

Luke Ó hErodáin:

So, I have a great relationship with ivy, one that's kind of followed me wherever I went. It's one of the most abundant plants that we can so easily use for people—that's why I'm presenting ivy. As I mentioned, it's an unbelievable lung herb.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

All these different ways to work with this plant I just find so inspiring. That's like the story over and over and over again with invasives. It's just how many gifts do they offer.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

As I said, it's a forgotten herb, as you said yourself as well, but it has so many different areas that you can actually use it for.

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.

Ivy is one of those plants that most of us walk right past. We pull it off our walls, write it off as an invasive, or mix it up with poison ivy and just keep our distance altogether. In this episode, I'm joined by Luke Ó hErodáin. I'll admit I came in knowing almost nothing about ivy as medicine, but I left with a whole new respect for it. Luke shares how this common, forgotten plant became one of his trusted allies for the lungs, the tradition and history behind that, and the bigger project he has given himself to bringing back the work of a whole lineage of herbalists that history has nearly erased. There's a lot packed into this one, and by the end, I think you'll be looking at ivy on your fences and on your trees and stone walls in an entirely different way.

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.

Luke, I'm so thrilled to have you on the show. Thank you so much for being here.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Thank you. I'm excited to be here too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I always love to hear guest stories, but I feel like I'm especially on the edge of my seat for yours because your world contains a lot of things that are favorites of mine, like France and Ireland, and plants. I'd love to just dive in like how did the plants find you, how did you find yourself on this path.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

I suppose it actually goes back to my childhood. I was actually born in France to Irish parents. They were actually missionaries in France, of all places. I didn't quite follow their path, obviously. I was born and raised there until I was 15. My first encounter with the plant—we were surrounded in the French countryside, and my first encounter was in school. In our playground, basically, we had these plants that were growing. One of my friends was saying, "Actually, my granny said, if you take that plant and break it apart and put the yellow sap on a wart, the wart will burn away." Guess which plants are these?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'm going to go with celandine.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

That's the one. It was growing absolutely everywhere, absolutely everywhere. That was kind of my first experience because it goes dark and black, and then just drops off. As kids we were just warty. Kids are warty creatures. And then, so we, basically—we've been surrounded by plants and would have been—kind of encountered different bits and uses just from people around the countryside.

But then I grew up, and as the story goes for many people who became herbalists, I ended up going into the corporate world. I actually was in the film industry. I was working up in Belfast, so I did a bit with Game of Thrones, as well. I've done all these things—opened up a company selling drones, of all things. I mean it was crazy. I was pure corporate—"Corporate Luke" I called myself. It's funny because I had this detachment between my childhood and me being super stressed and depressed. At that point, I was 70% covered in psoriasis so I was on heavy steroids. I was on corticosteroids, topical, of course. I also had Vitamin D creams, and just nothing was treating it. I went in and the doctor, a dermatologist who was clearly trained for years, when I asked her could it have anything to do with my diet or my lifestyle? At this point, I kind of remembered back to me being in France and healthy and young and runabout. She turns around and she says, "Ach, no love, it's just your genes." I don't know. I just couldn't take her seriously at that point. I was already starting to read about things, and then it just came on to this point where I was dreaming of getting out of it. The whole industry is very cutthroat, you know.

I went with a few friends out in the forest to camp overnight. We took some mushrooms, of course. Yeah, it was—it was interesting because it was an interesting revelation for me after—after that. I had quite an experience just with nature and being in the forest, we had this little—we were out off the beaten track up in the mountains—in the Mourne mountains. We had this hammock out between these two trees. The morning came, and obviously, I was—I was kind of dozing and kind of woke up to this woman who was walking up towards—we were off the beaten tracks. It was just like a fox trail or a deer—deer path, so it was just unusual seeing her coming up. She was wearing this kind of timeless type kind of clothes, like airy long stuff. She had a bit of a head thing on. She says to me—we exchanged a few pleasantries, lovely morning stuff, and then she says, "What did you enjoy most as a child like?" I was like, "Well, being outside with nature playing, playing, playing, being free." She says, "What are the things you wanted to do as a child? Find them and follow that path."

For me, I was, especially being Corporate Luke at the time, I was like, this is some kind of weird, mystical stuff. Off she walked away. She was as real as anybody standing in front of

me. I just couldn't believe that little interaction because it's really set off to change my life, and what happened from that is that following week, I asked my—I remembered I had asked the doctor when I was young if I wanted—I wanted to be a doctor. He said, "Oh, you'll have to be good at science." I went to a chef and he says, "You'll be doing two shifts a day and you'll not be able to"—so I wanted to be a chef as well as a doctor. So, I went and had a meal with my parents. I asked my mom and she said, "You wanted to be a gardener as well, so we gave you that strawberry patch," and all the strawberries died. [unclear] Then I sat down and pondered. I was like, okay, chef, gardener, and doctor. What could that be? I was like, oh, herbalist! Someone who's using herbs to heal and diet and all that.

So, I Googled and I joined this course to start my biomedicine side of things. Two or three months later, I lost my job. The person I worked for closed the locks. Everything just—I was completely immersed. I had no choice. I went from high earnings to social—social help. It was insane because then I decided at that point, I'm not going to go back into that career because it was just such a burst to me and such a grind for so many years. One of the lecturers in the course, Danny O'Rawe, who now runs his own herbal school, he was saying to me, "Why—why don't you go to the island, the Isle of Arran, and go meet this herbalist called Keith Robertson?" He says, "He has Celtic herbal medicine intensive, which is just two weeks in June." I looked at the price. I was like, how am I going to afford that? And then I looked at my expensive laptop and I was like, "Okay, that's going." So, I sold the laptop to pay my trip over. I was—that's all I had to do and had an absolutely amazing time completely immersed.

