Public health worker Beatriz Mendoza was living near the Riachuelo River in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when she started losing feeling in her fingers and toes. Her neighbours were also experiencing health issues — including skin rashes, cancers and birth defects — clearly linked to pollution in the heavily industrialized area. The Matanza-Riachuelo basin is one of the most contaminated waterways in Latin America.

In 2004, Mendoza and other residents sued the national, provincial and municipal governments and 44 corporations. And they won. Environmental lawyer David R. Boyd describes the case in his book, The Right to a Healthy Environment: Revitalizing Canada's Constitution. He writes that the lawsuit led Argentina's government to establish a new river basin authority and put in place clean-up, restoration and regional environmental health plans.

The government has since increased the number of environmental inspectors in the region from three to 250, and created 139 sampling points for monitoring water, air and soil quality. Three new water treatment plants have been built, providing clean water to millions of people; 11 sewage-treatment plants have been built or expanded, also serving millions; 169 garbage dumps have been closed; and 484 polluting industrial facilities have been shut down.

As Boyd writes, “In a country where Nature is an integral element of our national identity, and in an era where scientific evidence establishes our basic dependence on a healthy environment, it is striking that our constitution makes no reference to it.”

As Boyd points out, this was possible because Argentina’s constitution recognizes “the right to a healthy environment and the citizens’ power to defend their rights through the judicial system.”
Red Green would think he’d died and gone to heaven. Until he saw what’s on the activity list.

This summer, Meaghan Labine will be putting her remote fly-in fishing lodge to a whole new kind of use. The U of M doctoral student (pharmacology and therapeutics) will repurpose Birch Lake Lodge – located in the Northern Ontario boreal – as a slice of heaven for folks who’d rather pick an exotic mushroom than duct tape a rusted exhaust pipe.

The lodge will host two 7-day, all-accommodations-paid retreats “immersed in pristine wilderness with modern comforts free from the hustle of city life,” promises Labine.

During the Boreal Medicinal Plant Retreat, July 20 to 27, Hollow Reed Holistic master herbalist Chad Cornell and Ayurvedic counsellor Kalee Mund will lead people on tours of the local flora and teach them the basics, from collection to preparation. “I wanted to combine my love of the bush with my interest in alternative health and put together these retreats to help people reconnect with nature.”

For more info, visit birchlakelodge.com or call Labine at 204-480-8976.

Winnipeg fem-powerment guru Beth Martens has released her first CD in six years. While her last one, The Yoga Lullabies, coincided with the singer and life coach becoming a new mother, this one sets its sights on mothering children of the inner kind.

“While mothering is an amazing journey,” writes Martens on her website, “I have a core desire to fem-power women with a voice … who are taking risks in getting their creative life out there, and who take it upon themselves to have a true voice for the things that matter. On this new recording, The Soul's Voice, I’m singing original music set to ancient, sacred Sanskrit mantras – inspired by eight trips to India. It is to soothe and inspire those brave enough to swim against the current at times to express and live their purpose, and perhaps on behalf of many.”

You can sample Martens’ new (and old) CDs, videos, courses and writings at bethmartens.com or connect with her at facebook.com/bethmartensyoga.

Red Green country

Ontario (a 4.5 hour drive from Winnipeg) and all manner of this-would-make-Red-Green-squirm amenities, from free massage and acupuncture, to yoga by the lake and a wood-fired sauna. Cost of admission: $2225 per retreat with 20 guests maximum “to keep it small enough to give people a chance to interact with the instructors.”

Labine, who moonlights as a student of traditional Chinese Medicine and massage therapy, sums up her vision: “I wanted to combine my love of the bush with my interest in alternative health and put together these retreats to help people reconnect with nature.”

For more info, visit birchlakelodge.com or call Labine at 204-480-8976.

Beth Martens: relaxed and fempowerful.

Birch Lake Lodge: the beauty of a boreal sunset.
I have been eating wild plants since I can remember, taking after my dad, who was always gathering berries for jams and jellies or snacking on various plants while walking through fields and woods. As soon as I had a kitchen of my own, I basked in the luxury of having the space to indulge my passion for wild edibles. I immediately began incorporating the luxury of having the space to indulge my passion for wild edibles. For the most part, they are free, local, organic and have a higher nutrient content than domestic produce. However, I believe the greatest benefits come from the process of gathering them. By simply being outside, we become aware of our surroundings and in tune with nature. While harvesting wild foods, we can’t help but notice how the seasons and weather affect the things we are harvesting. We also notice how different species of plants, insects and animals relate to each other. As we observe where things grow and ask our neighbours if we can have that pigweed growing in their flower bed, we learn more about our local community. By pausing to say good morning to the robin, admire a flower or hunt down the source of a particular scent in the air, our awareness extends far beyond our immediate selves. We feel, if only for a moment, a childlike excitement or an awareness of our primal selves. We feel a connection to the earth. And we find ourselves developing empathy that reaches far beyond the plants we are gathering.

I forage for seasonal and locavore foods, much like people did for thousands of years. For example, when I realized how many local plants contain vitamin C, I suddenly saw the absurdity of buying orange juice that had been shipped all the way from the southern states and beyond. I cut store-bought juices from my diet completely, knowing that I would be forced to learn more about local plants and gather enough of them to get me through the long Manitoba winters. I have a developed a close relationship to the plants I love most, and the connection to the plants that I love most, and the reason why they are an integral part of my life.

So, you’re eager to learn more about wild plants. You want to become less dependent on commercial food supplies, make your own medicines, become more self-sufficient, spend less money or maybe just feel more at home in the wilderness. Cool! I’m with you!

There’s a bounty of food, fibre and medicine just outside your door, and we don’t mean Walmart. There’s gold in them thar dandelions: Laura Reeves, demonstrating the joy of weeds at a Wild Edible Adventure workshop. There’s gold in them thar dandelions: Laura Reeves, demonstrating the joy of weeds at a Wild Edible Adventure workshop.

