

Ruthie Kølle:

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Rosalee de la Forêt:

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. In this episode, I'm joined by Ruthie Kølle to explore hawthorn, a plant that's been part of healing traditions, protection stories, and everyday life for many generations. We talk about the qualities that make hawthorn such a steady companion during both strong and tender moments, and why so many people feel drawn to it once they get to know it. Hawthorn is one of my favorite trees, and hardly a day goes by that I don't engage with this lovely herb in some way. There's just something about hawthorn that stays with you, and I think you're going to feel that in this conversation.

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.

Ruthie, I'm so excited to have you here. Thanks for being on the show.

Ruthie Kølle:

Thank you so much, Rosalee. I'm thrilled to be invited and to be here talking about one of my favorite plants today.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yay! I'm so excited for your favorite plant because it's also mine! I'm so excited to personally be able to spend some time with you. We got to meet each other very briefly at International Herb Symposium where we found we had a mutual admiration for each other. You've been on my radar for so long, so this is just really fun to be able to spend some time together, talking

about our favorite things. I would love—well, first of all, I guess I just want to fangirl a little bit more. I loved your booth at IHS. It was so beautiful. I never connected with you there. I went there several times when you weren't there. Just the ceramics—and I bought one of your bitters, the orange pomander bitters which I've been really enjoying. I meant to bring them up for this, but just imagine they're really yummy. And just your whole booth was just a really lovely vibe and experience, so that's fun to be able to see you with your wares.

Ruthie Kõlle:

Thank you so much. Vending at conferences is one of the most fun things where you get to meet new friends, old friends, and teachers. Everyone's there doing their favorite thing, talking about their favorite thing, experiencing the plants for the whole weekend. It's like you're in this happy, little plant bubble for a few days, and it's always hard to come back home and reintegrate after. Such wonderful experiences.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, there's so much—yeah, just plant energy and good people, and everything. Yeah, yeah. Well, I would love to start with hearing more about you and what brought you on the plant path.

Ruthie Kõlle:

Okay, so I would say I can pinpoint the moment where I felt really called and welcomed onto this path by the plants, and it has to do with the day that my grandmother died. She lived—she was born and lived on the farm where I grew up. It's a multigenerational farm. I had the privilege of caring for her in the end of her life. She—I didn't learn any herbal things from her, but I learned how to care for and tend the land. The day that she passed away, someone gave me a pine tree sapling, and I came home and decided where to plant it. I can still very vividly recall the smell and the feel of the soil as I was digging the hole, the way the roots—the little rootlets looked as I splayed them out in the hole, the feel of the rocky dirt in my hands, and patting it down around the roots, and just kind of planting her spirit into my own earth space. I just felt like a—I felt like the plants were like, “Okay, you're welcome here, and now,

this is the start, and welcome to our—to our green realm.” That’s kind of how I got started on the plant path.

At first, you do a lot of self-study, and looking at other herbalists online. There was a handful of herbalists I can recall referring to very often in my early learning days, and you were one of them. So, I took a yearlong—just a very basic—it was called “Homestead Herbalism,” you know, how to make fire cider and cough syrups, and mustard plaster, and comfrey poultices; just basic, simple things you can do to care for yourself, and your family, and your friends. It just lit up this cell-deep thing inside of me that felt—I mean, it was new to me, but it felt so natural. Even reading and hearing words like “galactagogue” and “emmenagogue” and “adaptogen,” and all of those fun, old herbal words—it felt like a remembering even though I was learning them for the first time.