I asked Keith at the end of the time—at the end of the two weeks said, "Would you need any help for a year?" or something like that. He said, "Yeah, come back in October." I learned a lot under him. I did his—he did a correspondence course. I did it actually with him when I was there. I tried herbs every single day. I was living in a cabin, then in a bell tent, and then eventually, I came back to Ireland after having gone to the Isle of Arran in Scotland. The first lad, Danny O'Rawe, said he was starting a school, and so I joined the school as soon as I came back. Four years later, I was qualified.

Yeah, it was quite a journey I must say. I really connected with the plants in so many ways being on the island in a—in a way that I don't think I would have if I just went straight into education, so it really made me an avid forager, all into plant ID-ing. And then when I—lived in a van to pay for my course, so naturally, I was just out there every night. I had another—another ecosystem to look at. It's through my studies where I discovered about more French herbalists like Mességué. It was Keith on the island, he actually introduced me to Mességué. Very interesting character, but a great healer as it sounds, Maurice Mességué. He kept mentioning this doctor, Henri Leclerc, and I got fascinated and obsessed, and ended up—start becoming one of my adventures in the herbal world, I suppose.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

This is such a great story of just how all-encompassing plants can be once you answer that call. You're clearly like just once you are in, you are all in in such a big way. It's like selling off your belongings, living in a van, just doing whatever it took to have the plants in your life. I feel like there's—that's not unusual for this to happen, just to be all in like that.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yeah, and I think it's something—it's important for all of us. When we find your passion especially, as well as deeply, we all get slipped into these jobs often that we think they are dead ends, but also we can't get out of. For me, I had to lose a job because I wouldn't have left. I know that some people here have a bit more—more able to be a bit more intentional and actually jump out of their jobs. Kudos to them, but I think it's important for people to follow their hearts in that—in that respect.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And it's interesting too. The doors just kept opening for you: going to the Isle of Arran, finding the other school. Doors kept opening.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

And it's still happening. Just the involvement in the—it's the passion. When you have a passion, I think when people see that, and I think it's about being able to freely express that passion without [unclear] and that comes out in everything I talk about.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah.

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.

I'm excited to talk about Henri Leclerc later. I would love to talk about Mességué too because big fan over here, but first, let's dive into your plant of choice which is ivy. I'm excited for this new plant on the podcast, and one that can be a bit forgotten, so I'm curious why you decided to choose ivy for today.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

So, I have a great relationship with ivy. It was one of—one that kind of followed me wherever I went, and—and there was this one year that I had seen it was very abundant. I happened to have to do—I think it was my ninth monograph for the course, and—and these aren't like short, little monographs. We had to have—I think it's a total of 46 pages long after the references, of course, but very deep—we deep dove into these plants. Ivy was my selection, also—it was also inspired because—and Maurice Mességué had mentioned it, and then subsequently, Henri Leclerc in his books, which at that time I also had. I just started doing the study on it.

When I finished the monograph, I got very, very sick. It was—it was in a December or early January. I was like, hang on a second. I just studied a lung—lung herb – sweating, flu, on a bed. I was just sweating it out and everything, and I created this huge strong decoction of ivy, because at this point I was like, “It’s safe,” and it tasted absolutely delicious. Just everything purged. Everything in my lungs that stopped me from breathing and—I was sweating and having a fever, and all that, and feverish dreams—it just came out. I was able to just cough it all out, and I was just absolutely impressed by it. That relationship with ivy is huge.

I’ve got lots of farmer friends from my “trade routes” I used to call when I was in the van, and I treated them using ivy—someone with COPD, another one who had the flu as well to validate my—my own personal findings. It’s great when you have friends. You can experiment on them. So, that’s why I’m presenting ivy because as I mentioned, it’s an unbelievable lung herb, and most definitely forgotten. Very underutilized in Europe by European herbalists, and I can only point that towards the confusion or the caution between poison ivy, which doesn’t actually grow in Europe. I’m aware it’s over in parts of the States and Canada, so that’s why a lot of people—but then the comic books will have poison ivy and they’ll actually have actual ivy leaves, which is very confusing. I think there’s lots of different things that kind of came to it. It’s one of the most abundant plants that we can so easily use for people.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I was just going to mention that, the abundance, especially there. I was in Ireland last year walking. I have a friend who loves to see the ivy leaves on old stones, or—the walls, the stone walls or trees or whatever. I started taking photos and like, “Here. They’ll want to see this photo. They want to see that,” and then after a while, I said I can’t take all these photos. Ivy’s everywhere.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

I know. And the shapes—the shapes, they change. On the ground, they’re different from when they are on the walls, and then up on trees, and then when they flower, there’s this big—they just so—there is this metamorphosis with the ivy that—that I really enjoy, you know.

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.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

But it's interesting what actually started it off or its use of, according to what I found out, was this French doctor in France, obviously. Now, I can check the date here if you want. It's definitely 18th—18th century. Dr. François Leuret was his name. He went into this little village in Guérande. He noticed that the villagers had these bowls made out of ivy wood with wine in it. He couldn't understand why. They had them in the apothecaries, and people in their homes also just had them. He asked them and he found out that this actually may have come from Morocco because it's actually used over there in that way. The idea was whatever would infuse into the wine, they could give that to themselves or their children for whooping cough or for bronchitis or any kind of deep lung afflictions, probably consumption, tuberculosis as well. He took that back with him, did different tests, and then he actually used it on his children but he used the leaf. He tintured the leaf, created an extract, deemed that safe. There's a few saponins in it, but you know, if you're careful and don't have any stomach ulcers, it's perfectly fine. So then, he gave that to his children who had whooping cough, and all five of them recovered very well compared to anybody around them. So he was like, "This—there's definitely something about that."

From there, it just blew up. Went from France to Germany, to even the UK, and Ireland, naturally. So—and then it kind of just fell out of use after the First and Second World War for whatever reason. We have branded ivy and thyme, kind of watered down tincture you can get in health shops here, which is the only ivy product I've seen. Even on suppliers for tinctures and stuff, you can't get ivy, which is very—it was very strange to me. There's lots of research into it, which is very interesting.