The Joy of Gathering

There are many benefits to gathering wild edibles. For the most part, they are free, local, organic and have a higher nutrient content than domestic produce. However, I believe the greatest benefits come from the process of gathering them. By simply being outside, we become aware of our surroundings and in tune with nature. While harvesting wild foods, we can’t help but notice how the seasons and weather affect the things we are harvesting. We also notice how different species of plants, insects and animals relate to each other. As we observe where things grow and ask our neighbours if we can have that pigweed growing in their flower bed, we learn more about our local community. By pausing to say good morning to the robin, admire a flower or hunt down the source of a particular scent in the air, our awareness extends far beyond our immediate selves. We feel, if only for a moment, a childlike excitement or an awareness of our primal selves. We feel a connection to the earth. And we find ourselves developing empathy that reaches far beyond the plants we are gathering.

When I prepare food, weave a basket or make a salve from these plants, I continue to feel a connection to nature. And every time I eat this food, or use the basket or salve, I relive the gathering experience. I remember, clearly, the sweet yet medicinal smell of the balsam poplars that thickened the spring air, the cheerful sound of the song sparrow singing its heart out in the tree next to me, the reflection of sun and clouds in a tiny pool of crystal clear water, the shocking coolness of a frog on my foot, the porcupine waddling noisily by and the refreshing flavour of wild mint joyfully plucked from an ephemeral wetland.

I have a developed a close relationship to the plants I gather, whether they are for food, fire, baskets, or medicine. They take care of me, and I take care of them. This connection goes beyond the physical and can only be understood through experience. It is this connection to the plants that I love most, and the reason why they are an integral part of my life.

When I gather wild plants, I feel connected to nature. I feel alive, relaxed and thankful for what I’m harvesting.

Most of the plants we consider noxious or nuisance weeds are not only edible, but tasty and nutritious, offering stiff competition to our domestic garden vegetables. Many are also capable of treating or curing common ills. Stinging nettle, for example, is super rich in calcium, while burdock is well known as a “blood purifier” and is used in herbal cancer remedies. As you start scouting for your own wild gardens, be aware of potential sources of pollution, which may be as obvious as a factory belching out toxins or as subtle as a “blood purifier” and is used in herbal cancer remedies.

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By VESANTO MELINA, MS, RD

While paleolithic diets are the subject of many websites and books, I have yet to meet or hear of anyone who follows anything even close to a real paleo diet. The paleo wannabes who buy grass-fed beef actually buy a product with five times the fat content of the wild game of eons ago. Today’s pseudo paleos buy select cuts and avoid the offal (liver, kidney, brain, intestines, tongue, testicles), bone marrow and stomach contents our ancestors would have consumed.

What’s more, the intake of insects by today’s imitators is nowhere near that of true paleo people, and our ancestors also ate a lot of plant food. In fact, they gathered far more than they hunted.

Real paleos never used sugar or oil. And salt was so scarce that their sodium intake was one sixth of ours. Honey also was rare. And there were no lattes.

The paleolithic period lasted two million years, ending 10,000 years ago when the agricultural cultivation of grains, legumes and other plant foods began. Prior to that, domestic animals were not kept, and meat was nothing like the flesh from today’s grass-fed cows.

After being weaned from the milk of their own species, paleo people did not touch a drop of cow or goat’s milk. Nonetheless, their calcium intake was double that of people today, coming as it did from bones and plant foods.

Paleo people evidently ate plenty, with an intake of about 3,000 calories per day. This was necessary for climbing hills, gathering massive amounts of plant foods, chasing potential prey (with occasional success) and eluding predatory, carnivorous animals.

Two thirds of their calories – at least 2,000 per day – came from plants. The true paleo diet was very high in fruit, leafy greens, roots, other vegetables, nuts and legumes such as peanuts and seeds, all of which was generally consumed raw. Anthropologists estimate that the plant foods consumed by paleos provided as many calories as vegans consume today and exceeded today’s recommended intake for fibre, folate, potassium and many other protective nutrients.

When people switch to today’s pseudo paleo diet, their big advantage is that they eliminate refined carbohydrates (white flour and sugar) and in some cases they cut out oils, though most don’t because they fry meat, chicken and fish. But they do start to eat more whole plant foods, though not nearly as much as their paleo ancestors.

U.S. News & World Report ranked today’s paleo diet as the least healthy of all 25 dietary patterns rated, based on high cholesterol and fat content and intakes of healthful plant foods that fall short in protective nutrients and phytochemicals.

Among other criticisms levelled at the pseudo paleo diet is that it ignores the environmental crisis that should be leading us to eat lower on the food chain and it shows little concern for the plight of grass-fed cattle or “free range” chickens when they reach the slaughterhouse.

Since few people have access to much wild game, from a health perspective it makes sense to replace game with cooked legumes (beans, peas and lentils), fresh green peas and sprouted lentils or mung beans. The legumes are high in protein, low in fat and cholesterol-free.


British Columbia dietitian Vesanto Melina is the co-author of many classics in vegetarian and vegan nutrition, including Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Becoming Raw and The Raw Food Revolution Diet. Visit her at nutrispeak.com, like her at facebook.com/Nutrispeak or consult her at 604-882-6782.

Anthropologists estimate that the plant foods consumed by paleos provided as many calories as vegans consume today.
that the Arctic could be ice-free in the summer for a day or more by the end of the decade.

The implications of such melting are potentially immense. For starters, wildlife like polar bears, seals and walruses depend on sea ice for their survival; their habitat is literally being pulled out from under them. Polar bears were added to the United States Endangered Species List in 2008 for this very reason in what environmentalists herald as a great victory in that the federal government officially recognized the existence of global warming and would therefore be able to take more decisive action to rein in carbon pollution. Of course, that part of the dream has yet to be realized.

Perhaps even more alarming is the fact that melting sea ice and accelerating Arctic warming spur changes in the jet stream that increase the frequency of weather extremes like droughts, floods, heat waves and cold spells in the mid-latitude regions of the Northern Hemisphere. The fact that 2012 has been a scorcher around the world – July was the hottest month on record in the United States, with two-thirds of the country in drought, wildfires running rampant and half of all counties designated as federal disaster areas – only makes the connection between carbon pollution and the greenhouse effect all the more apparent.

Environmentalists argue that we already have the technology and the legal tools to achieve rapid greenhouse pollution reductions. “The polar meltdown shows we’re teetering on the brink of climate-change catastrophe.... We can’t wait any longer to cut carbon pollution.”

