

Liz Neves:

Pine has been, I feel, like present my whole life. There's so much to share about pine. I actually get so overwhelmed. I think about pine and there are two words that come to mind for me: clarity and peace.

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.

Pine is often so familiar that we forget its gifts, yet this resilient tree offers powerful medicine for both the lungs and the spirit. In this episode, I'm joined by herbalist Liz Neves who shares how pine helps us breathe more freely, release grief, and reconnect with hope. We talk about the many forms of pine medicine like resin and needles, and how this tree supports everything from winter wellness to emotional resilience. Liz also shares her experience working with pine as a teacher of presence, reminding us that even the most common plants hold profound healing.

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.

Welcome to the podcast, Liz!

Liz Neves:

Thanks so much, Rosalee. It's so great to be here.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Likewise. I'm really looking forward to getting to know you. I think one of the best places to start is just to hear about your plant path journey and what's brought you to us today.

Liz Neves:

It's a great question. I was really reflecting on this because I have multiple story arcs in this relationship with plants. I was thinking back to my childhood, actually, and thinking about how I felt called even then to the plants, but I didn't understand fully their medicinal properties or anything like that until I was an adult. I remember being younger, and my grandmother had a mimosa tree, and I was just fascinated by the flowers of the mimosa tree. My grandfather whom I didn't know, he passed before I was born, he had a grape arbor and so there were like grapes. I just remembered grapes. I associate those two trees with my grandparents, my father's parents. And then, when I was probably around three or four or five years old, I would play with acorn caps, and yew berries, and spruce. At the time, I didn't know what I was playing with, but they were like my toys. Later on, in high school, I felt this calling to go to the mountains. My high school had a unique program in the summertime. It was kind of like an outward bound type adventure, like a backpacking trip in the Adirondacks. They gave us this little field guide with plant—like three or four plants in it. I think it was eastern white pine, sassafras, and poison ivy. They might have mentioned clovers, which is so funny.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, that's an interesting combination of plants, for sure.

Liz Neves:

I know! There was just those. There was nothing—nothing else. I forgot—I had forgotten all about that book. I went off. I went to college. I studied psychology. I didn't even really—I wasn't as immersed as I am now in the natural world and the elements, but it started calling me back in around 2005. I was working a regular corporate job, working inside. I was starting to get tired with the environment of being shut inside all the time. I was also starting to wake up to things that were more ecological and healthier. I started to swap out all my cleaning products for healthier options, DIY. I was all about DIY that time. I even started a blog on green and sustainable lifestyle, but then I found permaculture.

Through permaculture, I—my teacher, at the time, Andrew Faust, he gave us this huge packet of handouts. It was all paper. It's something people probably wouldn't do anymore. It would be like a PDF or something. In there was an article from Susun Weed and it was an article about how she came to her land. I just—I just loved how she described how the land that she was sold was considered not useful, but she was—she was finding a use for it, which was to have goats and weeds, basically. I was like, “Oh, my God, this is the best!” and that was sort of one of my entry points back to the plants was studying permaculture, learning about the ways that Susun Weed teaches, and then studying with a variety of different teachers. I studied with Peek a Trenkle at the Open Center. I went to Third Root Community Center in Brooklyn, which is no longer around, and studied with Jacoby Ballard and Karen Rose. One of my first teachers was also Leda Meredith who recently passed a couple of years ago. She was like my—I call her my “foraging fairy godmother.” When I went on a walk with her, I just knew this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to be outside. I wanted to be with the plants. I want to be talking about them and sharing not just their medicinal properties, but the mythology associated with them, and all of the stories that humans have created around them, and the relationships that we've developed with the plants since—since before we can probably utter the words; before we created the words for what they are. Maybe they told us who they were. Maybe that's how language developed.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I like that theory, Liz. I know what my mind keeps thinking about is that I wonder how many of us on the plant path had those inklings of the plants calling us from an early age because I just really resonate with that. I can think of times when I was quite young, where I was just so enamored with the plants. That enamored, I never forgot those moments, but then life went on. Then—I almost like I feel this—and I've heard other herbalists talk about this part. It's like, “The plants call us. They're like, ‘Come here.’” Then we're like, “Oh, that's so cool,” and then we go on on another path, and the plants call us back. “No, no, no. Come over here.” We get into it and then we go on another path, and then finally, it's like—then it finally—they just keep calling, and finally, we're caught in their web.

Liz Neves:

And that's the best web to be caught in.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah. Thank you so much for sharing that trajectory. I know the permaculture has been really important to you. You've also studied a lot of other earth-based skills and energy healing, and woven that all together in beautiful ways.