After that course, I took some time to let all of that sink in and integrate. I knew I wanted to further my studies, and so I took the 11-month long clinical intensive course with Thomas Easley at the Eclectic School of Herbal Medicine. That really catapulted my medicine making and my practice into the next universe. When he says “intensive,” he means intensive. It was one of—I always say it was one of the hardest and best things that I have ever done for myself, because not only did I learn so much about the plants and medicine making, but I—I made lifelong friends. Our mutual friend, Lindsay, I met there. She’s one of my nearest and dearest. That was in 2017 that I graduated from that program, and you just—you continue on the path. I feel like it’s one of those lifelong apprenticeship things when you decide to follow the herbal way, is you’re never done learning. I don’t believe in the words, “master herbalist.” We’re all still learning. I just continue. I go to conferences, online classes here and there. It’s just—I’m constantly putting myself in the way of learning new things about plants because it’s—there’s—there’s no shortage of—there’s no shortage of plant people and new things to learn, new books to read, new classes to take. It’s just—it keeps me—it keeps that flame burning inside of me.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

When you did Thomas's class, is that in-person then you did that intensive where you went down there? Or was it online?

Ruthie Kølle:

I live in Pennsylvania and he—the school was in North Carolina.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, that's why I was wondering.

Ruthie Kølle:

I did it as a distance student. I was a lot younger then. I had my whole life here. I was working part-time as a massage therapist. I have a house and a mortgage, and all of those adult things. I would—I was a distance student and I would sign on in the afternoon—class was from, I think 12:00 to 5:00, Monday through Thursday. I would sign on for about an hour or two before I had to go to work. By the time I got home from work in the evening, the recording for the day would be posted in our online classroom. I would get on and watch the recording at double speed to not have to stay up 'til 3:00 in the morning.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah.

Ruthie Kølle:

But I made several trips down there during the course of the program, like if there was a weekend medicine making intensive or guest teachers that I really wanted to see. I made several trips down there, probably about six or seven trips over the course of the eleven months.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, wow.

Ruthie Kølle:

It was challenging, but [crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, that's really impressive fitting that into your life and just those—that Monday through Thursday must have been really, really long days.

Ruthie Kølle:

There was not a whole lot of other adulting that got done.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, I can imagine.

Ruthie Kølle:

The kids are fed. Everyone's alive, now it's class time.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And you're also a ceramic artist, which is just a fun combination because as herbalists, we love mugs, and that was—you had all sorts of different beautiful ceramics at your booth. I really admired those as well. You've been doing that for many decades now.

Ruthie Kølle:

Yes. I've been doing it—I always say on and off for 30 years. I was probably 13 or 14 the first time I touched clay on a wheel and it felt like one of those things, like plants, the first time I felt that awakening inside of me. It felt like some kind of ancestral memory that was awakened and I just knew. I was like, this is a—this is a thing that I do, even though I wasn't—you're never very good the first time you do it. I just knew it was one of those things that I can do. It's also something else that comes from the earth that we can work with and

communicate with and have relationship with, and also learn about ourselves through clay as a medium of learning about yourself is, I feel has been just as profound as plants for me.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's beautiful. Ruthie, how I know you is through your beautiful writing and just how you share about the magic of herbs. You also have this call to Celtic ancestry. I'm wondering how that came about. How did you find—you've talked about doing the homestead course, doing the Thomas Easley intensive. I'm just wondering how did you find your own voice and your passion through this process?

Ruthie Kølle:

I've always known that I've had Celtic ancestry. I was raised in a very conservative Christian home. There wasn't a lot of space for exploring that. In 2018, I think it was, I was invited to work with Sharon Blackie. I've done some of her online courses previously, like her Celtic studies course, and some other things. So, I, through working with her and for her, because she has a master's in Celtic studies, and she talks a lot about her spiritual connection to the land, and being enchanted by the natural world. It really-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's my favorite book by her, by the way, *The Enchanted Life*. That's my favorite one.

Ruthie Kølle:

The Enchanted Life, yeah. Then, she had invited me to write part of one of her courses that was called, *Sisters of Rock and Root*, which is no longer a thing, but it was all about the eight Celtic festivals and the ritual year and what we know about them from a scholarly perspective, but then how can we make those traditions relevant today and make them feel relevant to us personally, in a more modern context. My work with her took me to Ireland a couple of times—three times. I just was able to experience that connection for myself in a place that felt like a home that I had never been. I've got a lot of stories about traveling that country by myself, and just being open to and receiving really profound medicine from that land.