By DEVIYANI BORADE

Devil’s Dung. Not exactly the most flattering description for something that is eaten with such relish in parts of the world. Stinking Gum? Not much better. Food for the Gods. Ah, now that’s more like it.

My eyes run down the wiki description on my computer browser:

“Asafoetida (Ferula assafoetida, family Apiaceae) is a species of Ferula native to Iran. It is a herbaceous perennial plant growing to 2 m tall, with stout, hollow, somewhat succulent stems 5-8 cm diameter at the base of the plant. The leaves are 30-40 cm long, tripinnate or even —

All this gobbledygook passes straight over my head like water off a duck’s back. Dazed, I look up from the screen and sniff.

An exciting, pungent aroma wafts from the kitchen. It tickles my nostrils and I take a deeper breath, marvelling at how the English and the Indians can use exactly the same ingredients and yet come up with a distinctly different taste in their respective dishes.

It is the Asafoetida, of course. There is something about this herb that turns the plainest pabulum into a delectable pleasure. Its power lies in the fact that just a few grains blended in at the right time can turn a culinary catastrophe into a gastronomic delight.

My first acquaintance with this herb was at my mother’s knee. I was three and had a rolling tummy ache. My insides felt like a rugby field during the last frenzied minutes of an exciting match. When even being swung to dizzying heights by my Dad failed to take my mind off the pain, Mum already applied a moist cotton bud to my navel and asked me to lie down ramrod-straight on the bed. A heady breath, marvelling at how the English and the Indians can use exactly the same ingredients and yet come up with a distinctly different taste in their respective dishes.

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There is something about this herb that turns the plainest pabulum into a delectable pleasure. A few grains blended in at the right time can turn a culinary catastrophe into a gastronomic delight.

Asafoetida is a potent antidote for flatulence, and in India it is prescribed by Ayurvedic doctors for respiratory conditions like asthma, bronchitis and whooping cough. It is even said to cure “hysteria.” Although supposed to be taken in minute quantities, at times I find myself getting greedy and adding a couple of heaping teaspoonfuls. This doesn’t take

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Positive Thinking
Upsides, downsides … you decide

Positive thinking has come a long way since the Stoics. You’ve got the world by the tail, if you can learn to grin and bear it was the ancient Greeks’ philosophy. Buddha’s was not much different. Life is suffering. Acceptance is the path to freedom.

Then along came Émile Coué. The nineteenth century French psychologist asked his patients to repeat what would become a famous affirmation: “Every day in every way I am getting better and better.” Now that’s positive thinking.

Coué was soon outdone in the 1930s by Dale Carnegie: Every day in every way my positive attitude is winning friends and influencing people was the all-American optimist’s bestselling philosophy.

Finally, thanks to modern New Age thinkers—from “Seth” (“You create your own reality”) to whoever wrote A Course in Miracles, from Louise “Heal Your Life” Hay to Gabriel “The Secret” Byrne – positive thinking has reached escape velocity. And some – like social commentator Barbara Ehrenreich – would say that involves an element of escape from reality.

So would former Aquarian editor Anna Olson whose critique (published here), with a little help from Ehrenreich, sets its sights squarely on “The Secret” franchise. We’ve balanced Anna’s cautionary view with contributions by two New Age positive thinkers: an excerpt from a new Hay House book by Pam Grout and a recent column by Alan Cohen.

Where do you stand (sit, or levitate) on positive thinking? Write us at positive@aquarianonline.com. We’d like to publish your thoughts and stories next time.

The Downside

Compulsive positivity à la Rhonda Byrne (The Secret) is a big fat downer, argues Barbara Ehrenreich (Bright-Sided)

By ANNA OLSON

Rhonda Byrne could be called the “queen of positive thinking,” with sales of The Secret (DVD and book), The Power, and now The Magic reaching into the stratosphere, making Byrne one wealthy woman. The Secret (Simon & Schaster, 2006) started the gravy train rolling. Claiming to have discovered an age-old secret, the law of attraction, it hooked millions with its “yes you can; think positive and the world is yours” mantra.

The law of attraction says that like attracts like. If you think positive thoughts, you’ll attract positive people, abundance and power. Vice versa for negative thoughts.

The Power (Atria Books, 2010) came along to tell us about the power of love. Each page beautifully ornamented, it exudes love and happiness, success and fulfillment, power and glory. Still aligned with the law of attraction, Byrne emphasizes that love is everything, the be all and end all, the alpha and omega, the one emotion (real or forced) that will get you everything you want.

“Without exception, every person who has a great life

Compulsive positivity à la Rhonda Byrne (The Secret) is a big fat downer, argues Barbara Ehrenreich (Bright-Sided)

The Downside

Compulsive positivity à la Rhonda Byrne (The Secret) is a big fat downer, argues Barbara Ehrenreich (Bright-Sided)
Tap Positive Energy, Transform Your Reality

By PAM GROUT

If you’ve read The Secret or been in metaphorical, spiritual circles for any time at all, you already know your thoughts create your reality, that there’s a power in the universe that can heal, and that you and you alone design your own life. Unfortunately, there’s still this tiny little problem, this one itty-bitty catch. You don’t really believe it. Not fully.

Most of us, in fact, are still operating out of the mental architecture of our ancestors. We think we’re running our lives with our brilliant ideas and thoughts. We think we’re affirming our intentions and creating new possibilities, but in reality we’re simply recycling old tapes, knee-jerk conditioning, and automatic behaviors, most of which we picked up before we were five. We’re like Pavlov’s dogs, simply reacting to patterns we picked up before we had the intelligence to wisely choose. Most of the thoughts we assume are our own are really the invisible and largely unquestioned beliefs we downloaded from others. So we pit our positive thoughts against our old, disempowering programming. In other words, our consciousness, that force that always affects physical reality, has been hijacked.

Not long after I graduated from college, landed a job, and was running my own affairs, I noticed some negative thoughts about money dive-bombing for my attention. I found myself worrying, wondering if running out of money was imminent, questioning whether or not I could afford the new bike I wanted or the new computer I needed. One day, during an early-morning jog, I suddenly got it. Those thoughts were exact clones of comments I often heard my mother say when I was growing up. And even though there was no evidence to support any of those fears in my own life, I had downloaded them straight into my consciousness without even being aware of it.

