

Karen Burr:

That's the beauty of rabbit tobacco because for me, it is the most magical plant that I have ever seen to help to support mucous membranes throughout the body. It's just a plant with so many sides to it. It's literally like what can't you do with rabbit tobacco, the plant that literally saved my life? So, I try to tell everybody about it. Everybody needs rabbit tobacco.

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.

What if one of the most helpful herbs for the lungs is one you've never heard of? Rabbit tobacco has a long history of being used for things like bronchitis, lingering coughs, and supporting recovery after serious respiratory illness, yet I rarely hear it being talked about in modern herbal spaces.

In this episode, I'm joined by Karen Burr to share how this humble plant has earned a reputation for showing up when the lungs really need support, and why so many people who work with it end up wondering, "Why isn't this more widely known?" By the end of this conversation, you'll have a much clearer sense of when to reach for rabbit tobacco and why it might become one of those herbs that you don't want to be without.

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.

Karen, welcome to the show.

Karen Burr:

Hello!

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Hello! I've been so looking forward to this. I'm excited to hear your story. I'm excited to hear about your plant. So super excited to just dive into everything and let's begin, as we always do, with hearing how the plants have called you onto this path.

Karen Burr:

Well, it's interesting. I started out as a licensed esthetician and I felt like I was nothing more than a pimp for a skincare industry. I wasn't really helping anybody. [crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Tell me how you really felt, Karen.

Karen Burr:

Exactly! People just wanted me to sell their products when people were coming to me with some pretty serious skin conditions.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting.

Karen Burr:

I just knew that that was never going to be the route that I wanted. So, I left—I didn't leave. I went to the Institute for Integrative Nutrition, and became a more holistic health practitioner, and got really into environmental medicine. Back then, it was when we didn't really have regenerative farming yet. It was more conventional farming and factory farming – conventional factory or organic. After I graduated, I started going to all the local farmers markets and stalking every local farmer I could find saying, "I'm this new grad. I want to teach everybody about the way that food should be!" That was amazing. It really helped to solidify "To know your food, know your farmer." Did that for about ten years, helping people in my treatment room, learning more about environmental medicine and how to—how to really look at food from—from the grassroots, from the way food should be raised whether it was animal protein or the plants.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And so you were mainly working as a nutritionist then? Is that—like that kind of thing?

Karen Burr:

Not like a dietitian, but more in the holistic realm. I just knew that I wanted something different. I wanted something deeper. That's where I found the Chestnut School of Herbal

Medicine with Juliet Blankespoor, and that was my very first introduction into herbal medicine. Oh, my gosh, that was nine years ago! Now, like every herbalist, it just becomes an addiction. That's why I love The Herbalist Hour. It's my—I always tell Mason it's my favorite show because I've met so many amazing herbalists and I've even studied with some of them that I would have never known about if he didn't create that. That's where I got called to it, and then I just haven't stopped. Now, everything from folk medicine to Southern folk medicine, to medical botany.

Studied with Sam Thayer for four years, going up and doing wild food education, and so—and then clinical herbalism. All of it, it's just as you know, it's the best kind of addiction. [crosstalk] In my apothecary, I have a wild food bar. When you walk in, it looks like a cute little coffee and tea shop. I always tell people, “Welcome in. We're going to feed you weeds today. What would you like?”

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that.

Karen Burr:

And before every appointment, they're like, “What? You're going to feed me weeds?” “Yep.” Everything is seasonal. The way that I practice herbalism is more like “Your food is medicine,” which is where your—your book—I use *Wild Remedies* when I'm teaching.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Aw.

Karen Burr:

Well, I do. That book is the only book that I've been able to find that is so perfect for a beginner because it teaches food. How do you utilize these precious plants as nutrition? How do you use them as medicine, and how do you use them topically? Whenever I teach at conferences, I carry it with me. I just carry it with me. I'm like, “This is the best book for beginners because you learn several different modalities of ways to use these plants.” I sent an email years ago, thanking you guys for writing it because it's just such a help when people want to know where to start. “What's the best book, how can I start?” That was amazing. That's how I got into it through working with skin conditions, and just not liking the

superficial business side of that and not what actually, truly, truly gets to the bottom to help people, and through plant medicine and through understanding soil science. I don't know about you, but I feel like I've learned more about the human body and plants through studying how plants grow and soil science.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Will you say a little bit more about that?

Karen Burr:

Yeah, you know when you're—when you're studying the soil biology, that soil microbiome, and then you look at the microbiome of a human that has the most amazing—they're both ecosystems. They're both ecosystems. When I get people in the apothecary who have just lived that very standard American way, standard American diet, food comes from grocery stores or food-like products from fast food, and then they have such high stress in their life. They're not sleeping well. They're full of anxiety. They're on five to ten different pharmaceuticals, and something just clicks where they're like, "I need to do something different." So where do they—we're going to always show up last—the herbalists, right? You're like, "But it's traditional medicine! Why didn't you start here?"