So, I'm just always kind of viewing my work—my work is very inspired by Celtic spiritualism and a large part Celtic animism, which is the concept of trees and rocks and plants all have their own individual spirits, and their own personalities, and their own medicine, and things that we can learn from them. That's become what my work is today whether in writing or making a tincture or thinking about a new pottery design I want to make is, how does that light that part of me up? I think that infusing myself, that part of myself in my work, you can't just go wrong when you're—when you're infusing your own wonder of the magic, natural world into your work.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's beautifully said, Ruthie. Thank you for sharing that. Obviously, this—this thread of remembrance comes up a lot for you throughout your life in many different aspects. Just what a beautiful thing to be able to connect with that and have that inspiration pull you forward.

Ruthie Kølle:

It feels like a remembering in the sense of what you think of when you think of the word “remembering,” you're recalling something, but also like a re-membling, like a putting back together of part of myself.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It gave me goose bumps there. That's cool.

I'm very excited to hear what you have to share about hawthorn because this is a favorite of mine. Probably—it could be the plant that I work with the most often, really. I was thinking about it. I think hardly a day goes by where I'm not working with hawthorn in some way, shape or form, so I'm excited to dive in.

Ruthie Kølle:

Hawthorn—you say you work with it so often. Its medicine is so accessible, right? I wish there were more hawthorn trees that grew where I live here in Pennsylvania. They're not just a very common tree. I fell in love with hawthorn when we were required to write 20 monographs in herb school, and one of them had to be 20 pages long or something like that. I was already writing a monograph about hawthorn, and just absolutely got swept away by the stories it has around it. There's so much research on the plant because it has been around for so long. It's like one of those plants that's like an ancestor to us. It's so prevalent in so many cultures and traditions. Hawthorn just really took me, literally, away with the fairies, I felt like. When I was researching it and writing about it, I just could not get enough of it. It just—I love hawthorn because, like I said, its medicine is so accessible and is so prevalent in so many folk traditions. It feels like a reconnecting with folk traditions, like no matter—I have Celtic ancestry and Scandinavian, or if you have ancestry from other parts of the world where it is—where hawthorn is native and endemic.

The heart, the medicine—we think of hawthorn as heart medicine, first and foremost. I'm going to talk about three different body systems that hawthorn has medicine for. Obviously, the heart, first. The leaves, and the flowers, and the berries—when I make hawthorn medicine, I always include a thorn no matter what I'm doing. Even in my hawthorn leaf and flower tea that I have here, I put a little thorn in the French press because I feel like that adds hawthorn's magic into it.

It being just so beneficial to your cardiovascular system. It can lower the—the bad cholesterol and raise the good cholesterol. It is nutritive and really trophorestorative to the entire cardiovascular system by reducing plaque in your arteries, and by increasing the strength of your heart's pumping so that more blood—more oxygenated blood can be pushed throughout your system, which I mean, the cascade effects of that alone, we wouldn't even be able to cover here in an hour because it's just so nourishing. I always think of the berries, the bright red berries as being specific to the actual heart muscle and the bigger arteries, and the more delicate leaves and flowers as being specific for the peripheral, the small, little capillaries you have in your periphery.

Let's see, that's cardiovascular, and so, we are also going to talk about the benefits for the nervous system. I think that hawthorn can benefit your nervous system by way of calming that nervous anxiety that you get, like heart palpitations. Matthew Wood also uses it. I think David Winston also uses it for insomnia, for when you feel like your—he calls it, I think “high blood.” There's too much blood flow to your brain. You just need to—you need to spread it out, normalize it, and be able to calm yourself down enough to go to sleep, really.