Liz Neves:

Thank you. Yeah, it just keeps meandering this path. It's definitely not linear. It keeps changing and it's exciting. What I love about the plant path is that it is so diverse, just as diverse as the plants are. It's like you can be a clinical herbalist. You can be a folk herbalist. You can just—I say “just” but I don't mean it diminutively. You can be a home herbalist and help your family not take so many medications, or you can craft with your hands. You can make things—dye and all. The plants are just so abundant. They're so giving. Everything—our clothing, our furniture. Everything. There's no end to what they give and there's no end to how we can create with them in collaboration.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So true. I just have a random question for you. You said you had a corporate job. I love that you said, “I was working inside.” It sounds like such a thing an herbalist would say. There's a lot of people who have corporate jobs, and then go off to do—their hobby becomes their main income, but they probably wouldn't describe it as like, “I worked inside.” My question is, how was that for you transitioning from kind of a traditional path that was socially acceptable and the path that you are on, and then to walk away from that? Was that something you did suddenly? Was it something you eased away from? Was that hard or easy? Just curious about that process. I think there are other people out there that might be wondering, what does that look like?

Liz Neves:

I would say it's all of it. It was easy and hard. It was easy to step away. For me, I was like, "See you later." For me, emotionally, it was really easy to step away; but then, stepping in, it continues to be challenging. I feel like it's a continual stepping in to how—if you make this a living, which is what we're required to do in this capitalist world that we still live in and hopefully are changing, we have to pay for rent or pay for a home or pay for—all the things. Or we can live in a different economy of trade and stuff like that. I think the hardest thing for me has been making a living from doing this work. It's not to say that it's not possible. Maybe it's just the way that I've meandered. I have created little pocket—pocket businesses, I would say, out of doing that. When my son—well, before my son was born—my son is almost 13, actually. In less than two weeks, he'll be 13. Before he was born, I was making products and selling them at markets, and teaching people how to make their own body care products and cleaning products, and all these things. It was like—yeah, it became—it was like I jumped off too soon, maybe from the corporate. I was eager—so eager that I just jumped out maybe before it was time. Whatever that means. I honestly don't—I don't regret one bit of it. I think being like a solopreneur is really hard. I think that when we do step away from a supportive role within the system where we do have maybe healthcare taken care of, or there's the golden handcuffs, I guess. It is—it is hard to forge your own path in that way. I'm still figuring it out, to be honest. I'm still figuring it out.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you for that very thoughtful answer. I think that's—you've captured the nuance and complexity of it there. I like that you're like, "It was really easy to say goodbye to the corporate job," but it's just—layers of complexity come in after that.

The plant that you've chosen for us today is pine, which I'm very excited for because I live in a pine forest, so it's one of my favorites. I'm excited to hear about your relationship to pine and what you have to share about pine with us today, so wherever you'd like to start with that. Let's dive in.

Liz Neves:

Wow! There's so much to share about pine. I actually get so overwhelmed, but then I think about pine, and there are two words that come to mind for me: clarity and peace. Clarity brings peace and peace brings clarity, so there's this beautiful dance of those kind of states of being embodied in the pine tree. Where I live on the East Coast, one of the predominant species is the eastern white pine, *Pinus strobus*, which is to the Haudenosaunee people, their tree of peace. Literally, where the weapons were buried, the hatchets buried under the tree of peace, eastern white pine. If you know the wampum belt, it has the pine tree right in the center. It's a really important tree for this region—that particular type of pine.

Pine has been, I feel, present in my whole life, but I'm noticing how much more present they are now in the paths that I've been choosing or that I've felt called to. One really special place to me is the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. That name "Barrens" I feel like can have a negative connotation. The funny thing is pine is also a symbol of fertility and virility, so it's kind of a contradictory name, I think. I'm sure there are other meanings for barrens in the ecological sense, but when I think about that it makes me laugh.

In the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, there is the Tracker school where I've been going to the classes there, but also, I recently taught for one of their organizations, 4 Elements Earth Education, which my son and I started going to. About three or four years ago, we started going to their camps, and they teach earth skills. You're just surrounded by the pines. I'm sure you know the wind through the pines—there's no other sound like that. It's so ethereal and soothing, and it brings me back to the original thought about peace. It's like the peace of the pines; the smell evoking that. You step into a pine forest, you take a deep breath, and there's like an immediate transformation. It's physiological. It's emotional. There's actually aerosols coming off of this tree. The trees are creating these aerosols that create these microclimates and microenvironments.

I'm going to jump around a lot because all these different images are coming to mind. I was recently in the Great Smoky Mountains and I hadn't been there before.