Needless to say, that wasn’t a paradigm that served my highest good. So I decided to rewrite it and rewrite it fast. Consciously changed the paradigm that ran my financial life to: “I can afford anything I want. In fact, I am so prosperous and affluent that I never need worry again.” As an independent financial advisor, I consciously chose to rewrite it fast. So I decided to rewrite it and rewrite it fast. Consciously changed the paradigm that ran my financial life to: “I can afford anything I want. In fact, I am so prosperous and affluent that I never need worry again.” As an independent financial advisor, I consciously chose to rewrite it fast. I consciously chose to rewrite it fast. I consciously chose to rewrite it fast. I consciously chose to rewrite it fast.


From the Heart

By ALAN COHEN

Change Your Frequency

While staying at a hotel, I signed up for wireless Internet service. To my disappointment, the service kept going on and off. A call to tech support did not help much. Finally the technician concluded there must have been some interference near my room. He suggested I change rooms. So at 1 A.M. I packed my gear and trudged to another hotel room. I logged onto the wireless service and found that the reception in this room was no better. Stymied, I scanned for other wireless services in the hotel and found there was another one available. I logged onto it and it worked perfectly. So I didn’t need to change rooms at all. I just needed to change my frequency.

The world we experience is not created by people or situations. It is created by our thoughts.
SUZUKI continued from page 1

It’s a right that people in more than 100 countries worldwide enjoy. Canadians are not among them.

Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms gives us freedom of expression, equal protection from discrimination and the right to life, liberty and security of the person. But one fundamental right is notably absent – to live in an environment conducive to health and well-being, with clean air, water and soil and biological diversity. As Boyd writes, “In a country where Nature is an integral element of our national identity, and in an era where scientific evidence establishes our basic dependence on a healthy environment, it is striking that our constitution makes no reference to it.”

Along with David Boyd and Ecojustice, the David Suzuki Foundation is working to change that. Boyd makes a convincing case for the necessity of such constitutional protection. He points to evidence from more than 100 nations demonstrating that, “constitutional entrenchment of environmental rights and responsibilities contributes to stronger laws, increased enforcement, an enhanced role for citizens, and improved environmental performance.”

Although the idea of a constitutional right to a healthy environment is gaining support, it does have its detractors, including some government and industry insiders in Canada. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers argues such a law would harm our economy, and some government representatives claim it would hinder tar sands and other industrial development. Boyd doesn’t buy it. He notes that constitutional rights must be balanced against competing rights. For example, free speech comes with restrictions against pornography, hate literature, false advertising and so on.

Evidence from countries with environmental rights, such as Norway, also shows the shakiness of the economic argument. “Rather than trumping economic activity,” Boyd writes, “the right to a healthy environment would compel, or at least increase the likelihood of, sustainable development.”

And, even though there is still much to be done in Argentina’s Matanza-Riachuelo River Basin, people there are already enjoying significantly improved living conditions, including a stronger local economy. Getting the right to a healthy environment enshrined in Canada’s Constitution won’t be easy. We’re headed in the opposite direction, with environmental protections and laws being rolled back or gutted, mostly in the name of keeping us tied to a resource-extraction economy. And despite our country’s abundant water, many people, especially in First Nations communities, don’t have access to clean drinking water.

It’s time to address Canada’s dismal and worsening environmental record. If all of us work together, we can make it happen.

Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation Communications Manager Ian Hanington. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org.
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what they say or do, they will likely spin out of mind. I got really worked up over this picture in my mind. I needed a fresh perspective, a new energetic wiring and negative thoughts I’d downloaded from my past. Clearly, I needed a new energetic imprint. We can develop a conscious relationship with energy. And since energy is all there is (even matter, said quantum physicist David Bohm, is nothing but “frozen light”), we can transform and parlay it into anything our heart desires – whether it be peace of mind, money, or a more rewarding career.

Take me, for example. A few years ago, I decided to spend a month in Australia. A chiropractor I had a huge crush on had just taken a job there and the author of many inspirational and travel books.

Pam Grout is a blogger for The Huffington Post and the author of many inspirational and travel books.

COHEN continued from page 7

Dr. Michael Ryce offers a workshop called, “Why is this Happening to me Again?” He cites this example: “You fly away from New York to get away from a relationship that isn’t working, and the person who meets you at the airport in Los Angeles finishes the sentence that the person you left in New York started.”

The world we experience is not created by people or situations. It is created by our thoughts. The most powerful place to start changing the world is in your mind. If you try to change your world without first changing your mind, the world will not change. When you change your mind, everything changes. Holiday seasons often bring up lots of juicy material for spiritual growth. You might face family and social gatherings with people who annoy, insult or drive you crazy. While you may attempt to avoid such situations, if you find yourself in a position where you have to attend, you can seize the moment to practice vertical rather than horizontal movement.

To illustrate: A woman called into my radio show Get Real on Hay House Radio (www.hayhouseradio.com) and reported that she had to go to a weekend family meeting with members who bug her. I suggested, “Before the weekend, sit quietly for a few minutes and make up your mind that your only goal for the weekend is inner peace. No matter what anyone says or does, you will stay centered in your calm inner space. Completely withdraw any power you have given your relatives to make you unhappy.” That might be a good practice for all of us to adopt. If you can hold your inner peace in the presence of someone who has regularly irked you, you earn your spiritual graduation diploma. Consider yourself in a seminar called, “The Power of Radical Contentment.” To learn about Alan’s programs, books and free daily email of inspirational quotes, visit www.alancohen.com, email info@alancohen.com, or phone (800) 568-3079 or (808) 572-0001.

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used love to achieve it. The power to have all the positive and good things in life is love!” Byrne’s definition of a great life is having “power over your health, your wealth, your career, your relationships, and every area of your life.”

It all starts with imagination, Byrne says. “History has proven that those who dare to imagine the impossible are the ones who break all human limitations.” She says what we desire and “never deviate from that state of being.”

Now we are graced with The Magic (Atria Books, 2012), Byrne has rewritten a passage from the Gospel of Matthew to include gratitude.