And digestive, that was the other one. That was the one that really surprised me when I was researching hawthorn, is that it has a long traditional use of being used as a digestive support for when you're eating heavy foods like fatty meats and rich foods, like that. I was really confused by that at first because you really think of bitter herbs for digestive support. Hawthorn is not really bitter, so I kind of dug into the mechanism there a little bit. I don't have any proof for this or studies to support it, but my thinking is that maybe it's so nutritive and nourishing that maybe there's some gut lining being nourished and healed there where—that's where we assimilate all of those fats and lipids into our bloodstream. That's just my idea. I'm not saying that there's any—there might be studies out there to back it up, but-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's an interesting perspective for the digestion there. It's fascinating.

Ruthie Kõlle:

Just so many—there's—it's just medicine for so many parts of our bodies--our physical bodies, and also, our emotional selves too. It's one of the first plants I think of for broken heart syndrome or any kind of grief, whether it's grief from the loss of a loved one or a pet, or a grief from being uprooted and having to move far away and start all over, or the loss of a relationship, or whatever kind of grief, I think of hawthorn first and foremost. That's why I include it in my—in my grief formula for anyone who is experiencing any kind of heartache. It's just so—it's like a gentle holding. It's so protective. If you think of hawthorn in its plant form where it grows, it's a plant of the hedge and the hedge is protective. Hawthorn has those

gnarly thorns, so you have to approach it carefully and delicately or else you're going to get stuck. It just—it's also—it's protective. Think of all of the animals that can live in a hedgerow. They're like these centers for all of this magic in life. Hawthorn has those very nourishing berries, so it's nourishing and protective. That's the signature of the plant. It's nourishing and protective while it's in the ground growing to everything around it. It's also nourishing and protective in our human bodies.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's such amazing medicine. Hearing you speak about it, I just—I often think this way about hawthorn. You're bringing it up for me again, where it's such amazing medicine. There's no drug—pharmaceutical drug that does what hawthorn does, the nourishing—there's no drug out there—we have no drug commercials that it's like, “Work with this drug to spread the energy of the heart throughout the body to both reduce”—or we could say maybe “balance cholesterol levels or—and address high blood pressure issues.” All this stuff, it's such amazing medicine that's completely overworked—overlooked by Western medicine even though there is solid research on it, but there's not a lot of people who are going in and considering just the prevalence of heart disease these days. That's one reason I get really excited about hawthorn. I think there's just no reason why anyone should not take it unless—there's very few contraindications out there. There's a few people, not everyone, but if someone's prone to low blood pressure, then that might be a contraindication for some people. There's very few contraindications there. So I just think 91% of the population could really enjoy hawthorn in their everyday lives. It really is just beautiful food, as well as medicine too, so, yeah, but just—if you went—I could just imagine that conversation going to any doctor and being like, “What if there was a drug that did this? And this? And this?” and was also a balm for heartache, and they'd just be like, “Oh, what could possibly do that?”

Ruthie Kõlle:

“Here, here's hawthorn jelly!”

I completely agree and I think that's just one of the most beautiful things about herbalism is the intelligence of plants. I'm not—I'm not trying to insult modern medicine at all. There's a time and a place for it, and thank God for it, but you know—how many different prescriptions would you need to improve the tone, elasticity and health of your arteries, reduce plaque, normalize blood pressure, and normalize cholesterol? That's like five different medications right there. It's just—and to also have very few contraindications and interactions with other medications. It's just-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And negative effects as well.

Ruthie Kølle:

And negative effects, that's right. Also, you can feel happier in your heart.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And enjoy the medicine too because you mentioned hawthorn jelly.

Ruthie Kølle:

And it tastes good!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It tastes good. When I was in Ireland just this past summer, I bought hawthorn jelly for fun because I had to. I enjoyed that every morning. I've been experimenting this fall with making hawthorn barbecue sauce, which has been absolutely fantastic. It's super delicious. I love hawthorn oxymel. That's another—that's one of my most common ways that I work with it. I make hawthorn tea for my husband every morning. It's just so delightful. You have also shared a wonderful recipe with us, your Anam Cara Heart Opening Cordial. Would you mind speaking a little bit about that for us?