I was amazed by just this phenomenon of the aerosols being—when you look at—when you think—if you’ve seen pictures of the Great Smoky Mountains or if you’ve been there before, there are these beautiful clouds that exist. They’re like these mist-like clouds that exist over the trees at the tree tops of the mountains, and that is what the trees are creating, which is a protective, cooling layer of air, basically. The trees are like—I mean, trees are the lungs of the planet, and these trees in particular have such a strong affinity with the lungs and breath. What is more fundamental than that? What’s more important than fundamental than our breath?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That’s beautiful, Liz. It’s really beautiful. There’s something about the pine too when you’re out there in the sun. There’s such a distinct smell. You can really get a sense of that. I love that you started with peace and clarity because that reminded me that this week, I was very sad and had a very, very heavy heart in dealing with the grief and passing of a friend. I was just so sad, so I went on a walk, and there’s this big grandmother ponderosa pine tree out on my walk. This tree has brought me a lot of comfort before. It takes a bit of going through a lot of brush and everything to get over there. I was like, “It’s worth it today,” so I rambled over there through all this brush. There’s this little hollow in it that’s just perfect to put my back up against. I put my back up against the tree and just sat there for a really long time. I don’t even know how long. I was brought so much peace in that moment, and also, in that time too, it’s like—I felt like I was kind of wallowing in sadness, kind of like circular thinking, just kind of stuck in this place. I decided to do whatever I could to get out of my head. Ponderosa bark has a really cool—or ponderosa pine has really cool bark. There were all these pieces of bark around me from the tree, so I just spent a long time really looking at the bark; all these slivers of bark. It’s just this amazing thing to be up against this tree that’s hundreds of years old in the middle of this forest, and just feel the comfort, feel the peace of it all, and then be able to stare at this little, tiny piece of this huge tree, and just be enamored with that little piece for so long. So, yeah, I’ve kind of forgotten about that. As soon as you said the pines bring peace, I just immediately remembered, yeah, that just happened to me this week. The pines brought the peace. Now, I would not have thought of starting that way with pine. I appreciate that you did.

Liz Neves:

Thanks for sharing that story. Really, I just love how you can just dial in right down how clarifying that is to just focus in on the beauty of that one piece of bark, and how much is in there in just that one little piece.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, it's so true, so true, yeah. Sometimes—I was thinking about how they say if we name something, then sometimes our brain can shut off, and it's like we've named it and so our brain is done? There's something to be said about looking so deeply at something, and I really just needed to get out of my head and just find some space. I would do that again and again. I still don't feel like I know or understand ponderosa bark. It's so amazing!

Liz Neves:

I don't really know that. I mean I have seen ponderosa pines, but not—I haven't developed a relationship with that particular tree. I know they can be really big pines. I've seen—they got in Arizona.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And I also—I have to mention that it's so interesting that you talked about the Pine Barrens, because I think I had—I got actually into herbalism through the Tracker school. That was kind of my—that was my inroad, yeah, but I've never been back east. I went to—I went to the school down in Santa Cruz when they were traveling. My first teacher was Karen Sherwood and she taught there for a long time. I've always thought of the pine barrens and I thought of it as a barren place because I've never been, but I've always unconsciously had that so it was just funny that you brought that up because it's like, oh, yeah, it's probably not barren. I kind of had this desolate picture in my head.

Liz Neves:

I hear that and I think most people do because the pine barrens, actually, take up a huge—like in New Jersey, there's multiple pine barrens, but the biggest ones are in New Jersey and Long

Island, at least, on the East Coast. There's also a little tiny one that I lived in this past winter, where it's a small pine barrens habitat, and also coastal. Cape Cod, I feel like has some of that pine barrens ecology, but it's not barren at all. In fact, it's one of my favorite ecologies because it contains some of my favorite medicines like sweet fern. I love sweet fern and that grows in a pine barrens habitat and it grows in the Pine Barrens in New Jersey. There are different kinds of oaks like scrub oaks. There's blueberry, wintergreen, and all these acid-loving plants, they all grow in the Pine Barrens. I love ghost pipe too. I know ghost pipe grows in a lot of different environments, but that one I have a special relationship with. Interestingly, with ghost pipe and pine, I realize the relationship between those two in terms of peace. I notice that I have an affinity for plants that evoke peace because of something that I desire in my life is to have peace. They've been calling. Both of those plants speak to me pretty loudly.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's beautiful, yeah. Thanks for painting a better picture of the pine barrens for me.

Liz Neves:

There's pitcher plants and all these other wild—and sundews and all kinds of interesting carnivorous—I could keep going. Beautiful, beautiful place.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Where else would you like to go with our pine exploration today?

Liz Neves:

I don't know. There's like a lot of little tidbits about pine that I find interesting. I, for a time, I was looking at my ancestry. I have a pretty diverse background ancestrally, but I have a big chunk of people from—ancestors from the British Isles and from Scotland and Ireland. I was interested in the Celtic Ogham, which is the—what some people call the “tree alphabet.” It's sort of this runic alphabet, which I—I don't fully understand. I feel like even maybe scholars today have a good understanding, but even—there's probably even more information that we don't have because it got lost to time. The staves, the Ogham staves, a lot of things back then

were probably written on wood. A lot of those things probably decomposed, but the Celtic Ogham for pine or spruce, it's kind of vague which coniferous tree it is, but is "Ailm". It is a symbol of wayfinding and beginning to find one's purpose. It's a beautiful—to me, it really helps to clarify who we are and why we're here, and help us find our way, so I find to be really beautiful and I think something that I resonate with.