It's just really powerful when you can explain to somebody, especially if they're a gardener. If they—I always ask, "So, do you grow anything? Are you a gardener?" because if they are, then they already understand that if they don't have healthy soil, they're not going to produce healthy plants. When you can get them to think about themselves that way, it's just—it's like a light bulb goes off. It's amazing to understand the ecosystem of healthy soil and the ecosystem of the human body and how you can work with that, and then keystone species. I love working with keystone species of bacteria. You can ferment them.

When I was with—I was with Emilie and Karin at the conference.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Just so everyone knows, these are team members of Herbs with Rosalee, Karin Rose and Emilie Thomas-Anderson.

Karen Burr:

Yes, and they were so much fun. We were all at this conference and they needed a ride. I'm like, "Hop in my car," and we're just driving around and start geeking out about plants. I was like, "Have you girls ever worked with keystone species of bacteria?" They're like, "What is that?" I'm like, a keystone species is the mother of a probiotic, of a beneficial bacteria within us that is easily killed off with antibiotics, steroids, foods rich in glyphosate because it's a large antibiotic. When those keystone species are killed off, you have to be able to restore them for others. Let's just take *Lactobacillus reuteri*, very common. Without that one, it's in control of 50 different mechanisms in the body! But you can ferment those with herbs.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting!

Karen Burr:

It is. It's very interesting. It helps with skin conditions and so many—mast cell—there are so many different things that you can do when you take these plants and utilize them like you would to build a healthy soil, so that's—when you asked me, "Can you go into that?" I'm like, "Oh, girl. Are you ready?" because-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I am curious about what it looks like just because when you ferment the plants, I can think of tea fermentations or a fermentation like a sauerkraut or a vinegar or a kombucha. There are all these different ways, so when you say "fermentation of an herb," with a particular species—keystone species? What does that look like?

Karen Burr:

The same way. We just—we just went out yesterday digging up Japanese knotweed. I love to take the knotweed shoots. I love to pickle them and all the fun things, but they're really fun when you can take a strain of *Lactobacillus reuteri* or *Lactobacillus gasseri* or—for the normal average human who doesn't have a lot of high histamine in their body, and those two strains, you can use that as your starter to ferment them. See what I mean? And you're not getting just a normal *lactobacillus* ferment. You're actually getting these keystone species. If you have someone who has a lot of high histamine and mast cell issues, which is rampant with the environment that we live in, at least, in the Midwest. I'm not quite sure how it is out where you are. It's interesting because then you can take a *Lactobacillus plantarum* strain with a *B.*

infantis, *Bifido infantis*, and then you can ferment those with something like Japanese knotweed that's so high in resveratrol, in all of those anti-inflammatory antioxidants. Can you even think about anything more powerful as something [crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It sounds amazing.

Karen Burr:

Exactly! So, it's just really breaking down, really nerding out with instead of doing a normal ferment, which is still a *Lactobacillus*, which is great, but instead of doing a normal ferment with our herbs, you can ferment these amazing medicinal herbs with keystone species of bacteria, which has nothing to do with rabbit tobacco, but you got me in the "how do you really restore an inner ecosystem" and that's the way that I've really been geeking out about. When people come in and they talk about how a lot of their health problems are starting to subside because you're restoring them. You're restoring that inner ecosystem. It's just a really cool thing to experiment with, and to watch and to grow, and learn from every person you do it with.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It sounds fascinating. I'm glad we took this little tangent because I can see you being lit up by it and it's not something you hear talked about everyday, so thank you for going down that lane.

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'd love to hear just a little bit about your apothecary. I know when I first met you at IHS, if I remember correctly, Mason was there and he had told me about you previously because you've done some work with him. He had told me that you play his podcast, the HerbRally,

Herbalist Hour in your apothecary, which sounded so cool. What is your apothecary like? Where is it located? That sort of thing.

Karen Burr:

I'm in a suburb of Indianapolis, Greenwood, Indiana. I love where I'm located because I'm right off of a major interstate throughout the State of Indiana. People who come into my apothecary aren't always necessarily right in the Indianapolis area. I've been very blessed to speak at conferences around the state talking about wild foods and plant medicine. I work with so many people from all around the state because I'm right in the center, so it's so easy to get to. That's such a blessing.