Part of it—it's a bronchodilator, so it actually opens up the lungs. I love it because if you think of doctrine of signatures and you look at the berry heads, they look like little bronchioles. Yes, it's really good for opening the lungs and then for expectoration. It's not quite an emetocathartic, which is kind of like—can make you vomit. It doesn't do that, but it definitely expulses what's in the lungs. You can take it long-term in small doses or the purge that I kind of discovered by mistake, which I've since treated many people using that. It would be a once-off. It wouldn't be something you do a lot of, the purge.

The other aspect of it—so it was used in these tincture—in these apothecaries for lungs, for bronchitis, and spasms, any kind of bronchial spasmodics or any kind of reactive coughing. It actually takes away the itch because it actually has some nervine effects where that can stop the stimulation of peripheral nerves. It actually relaxes a spasmodic cough and creates a productive cough. It's kind of an all-in-one remedy [unclear].

Then these French eclectic doctors I've been mentioning about, they then actually realized you can use it on burns, the decoction of it—a strong decoction. You can use the leaves, mashed up, can be put on burns. They realized it actually works for cellulitis, people who might be in the hospital and getting bedsores and all that. It was a brilliant way of drying up and healing and stopping scars, or stopping that kind of tissue. Then they actually realized it will break down actual scar tissue. It breaks down the matrix. It acts as an antioxidant, and then actually heals over with less of the scar tissue. For cellulite or for actual scars—and I tried it myself. I had quite a big scar, a burn there. It was raised and flat skin and all that. I kept putting it on, and now, it subsided far more. You wouldn't see how it was. It's amazing stuff.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

How are they working with that topically? Is that like a fomentation or an oil infusion or...

Luke Ó hErodáin:

So, they mix it—I believe they mixed the tincture with lanolin, potentially egg yolk and something else just because there was an emulsion. You add something to lanolin to make the emulsion. I think it might be an egg yolk. But then I developed my own cream more recently, which I just—I just make it as a base cream. Instead of using a tincture, I would just use a strong decoction, and then I would combine that decoction with an oil using an emulsifier. The oil might be a mix of a liquid oil like grape seed, hemp seed, and [unclear]. As emulsifier, I would actually use sunflower lecithin. Brilliant. It makes a lovely, lush cream. It's brilliant. People love it when I make it. I only make small batches at a time, but it works. You can make it as a normal cream, really.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Okay. Are you working—did you say the roots primarily, or are you working more with the leaves?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

You wouldn't actually use the roots that much. It would be the wood or the-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

The wood?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Or the—the leaf, yeah. Practically and sustainably, I suppose. Not that there's sustainability issues with ivy, at least not over here. Usually, you just use the leaves and that's what the doctors and all that started using because it has—it has the same, if not a little bit more of the hederacine or different types of saponins and stuff, and metabolites that actually give the

therapeutic effects. It's brilliant. It goes beyond just even health. It goes also for agriculture. In Morocco, the actual official agriculture government website mentions how you can use it as an insect repellant—a natural insect repellant. You put it in a bucket and you leave it for a while— with 10 liters, and leave it for a few weeks. It smells terrible. I have done it. And then you put it into—you mix it in a dilution of 10% to 90% water, and then you spray that on your plants. It definitely deterred some aphids because they're—they're terrible over here, destroyed my [unclear]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, dealing with some of them myself right now, actually. Here, I'm in the Pacific Northwest right now, kind of cool still. Here, ivy is a invasive and so people love to hate it. Non-plant people love to hate ivy. They'll have like "ivy-pulling parties" because they'll just cover the trees here in a negative way and take over a plant population, so all these different ways to work with this plant I just find so inspiring. That's like the story over and over and over again with invasives is how many gifts do they offer? How many creams could be made with this for—even as you're talking about using it for cellulitis and stuff, I'm thinking it probably makes a wonderful—wonderful cream for just skin support, in general.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Absolutely. I tried it for my psoriasis to see if it would do anything. It unfortunately didn't really, because, again, it's a root cause issue, but it definitely helped people with eczema. At least, relief and also, it came back to normal skin, especially when working with diet and lifestyle, as well. It's one of those—as I said, it's a forgotten herb, as you said yourself as well, but it has so many different areas that you can actually use it for. As an invasive, it makes a good point because for us it's Japanese knotweed over here. It's everywhere. It's unfortunate that they inject it with glyphosate to kill it, s most of it is toxic in Ireland, while it's actually one of the best herbs for resveratrol. We should be harvesting it to death if we really want to get rid of it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, exactly. Something I find really fascinating about ivy too, that my friend, Mason Hutchison, from HerbRally, he recently taught me that it's in the *Araliaceae* family. It's in the ginseng family, ivy is. When he first told me that, I was like, nah. I kind of didn't believe him. I had to look it up, honestly, and that's really fascinating to me. This is some of the plants—devil's club, and ginseng, and *Eleutherococcus*—they're all in the same family, which obviously does not mean they're all worked with in the same way, but that's a very medicinal potent plant family that's highly respected, and that's ivy.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Well I mean, the funny thing is in the monograph, I was doing different—different research on it. There was things coming up that were quite similar. It had—it has hypoglycemic effects, so it lowers blood sugar. It also—it's a—what do you call it? It can help, internally, it can actually help with immune modulation, or at least, there's potential of that. And then there's also other anti-aging research that came up. I should publish my monograph somewhere at some point, probably on my website because I said people would be interested reading it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah, I want to read it.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