“Whoever has gratitude will be given more, and he or she will have an abundance. Whoever does not have gratitude, even what he or she has will be taken from him or her.”

What sets The Magic apart from The Secret and The Power, is the inclusion of 28 days of exercises to get you going on the road to success. You’ll learn to be grateful for what you have now and in the past (12 days), for what you want in the future (10 days), and for your ability to help others, dissolve problems and improve any negative situation (6 days).

If you are a business owner, take note that the value of your business will increase or decrease according to your gratitude. According to Byrne, “It is when business owners stop being grateful and replace gratitude with worry that their business spirals downward.”

Fantasize or analyze – or both
You can read the gospel according to Rhonda Byrne in two ways. The first way is to pretend the books are fairy tales. Float through the words, letting images spark your imagination or highlight a problem area in your life. Does anything inspire you? Anything you feel like trying? How can you give and receive more love? Can you increase your attitude of gratitude?

The second way is to take a critical look at Byrne’s concepts – and at Byrne herself.

Kathlyn and Gay Hendricks, two experts who were originally part of Byrne herself.

look at Byrne’s concepts – and at look at Byrne’s concepts – and at

Bright-Sided says positive thinking not so bright

In Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America (Picador, 2009), we learn that respected intellectual Barbara Ehrenreich, an author with 21 books to her credit, had a jarringly personal introduction to the world of positive thinking. During a routine check-up, her doctor found a lump in her breast that proved to be malignant. Ehrenreich descended into a maelstrom of panic, confusion and painful medical procedures.

Not trusting alternative medicine, she surrendered to the mainstream modalities of surgery, chemotherapy and radiation.

To her surprise, Ehrenreich found that “not everyone views the disease with horror and dread.” Instead, positive thinking and acquiring the pink-ribboned accessories were de rigueur. She noted that there was very little anger, no discussion of possible environmental causes and no criticism of environmental causes and no criticism.

The housing bubble that crashed the global economy was inflated by the power of attraction. The Secret (one source suggests $300,000,000 in sales in the first nine months). Although Herriot lost his court case, Hollings settled out of court.

It’s a puzzle: Byrne has refused media requests for interviews about The Power and The Magic. Could it be she doesn’t want to deal with questions about The Secret lawsuits?

Nor has Byrne commented on these lawsuits – at least nothing I’ve been able to find. But in The Power, she claims: “If you feel you have done something that wasn’t right, understand that your realization and acceptance of it is absolution for the law of attraction.” Some would argue that apologizing and making amends would be a more sincere way of redressing a wrong.

Also problematic is that Byrne appears to be using the law of attraction to encourage consumerism. Her emphasis is on having everything you want, rather than focusing on character development or learning to live simply. In The Power, she maintains “there is no lack anywhere in the universe.” Those who worry about vanishing species or diminishing resources are worrying needlessly, according to Byrne, “Quantum physics tell [sic] us there are infinite planet Earths and infinite universes that exist, and we move from one reality of planet Earth and a universe to another, every fraction of a second. This is the real world emerging through science.” This dubious take on quantum physics is Byrne’s proof we can consume all we want.

“Positive thinking seems to be mandatory in the breast cancer world,” Ehrenreich notes, “to the point that unhappiness requires a kind of apology.”

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Killing the Ocean with CO₂

Dear EarthTalk: I was horrified to read recently that our oceans are actually becoming acidic, that the continued burning of fossil fuels is changing the chemistry of our seas. What's going on?

– Kim Richardson, San Diego, CA

It’s a known fact that our oceans are becoming more acidic as a result of the increasingly large load of human-generated carbon dioxide (CO₂) entering our atmosphere. About 25 percent of all the CO₂ we send skyward out of our tailpipes and smokestacks ends up in the world’s oceans where it triggers chemical reactions in the water column that lead to increased acidification.

Researchers estimate that the acidity of our seas has increased 29 percent since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. If we do not slow down the pace of greenhouse gas emissions, our oceans could be two to three times as acidic in 2100 as they already are today, which could prove disastrous to marine ecosystems and the world’s food chain.

“When carbon dioxide is absorbed by seawater, chemical reactions occur that reduce seawater pH, carbonate ion concentration and saturation states of biologically important calcium carbonate minerals,” reports the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). These calcium carbonate minerals, typically abundant in areas where most marine life congregates, are the building blocks for the skeletons and shells of many marine organisms, from oysters to coral. “However, continued ocean acidification is causing many parts of the ocean to become undersaturated with these minerals, which is likely to affect the ability of some organisms to produce and maintain their shells,” adds NOAA.

The process will not only wreak havoc on the shrimp that we eat, but also on smaller marine organisms that are key components on the lower end of the marine food chain.

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), a leading American environmental organization, coral reefs around the world may face an even greater risk than shellfish because they require very high levels of carbonate to build their skeletons. “Acidity slows reef-building, which could lower the resiliency of corals and lead to their erosion and eventual extinction,” NRDC writes. This would be an unmitigated environmental disaster, given that an estimated one million marine species depend on healthy coral reefs for survival.

“Such losses would reverberate throughout the marine environment and have profound social impacts, as well – especially on the fishing and tourism industries,” NRDC reports. “The loss of coral reefs would also reduce the protection that they offer coastal communities against storms surges and hurricanes . . .”

Any large-scale effort to address ocean acidification will require the slowing down or phasing out of fossil fuels. We can all help by driving less and walking/biking more; upgrading our vehicles, light bulbs and appliances to more energy efficient versions; patronizing companies that work to reduce their carbon footprints; and pushing our governments to enact binding reductions in CO₂ pollution.

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Asafoetida in Action

Cauliflower Potato Curry

(Serves 2)

This tasty vegetarian dish is popular in many an Indian household. Not too hot or pungent, it will appeal to all palates.

**Ingredients**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (or any cooking oil)
- 1 teaspoon hing (asafoetida powder)
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds (or black mustard seeds)
- 1 onion, diced
- ¼ teaspoon red chilli powder
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- ¾ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
- 1 tomato, diced
- 2 potatoes, chopped small
- ½ cauliflower, chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped leaves of fresh coriander

**SECRET SAUCE** continued from page 5

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and add the hing and cumin seeds until the mixture sizzles and turns darker. On as high a flame as possible, fry the onion until golden brown.