I've been in the same space for nine years, and last year—no, it's been two years I think. I can't remember. I finally, after studying wild foods with Sam Thayer up in Wisconsin every year, I was like, "You know what? It's time to open up a wild food bar." And so, that has been so amazing, and then just having people come in and asking for just different types of therapies—seasonal wild food therapies. During the winter months, I always teach a broth medicine class and how to incorporate tree barks and leaves and roots, and working with local regenerative farmers where I know that the animals have never been vaccinated, and I know that they are 100% pastured, so that way we are able to get organ meats. We are able to get bones and frames. And I teach how to use a variety—and I use rabbit tobacco in these—but how to use a variety of different animal—animal frames because you get a different collagen from each animal, whether it's marine collagen, even egg shells for vegetarians and vegans, and then being able—you're making pretty much like a decoction. I will add rabbit tobacco into a lot of my winter medicinal broth therapies because you have what I call the "ines" – the glucosamine, the glycines. There's like 15 ines. I can't ever remember them all. By the time you've added that real collagen, not the powdered stuff, new—that real collagen therapy with all of the "ine" therapies, and then all of those different medicinal herbs and you switch them up every week, that's a therapy for people. It's one of my favorite things to do in the winter and when someone is battling with any type of mucous membrane infection, whether it's Crohn's disease or IBS or respiratory, ear, nose and throat, all of the things, that's the beauty of rabbit tobacco because it's one of the most—well, for me, it is *the* most magical plant that I've ever seen to help to support mucous membranes throughout the body. You can throw that into a broth therapy in the winter time. Now, we're going into juice season, so now I'll be doing wild juices all season.

It's just so awesome to be able to walk into an apothecary and say, "What can I get you today? Would you like a tree bark chai? Would you like several different herbal smoothie blends? Would you like a different—a hot cocoa made with raw cacao infused with all different herbs?" Everything is foraged. It just brings that awareness to people because it's set up like a normal coffee shop, that we make herbal infused nut and seed milks, and then put herbs in all of our coffee blends, herbs in all of our—we mill our own grains. We work with ancient grains and sourdough. Sourdough, ancient grains, and then are always filling them with different herbs all the time. There's always something going on all the time at the apothecary, but to walk in to see your herbalist and to be able to be handed something that is both a food item and a coffee or a tea or, like I said a tree bark chai or something like that. It gives them—it opens our eyes. It plants a seed and makes them think differently. "You mean I can eat this? I can drink this?" and like, yeah, and you should be. "Come on in. We're going to have a two-hour appointment and I'm going to have you eating weeds in three weeks."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love this! It makes—I want to walk through those doors and get handed a tree bark chai, for sure.

Karen Burr:

Yeah, it's really cute.

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.

You've already been mentioning our plant for today, so thanks for keeping us on track with that, Karen. You've chosen rabbit tobacco, which is a plant I'm not super familiar with, so I'm excited to hear from you about it. I'm always curious, why did you choose this particular plant?

Karen Burr:

Nine years ago, I was foraging in Southern Indiana in the early spring. It was May 28th, I'll never forget the day. I stepped—I was so ignorant. Oh, I just didn't know yet that that was prime deer tick season. And so, I had stepped into a deer tick nest and I was covered in them. The thought even crossed my mind. I was like, "I'm from Southern Indiana. My mom picked ticks off of me all the time as a kid. I've had so many tick bites. I've always been fine." Well, I wasn't this time. My symptoms showed up two months later and I ended up with chronic Lyme, and for about four years, I battled chronic joint pain, flu-like symptoms, fevers, the whole scare of, "What is wrong with me? Why do I feel like I'm literally dying? I have some rare, odd disease?" And I knew what it was. I knew the minute that it started because I had already taken so many courses on Lyme disease through herbalism and I was like, "Here we go! I've got it!" I called a friend of mine who is an integrative medical specialist. I said, "Hey, I was bit by over 30 deer tick. My immune system went down just a smidge, like a summer cold, and boom! It got me." He was like, "Oh, you absolutely have it." He said, "I don't want you to do anything. Don't do doxy. Don't do anything. It's already too embedded in your system and we don't want to weaken you." I said, "That's good because I wasn't going to do that anyway."

Wild food is what really put me into remission, and that's why I'm so passionate about it. It's been three years ago now, I started to develop reactive airways. When the temperatures would drop in Indiana and we would start to get colder weather, I would develop this (makes coughing sound) annoying little cough. Not a big deal. I was like, "What is going on?" Some respiratory therapist clients of mine were like, "Oh, yeah, you're starting to get reactive airways when the weather drops. That's a form of asthma." I was like, "What? I've never had asthma in my life!" Well, it got me. I started having severe, acute asthma attacks. They were so severe that I just knew that I wasn't going to make it. I was like "I'm going to die this way. This is so bad." My poor husband, poor Brian—we're learning how to navigate this together. I called my integrative doctor friend. I was like, "You know, I don't have a doctor. I'm having asthma attacks and I have to speak at a conference in front of a thousand people in four days."