I'll send it over. It's long, but there's just so much to it. I completely fell in love with the plant.
[crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I can feel that. Yeah, this is like yet another plant that I feel like one could spend a lifetime with.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Absolutely.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that you fell upon the purge method. I wanted to say that earlier because one thing I think that herbalists can sometimes be shy about is taking large dosages of plant when necessary to have because when we're in an acute situation, like you were so sick, the fever, the congestion, everything, you don't want to mess around with little drops of this and that, that don't do anything. If little drops work, by all means, but we just don't want to be like when people say, "I was sick and I took something. I don't know if it helped or not." It's like either it wasn't the right plant or it wasn't the right dosage because plants will definitely help. They're not weak in that way, but sometimes you really have to be—have some gumption with that dosage.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

You'll probably laugh, but basically coming up, coming up—the year coming up to me being sick and having done that monograph. I'd done the monograph, got sick, and then it was like, "Oh, I just wrote a monograph." That year was 2019. It was in January 2020 that I got sick. In February, my friend got sick as well. He's a farmer. He gets up—he gets up at 4:00 in the morning to go see, check his cattle. There were calving at that time as well, so he needed to check on the young ones. He was one of my stops, and I stopped by his house. He was upstairs in bed, same kind of sweating and just absolutely coughing and just in his bed. I went. I just made myself at home and I was like, I'm going to make him exactly what I did and see what happens. I brought it up to him and I said, "You drink that full liter." It was 1.2 liters. Once I was done with it, I boiled it down. I explained a little bit what I did. I brought that decoction up and he drank it all as I instructed. The next morning he was up at 4:00 in the morning, checking his cattle, came down. I was only up a couple of hours later. He came down for breakfast and he says, "Boy, that thing was frightfully good." He—a bit of a drinker. Obviously, if you've had the bad experience of vomiting up your stomach lining after a heavy night, he basically described that to me. He said, "You know when you're going out, it was like that with my lungs," he said. "It felt like something in my lungs, like the lining or some lining was coming off, and I just coughed everything out." I was like, "That's exactly what I experienced." That for me was a lot of validation.

It makes sense because when I looked into the nitty-gritty of it and that's my science brain, but I was saying it's saponins. Saponins are soap and they can dissolve gels. What our natural response is and what does cause most of the serious conditions is when you actually—it all gels up because the hyaluronic acid goes into this feedback loop, and just gets more and more gelatinous. I was like, actually, it makes a lot of sense. If you're drinking the ivy, something is going to happen that's going to help you actually purge it up, and it did.

And then a few months later, I had another friend. He was diagnosed by his doctor with COPD. He smoked for years and years and years. He's coughing and I got him to do the purge once a week, and then to drink a light ivy drink for all the other days. He would send me photographs of his sputum.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

From tarry, dark colors. Every few weeks for about three months and it kept getting lighter and lighter and lighter and lighter.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

He went back to see the doctor and the doctor was like, "Oh, I must have misdiagnosed you." I was like, oh, well that is enough validation for me.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, oh my gosh. That's so classic with the plants. I had that—and I had my own illness. That was what told to me as well, “Oh, it was misdiagnosis,” because the brain cannot comprehend that maybe these are potent.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yes, it's unfortunate. [crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I bet there are listeners out there who are interested in this kind of heroic preparation that you've been sharing with us. We do have a recipe card for that with a couple of different recipes, it looks like that you've got for us.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

I do, yeah. I like to be concise because there's a few different things. One of them is the purge and I wouldn't do that every day. I wouldn't do that often. I would also prefer people do it under supervision of a herbalist if they can as well. If they're doing heroic—I mean if it's a once-off, fair enough if you're very sick or if you know someone who—who needs to purge their lungs. Basically, 35, 45 herbs, as many as can be held in a hand. You put all of those into a big pot. Cover it with 1.5 liters of water and boil it for about—bring it up to a boil, and boil that covered for about maybe 20-30 minutes. You kind of know that it's ready because they get—they start blanching, getting very vibrant, a lovely beautiful green color, and then all that color disappears. That color is all gone then that's all the chemicals going into the—the drink. They'll look completely discolored. They'll just look like dark brown bits of leaves, as if they're sitting out there in autumn. It's amazing. You drink all of that in one day. Just keep drinking it. You don't drink it all in one go. This is not like a challenge, but you can have that within a six-hour window.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Okay.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Even shorter, and then you'll start getting a purging effect. You can do a lighter version which is exactly the same recipe, except you're using 10 to 15 leaves, and then that can be more daily support, especially if someone has COPD or—very, very safe. The only thing I would say isn't worth giving to is—is to pregnant women. It's not a good idea in case there's anything goes—there's not enough research on it. I also would not advise for anybody with stomach ulcers because the saponins can irritate the lining. There wasn't—there hasn't been any research that I found, but I would just put as a caution because it's not widely used, so it's just one of those things.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And so, the indication for this would really be that deep congestion of the lungs?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

The purge would be deep congestion—congestion of the lungs. If you have bronchitis or whooping cough or any kind of spasmodic cough, that really you're spasming or you got a tickly throat, that would be a very good indication for it—for just the lighter one.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

For the lighter one, okay.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yeah. Add a bit of ginger. Do the ginger lemon thing, but add your ivy in it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I see. You had mentioned thyme and ivy earlier. You said it was kind of a “watered-down” version that you can find, but that seems like a good combination, the thyme and ivy, but maybe more properly prepared.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

One hundred percent. It actually comes from older preparations from apothecaries in Europe that had actually done this combination, and sold it to anybody who got sick because you're getting the strong antimicrobial effects of thyme. Thyme is just a wonderful herb for also getting rid of different toxins in the body. Of course, when you're sick, it's taxing your liver and all that. What I would do with the thyme is I'd actually probably do it separately to get essential oils first in a smaller cup. And then actually, I put the plant in to be boiled because then you're going to get the bitter components, and that's [unclear]. Bit of alchemy there.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I like that, kind of a short steep for the volatiles, and then longer for the bitters. This is really fascinating about ivy. Now, I'm like looking, looking for where I can find some ivy to play with. Probably not the purge method for me right now since, thankfully, my lungs are healthy, but I'm curious. I'm very curious. Also, topically though too that just sounds like a fun thing to play with.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yeah, yeah. Daily use, that's all I can say if someone wants something—I also had someone who had one of those kind of keratinous—when older people get a keratinous kind of growth on their nose or ears or whatever, just put that on for about two or three days, it fell off. It does wonders. Again, it's because of this whole unraveling of the matrix. It unravels your skin matrix without destroying it completely. It allows for any of the debris to come out that's stopping it from healing, so that's why you're scarring.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting. Well, it's been totally fascinating, Luke. Is there anything else we've missed about ivy before we move on?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