Reduce the flame to medium and add the tomato, potatoes and cauliflower. Mix well and cover the skillet. Leave for 10-15 minutes until the potato and cauliflower have become tender. (Test by gently cutting through a piece with a wooden ladle.)

Add the turmeric, then the salt and finally the chilli powder and mix well. Stir in ¼ cup of water to keep the curry from getting dry. On low flame, cover and leave to cook for another 10 minutes to let the spices soak into the vegetables.

Garnish with chopped, fresh coriander leaves and serve hot with Naan, Indian Chapatti bread or white rice.

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heading “Angry.” In it, she complained about the debilitating effects of chemotherapy, recalibrant insurance companies, environmental carcinogens and the “sappy pink ribbons.” She received “mostly a chorus of rebukes.”

Trust Ehrenreich not to swallow this positivity pressure without fighting back. She threw herself into learning the history and ramifications of what she calls the “virus” of positive thinking. The result is an eye-opening treatise that will leave the reader in awe of the damage its believers can do. But if the principles are used for selfish reasons or to manipulate others, damage can occur, lives can be hurt. I agree with Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks about the “upper limit problem” pulling us down when we attempt to force our thoughts to be strictly positive. Results may appear successful at first, but the underlying resistance usually rears up to sabotage us. I think positive thinking efforts should be balanced with an attempt to be squeaky-clean ethical – and to deal with negative feelings and attitudes, rather than just repressing them with forced positivity.

It’s a fascinating juxtaposition: the sweet, delicious fantasy of Rhonda Byrne’s “change your thinking, change your life” versus Barbara Ehrenreich’s “empathy deficit,” according to which disasters like tsunamis can happen only to people who are “on the same frequency as the event.”

One of the dictums of positive thinking is to rid your life of negative people. Even if the other person may be going through a rough patch and need a helping hand – out they go. Or if the negativity could be in a child, co-worker or boss – someone difficult to be around, out they go. Or if the negativity could be in a child, co-worker or boss – someone difficult to be around, out they go.

Positive thinking and the law of attraction are valid concepts, and understanding them can enhance our lives. But if the principles are used for selfish reasons or to manipulate others, damage can occur, lives can be hurt.

Anna Olson (annols@mts.net) is a Winnipeg freelance writer and editor. Read her online at annolsnonline.blogspot.ca

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This year is a rebirth of sorts for the Body Mind Spirit Show. We have a new location – the Centro Caboto Centre at 1055 Wilkes Ave. in Winnipeg.

I took over the show a few years ago, and since then my son Mark has come onboard, and now my grandson Greyson. So here we are, three generations of men in a spiritual world usually dominated by female energy.

In 1995, my wife and I lost our daughter Melissa to leukemia at the age of 15. Our world changed. I ran the full gamut of anger, shock, disbelief and finally acceptance. I mention this, because it was the reason I became involved in the Body Mind Spirit Show.

Where do we go when we feel life has beaten us down? Where do we turn and how do we start over? We all grieve in different ways.

We must learn to celebrate life.

A few years back my Mom and Dad took a cruise to Alaska. There was an older woman on board who was the toast of the trip. She was full of energy and fun. They took the time to get to know her and found her life partner had died. She said she had sat indoors waiting to die. One day she woke up and said “I am not going to spend the rest of my life saying ‘poor me.’” A couple of years later those same words helped my Dad move on after my Mom left this world. Words, shared by a friend or a stranger, who has been there.

The theme of our show this year is rebirth, acceptance and gratitude.

There will be 50 plus exhibitors displaying their wares. All forms of alternative healing from chiropractors to herbalists, from deep tissue massage to acupuncture, from psychics to mediums, from healthy food choices to handcrafted soaps ... we want them all. For whom you ask? For you to taste, test and sample.

There are three lectures dealing with rebirth, acceptance and gratitude. The cost is included in the price of admission for the whole day, which is five dollars. And being true to Manitoba, look for two-for-one specials in the newspapers and from our exhibitors. There is no ATM at the show, sorry.

In the centre of the showroom we will have a caring tree where you can place the name or memory of someone or something dear to your heart.

The list of speakers and exhibitors is on our website at www.bodymindspiritshow.ca.

When I was a boy, my mom used to have us repeat these words whenever she thought we needed reminding:

Kind words will cost you nothing, and the effort is but small. In the daily walk of life, speak kindly unto all.

Share a smile today. Health and happiness, Dale

Look for the BMS show admission coupon on Page 19
By gathering plants with a caretaker attitude, a person can do more good for the plants and the landscape, as a whole, than a person who does nothing at all.

subtle as a park or agricultural field that has just been sprayed with pesticides. Take note of human and animal activities around the site. If possible, do what you can to stop or contain the pollution.

When gathering wild plants, it is important to do so with a caretaker attitude. A caretaker does not take without giving back, is always mindful of his or her actions, respecting the plants’ needs and leaving a site in the same or better condition than it was found. This might mean picking up garbage, or helping a struggling plant. By gathering plants with a caretaker attitude, a person can do more good for the plants and the landscape, as a whole, than a person who does nothing at all.

So how do you get started?

If you’re like most people, you’ve probably had some introduction to plant uses through books, presentations or friends, but you don’t know which plants to look for or if the plants you’re interested in even grow in your area. It’s very easy to get overwhelmed by the hundreds of useful plants out there!

If you’re new to all of this, or simply new to the geographic area, I suggest you pick a few plants – say, three to five – that you see every day while in your geographic area, I suggest you pick a few plants – say, three to five – that you see every day while in your yard, walking the dog or running through the park. This is what makes plants interesting in your area. It’s very easy to get overwhelmed by the hundreds of useful plants out there!

Start by asking the following questions about each plant:

• What are its key identifying features?
• Does it have any poisonous lookalikes?
• Where does it grow, like in spring, summer, fall or winter?
• Where does it like to grow and what does it look like when it’s healthy vs. unhealthy?
• Which parts can I use?
• When should I harvest it?
• Are there different harvest times for this plant?

Cattail is one of my favourite plants, and I love how many uses it has in the kitchen, as well as how it can be used for shelter and drying clothes!