I don't know what to do," and this is where I welcomed the Western medicine. He's like, "You're not going to like this, but I'm putting you on prednisone and I'm putting you on an inhaler." I was like, "Bring it on!" When your symptoms are that bad, that's when you need Western medicine. You need that heroic medicine to save you.

So, I got through it. I got through it. I had a great pulmonologist who knew exactly what I did. He knew it and he said, "Karen, I'm supposed to tell you that"—well, we knew that the Lyme had caused it. We were able to use some labs to see such high infection in my body that was causing it. We knew exactly what it was. He was like, "You know, I'm supposed to tell you that you're going to have to stay on these medications for probably the rest of your life." I was like, "You know that that's not going to happen. I'm not going to do this because they suppress your immune system, and people don't heal this way."

I had already heard about rabbit tobacco through Phyllis Light and through Matthew Wood. It was in some classes that I took with them, and so I went back through a lot of my notes, and I was like, "Rabbit tobacco—I need to learn more about this plant." So, through studying through Phyllis, which is one of my favorite herbalists—I love Phyllis Light. Through learning about rabbit tobacco through her and then studying folk medicine with Daryl Patton, that was amazing to be able to learn more of what is going on with that plant, so I was like I have to find it because it doesn't grow where—I have found it twice in the State of Indiana. It was—when I found it, it was like that magical moment where you're like, "You've got to be kidding me. I can't believe you're right in front of me." It was one patch of it so you know it wanted me to find it! It was just one patch right there! It was like the plant was just saying, "I'm here. You're going to be okay."

I had called down to Alabama to an herbalist and had it sent to me. I started nebulizing it. I started making herbal teas out of it, started putting it in my food and my broths. I would nebulize—I'm not kidding, like five times an hour. I would walk around with that nebulizer on because I was like, "I'm going to heal my lungs with this plant," because—the amazing chemistry when I was doing a lot of research on this plant. They were—the University of Kentucky med school—they were using that plant to help people with COVID lung because it goes into—when you're nebulizing it and you're doing that topical treatment with it, they were showing where people who had had COVID had nicks in the epithelial tissue of their lungs. They used rabbit tobacco to seal and heal because it thickens thinning tissues. How

beautiful is that? At my apothecary, we do breathing treatments all the time, and the base of every—I switch them up. I gave Emilie a formula, but I switch them up all the time based on what each person needs. You know the typical: dry cough, wet cough, do you have airway constriction, all the things, and then that way when they come in, the base is always going to be rabbit tobacco, but then I will specialize by customizing what they need based on what's going on inside their lungs.

I also use it in vaginal suppositories. It's wonderful because it helps to thicken those thinning tissues. It's great topically. It's a natural anodyne, so it has some pain-relieving. I love it for psoriasis, eczema, acne, any type of inflammation on the skin. It actually has some very—not quite sedative, but as a tea, it's very relaxing. When it's more of a cold—cold to room temperature extraction, it has more of those very relaxing like a cup of lavender and chamomile. Same with the tincture. You can add it to sleep blends in a tincture. But then if you make a hot tea or a hot decoction out of it, it's a diaphoretic. It's just a plant with so many sides to it. It's almost—it's literally like, "What can't you do with rabbit tobacco?"

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I'm getting that.

Karen Burr:

Exactly! I don't—I don't know if it would grow where you are. When we were in South Carolina and I was foraging last October, and I was so excited because it was all along the beaches. It loves sandy soil. It loves to be where like plantain—where the soil is just so distressed and so trampled. It doesn't ever want to be in a prepared garden bed. It doesn't like that. It loves big wide open fields, full sun, and it loves to be dry. It's just the plant that literally saved my life, so I try to tell everybody about it. Everybody needs rabbit tobacco.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

That was a very compelling "This is why I chose this plant."

Karen Burr:

This is why what? Why I chose the plant?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's a very compelling reason why you chose this plant.

Karen Burr:

Yes, absolutely! Here, in Indiana, I'm trying to get everybody to grow it. I'm like, "Come on, man! Everybody, let's grow this plant" because that way—who doesn't need it? Who doesn't get pneumonia or bronchitis or asthma or have any type of mucous membrane infection? There's so much that you can do. It's great in sore throat formulas. You can use it as an eye soak. What can't you do with rabbit tobacco?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

And it is a native plant. Is it at-risk at all? I don't even know.

Karen Burr:

No. Nope, not at all. You'll find fields of it in the South, like everywhere. No, if it were at-risk, I'd be freaking out.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I like that you're ambitious about growing it. You said it would be hard to grow—it likes certain conditions, being neglected a bit, open, the sand, but with some perseverance you can recreate those conditions and it can happen.