I'll say one more little anecdote, and this is in my monograph—I mentioned the monograph. There's—I was working on a—on an organic farm to pay my way through the course. The head

gardener had one of those real heatstroky headaches or heat headaches, just very—it was a hot summer day. He hadn't drank enough. He started getting a banging—banging headache. It was middle of the week. We had to do the harvest. He had to go on. Again, I'd just done my monograph. I was like, "Oh, I'm going to experiment." There's this myth—or not this myth, sorry. There's a kind—I think it might have been—it might have been—yeah, it might've been Pliny the Elder who mentioned it. It's about if you gather the berries from the head of a stone statue where ivy is growing up on, it will help with pain, notably, headaches or head injuries. So, knowing that they do have a lot of saponins, I wouldn't encourage people to eat them or eat too many of them, of course. Two or three is okay, so basically, that's what I gave him. I gave him two or three. I said, "Just chew on those and see how you get back." I saw him later that day and was like "So, how's it?" And he was like, "I've completely forgotten about it." I've tried it a few times since, so definitely it does something. Generally, those kind of migraine headaches, I haven't figured out which type of migraine yet, but I'm pretty sure it's probably going to be something to do with modulating the circulation to the head.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I have a new found appreciation and respect for ivy. I had no idea about much of this, so I'm excited.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

I'll say one more thing-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Please.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

And ivy honey has been used in Ireland for—medicinally, also for the lungs, and it's—it's usually the food for winter for the honeybees, but it's often they make a lot more because there's so much of ivy with it. It's actually green. It kind of looks greenish. If there's any people

who have lots of ivy around them and they happen to have honeybees, they will get ivy honey. That's very, very sought after over here.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, interesting. When you first said that, I thought maybe you're talking about an infusion of infusing the leaves in honey, but you're talking about actually bees making the honey.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Actually, pollen from the ivy. It's amazing.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Okay, I'm going to look for that next time I'm over there.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Bantry—if you go to Bantry, there's a man who sells it in the Bantry market. I think it's on a Friday.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

As luck would have it I hope to be in Bantry at the Farmers Market next year, so I'm going to check that out. Lovely. I love Bantry. Thank you so much for sharing your passion for ivy and so many gifts that it has. I first found out about you through David Winston. He had sent out an email talking about this project that you're working on looking at eclectic French herbalists, and it immediately caught my attention. I started just looking into everything I could about it. Anyway, I would love to just hear from you what is this project? Tell us about the French eclectics. What are you doing? Why are you doing it?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Okay, so as I was mentioning earlier, I was reading *Of People and Plants* by Maurice Mességué. I was reading it in French. He kept mentioning this doctor, the good Dr. Leclerc, Henri Leclerc, and the very few references he ever put in the footnote was research by this

doctor. So, I started scouring the internet trying to find who and where this came from, and who he was, and I found absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. Basically, what I found out was, he—he actually ran a full-on school of phytotherapy in France, and that was just through reference of some obituary I found in the deep internet somewhere. The most information I found was on the German Wikipedia, which isn't—and the French Wikipedia had one line. Now, it's been updated by the family, thankfully. Eventually, I went on archive.org, started scouring a lot of the French journals and realized that he had written loads and loads of information, and then he had published different books. He wrote *Précis de Phytothérapie*, which is one of the most prominent ones. This one I'm currently working on translating and annotating because there's a lot of terms that it just wouldn't work if someone translated it just like that, you know, you need to have a bit of context.

It just occurred to me that he was praising eclecticism or the eclecticism of French medicine. This is actually in one of his—actually, I've got a quote here that I wrote down. He would describe—he says, “Eclecticism is, as a science, a very significant hallmark with the degree of perfection it has reached because it is strengthened by the knowledge it possesses. It accepts all theories with equal benevolence knowing that it will be easy, thanks to its investigative methods, to extract what is worth keeping and to exclude what is to be rejected.” He's talking about what the American eclectics also were looking into, bringing the empirical and not ignoring the past, and the rich tacit knowledge, all these traditions that exist or all these different books and experiences, but also the fact because we do have microscopes. We do have—and even now, we've got even more advanced tools to be able to actually look and see how things work.

This is not the standard pharmaceutical research of isolating a compound. These guys were talking about looking at the parts, but then actually to reinforce or explain the actual effects that they see in clinic of the whole plant. Leclerc would go on to say—and he says this in the 1920s—and this was—I believe this was his very first article on one of the journals—the French main medical journals. He wrote all about the introduction of phytotherapy. I do have that translated somewhere. It's fascinating because he actually coined the term “phytotherapy” in

that article, so essentially, the word phytotherapy—this word phytotherapy exists probably because he wrote that article. You can't find it anywhere else before that. It's not been mentioned before that. There are several sources who actually directly attribute him to actually mentioning it. We can really say that actual phytotherapy, at its core, was born in France in—in that kind of—that paradigm, but then it aligned a lot to the American eclectics in the use of whole plants. He does go on—in this article he says, “Nobody would challenge the fact that morphine, codeine, narceine, and other alkaloids of opium, even when administered simultaneously, would fail to reproduce the effects of opium. Nor can gluten or starch alone become the substitutes to make bread, nor is it possible to merely use alcohol, tannins, and coloring compounds to make wine.”