You Can do That with Cattail?


Yes, the lowly cattail is probably the most useful, common, yet overlooked wild plant. Foodwise, almost every part of the cattail can be eaten, including roots, tubers, shoots, flower heads and pollen. The parts that aren’t edible – leaves, stalks, and seed heads – have a host of other uses.

The seeds can be used to make flour that has a nutritional analysis similar to grain flours. The flour is made by washing the roots in cold water until the starch separates from the root fibres. Once the fibres are removed and the starch allowed to settle, the water is poured off. Add fresh water, mix it all up, remove any remaining fibres and allow it to settle again. After the water is poured off, you will be left with a fine, white flour. This flour can be used in its wet state or dried for future use.

The shoots, when they are up to two feet tall, can be pulled up and peeled to expose the tender white core. This is what muskrats eat, and for good reason – they taste like pepper-cucumbers. The green flower heads can be unwrapped from their papery sheath and eaten on the spot like corn-on-the-cob, or cooked first. I prefer to steam them. They can then be eaten with butter or, once the stalks are removed, added to soups, stews and other dishes. When cooked, they have a mucilaginous property that makes for great soup thickener.

One of my favourite recipes is a derivation of Euell Gibbons’ cattail casserole, which I have dubbed “cattail stuffing.” These flower buds also make a great addition to creamy potato salads. Pollen from these flowers can be easily collected by bending the flower heads into a large bucket and tapping them on the sides. If gathered at peak production, even the smaller cattails will yield one to three teaspoons of pollen. The pollen should be sifted through a fine sieve to extract the fluff that is inevitably gathered along with it. This pollen is extremely rich in protein and beta carotene and makes an excellent addition to muffins and pancakes.

The leaves and stalks of cattails have amazing insulating properties. A broken stem or leaf will reveal a multitude of air spaces that function just like foam. I have used these for shelter materials and sleeping pads, especially when the ground is frozen. I always have a cattail mat to sit on so I can enjoy being outside even if the ground is wet or cold. The round flower stalks can also be tied or sewn together to make a stiff back-rest.

The seed fluff is highly insulating and could be a lifesaver in an emergency situation. Simply remove the fluff and stuff your clothing with it to simulate a layer of down.

Cattail flower stalks make good hand drills, and the seed fluff can be added to tinder bundles. You can even dip the dry seed heads in oil or fat and light them to produce a torch that will burn for up to 45 minutes. Still not impressed? The smoke is said to help repel mosquitoes. Now if that’s not enough to gain your respect, I don’t know what is.

Cattail Stuffing

2 cups cattail flower buds
1 cup bread crumbs
1 beaten egg* (can be replaced with purslane)
½ cup milk
Onions and celery (chopped)
½ tsp powdered sage salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together in roaster and bake at 350°F for 20-30 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

*Purslane makes a fine addition to this recipe. Because of its mucilaginous properties, the egg can be omitted when purslane is used.


See WILD EDIBLES on page 19

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The seeds can be used to make flour that has a nutritional analysis similar to grain flours. The flour is made by washing the roots in cold water until the starch separates from the root fibres. Once the fibres are removed and the starch allowed to settle, the water is poured off. Add fresh water, mix it all up, remove any remaining fibres and allow it to settle again. After the water is poured off, you will be left with a fine, white flour. This flour can be used in its wet state or dried for future use.

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The seed fluff is highly insulating and could be a lifesaver in an emergency situation. Simply remove the fluff and stuff your clothing with it to simulate a layer of down.

Cattail flower stalks make good hand drills, and the seed fluff can be added to tinder bundles. You can even dip the dry seed heads in oil or fat and light them to produce a torch that will burn for up to 45 minutes. Still not impressed? The smoke is said to help repel mosquitoes. Now if that’s not enough to gain your respect, I don’t know what is.

Cattail Stuffing

2 cups cattail flower buds
1 cup bread crumbs
1 beaten egg* (can be replaced with purslane)
½ cup milk
Onions and celery (chopped)
½ tsp powdered sage salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together in roaster and bake at 350°F for 20-30 minutes, stirring once halfway through.

*Purslane makes a fine addition to this recipe. Because of its mucilaginous properties, the egg can be omitted when purslane is used.


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A Winnipeg Woman’s Spiritual Journey

Adventures with Spirit: The Healing Journey

By Sue Ostapowich
Xlibris, 2012
96 pages
Softcover: $16; Hardcover: $25; ebook: $10 or less

Reviewed by MARY JANE EASON

Adventures with Spirit is the first in a series of three books that Winnipeg’s Sue Ostapowich, a retired psychiatric nurse who worked with people with disabilities, has been “called” to write. I’ve known Sue since 2007 when she made her first of several appearances as my guest on the CKUW radio program, “Wooden Spoons.” Over coffee, I’ve come to appreciate Sue’s ideas and experiences. In this small book, Sue very gently carries the reader on a journey with “Spirit” as it unfolded in her life.

After years of being trapped in a toxic relationship and having undergone a family breakup and divorce, Sue had developed fixed patterns of coping and self-protection. Isolated in her brokenness and unable to experience happiness or joy, Sue maintained her persona of independence and privacy. All that began to change when, following the advice of a friend, she joined a singles group which offered a 10-week program. Sue found herself on a new path in which “Spirit” led her and provided her with profound teachings, which are shared and explained in this book.

There were teachings that surprised Sue and changed her thinking and set her on a different course. Under the instruction of Spirit which communicated in gentle, simple ways through experiences, encounters and messages, all of which are described in an easy and credible style, Sue forged a radically new life for herself. She gained insight into the reason for human frailty and why we do things that are hurtful even when we know better.

“Sue’s book is written for those who suffer in silence, who have no voice and no hope. She is speaking, too, on behalf of her mother who like many women in the past had no voice and endured their hardships in silence. Adventures with Spirit has appeal for the general audience as well as counselling and self-help groups. The book does not overwhelm but carries the reader forward to share the journey with Spirit and to be open to the call of Spirit within. Valuable teachings are shared, such as the realization that the distress Sue had experienced in her marriage was a necessary experience for her miraculous awakening or the discovery that her new life partner was her “demon slayer.”