I also find it interesting on the flipside of that is that when colonization started here, the British saw the white pine trees. Of course, they had deforested their land. They deforested Ireland, and then here they come to this fresh virgin land, so they say, and they see these beautiful, tall, white pine trees. They look at them and they say, "Those are masts for our ships." They're taking this what's a symbol of peace, and they're turning it into a symbol of war and putting it on their war ships. But all of that is maybe not a great experience for the pines or for the people of this land, but I find it interesting the connection between wayfinding, that the symbol of wayfinding and having a mast on a ship, and the relationship between the wind power—the wind power and thinking about the trees and how the wind moves them, and that connection and that relationship. Who figured that out that a pine tree would make a good mast and that relationship with the wind too? I don't know. I find that really fascinating.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's really fascinating, beautiful and poetic in an also sad way.

Liz Neves:

Yeah, yeah. And that what you spoke about—about the ponderosa pine and your need to find relief for the grief, that is the medicine of pine as well. The lungs are huge. The lungs and the nervous system are two really big points that the tree works with medicinally. I have a cup of pine tea—pine needle tea, of course, for this talk. I was like, "I need to have some pine with me."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And the cutest cup too. For people not watching, it's super cute. I love a good tea mug always.

Liz Neves:

I know. It's really important. If you have tightness in your chest, it could be from grief. It could be from an illness. It doesn't really matter what it's from, pine is going to bring relief. Pine is going to unstick what's stuck. Whether it's emotional, whether it's physical, there's really, ultimately, no difference. When we ingest the pine, when we breathe it in, when we drink it, when we take it as a tincture or a honey or an elixir; any form is going to help to alleviate congestion in the lungs, and give us a sense of peace in the places where we might feel grief. It's also very cleansing, antimicrobial, so if you have a cold or something, it can help—help to clear and boost your immune system. There's tons of Vitamin C in pine trees and a lot of conifers. Spruce, as well, has high Vitamin C content. It's just such a great, great plant and evergreen, of course, too. So, through cold and flu season, you have trees right outside if you have pines near you to harvest from, then you can make—easily make a remedy for that. That's the season that's coming. You want to be prepared for the season.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I think that's one of those reasons I have such a connection with the pine because for six months out of the year, the only plants that are really available to me are ponderosa pine and Douglas fir because everything else is covered in four feet of snow, so those are the plants I could interact with for a long time.

You mentioned that helping with the chest and grief, and just actually moving things out of the chest, I want to say the first time I ever experienced a stimulating diaphoret—or stimulating expectorant was a decoction of pine needles. It was—the decoction is—it's got a lot of bitter qualities to it, but man, it was just like, “Oh, that's what a stimulating expectorant is.” It really just gets things moving and out in such a profound way. Thorough way, I could say.

Liz Neves:

I love how the tree shows us that too in the way that the sap oozes out. It's almost like it's showing us how it's going to come out of you. It's like oozing out of you. I love all the ways that the tree communicates all these important uses to us. This past weekend, I was with a group of teens, teaching them about foraging. We came across a spruce tree that was oozing quite a lot of pitch. We collected this much of it from the tree.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Wow.

Liz Neves:

And I had taken a piece and I was like—I put it in my mouth. It was in there for quite a while because it takes a long time to dissolve. I was chewing on this one piece of—of one of the kids also had—she said she had a sore throat, so she took some and she was sucking on it like a lozenge. It's like it's right there. You could just take it off the tree and use it that way. The reason why we gathered this much is because one of the other teachers was going to be making glue—pitch glue with that. You can do that from pine or from spruce. He mixes it with charcoal, and then uses that as pitch glue. It's interesting how it's also—the stickiness, it's like it resolves the—in our bodies when there's stickiness, it resolves that. So, kind of like the opposite property.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Nice. That's a messy job harvesting that much of the pitch.

Liz Neves:

One kid who was holding the whole thing like this, and his hands were coated. He was trying to figure out how to get it off. He was rubbing it in the dirt. He had a method, but by the end of the weekend, he still had lots of it on his hand.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It smells good, but yeah, it's a mess.

Liz Neves:

Yeah. It's worth it though.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I often harvest in the wintertime because I can, so it's—in the wintertime when it's below freezing, you just kind of break it off and it's not sticky and gummy; just easier to get it off.

Liz Neves:

It was a warm—a warm weekend, so it was all melty. And then my son, he wanted to burn it. He wanted to—to make a torch, so we got a fir—or actually, we got a spruce cone and we coated it in the pitch, and then we made like a little tiki torch.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, fun! Did it work well?

Liz Neves:

Yeah, it did! It's really cool how versatile the pitch is. You use it for wounds, to treat wounds, to draw out splinters, heal scrapes, and things like that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Nice.

Hey, friends, it's Rosalee. If you've been nourished by this podcast, if it has helped you feel more connected to the plants or more grounded in your own herbal path, then I'd love to invite you to join the Herbs with Rosalee Podcast Circle. This special membership helps make the podcast possible. It supports everything we do behind the scenes, and it gives you a chance to go even deeper with the content that you love. Inside the circle, you'll get exclusive

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The recipe that you've shared with us is absolutely delightful, pine needle infused honey. Would you go over that recipe with us, and just share a bit about it why you decided to share this one and how you like to use it?