Karen Burr:

You sure can. It loves heat, so it loves that dry, arid heat. But yeah, I think everybody should try to grow it. I do. I try to grow everything! I'm like, "Hmm. How can I figure this out? Who cares if it's not my zone? I might be able to make this happen."

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I am—I'm the same way. I will try pretty much everything, at least once or twice. So, let's talk that—you've mentioned your recipe that you've shared with us, the Respiratory Support. It's a nebulizing recipe, so let's talk about that and just how you go about making this and what it's like. People might not be familiar with this type of preparation.

Karen Burr:

Nebulizing? At the apothecary when people call in and they are trying to schedule, they will schedule a breathing treatment. I always ask, "Do you have a nebulizer at home?" and if they

have chronic conditions, I always say, “Look, grab a \$40 nebulizer—it doesn’t have to be expensive, and I will make you breathing treatments and that way you can do them at home.”

Basically, it’s so simple. You’re making a decoction out of the plant. I take just the rabbit tobacco and I make a decoction out of that plant. And then, let’s say I have somebody with bronchitis. If you have bronchitis, you could add in mullein. You could add in mullein. If it’s wet and lots of congestion in there, you can add in sage – add in more of those astringent plants. I love—I love okra. I love okra instead of always just using marshmallow or—here, we have sassafras and these are just so demulcent, but being able to add more of that demulcent chemistry if you’re trying to moisten something up. Rabbit tobacco is always the base, but then you add these other plants in based on their constitution—the conditions you’re working with. But then, I will take my extracts like my *Isatis*, my Chinese woad, I will add that in there. You’re just working with drops. If I feel like we have a lot of bacteria in there, we need to move that lymph, you can have pokeroot. Add some poke extract in there. I love to work with chameleon plant, *Houttuynia cordata*. I love to work with chameleon plant if there is some mast cell, like a lot of high histamine that’s creating something. *Lobelia* always. If there’s bronchial dilation, love lobelia. For me, I was nebulizing a blend of wild cherry bark extract, lobelia, and rabbit tobacco. That’s how I was able to heal myself from having to use medical inhalers. You can use *Grindelia*. You could use so many amazing plants based on what—what you need to add that in. I always make it isotonic, meaning I always add a neti salt to it also, to make it more conditioning to those mucous membranes, so it’s not so harsh when you’re breathing it in.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

What about preservation of this? Because I know if nebulizing, it’s very important to have this—you’re breathing in something sterile, so how long you if make this preparation—how long would you use it before needing a fresh-

Karen Burr:

Three days.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Three days? Not that long, huh?

Karen Burr:

Three days I make them, keep them refrigerated. Three days. I use reverse osmosis water and then I add in my neti salt. In that way—you know, when you’re using reverse osmosis, there’s no mineral in there so the water is able to absorb more minerals from the plants, and so I always use that. I always tell everybody, “If you’re going to make this for yourself, please don’t use tap water.” Do not do that.

I put it in a little [unclear] a little bottle that’s probably maybe 2 ounces and they’re able to use that over and over and over again. I always tell them, “Look, you’re the delivery system. The more you are able to get these herbs down into your tissues, the better that they will work.”

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love the frequency on that because that’s often when we’re dealing with these issues that really need a lot of attention, it’s not a one-time-you’re-done situation, so thanks for bringing that into the picture as well.

Karen Burr:

Absolutely—oh, and nasal rinses. I make a lot of nasal rinses with rabbit tobacco in the little atomizer sprays to get up in that topical, in those sinus cavities. Same thing. It’s like, look, if you have a sinus infection or you have allergies right now, you’ve got—they don’t just use this once a day. This isn’t like Afrin. You need to use this. Let’s get five times an hour in there, so we can start really getting that medicine up into those sinus cavities and absorbing through those mucous membranes. Topical treatments are just so important.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

They absolutely are. You have shared so much about rabbit tobacco. You shared this wonderful recipe, which people can download by looking at the show notes or going to herbswithrosaleepodcast.com. You get all the information in there, directions, everything, so definitely check that out.

Do you have—I feel like you’ve covered so much, but is there anything else you’d like to share about rabbit tobacco?

Karen Burr:

Oh, my gosh. If you have—it's great for menopausal women. People always want—you know how it is. When people aren't necessarily in our world but they're curious, they're, "What herb can you give me for this?" or the whole bioidentical and hormone therapy stuff has become crazy. I'm always trying to tell people, "Listen, it's not just what you put on your face, or it's not—you've got to understand that your tissues are thinning from the inside," and they're supposed to because we are aging. This is very normal. Our tissues are thinning. When you're able to use a plant like that internally and you're drinking it as a tea, you're adding it to juices and smoothies and broths, you're helping to thicken those tissues in the body. It's amazing, and topically, you can pair it with comfrey! You can pair it with all these amazing plants that help to produce that cellular turnover and help to thicken that epithelial tissue.

