast.com or check out the show notes for a link. If you're not already subscribed, I'd love to have you as part of this herbal community so I can deliver even more herbal goodies your way.

This podcast is made possible in part by our awesome students. This week's Student Spotlight is on Andrea Hayes in New Jersey.

Andrea has immersed herself in all three of my foundational courses, bringing dedication, curiosity, and consistency to every step of her herbal journey. She has woven herbs into her daily life through nourishing nettle infusions, evening chamomile teas, schisandra syrup, and hawthorn decoctions, while thoughtfully observing how different preparations reveal different qualities of the same plant. Her willingness to keep learning, ask questions, and let

experience guide her is a beautiful reminder that herbalism grows through curiosity and everyday practice.

To honor her contributions, Mountain Rose Herbs is sending Andrea a \$50 gift certificate to stock up on their incredible selection of organically and sustainably sourced herbal supplies. Thank you, Mountain Rose Herbs, for supporting our amazing students!

And if you'd like to be an herbalist, you can check out my foundational courses at HerbsWithRosalee.com.

Okay, you have made it to the very end of the show, which means you get a gold star and this herbal tidbit.

In 1999, Tori Amos released a song called *Datura*. I know some of you are rolling your eyes right now, but I swear this is totally relevant. It's not just me being a total fangirl as per usual. This song, *Datura*, is amazing. It's also a bit bizarre and it's one of the few songs that she's never truly played live. Some say it's because the song is so complex—it changes time many times throughout the song because, as we all know, she's a musical genius. Anyway, a big part of the song is her reciting a list of plants, and there's lore around this that it's every plant that survived in her garden after a hurricane passed through. And then somewhere in the middle of that roll call, tucked between the jasmines, she names *Clitoria*, blue pea. So, butterfly pea was grown in Tori Amos's garden and that was my first introduction to this plant all those years ago before I even knew that I was going to be an herbalist or that I'd have a podcast interviewing fabulous folks like Farmer Cee.

Just one more thing before I go, this song has actually been on my mind a lot because I just got a car that I've named *Datura*. I even went so far as to get personalized plates for the car, so if you see someone out there in a black car with *Datura* plates, please wave hi.

As always, thanks for joining me, and thanks for putting up with all my Tori references.