This was in the 1920s. This is when all these novel drugs are coming in, these petrochemical drugs were coming in, especially from America because of huge industry. The Flexner Report had done its damage, and brought forth all this new biomedical—this new medical paradigm, which I don't know if many people know but I write this in my paper on French eclectics. It was actually a small group of four or five men who actually made this huge change. It was called the “Hopkins Circle.” There's actually a paper talking about 100 years since the Flexner Report. You can find it on ResearchGate. It talks about—it names these four men and one of them was a right-hand man, a guy called “Fredrick Gates,” unrelated to Bill Gates. Frederick Gates would have been the right-hand man of John Rockefeller, who then funded the campaign to make biomedicine the golden—the golden standard of health in America and beyond. What happened is, this all kind of filtered in to Europe through the first—the destabilization of Europe through the First and Second World War. It's very sad.

It's very sad how it ended up because imagine this: you're in a society where you have apothecaries or *herboristerie* nearly in every town, probably several of them. Doctors knew about them and would send their patients with a prescription note to the *herboristerie* where the herbalists would make and prepare things, but also could dispense from their own training because it was an official French certificate for herbalists. It wasn't until the Vichy regime, which brought in all these new laws, that they made a deal to align themselves with

biomedical sciences that made the diploma disappear overnight. It's not that it was illegal, everybody who was qualified could still practice, but they never would give a diploma ever again. That collapsed the dispensaries, and then from that point on, only doctors could diagnose and only chemists could dispense, and that ended an entire industry. You had every region of France had *herboristerie* associations, and they would then invite people like Dr. Leclerc and all these other great doctors of the French eclectic movement that I'm kind of calling them, to do different talks. Like I dream—this doesn't exist here in Ireland. It doesn't exist in the UK. We still can practice but it's very dissonant in a way.

It must have been so fascinating to have such a big energy, such a big movement happening, and that was for hundreds of years. The charter called the codex in France was very, very—they were very, very well-researched in their methodology. This codex that was released every few years and first started by decree of the King and then it was decree of the French Republic. This codex was the bible of doctors. They went into it and had all these different preparations. Of course, it kept changing as things—biomedicine started coming in. They started taking away all the herbal ones and adding the chemical isolates instead even though—

And so, these French eclectics and Leclerc came in to try to remind his peers about herbal medicine. That's why the book *Précis de Phytothérapie* is interesting. It might be interesting for someone who's not in clinical herbalism, but these terms and concepts are far too complicated. That's why I'm trying to translate it, so people can understand a bit better or even some terms that, again, were used in the year 1900s that then we have new terms for now in modern medicine or biochemistry. But they were talking about molecules. They were talking about alkaloids. Tannins, they were splitting them. They were stabilizing them. There was a novel, Galenic method, they called it, where they created an *intrait*, which was a fluid extract that had stabilized plant, meaning they were desiccated without their molecular structure breaking. They were just as good as the fresh plants. They'd done this by immediately harvesting the plant and putting it in an autoclave under pressure and steaming it to stop hydrolization and bacterial decay, and then they had these—so they were able to

stabilize foxglove, which we can't use because it's unstable, or they used it for horse chestnut. They still, to this day, prepare horse chestnut preparations in France as an intrait as a "stabilized" plant. It's one of the only ones.

Again, there's loads of research and the more I open doors in this case, the more names I see. In his book, he mentions so many different researchers as if we should know them, because he's talking to his peers. He's like, "Oh, yeah. Borav says that and then Calzin says this," and so I'm having to look and find all these different names. Some of them surprise—some of them have disappeared completely to history. I'm like, where is the record? There was apparently this lady researcher from the early 1900s that he was absolutely praising for—again, when you look at literature back then, you don't hear a lot of women being involved in research, which is great to see that. It was just absolutely fascinating. It kept going to different places. They're so relevant to us today because it bridged that time when the Flexner Report collapsed the whole United States herbal medicine structure. This comes from 1920s right up to 1956. One hundred and fifty eight issues of his journal called *Revue de Phytothérapie* and that was what I was trying to save, which I did save in the end thanks to everybody who actually helped. They're sitting right in front of me there.

I'm having to digitize them. It's difficult because there are some—some authors who have passed away more recently, so their rights aren't up, so I'm going to have to filter out those, the authors. I'd like to get in touch with their families which I'm trying to [crosstalk] and I can use anything of theirs, which is great. And then any other research that's published on the journals, that's also able to be shared, which is brilliant. I'm so thrilled.

Part of what's relevant to us is, for example, he's got indigenous European plants as analogues to exotic plants. That to me, for example, that's so current. We're talking about sustainability. We're talking about—would you like me to give you a couple of those examples?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Because it just fascinates me. This is just a few of the many. For example, this one pleasantly surprised me: *Hydrastis canadensis*. I remember people in our course, we were talking about unsustainable practices, how it could be endangered, how it's being maybe overutilized, and how we really shouldn't be probably buying it from over your end of the pond. Of course, sustainability, but also—but then what can we replace it with because it is such a powerful herb. These French doctors have an article that's called "*Geranium robertianum* as a substitute for *Hydrastis canadensis*."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Will you say that again? You kind of broke up a bit. What is the herb that was mentioned?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Geranium robertianum.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh!

Luke Ó hErodáin:

This is herb robert.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Another astringent, so it's very astringent like goldenseal is astringent.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Absolutely. And then he also mentions another one, crane's-bill, which is *Erodium cicutarium*, I think, or cychotarium? However you say it. They actually had—they had done studies and actually got—done some—in their own clinical practices. They used the geranium or both

geraniums to help people who had hemorrhages. In particular, to help women with—as a toning stimulant and astringent of the uterus. They didn’t find anything specific related to hydrastine but they find that the actual effects of the plant as a whole has very similar effects, menorrhagia or pain from menstruation or too much bleeding, for example. They were starting to recommend that instead of using the *Hydrastis*.