I guess I would love for everybody to learn about the plant that saved my life. If it doesn't grow in your area, try to grow it anyway. Who knows? What's the worst that's going to happen, it doesn't work? Then you can always—just like anything, you can always find an herbalist that can wildcraft this amazing plant for you in the Southern states where it is prolific. It's all through Tennessee. It's all through—I've not found it in Kentucky, but I'm sure it's there. It's all over Alabama. It's all through South Carolina, the Carolinas. It's just everywhere.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

We could talk about that a bit, Karen. How do you like to harvest it? At what stage? Do you have any harvesting tips or drying tips?

Karen Burr:

It's best to harvest that plant at the end of the summer season when it looks like it's getting ready—it's gone to flower and you think that it looks like it's going to die. That's the—the nickname of the plant is rabbit tobacco, but it's also called "life everlasting" or "pearly everlasting." They call it that because it's still just as vibrant-looking in the dead of winter. It's almost like you walk outside and the conifer tree still looks the same as it did in July.

The best—it's highest in its essential oils and its chemistry in the late summer when it's—after it's gone to seed and gone to flower. That's the best time to cut it. You can harvest it earlier

and bring it in, and tie it up, and let it dry. You can do that. It's medicinal all the time, but it's highest at the end of a summer season.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Is it a strong aromatic then? You said it's high in essential oils.

Karen Burr:

Not really. I think it smells like maple syrup. A lot of people say that to me. When they're nebulizing, they're like, "This smells like maple syrup." I'm like, "Yep, that's the rabbit tobacco." Once you know the smell, you just know it. You know the smell. The flavor is—it's interesting. It has a bitterness, but not like a gentian. I like the flavor of rabbit tobacco. If—you know, what I think it tastes the most is if you make a mugwort tea. It has this similar flavor as mugwort with a hint—the aromatics a hint of maple syrup.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Interesting.

Karen Burr:

It doesn't taste like maple syrup, but it smells like maple syrup.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Good to know, good to know. It seems like you work with it in so many different ways – in the nebulizer, as a tea, as a topical. Have you mentioned it as a tincture?

Karen Burr:

Yeah, you can. You can tincture it. It's not my favorite. I'm not a big tincture person, anyway. Tinctures aren't necessarily my favorite. I get—I like—if I'm going to tincture anything, I'm going to do multi-fractional. I love doing multi-fractional tinctures, and then that way I feel really good about that plant medicine because I know I've used so many different solvents to pull different chemistries out. [crosstalk]

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Can you describe that a bit more Karen? Because there will be people who are going to ask, "What is she talking about?"

Karen Burr:

About what?

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Will you describe that more? Because there's going to be people who want to know. I can already hear it.

Karen Burr:

Oh, multi-fractional? Yeah, it's amazing! Sam Coffman is one of the most amazing teachers about that. Multi-fractional is where you look at the chemistry of the plant and then you look at what solvent should you use at different times, different temperatures. Let's take *lobelia*. Most herbalists have done a lobelia tincture. With lobelia, you always want to use half of an alcohol and half vod—and half apple cider vinegar. That is a form of a multi-fractional tincture.

At the apothecary, I love to use different solvents at different times. Like with marshmallow, if you're going to tincture demulcent plants, you have to do a cold water extract first because they're not alcohol-soluble. You're basically using the alcohol to stabilize it just to—for shelf stability. Learning the difference—multi-fractional is learning the different chemistries of your plants, and then learning what you can use as a solvent to be able to pull out all those different chemistries of your plants, like using red wine to pull polyphenols. If you're using a tannin—a very tannic-rich plant then you're going to—with a plant that's full of polyphenols, you're going to pull those polyphenols out better than you would ever use using a vodka. So, did that answer it? There are so many-

Rosalee de la Forêt:

How would that translate to the topic at hand with the rabbit tobacco?