Ruthie Kølle:

Anam cara is Irish for “soul friend,” and is also the title of a book by John O'Donohue, who is Ireland's—one of Ireland's most beloved poets, writers, Celtic mystic. He just was a beautiful human being. He's no longer alive, but his work was—has been very inspirational to me in kind of honing in how I feel about the world and see my place in the world.

Anam cara is my heart-opening cordial that I like to pass around, like if I am in sacred space with friends or just wanting my own heart to feel a little bit softer and more open, I will take it by myself. It's very hawthorn-forward, obviously. It's got the berries and the leaves and the flowers. Of course, I put one thorn in every jar that I make. It has a lot of the other rose family plants of the hedge, like brambles or Americans would call it “blackberries.” Apple, which is another one of those. Apple trees kind of resemble hawthorn trees in that gnarly, wizened way. It's also in the rose family and has a lot of magical lore that goes along with it. I just love—it's just very sweet. You just take a couple of drops of it and you can't help but smile because it just feels like your heart is opening up. You're feeling more connected and open. Anam cara—I love to give that as gifts to friends, to my beloveds. I just—it's one of my most favorite formulas.

I remember when I'd kind of gotten the universal download for that formula. I was on a walk in the woods, listening, actually, to John O'Donohue talk on YouTube. I thought, what if I—I don't think he was even talking about hawthorn, but I just thought what if I used all of those magical rose family plants of the hedge and put them all in a jar together, and used it to help us connect to one another? I just feel like this world just needs a lot more human connection in it, and that's never a bad thing, right?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love how this can be very much a bioregional blend too. People can go out and find the rose family in their neck of the woods.

Ruthie Kõlle:

Yeah, the other thing I like is wineberries, which are—wineberries in my area are considered to be invasive, and that to me, is a loaded word and a whole other podcast. They're like a wild raspberry. You could also use raspberries instead of wineberries. You can omit the chokeberries if you don't have access to them. Another name for them is Aronia, aronia berries. You can customize the formula even if you just use the hawthorn berries, flowers, and leaves, which are very easily available in commerce. They're very accessible plants to find. Even if you just use the parts of the hawthorn to make that cordial, I think that you could have a really lovely—really lovely heart medicine there.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Absolutely. Thank you so much for sharing this Anam Cara recipe with us. We'll have a beautifully illustrated download for folks who can find that at herbswithrosaleepodcast.com or check out the show notes to get that, so you can make your own blend. I'm looking forward to this one. It's absolutely beautiful.

Ruthie Kølle:

Let me know if you like it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, I will. I will. I'm already excited thinking about what's—what's around me that can be a part of this.

Ruthie Kølle:

That's the beauty of herbalism—is how can I personalize this medicine for me and how can I explore my own earth space to make it more—more ethical and accessible to wherever you're planted?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And speaking to earlier what you're talking about, infused with our own wonder and joy and explorations of the world around us.

Ruthie Kølle:

Those things are medicine too, you know.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Absolutely, absolutely.

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.

Ruthie, is there anything else that you would like to share about hawthorn?

Ruthie Kølle:

Hawthorn. I just think if you have access to a hawthorn tree, go sit with it and see what it has to say to you because I guarantee you, it has medicine for you in that way.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Lovely. Thank you. I planted a couple of hawthorns on my property here. Two of our native—three, actually. Three native hawthorns and then one of the *Crataegus monogyna*—and that *Crataegus monogyna* is taking a really long time. I got it at maybe like six inches tall. Now, it's like 30 inches tall and it's been seven years, so it's one—it's an investment, but still a lovely one to have around.

Ruthie Kølle:

Your descendants seven generations from now will appreciate that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yep, that's kind of the case. I do—one of my favorite aspects of being in Ireland is the hedgerows, and hawthorn is a part of that. It's just I feel like—people are like, “Did you kiss the Blarney Stone?” or “Did you go see the library in Dublin?” I'm like, “No, I just went to the hedgerows.”