We have another one which would be, for example, our local hazel or just standard hazel, *Corylus avellana*, as a substitute for witch hazel. Notably, the young branches. You can actually use a one-year old branch and make a fluid extract out of that, 40 to 80 drops of it has vasoconstrictive effects on patients with varicose veins and ulcers, and nose bleeds, and it stops internal bleeding. Hazel, just standard hazel.

Again, these guys went, had labs. They had patients. They had done this research. It’s all sitting there. If I went on—well, I did. When I was doing my research on this, I went on PubMed and ResearchGate, Semantic Scholar, trying to find any information on that. It doesn’t exist; nothing about it. The effects of herb robert on the uterus or as a toning agent or hazel.

Another one was *Sambucus nigra*, which is elderberry—elderberry bark, as a substitute for *Smilax*, which I find very interesting. We know, again, for us it’s quite exotic. Apparently, the American eclectics in my research did use *Sambucus canadensis*, is it? They used the inner bark, that for—to promote fluid secretions and to treat edemas, and all that. They were saying pretty much the inner bark of—and it’s funny because like the ivy, there’s a fear around it. It’s like, “Oh, but it’s got glycoside—it’s got cyanogenic glycosides, and this and that compounds in it.” That’s all good if you just read a reductionist scientific paper telling you what compounds it has, but it doesn’t—the French go ahead—the French eclectics go ahead and explain it doesn’t contain a certain enzyme that breaks down the cyanogenic compounds, meaning you excrete it. It’s emetocathartic and it doesn’t cause you stomach upset because of that. Whereas the leaves contain the enzyme, and if you take the leaves, you might get sick and get a little stomach upset. It’s fascinating. They’d done this research. Again, no modern research mentions that. That’s why I’m incredibly excited to unravel this.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah. It feels like a treasure trove. I do want to highlight, Luke, just talking about the Flexner Report, if people don't know about that, it's so important to read that as herbalists, even just as humans. So often I think biomedicine is seen as like this natural progression, and so herbalism gets seen as antiquated or this thing we should have left behind. The Flexner Report was actually a very manufactured, intentional cessation of herbal medicine in a way that was not evolutionary. It's not like herbal medicine wasn't working and so people moved on. It was that it was actually squashed. That's not to say there isn't place for all of it in today's healing world, but the fact that it was squashed so incredibly so, and now, all of these journals that you've found, with all of this information, that's really fantastic.

I love too that this began with Mességué. Looking at his footnotes, Mességué, just a quick shout out to him. When I think of historical French herbalists, he's the guy that is talked about, Maurice Mességué. He had published some books. The thing—and he is very—he's very famous for he did hand and foot baths. He didn't do a lot of internal treatments, so he said. It's a lot of external treatments through hand and foot baths, which is fascinating, but what I love about him is his writing. He was the quintessential, bioregional herbalist. He loved France. He loved Provence. He loved those fields. He loved those plants so much and he speaks about them in such beautiful ways.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Such beautiful ways.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that because he was clearly a clinician, very interested in healing, and he just loved the plants and the whole ecosystem. That really comes through in his writing, which is very fun to read.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

And it's funny because I do think that after reading him, and him sending me on to Leclerc, that he inspired himself from Leclerc because Leclerc grew up in—sorry, he studied in a school—was it Verlaine?—there's a famous French poet that he actually was friends with, really close friends, another author. He was known—in his obituary, they say how he is so eloquent with his words, like he's really poetic, and then I found out he actually has a book called *Le Similitude* which is all poems that he wrote about plants. He was fascinated-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, really?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yeah, because he was fascinated by this little—this little monk. He wrote—he translated *Hortulus* by Walahfrid Strabo. He was this little German—German monk who just dedicated his entire life to herbal medicine. He probably was writing—scribing. He had this full-on garden absolutely abundant with all different herbs because people kept bringing him all these different specimens, and he'd grow these. So, Leclerc inspired himself in his own garden on that. All his writing is just so entertaining and sometimes even humorous, which is nice. It makes it lighter to read. There are some really funny ones. There's one that he writes about the mandrake. He—he has all these little anecdotes and stories mixed in with his heavy, kind of mid-19th, mid-20th century medical lingo. It's really funny how it's done. Mességué—Mességué and him really are huge inspirations to me.

I think, in a way, we do need to look at how we operate as herbalists. I was talking to a—I was talking to—to a researcher and a doctor who was saying really—but he's an herbalist. He was saying how in herbal medicine really our kind of tincturing thing, our obsession with tinctures, comes from the '70s, or kind of started in the '70s, and that's maybe because of the breakdown of all the apothecaries. We've lost our use of all the syrups and the—the different extracts that we can make. [unclear] that might actually be adjunct that actually drive the medicine in.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I get kind of over tinctures sometimes just because they are—they so popular, I understand they can be so effective, but sometimes I think they overshadow everything else, and they have limitations. They have limitations on dosage. They have limitations just having alcohol in them for some people, so—I’m always a big fan of—we have so many preparations at our fingertips. The eclectics were, as a whole, famous for their apothecary style and just what they were doing very advanced looking at how to create different medicines in very sophisticated ways.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

It’s amazing because I still yet to find mention from the eclectics of these French doctors or from these French doctors of the eclectics, and I haven’t yet. I’m hoping to someday, even a letter.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I’m curious, Luke. For folks who are like, “This is fascinating. I want to follow it more. I want to see these translations,” how do they stay in touch with you? How do they find out more?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