Karen Burr:

With the rabbit tobacco? Tincturing rabbit tobacco I like to do it more like your—more like a lobelia tincture. I don't use—you're not going to want to use a 150 proof. I just use a regular—regular vodka and mix it with an apple cider vinegar, so then you're using acetic acid with alcohol and you're pulling that together. And then I have a rotary evaporator, so then you can take all of those different tinctures and run them through a rotary evaporator, and then you

get this highly-concentrated plant medicine that you can both—use both topically and internally. With rabbit tobacco, you can take that. You could do that multi-fractional extract and be able to pull that out, powder it through a rotary evaporator because you're evaporating off the menstruum, and then you're left with a highly-concentrated plant—plant medicine, so it's awesome. If people don't ever use multi-fractional ways of extracting and tincturing, you should. It's beautiful, and then you just get—those are the kind of tinctures that I like. I always look at, "Okay, how are these—how are these extracted?" and then, "Darn it! I'm missing so many minerals," or "I'm missing the polyphenols," or "I'm missing all of this stuff," so yeah, I geek out about it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thanks for that description. I love the making it go through the evaporator too, that concentrated—because that's what I often don't like about tinctures. They say that tinctures are concentrated medicine, and sometimes they are depending on the herb you're working with. Reality is you can often get a much higher dosage with a tea than you can with a tincture. It might not be as fun, but taste-wise or whatever, convenience-wise. I like that, I'm definitely one of the higher dosages advocates when appropriate, of course.

Thank you so much for sharing so much about rabbit tobacco. I can see why you love this plant on so many different levels. Now, I'd love to hear—we've already heard a bit about your apothecary. I'd love to hear more. I'd love to hear what projects you have going on right now. Let's dive into all of that.

Karen Burr:

There's so much. It's amazing. I'm actually in the process of looking to move my apothecary. Not because I don't love the building I'm in. I love the building I'm in. I love the owners of the building. They're like family. There's a part of me that's like I just want to stay with them forever, and then the other part is like, okay, because I own—I own and I have four people who work with me, but my husband and I started Indy Holistic Living five years ago. It has grown into over 20,000 people throughout the State of Indiana, and that is—that is almost like a second part-time job. We host events. We work with local farmers, herbalists all through the state. Anybody—practitioners, like all the things. Like, "Where can I get raw goat milk in Johnson County?" It's a community that brings people together that creates a circular economy. That has been one of the biggest things that we do within the State of Indiana, and

it's just this ongoing, growing practice. It's just—it's phenomenal to see a whole state of communities and an entire state come together and support and inspire each other. That has been—that's life-changing.

Being able to help support people throughout the State of Indiana through the apothecary has been awesome, but that's why I need a bigger space. I need a place where I can have the teaching gardens. Inside of my apothecary, I have a naturopathic medical doctor. She's a licensed naturopathic medical doctor. I have an integrative nurse practitioner. We have a craniosacral therapist who specializes in flower essences and stone medicine, and then I have an acupuncturist who wants to be there, and a medical doctor who wants to study, who wants to be integrative. When you're able to help other people find that level of inspiration—and that's what we've done with Indy Holistic Living and the apothecary—it's just spreading this ripple effect, so we definitely need a bigger space. I really want a full-size teaching kitchen because I love to teach wild foods. I love to teach that. That's all happening right now. All those things are going on right now, so it's a good thing that I have a lot of energy.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I was just thinking that, actually.

Karen Burr:

I do, but my husband, Brian, he knows me. Brian loves this life too and so we do all of the stuff together. It's just constantly growing and how can we just keep that momentum of keeping that together? We had a really bad—in the State of Indiana, we had some of the worst cases of flu, influenza A and B, that we've ever seen. I was like, "Okay, we got to do something within these communities where everybody can get out and start helping each other." I was like, "Brian, come on. Let's go over here to this local park." I was showing people different conifer trees and this was January. I was like, "Look, this is a Scotch pine. This is a white pine. This is a cedar," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I was like, "This is what you can do."

I love to tap trees for—I call it "untapped medicine." If you've never gotten into drinking trapped—tapped tree water for medicine, it's life-changing. We had just tapped a bunch of trees. I'm blending them with all these conifers, putting some elderberry juice—not heated, fresh elderberry juice in there—ginger, turmeric, adding all the stuff in there. Some dates for some sweetness, and shoving it in a Vitamix going, "Okay! Everybody can do this. If you have

conifer trees in your yard, in a nearby park, anywhere where you're at, please start making these. We're going to call them 'medicine bombs.'" So, Rosalee, the whole state and all these different counties started making medicine bombs and passing them out to their community members who were sick with this flu. If every state could have their own holistic living community with that amount, over 20,000 people can come together and help each other. Can you imagine? Can you just imagine how it creates such a culture shift? That's it. It creates a culture shift of love and true kindness to be able to support each other like that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

What a beautiful thing. The building of community is just so powerful and just to do it in such real ways that's spreading and building. I can see why you're so enthusiastic about it. Thank goodness you're someone with so much energy to be spearheading something like this.

Karen Burr:

Thank you. At least, for me, I get energized when people call us or send us messages and say, "Thank you for what you did," or "Thank you for helping me," or "Thank you for this." I think we live in a very narcissistic culture. We have social media. We have AI and we don't know what's real. There's so much division. I always tell people, "Turn it all off. Get rid of it!" We have so much beauty and integrity and true love and kindness in our own communities, and that's what we should be focusing on. If we do that, then we create it. We create the culture we want to live in by letting go of all of that.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

I love that, Karen. Wise words right there.