Ruthie Kølle:

“Did you go visit the hedgerow?” I've only ever been there in the spring. It's like—literally, the hedgerows look like snowdrifts dividing this patchwork of green fields everywhere.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

All the brambles and the hawthorn, and-

Ruthie Kølle:

I did last time I went there for Herbfest. There's the conference that happens there every year. I can't make it there every year. I wish I could, but no. There was a hawthorn on the property there, and I fashioned the hawthorn crown for myself and a friend of mine out of it. I just feel like that's another way that the tree has medicine, is giving you those little bits of feeling magical and just enchanted with it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's so true. Yes, it's so easy to fall in love with the hawthorn, especially in the springtime.

Ruthie Kølle:

Absolutely, yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Ruthie, what have you got going on in your herbal world? Do you have anything—projects you are working on? A lot? Let's hear about it.

Ruthie Kõlle:

I'm always in the kitchen medicine making. Right now, I have a new class that just started. I have an online course called, The Hedge Walkers Path, which is a six-month medicine making apprenticeship. It's all online. We meet live a couple of times a month. Yes, there is lots of magic and ritual uses of herbs in it, as well as how to calculate tincture volumes, and things like that. I've got that happening and I've got a new course coming out, hopefully by the spring, about how we can observe the eight Celtic festivals of the year through the lens of herbs and ritual.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, I love that. That's a favorite topic of mine. I did take Sharon Blackie's course on that. We were talking about that. It's something that I love to revisit over and over again, especially, like you said, how do we bring herbs into that? How do we bring our own climate and season where we live into that? Like, for example, Beltane is—I'm not going to say synonymous with hawthorn, but it's very much how I think of it as hawthorn's holiday, Beltane. Where I live, the hawthorn doesn't bloom around Beltane at all. We have other plants that are going on, so it's like, how do we bring that observation and awareness and wonder and awe to the seasons as they unfold around us? Just a continually unfolding magical experience that I love.

Ruthie Kõlle:

I can't believe we got this far in without me—actually, I'm so glad that you brought that up. I haven't mentioned the connection with hawthorn and the Festival of Beltina. I hear Beltane, Beltina. It's whatever. I'm not correcting you. I'm just saying—people say it differently. So, yeah, I can't think of May 1st without thinking of blooming hawthorn, and how they're called “trysting trees” in some of the lore because it's springtime and the earth is coming alive. We have all of this generative, powerful, potent, seductive energy happening in our earth space

and that's contagious to humans also. You might be out meeting somebody under a trysting tree for a fancy spring—springtime alfresco night.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You're selling it really well.

Ruthie Kølle:

Something else interesting about the hawthorn, if you've ever smelled a hawthorn flower, it does not have a nice floral scent to it. It kind of—the scent has been described as rotting flesh and—or dead fish or something else not very appealing or seductive or it's not a very sexy smell. When I was doing my research on hawthorn for my monograph, I dug into the scent profile of it. Because it smells like rotting flesh, it is pollinated by—it attracts flies and things like that are normally attracted to dead animals, but that scent is also—I think it's called "triethylamine." That chemical is also present in human sexual fluids, so maybe people are smelling that and thinking, "Oh, it's time for that."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting connection with the plant that just is so much woven with that folklore and history and tradition, you could say.