Interspersed throughout the book are pictures as well as poems signed “Reflections by Sue.” Additional pages for notes at the back of the book add a personal touch.

Adventures with Spirit ends with a special chapter titled “Additional Notes” providing definitions of spiritual concepts, highlighting spiritual traditions and teachers and offering information on resources. Imperceptibly, Sue moves from simple but profound spiritual teachings to a higher level of spiritual knowledge. This is a book of healing and hope.

Mary Jane Eason is a community nutritionist and Program Coordinator of Mary Jane’s Cooking School, a registered charity.

Lisa M. (Sobry) Delmage

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Deathbed Visions

Visions, Trips and Crowded Rooms: What the Near Dying Hear and See Before Death

By David Kessler
Hay House, 2010
Softcover, 165 pages, $18

Reviewed by ANNA OLSON

David Kessler is a modern-day thanatologist. That is, he’s a student of death in all its aspects, from the biological to the emotional and paranormal.

“I don’t only deal with death in the hospital or hospice, but also at crime scenes, plane crashes, and even bioterror attacks. I follow death wherever it calls me,” writes Kessler.

As a nurse, end-of-life program facilitator, trauma team member and Red Cross disaster worker, Kessler admits he used to believe that the only thing needed to alleviate the suffering of the dying was good pain management and symptom control. He now knows that besides anti-anxiety medication to combat fear and distress, “we have the ‘who’ and ‘what’ we see when we know better.”

As a nurse, end-of-life program facilitator, trauma team member and Red Cross disaster worker, Kessler admits he used to believe that the only thing needed to alleviate the suffering of the dying was good pain management and symptom control. He now knows that besides anti-anxiety medication to combat fear and distress, “we have the ‘who’ and ‘what’ we see when we know better.”

See BOOKS on page 18
Kessler’s fascination with the process of death started when he was twelve and his mother was dying. In those days, the medical system didn’t see a value in family members being with the dying. He and his dad were allowed to visit her for ten minutes every two hours. She died alone. Kessler says he felt “utterly overwhelmed, knowing that what I’d seen with my mother was not how death was supposed to be.”

Since then, Kessler has learned a lot about the death process – specifically that many dying people see visions of deceased loved ones, they talk about going on a trip and sometimes report crowds of people in their room. All these phenomena point to the existence of spirit life after death, Kessler believes. His goal is to bring that hope to people who fear that death is the end of all life for the ones they love.

Kessler uses the term near death awareness to refer to deathbed visions of the spirits of departed loved ones. This is different from near death experience where the a person comes back from the brink of death and can talk about the experience.

Kessler says loved ones really do appear to the dying, why can’t we, the healthy ones, see them? “He answers with a story about a dying woman who saw the spirit of her dead mother wanting the daughter to come with her. A relative who was sitting nearby said she couldn’t see the spirit. The dying woman answered, “Of course you can’t see her – she’s here for me, not you!” Kessler suggests there is a power that can “lift the veil” for the dying, allowing them to see what others cannot.

In general, Kessler claims, the medical profession discounts the metaphysical experiences of the dying, calling the deathbed visions hallucinations due to pain medication, fever or lack of oxygen to the brain. Kessler talked with one such skeptical oncologist who discounts the metaphysical experiences of the dying, them to see what others cannot.

When dying patients talk about “going on a trip,” they don’t connect it with death, as in oblivion. It seems they have a purpose; they are going somewhere.

• One patient said he saw a “blinding light.” Another said, “I have to get my house in order.” He was a minister and the caregiver realized that it was a metaphor from the Bible about being ready for his transition to the other side.

• Caregivers talk about “terminal agitation,” the restlessness that can come before death. After the patient has a vision, the agitation subsides.

• When dying patients talk about “going on a trip,” they don’t connect it with death, as in oblivion. It seems they have a purpose; they are going somewhere.

Visions, Trips, and Crowded Rooms by David Kessler is an excellent book for those interested in learning about the metaphysical side of dying.

Medical staff would also benefit from recognizing near death phenomena as credible. When medics understand what’s happening, they can validate patients’ experiences instead of sedating them to quell what they misperceive as hallucinations.

Other skeptics suggest that these visions are “the brain’s way of psychologically making it easier to die; that is, our brains are comforting and protecting us.” But Kessler points out that it’s only deceased people who appear to those who are dying. There are many stories of a patient saying “X is here” to help me leave. The next of kin, who protest that X is still alive, later find out that X died a few hours or days ago. If these visions were the brain’s way of comforting the patient, Kessler asks, why wouldn’t images of living loved ones appear? It’s always spirits of the deceased that appear.

Those caregivers in hospices and end-of-life care management tend to have more respect for the near death phenomena as they see it more than other medical staff. They point out that sometimes patients have these paranormal experiences weeks before death when a lack of oxygen can’t be blamed. Here are some of Kessler’s reports from the friends, relatives and caregivers of the dying:

As someone who previously had the predictable question of objections to the use of psychoactive substances, based largely on my own misunderstandings and misperceptions, I can assure you that reading this book may stretch your conventional orders of perception. But the rewards of keeping an open mind will shift your perspective and give you a greater appreciation for the possibilities of the underlying intent – the dawning of a new era of spiritual intelligence.
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Urban Massage Therapy

WILD EDIBLES (cont’d from page 16)

different parts?
• How do I prepare and use it?

The key here is to ask the questions! If you don’t ask the questions, you won’t get any answers – it’s that simple. Make a little journal for each plant and as you find the answers to your questions, add them to your journal. Once you’ve done your research, and you are 100 percent sure of the identity of the plant, experiment with it and have fun! Then gradually start adding more plants to your list.

Creating a need will speed your learning tremendously. So tell yourself you will not buy another bag of coffee until you’ve made your own dandelion coffee. See how simple it is? What could create a more desperate need than the thought of going an hour without your regular caffeine fix?

Botanist Laura Reeves is the founder of Prairie Shore Botanicals, located next to the Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. Through PSB, Laura and her associates offer courses and workshops on wild edibles, wilderness skills and urban survival and disaster preparedness. They also provide private consultation services and self-sustainably harvested products. To learn more, visit psbotanicals.com or connect with Laura at Facebook.com/PrairieShoreBotanicals.

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