Karen Burr:

It's happening.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Wow, what a wonderful model. I'm so glad that you're here to tell us about it and I have no doubt people are going to want to hear about it more, whether they live in Indiana or nearby, or they're thinking, "Yeah, let's do this in my state." Where can they best find you?

Karen Burr:

Oh, gosh. I'm terrible on Facebook. I'm horrible with emails, but I have my website, which I think I gave it to Emilie. It's Materia Medica Restorative Herbalism Center. I'm very active on that, and then IndyHolisticLiving.com, and then through Materia Medica Restorative Herbalism Center Instagram—I'm very active on Instagram.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Okay, great. We'll get all those links in the show notes as well, but folks know she's out there. Go find her.

Before you go, Karen, I have one last question for you, and that's, why do you think herbs are especially good at teaching us humans right now?

Karen Burr:

I think that they are good—well, they're not even good, I think they *are* teaching us how to literally re-wild ourselves. When—when we live in a world that can help to create so much disease, and then when you really truly learn how these plants restore you—look at how they restore the earth! You can walk into a field that has been obliterated with—it's been ripped up. It's had GMO, chemicals all over it. There's been construction—all the things. And you go back a year later, what do you see? Clover, huge nitrogen fixer. When you think about what these “weeds”—you see clover, dandelions, different grasses, plantain. You got all of these poke. Poke is always popping up in disturbed soils. When you see these amazing plants and what they are doing to restore that living soil, they do the same thing in us.

If we can just get people to understand that those plants are there to restore us—they're not a drug. They're not going to “treat disease”. They're restorative, so that's my biggest thing. That's why I call it the Restorative Herbalism Center—is that's what they do and that's the biggest message. That's the biggest takeaway: don't look at these herbs as take-this-for-that. They don't work that way. They're never going to work that way. How do I eat dandelion leaves everyday for two weeks and then see how I feel, and see if I'm still retaining water and if I'm swollen? Just learning how to work with nature and let it restore you. That's it.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

It's so beautiful, Karen. I love that sentiment, so beautifully explained. This whole time with you has just been very enlivening. You just have, again, so much energy, so much enthusiasm

doing such really amazing projects too that I just find to be super inspiring. Thank you for sharing about it all. I have a new appreciation for rabbit tobacco too, so I appreciate that as well. Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your obvious love and your own kindness and generosity with us as well.

Karen Burr:

Thank you for having me on. That was—this has been so fun. To be somebody who’s always—who’s never known you and I got to meet you once, but someone who’s always said, “Here, this is Rosalee and you need her books!”

Rosalee de la Forêt:

You are so kind. Thank you, Karen. It’s been truly just so much fun to get to know you. I just really appreciated it, so thank you very much.

Karen Burr:

Awesome. Anytime. Thank you.

Rosalee de la Forêt:

Thank you 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 in one way or another, 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 fabulous, incredible, amazing, awesome herbal students. This week’s Student Spotlight is on Laura Calliet in Alaska. Laura lives surrounded by the boreal forest where she wild forages, gardens and continues to deepen her relationship with the plants around her. With roots in the Sonoran Desert and many years in Alaska, her connection to place is both meaningful and a big part of her herbal journey. She’s been exploring herbs like yarrow growing right outside her door, and ashwagandha which she has incorporated into her daily routine, and her reflections are really thoughtful and intuitive, showing how herbalism can grow from both lived experience and the willingness to trust what we already know.

To honor her contributions, Mountain Rose Herbs is sending Laura a \$50 gift certificate to stock up on their incredible selection of organically and sustainably sourced herbal supplies. Thank you so much, Mountain Rose Herbs, for supporting our amazing students. And if you'd like to deepen your skills as an herbalist, you can check out my foundational courses at herbswithrosalee.com.

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

For your herbal tidbit, I want to share something about rabbit tobacco that I recently learned. Rabbit tobacco is what ecologists sometimes call a “disturbance species.” It's one of the plants that often shows up after fire or in places where the land has been disrupted. It really thrives in these open, exposed, depleted, and sandy soils. I think that's pretty fascinating when we think about how it's been used traditionally because rabbit tobacco is often turned to when the lungs are irritated, inflamed or recovering after an illness, after long bouts of coughing, after the system has really been through something.

Alright, I'm really excited to hear from you on this one. Do you work with rabbit tobacco? I would love to hear your stories in the comments on YouTube. Do you—have you never heard of rabbit tobacco? Is it something you're interested in learning about more? Tell me everything.

As always, thank you so much for being here. I'll see you in the next episode.