Ruthie Kølle:

That's why I like to call it the "Celtic tree of sex and death." It holds all these dichotomies in it. It's—it's protective and nourishing. It has those thorns, but it's also protective. That scent can remind you of procreation. It can also remind you of death. Is it the tree of ecstasy or turmoil? Are you having fun underneath of it in the springtime or are you having a hawthorn stuck into your thumb and you're trying to heal it? I just—I love that about hawthorn too because it embodies so many of those what are binaries. It is—it's not an "either or." It's a "both and," and I love that about it too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Then, of course, there's all the folklore around it being sometimes a portal to the land of the Sidhe, the fairies of the Irish and the—those single hawthorn that you see out—out on the land. There's—we went—when I was in Ireland this past time, we went to a circle of standing stones. There was that singular hawthorn right there at the base of one of the trees. It was an old, old tree. It was definitely—you could just feel like—I wouldn't want to fall asleep under that tree. That's-

Ruthie Kølle:

Was it Piper's? Was it Piper's Stone Circle?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I do not remember [crosstalk]

Ruthie Kølle:

You probably had to jump a fence to get there? In the middle of the cow pasture or something?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yes, actually. It was like that, yeah, yeah.

Ruthie Kølle:

So, it might be the same one that I'm thinking of. My friend, Deirdre, took me there last time I was in Ireland. It's not too far from her house. It's called Piper's Stone Circle. It's this hawthorn tree that grows sideways for a little bit and then up, and then people have attached all kinds of little mementos and scraps of fabric to it, left little coins and wishes on it. I love that it is considered to be one of those guardian trees. It is often very symbolic of that portal, that in between, between this world and the other. It has so much story around it involving the fae folk and people falling asleep underneath of it, like Rumpelstiltskin style and waking up, and they haven't aged at all, but everything around them in their world has—all this time has passed. I actually thought an interesting parallel to that how we could see the medicine—the

physical medicine in the story, is that maybe hawthorn keeps you young by taking such good care of your heart, your cardiovascular system. Maybe that's how that medicine got woven into that story is you fall asleep under it for seven years; you wake up and everything else has changed but you haven't.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's another—it's such a beautiful tradition; the prayer, the fabric with the prayer and stuff. When we went to that tree, we were told we could take off all the plastic bits that last there forever, instead of—and leave the linen and cotton behind. The plastic, not part of the tradition so much.

Ruthie Kølle:

If you're listening to this and you do visit a hawthorn tree, please do not leave anything non-biodegradable. Take a scrap of cotton or linen or hemp fabric with you because that's the whole point to—the tradition is you tie—you infuse what is hurting you, your wounds, whether they're emotional or physical, into this piece of fabric. You tie it on the tree, and as it disintegrates, the fairies have taken your ailments away.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you for sharing that. That's fun, we get to get into a little bit of the lore of hawthorn. There's so much there. Obviously, we, humans, have been fascinated with this tree for so long and in so many ways. Often the land—there's just something about those singular hawthorns that just have a different—I love the hedgerow hawthorns as well. Those singular hawthorns—there's just a power and a mystery there.

Ruthie Kølle:

I remember driving around in West Clare with a friend of mine. She's—we were driving down the highway, and she said, "Oh, there's that hawthorn that they rerouted the entire road away for."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So, I've heard of this. I've heard of this, yeah.

Ruthie Kølle:

Actually, I think it's in Limerick. They had this motorway planned, and there was a hawthorn tree right in the path of where this road was supposed to be. The county or the town council, all got in an uproar about it. You absolutely are not cutting down this tree because it was not only sacred to them, but in their belief, if you cut down a hawthorn, you're incurring the wrath of the fae for the rest of your life, basically. In Ireland, fairies aren't these little Tinker Bell characters.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You don't want to piss them off.

Ruthie Kølle:

It can really cause some trouble.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So, they rerouted it.

Ruthie Kølle:

They did. They totally did and the tree is still there. It watches all the cars go pass. The tree still stands. I love that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Ruthie, if there's other people out there, which I'm sure there are, like me, who are very interested in your offerings and your upcoming seasonal course, where can they find you and how best to stay in touch?

Ruthie Kølle:

Wonderful. Thank you. I have one last question before you—for you before we go, and that question is, what do you wish you had known when you were just starting out with herbs?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Wonderful. Thank you. I have one last question before you—for you before we go, and that question is, what do you wish you had known when you were just starting out with herbs?