So, currently—I’ve got a domain, I haven’t created a website yet, so the best way to do it will be to sign up on the waiting—or the mailing list, sorry—on my website, which is CelticFoxHerbal.com. I will put it on my home page, so you’ll see it. It will be like—it will say like French eclectic doctors newsletter. If you sign up to that, then you’ll hear all the updates I’ll be making. I am building a website. Hopefully have some things started—some things

published, sorry—by December or November. It's just incredibly busy coming up to September. I've got many other projects I'm involved with. I'm looking really forward to getting people to see this stuff. I think it's really important.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, I know there's going to be a lot of us on the edge of our seats, so no pressure. That is very exciting. I do have one last question to finish up with, Luke, but before I go, is there anything else that you wanted to mention? You've just been such a fountain of information and interesting things.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Since—since we—since we're talking about Flexner Report and stuff, and for people who want to know information about it, there's actually a book that came out really recently by Dr. Dilis Clare and Dr. Tim Morrissey. Dilis is an herbalist. She's a GP turned herbalist, operates in Galway. She spent ten years writing this book. Funny enough it's called *Uprooted*. The book is called *Uprooted* by Dr. Dilis Clare, and it's about our history. It's about how our herbs, our herbal medicine, how—it's about all of that in quite a global thing. She covers the Flexner Report, but also covers kind of today and where we are at, the dynamics we're—we're dealing with. For both herbalists and members of the public, it's a book that both can read easily, also, it's all very, very well-written, and very factual as well, referenced. It's definitely something I'd say is worth, if someone's interested in that, to look at. She has a website which I can't—I can't quite remember. I might remember—JoinedUpMedicine.com, that's [unclear]. If you're a researcher, I think she can also send you the manuscript or whatnot. You can contact her. Anyway, she's very approachable.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, cool. We sure will—we'll be sure to get all these references into the show notes so people can check it out further. Thank you so much. This has been awesome. I do have one last question before I let you go, and that is, what do you think herbs are especially good at teaching humans right now?

Luke Ó hErodáin:

See, I had to think about that one. You know, it would be easy for me to say, “oh, calm,” or to become or to kind of relax and take things slow, it’ll be cliché, wouldn’t it? And so, I think what really—what really is apparent to me is the ability to be flexible and to have respect, and to be adaptable. So, the reason I’m saying these three things is, for example, in terms of flexibility, plants are chemically flexible. I was noticing how even my herb robert from one place to another grows red or grows lush green depending on the soil, they’ll change a little bit, but they’ll still be able to be used mostly the same. They might have slight differences. What’s interesting is I find, as humans, we tend to get kind of rigid in our ways at times, especially even as an herbalist. We can—like I would personally struggle at times between the folk herbalism and esoteric side of things, which I think is so important, and then maybe the—a newer finding that maybe conflicts with something like that. I think it’s important for us not to close off either side. We need to be flexible and adaptable and being like, “Well, actually, if that’s true, then maybe that’s—maybe we should look into it more,” rather than shutting off. I do find that we can as humans, also, as practitioners, we can tend to do that and then that causes conflict because then everybody thinks they’re right by their own experience. But it’s experiential as well, if you see a patient or you use a herb and it has an effect. It might not have an effect for someone else because that’s just not how their—their body works. They might be from a different part of the world. They might be biologically different. It’s—it’s just how—it’s just how it works with that flexibility as practitioners and as humans to be able to get along in the world, I think is important and something that the plants can tell us.

The respect side of this because in the forest you have an ecosystem. There’s—yes, there’s invasives, but they also end up finding their way. There’s this balance. Some plants may disappear and then some—they might come back again when the conditions are right. The fungi, the plants, all kind of work together. I did notice since—since I joined the herbal world, we all have, again, our opinions. We all have different politics, all our different—there’s also maybe old feuds or new ideologies, and all these different shifts, you know. Again, that’s where respect really comes into, but I think it’s always important then, to just look at nature

and realize they're all very different—all these different plants, but they actually still can co-exist. Every trained practitioner belongs—belongs in this ecosystem. The pollinators or the patients are attracted to each of them in a unique way. One herbalist is more folky, might not attract someone who prefers seeing a more scientific herbalist. That's grand. We can all co-exist. I think we need to—I think the divide that we can create with our little prejudices, I suppose, or being conceited about our own ways of doing something, I think there's this lesson of respect in nature.

And then finally, adaptability. Plants survive changing landscapes and laws change, governments change, things change all the time. I think it's important for us to remember not to bicker at each other's differences, but to actually team together to be able to adapt and survive and thrive even, because all of us together and not divided, we can achieve unbelievable things. Unbelievable things!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's a very good answer. I did not see that one coming and I love it. These are things that are so important to me, the flexibility, but also, the—how can we work moving forward instead of getting caught up in the BS of disagreement.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Yeah.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Luke, this has been so fantastic. It is such a pleasure to meet you. I'm so glad that I found out about this project. I'm so inspired by it. I can't wait to see what comes of it. It's just been really fun hanging out and chatting with you too, so thank you so much for making the time and looking forward to more in the future.

Luke Ó hErodáin:

Absolutely. Thank you for having me.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thanks so much for listening. You can download your illustrated recipe card from today's episode. Just head 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 JJ Fiore in Scotland.

JJ brings both experience and curiosity to her herbal journey, always paying close attention to how plants meet her body's changing needs. During pregnancy, she found deep comfort in working with oats through teas, oatmeal, and soothing oat baths, while ginger unexpectedly became the perfect companion for easing nausea. Her reflections beautifully demonstrate that our relationships with herbs are never static—they continue to grow and change right alongside us.

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 your very own gold star and this herbal tidbit.

Ivy is one of the last plants to flower, blooming well into autumn when almost everything else has finished. It stays in bloom from early September to early November, which makes it a lifeline for pollinators heading into winter. There's even a bee named for it. The ivy bee foraging is so tied to this plant that ivy made up 98.5% of the pollen it carried. It flies only from September to mid-November, exactly when ivy is in flower. But here is the part I really love: it was only discovered in Britain in 2001, but by 2021 it had reached Scotland and Ireland, so the plant we pull off our walls is feeding a bee that's still expanding its range across Luke's part of the world.

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