Liz Neves:

Sure. I mean, who doesn't like honey and sweet things? Maybe there are a few people who don't like honey. A lot of the plants I find that I like to use for colds and flus and things like that, I like to infuse in honey because it's just so soothing and easy to prepare. You can just put a spoonful of that in your tea or even in just some hot water, and it's instant tea. It's absurdly simple. You take some pine needles. You can cut them up if you want to, but then they are small and you have to strain them out. I find that you don't really have to. You can just put them in whole, jam them in a jar and then pour honey over that, and you can let that steep. It depends on how long you want to wait. But the longer—a little bit longer, maybe you'll extract a little bit more of the goodness from the pine needles. Like a week or maybe two weeks, and then you just spoon it out. You can chew on—like my son, he'll even eat the needles. You can pull them out and chew on them with the honey on them. Just such good medicine for boosting the immune system, and keeping—keeping everything feeling good in the cold and flu season.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love these types of honey. It's like you said, by the little spoonful makes instant tea which can be such a relief when you are sick because sometimes it's not—I could always have the best intentions of all the things I'm going to do when I'm sick, but when I'm actually sick and tired and I don't feel good, a little spoonful of honey into hot water, making instant tea is pretty nice; very practical.

Liz Neves:

It's great for kids too if you don't want to give them tinctures or anything with alcohol in them. It's a really nice—nice option for that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Soothing for the throat.

Liz Neves:

So many—so many uses.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Is there anything else that you'd like to share about pine, Liz?

Liz Neves:

I could go on and on about pine, but here's—here's something. I was talking about crafting with pine, and I really love crafting with my hands, so I made some pine needle baskets. This was actually the first one I made from the pitch pine. I love how it even looks—it reminds me a little bit of a pine cone in the way that they grow, the spiral pattern. This is—this is—it's tedious work, but it's really satisfying and not so hard to do once you get it started. I love working with this material because it's so—especially, the harder—it doesn't work so well with eastern white pine, but with pitch pine, because it's—and probably the pines out west have longer, thicker needles. It's just such a satisfying feeling. They're smooth and kind of hardy. I just love how—I love how it comes together.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I have also made pine needle baskets and I have to say mine have never looked that good, so—they're passable. I'm not saying they're ugly, but yours are quite cute.

Liz Neves:

Thank you. It's fun to get creative with the stitching. I was kind of playing around with that. Just like some intuitive meanderings, like a web.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's beautiful.

Liz Neves:

Thank you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I hear the squirrels will cut down the—they're out there getting the cones, but they'll cut down the needles as well, and so certain years, there'll just be piles of needles—fresh needles just on the ground. When you harvest those just off the ground, say thank you to the squirrels, and that would make our pine needle baskets.

Liz Neves:

I just thought of animal relationships with the pines. The spring where I was living up, it's not far from where I am now but it was up on the mountain by the pine barrens habitat, I saw tons of porcupines. It's funny that they love pine trees. They eat—they climb up into them. They hide in them. I feel like—they're so akin to the pine tree; porcupine and the spines. I learned from my friend, Nancye, who was also—Nancye Good, who was the one who introduced me to 4 Elements Earth Education and the Tracker school, that you can burn their poop as incense and it smells like pine or hemlock or whatever they're-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting!

Liz Neves:

It smells—it smells really, really good!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That sounds like a practical joke you'd play on someone like, "Hey, this smells really good."

Liz Neves:

But it does smell good.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You just let that dry out then, no further processing needed? You just kind of-

Liz Neves:

You just track the porcupines. You find their den and then there's the poop outside of their den, and then you—they like rocky habitats. They're very specific. At least here, they—I love how they love—they like to be in the ground and they like to be above the ground. They're either down under. I've seen them down under stones. I've seen them up, up in the pine trees. And locusts—they like to eat locusts too, apparently, like locust blossoms or locust pods. I saw them up in the locust—and they can climb. It's amazing because they look like they'd be big and cumbersome, but they can climb really far out on the branch to nibble on whatever they're nibbling on up in the tree. It's kind of surprising.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yes, going back to the poop thing, I wonder if that would be like good for a mosquito repellent, like the smoke you could put that in your campfire, and it would be a good mosquito repellent.

Liz Neves:

Yeah. You can even—poop aside, you don't have to use the poop. You can burn the needles of the conifers on their own too. I bet you that would make a really nice—it's also a really nice incense. I actually made pine needle incense where you don't even have to dry out the needles. You just grind them up and add—I've used honey and marshmallow root as a binder and a little bit of water, and then you pinch it together into a little pyramid.