Ruthie Kõlle:

Okay, the first thing that comes to mind is don't tincture everything you can get your hands on. It's so exciting when you're first learning medicine making to just tincture everything even if you don't know what you're going to do with it, or what it's used for, or even if it's safe. I still have tinctures I made more than ten years ago because tinctures last a really long time. But I mean, really, it's kind of disrespectful to the plant. It's expensive for the alcohol. It's a bit unethical to be harvesting and tincturing everything that you can find. I would just say be more mindful about your medicine making practices.

I also wish I would have known—what really surprised me about being an herbalist is the personal spiritual fulfillment that I've gotten from it. It's not just learning what plants are for from books and from classes. It's the personal connection that you can have with—with the plants. As I said before, I was raised in a very conservative Christian home, which felt like it didn't fit me. Being able to have a spiritual path that really feels like it fits me, and it has been huge, huge in my own personal growth. So, whatever spiritual path you're on, the plants can have medicine for you. You don't just have to be a plant person to get—to get that—that medicine from the plants.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

One of the ways herbalism can be truly transformative, that connection to the land and the feeling of being a part of a greater thing. And about the tinctures, that's probably one of my #1 pieces of advice for folks too because I did that. I tinctured everything I could get my hands on.

Ruthie Kølle:

Because it's so fun.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It was so, so fun. It's—yeah, it was enthusiasm-driven. I thought I was opening a free—I did open a free clinic for a while, so I kind of had that pushing me, but then that didn't really pan out. Yeah, it's just so much waste of the plants. Like you said, the alcohol—there's just hundreds and hundreds of dollars of wasted money, and then time, and the plants. That was an unfortunate—so, I always tell people, at least make—I made quarts. It was like I always made a quart of tincture; always in a mason jar. At the very least, consider making even a half pint. Just make a little bit if you really need to go for it. You don't have to make a quart.

Ruthie Kølle:

I'm still working through a quart of shepherd's purse tincture that I—you don't often find use for it. I have some midwife friends that use it and I give it to them, but it's not every—every birth that they have use for it, so it has lasted quite a long time. That's a lot of shepherd's purse.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I imagine. Thank you so much for being here. Thanks for showing—sharing your joy of hawthorn, and your story with us, and your wisdom as well. It's been wonderful to be able to connect with you, Ruthie.

Ruthie Kølle:

Thank you so much, Rosalee. This was so delightful.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yay! Thanks again for being here.

Ruthie Kõlle:

Thanks.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

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 Herbs with Rosalee students. This week's Student Spotlight is on Sarah Gamez in Kansas City, Missouri. Sarah has been a part of our herbal community for many years, taking courses like Rooted Medicine Circle, Cooling Inflammation, and the Herbal Energetics Course. With more than 25 years of herbal studies, she brings both wisdom and playfulness to her work, balancing a long career in technology with a daily connection to the plants. In the Herbal Energetics Course, Sarah explored turmeric with creativity and enthusiasm, adding it to stir fries, golden milk and even inspiring her to buy a yellow dress. Her reflections showed how turmeric's warmth and cheer can brighten both body and spirit, and how herbalism truly comes alive in the kitchen.

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

Alright, you've made it to the very end of the show, which means you get your very own gold star, and this herbal tidbit.

While we commonly say "hawthorn berries," the fruits of hawthorn tree are technically called "haws." That's the traditional botanical word. They're actually tiny pomes, like little cousins of apples and pears. Most people say hawthorn berries. I say hawthorn berries, totally fine, but haws is the more older, accurate term there. Haws often ripen in the autumn, but they stay on

the trees well until winter in many places, and then these haws become a favorite food of birds like waxwings. Waxwings will flock to hawthorn trees in huge chattering groups, and they can strip a tree clean in under an hour. It's really a beautiful reminder that hawthorn nourishes more than just us. It feeds and shelters whole communities.

As always, thank you for joining me. I'll see you in the next episode.