I find that it's easier to burn it on a coal than—it doesn't really—unless you use other things like maca powder or something else to bind it. It doesn't just burn on its own. You have to put it on a coal to burn it, but it still works really well. I really love the smell of it burning.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's interesting with the honey too; that you put honey in there.

Liz Neves:

It's more of a—it's just like a binder, but I guess it probably does add some sweet, sweet scent too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That sounds lovely.

Liz Neves:

There's more and more medicine. I could stay here and talk about it for a long, long time.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Especially in the winter, conifer smells are just some of my favorites. I'll make my body butter with the evergreen. A friend of mine makes a really good conifer oil that I'll just use all over my body. I just can't get enough of that smell, especially in the winter. I definitely associate it very strongly with the winter.

Liz Neves:

With the winter holidays too. I take the fir—if we have a fir tree for Christmas time, to take the needles and make an oil with them, and then make lotion.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah.

Liz Neves:

I give that out as gifts and everybody is always like, “This is the best smelling lotion I’ve ever had,” and they keep it. They keep it for a long time because they don’t want to use it up because they know it’s seasonal and precious. You can—I found that you can leave the needles in for a really long time. Because they’re so antimicrobial, they don’t—it doesn’t go bad. The oil doesn’t go bad. It lasts much longer than other oil—like other herbal oils would.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting. Yeah, that’s cool. Was there anything else that you’d like to cover before we move on? I don’t want to cut you off on anything, so anything you want to share, Liz.

Liz Neves:

I don’t know—oh, yes, actually. I was thinking about the relationship between pineal gland and pine trees, and the cones. I’m sure people—a lot of people talk about how the pineal gland is shaped like a pine cone. The pine—the cones and the pineal gland are both sensitive to light, and so I find that it’s—and I feel like maybe pine medicine would be also helpful for regulating, not necessarily producing melatonin, but regulating our ability to manage lightness and dark. There’s that relationship, I think, with the tree and lightness and dark, and the seasons too. This is a tree that brings us through the dark months. I just love that connection between the shape of a pine cone, which looks like our pineal gland or vice versa, and that they both are light receptive, and help to regulate fertility, and our sleep-wake cycle. Fascinating connection.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

What I find fascinating, Liz, is how your brain works and how you see these associations between—you’re talking about the masts and the wayfinders, just these correlations between things. It’s a really beautiful way of seeing the world and being informed by the beauty, and the lessons, and the wisdom around us that we’re experiencing, and how that informs our passage in life as well.

Liz Neves:

Thanks, Rosalee. That's—thank you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Well, I know that you have written a whole book on *Northeast Medicinal Plants*, and I would love to hear more about that.

Liz Neves:

Yeah! Oh, gosh. There's a couple of stories that go with this book.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Oh, cool.

Liz Neves:

I had mentioned Leda Meredith earlier. She had written a book called, *Northeast Foraging*, which is also from Timber Press. I would lead plant walks. I did actually—most of my learning about plants was in the city and I—even though now I split my time between the country and the city that is where I learned plants. When I went on my first foraging walk, it was with Leda and it was in Prospect Park. Then, when she moved out of the city, I took up where she left off and led plant walks in the park. And so, about—I don't know. I guess it was maybe the fall of 2018, 20—I forget what year. Somewhere around 2017, 2018, I was like, “You know what? I'm ready to write a book. I'm going to write a book.” I had this idea and it was not the idea that came to me, but I had an idea for a different book, and then a month later, I got an email from Leda and she said, “Hey, I'm not in the Northeast anymore and Timber Press reached out to me to write this book. Do you want to write it?” I was like, “Whoa! Yes!” And—and people on my walks had been asking me, “Is there a book out—what book do you recommend for this region? What book?” and I would always recommend Leda's book because it was the closest thing that I had to a regional field guide that was like really easy to access. Anyway, I was so honored that she thought of me and so honored to have this opportunity land in my lap. It still feels like a miracle and it was like solving this thing that I needed a field guide to offer to

people that I was showing the plants to, so it continues to be such a gift. Even with the teens this weekend. They had me bring my books. We gave it to them at the end of the weekend to say, “Look, all the plants we talked about, they’re all right here. You can look at them—look them up.” I’m so—I’m so grateful to Timber Press and that series. It’s a whole series of field guides—regional field guides and the *Northeast* one. I honestly—so far, I haven’t found anything quite like it for this region. I had one year to do the whole thing, photographs and all of it. I did—I did have—I did get to source some photos and some editorial help from 7Song, and I had an editor who was really great with helping me hone in some of the ideas. It was—it was quite a seemingly magical coming-together of all that informa—I honestly don’t even know how I did it in that short of a time.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It’s a lot. It’s one thing to write a book, but to be also doing all of the photography and everything, and just the technicality of it too, and crosschecking all that stuff. There’s a lot of—a lot of moving pieces there for sure.

Liz Neves:

Yeah, I feel like it’s a miracle. I did find one error in it and I was like, “Oh!” It’s like a sentence got omitted, but I’m amazed that the process and how smooth it went, and how it all came together with really very little issue. I know you’ve written at least one, *Wild Remedies*, and probably more books. You know how the process is, I’m sure, just taking it from concept to finished product, it’s a lot—it’s a lot of work.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah. I actually, just had a meeting earlier today. I’m getting started on my third book. I had this moment where I was like, “Why am I doing this again?” because, it is—especially the very beginning stages where we’re just writing a book proposal. It feels daunting, but having the end product feels so good.

Liz Neves:

It does. It's like I said, it's like a gift that keeps on giving too because it's always there. I carry them in the trunk of my car because there's always someone like, "Hey, do you have your book?" or when I go to certain places, people know that I have it. It's right there. It's really—I'm really happy about it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's wonderful. Like you said, the Timber Press put out amazing books. So many of my friends have written them from all the different regions, so that's pretty fun in that regard too. Quite a collection. It's wonderful to be a part of that.

Liz Neves:

Yeah, it is.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

What other herbal projects do you have going on, Liz?

Liz Neves:

Well, I have been teaching this class with my friend, Emily, called Fire & Forage, where we combine the earth skills of making friction fire with foraging to show and we—and actually, this past weekend, when I taught these kids, it was very—it was basically, fire and forage because we went out, we foraged, and then we cooked over the fire. That's basically what this class is, but you're making the fire. All the kids know how to use bow drill kits. They all made their fire. It took some time, but they did—they did get it. It's not always guaranteed with friction fire, that you're going to get it, specially, depending on the weather conditions, but yeah-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Humidity can really put a damper on that, literally.

Liz Neves:

Yes, absolutely. It's funny because Emily and I taught this class in June, and it was a rainy day. Most of the people that we taught got a coal even though—even though things were damp. I think we were trying to be really mindful of how we kept our stuff. We kept everything away from the ground. We did it up on a raised platform, but it was really incredible. It's really incredible to see the reaction that people have when they're like, "Oh, my God. I just made that fire from essentially two sticks, and then I get to cook on it from things that I got from the land." It's just like all those connections that come together for people. It's such a human thing that not everyone gets to do and touch upon. That's one sort of on-going herbal project that I'm excited about, and also, something that is not quite herbal but will definitely have an herbal influence is a project called the Women's Intuition Project. This is the first time I'm announcing this publicly. It's in development, and maybe you would like to be a part of it too, at some point. I'm interviewing women about their relationship with intuition.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Is this like a podcast? How? What is the-

Liz Neves:

It will be a podcast plus. There's going to be more, but definitely a podcast element to it. I'm really, really excited about this. For me, the plants—a lot of my intuition comes from my connection to plants and communicating with plants. It will definitely be a big, big part of—big part of this. I'll share one little story too just in regards to listening to the plants and pine. It was early in the pandemic, right at the height when there were shutdowns. My son was not in school and he had to do remote, and all that stuff. It was just like such an uncertain time and was really scary, really uncomfortable time. There's this one white pine tree in the park that we go to, and it's a perfect climbing tree. It has this perfect straight branches that go up in like a perfect ladder. It's a tree that my son liked to climb. One time, all of us, our whole family climbed the tree. We sat at the top and we were away from all the people who were milling about in the park because they were like—everyone was trapped inside, so the park became this huge party zone, even though it used to be, for me, a refuge, and then it became a party

scene. So, we're up there in this big, big tree. I was feeling a certain way. I was feeling really down and upset about the state of things, and I heard the tree say, "It's all okay. It's all going to be okay." I was just completely in awe and completely moved. I couldn't believe it. When it comes from that place of like, "What? Where—what? I didn't say that. The tree is definitely saying something to me." It was one of those moments where it just felt I can feel the truth of that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So, it landed then? There was a like, "Where is that coming from?" but you did feel like things are going to be okay.

Liz Neves:

I mean some part of me accepted it, yeah. I'm sure I was still in other ways freaking out, but it definitely came in and was like, "Okay. This is alright. You can—you're going to be okay. We're going to figure things out. It's going to be okay." But also, that universal, "Yeah, things are chaotic and things are awful right now, and ultimately, in the scale of things, the earth is going to work it out." [crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that you were nestled in the branches of the tree, like in the embrace of the tree, and then the tree is like, "It's going to be okay."

Liz Neves:

It really was like a mother—like a mother hug from the tree.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you so much for sharing that. Liz, if people want to get your book, they want to check out your courses, what's the best way for them to get in touch with you?

Liz Neves:

Right now, my website, gatheringground.nyc, is probably the best place to go. The book is sold—*Northeast Medicinal Plants* is sold in most booksellers, so if—you can buy it directly through me or you can buy it from most booksellers too.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Wonderful. Awesome! That brings us to our very last question, which for you is, how do herbs instill hope in you?

Liz Neves:

Gosh. I think their giving—the giving nature of herbs. The—just—it's the most unconditional gift-giving that they have, that they offer; the abundance that they offer in their medicine, in their food, and the ways that we create with them, the way that they are so resilient. I know many people talk about plants pushing up out of the sidewalk. I just see that and I think plants—man, plants are okay. Plants are going to keep going, and that to me, again, is like that idea—the bigger sense that everything is going to be okay because life is going to continue in some form. Even though maybe humans won't continue or we will continue in some other form, they are us and we are them. There's something that's going to keep going. For me, that helps me have some broader perspective about—about the world.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That's beautiful. I feel the same way in that—I guess sometimes what I think about is how do people have hope who aren't connected to the plants, or even the living world around them—because I think that is what brings me so much comfort everyday. I walk a lot. Sometimes I nestle next to pine trees, and sometimes I'm just out there walking. I feel that is my mental health wellness, and that is my sanity, and that is my—my bigger picture. My hope is out there in the forest. It's hard to imagine what people do without that.

Liz Neves:

I honestly don't know which is why I try my best to introduce people to it as much as I can because it is such a healing balm.

And I'm wondering—how do you nestle up to pine trees without getting sap on your clothing?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

So, I am a double Virgo, and in that, I'll just specify I really do like to be clean. I'm not the herbalist out there that's super dirty and doesn't care. I also wear very pretty nice clothing, as well. I did a thorough check of the pine tree before I sat next to it or in that little thing. I've sat there many times before, but the ponderosa pine bark is very thick, and there's many, many layers. It usually doesn't really ooze unless it's been wounded. Another favorite tree of mine is also a pine. It's right on the side of the road, which in the wintertime I can still get to it because there's huge snowbanks everywhere, so it's difficult to get to all the trees I want to. In the wintertime, I can still get to the street. I call it my "gratitude tree" because I stop there everyday on my walk and do gratitudes, kind of like a joy—like fill myself up with joy and do gratitudes with this particular tree. That tree, because it's right on the road, the snow pile will hit it, and so it's very scarred. It has a lot of sap coming over it—out of it, which I always apologize for that for the tree, and tell the tree how strong it is that's withstanding this massive snowplow coming at it. But it is fun to play with the sap and everything; the resin that's coming out of that. That tree—I hug that tree a lot and I have to be very careful about the hugs.

Liz Neves:

Love it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

In the winter—it's super cold in the wintertime. It doesn't matter, but it was just two days ago, I've really needed a big hug from that tree, but I was like, "Okay. Where do I—okay."

Liz Neves:

It's an awkward hug.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, it's an awkward hug trying to figure it out, but we figured it out in the end.

Liz Neves:

But I love that because it really creates a sense of deeper awareness of your body and the relationship with the tree, and also, you have—I think a lot of us, we have specific trees for specific purposes in our life that we go to and ask. Ask whatever or pray, or whatever we do to connect with that tree. They—again, they give us so much. They're like-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

They really do.

Liz Neves:

Without even having to ingest them or anything, they give us everything. All the answers are there.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Yeah, yeah, and you have done such a beautiful sharing of that today. Thank you so much for illustrating that. It was really beautiful to see how your mind works and the associations you make with that, and just all the wisdom that you've kind of translated from trees to us. Thank you so much. It's been absolutely delightful to hang out with you.

Liz Neves:

Same, Rosalee. It was really great.

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 students. This week's Student Spotlight is on Shannon Pearson in California. Shannon is a student in the Herbal Energetics Course and the Healing Power of Teas where her reflections are thoughtful, nourishing, and beautifully written. With a background in biology, nutrition, science, and outdoor education, she brings both science and soul to her herbal studies. Shannon's journey with marshmallow and *Mallow neglecta* has been especially powerful. She describes making cold infusions almost daily and feeling the soothing, moistening qualities spread through her body like a sigh of relief. "It's the same feeling," she writes, "as when a loved one brushes my hair or when I float on my back in cool water." Her daughter also joined in the fun, enjoying homemade marshmallow treats made from one of her favorite tea roots.

To honor her contributions, Mountain Rose Herbs is sending Shannon 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.

Okay. You've made it to the end of the show which means you get a gold star and this herbal tidbit. For today's herbal tidbit, I have a poem for you by Mary Oliver. It's called, *Five A.M. in the Pinewoods*:

I'd seen
their hoofprints in the deep
needles and knew
they ended the long night

under the pines, walking
like two mute
and beautiful women toward
the deeper woods, so I

got up in the dark and
went there. They came
slowly down the hill
and looked at me sitting under

the blue trees, shyly
they stepped
closer and stared
from under their thick lashes and even

nibbled some damp
tassels of weeds. This
is not a poem about a dream,
though it could be.

This is a poem about the world
that is ours, or could be.
Finally
one of them—I swear it!—

would have come to my arms.
But the other
stamped sharp hoof in the
pine needles like

the tap of sanity,
and they went off together through
the trees. When I woke
I was alone,

I was thinking:
so this is how you swim inward,
so this is how you flow outward,
so this is how you pray.

Thank you so much for joining me on this episode. I'll see you in the next one.