

Healing the Earth Equals Healing Ourselves

by Mary Brunette

"What we do to the environment, we unwittingly do to ourselves...our bodies are permeable and behave like barometers of our environment."
Irene Ruth Wilkenfield

In what might otherwise be considered a dark time, there are many promising developments, people speaking the truth as they know it, and offering their knowledge in a positive way. Some are not only speaking out against what they see as wrong, but are living their lives in a new way. This conscious living equals non violent resistance, equals peace, equals loving ourselves and all our relations on our Mother planet.

Many of us who are environmentally conscious have been trying to live our truth for a long time, yet in these times we have the opportunity, perhaps the responsibility, to deepen and broaden our awareness. Our efforts may not be singularly dramatic (or they may be!), but in concert, they will have a long lasting impact on all that lives, including our own bodies.

A recent example of the way in which environmentally conscious people can broaden and deepen their understanding and take conscious action, came to me in the form of a beautiful book, a photographic and verbal treasure compiled by folks with the best of intentions, to help us understand the importance of the spiritual and physical preservation of Native American holy sites.

However, for an environmental sensitive such as myself, the book was impossible to read, due to the chemicals used in its manufacture. Motivated by my great desire to see its beauty, I held it at arms length in the open air, turning each page slowly and carefully.

I was ill throughout the night and the next

day.

Most people do not experience the reactions that I and many others experience to common chemicals. However, science has confirmed that substances to which the chemically injured react are toxic to everyone, whether one gets a little over a long period of time, or whether one gets a single big exposure. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that 15 to 30% of the US population has "increased sensitivity" to chemicals. The number of people so affected is growing world wide, as our bodies protest the daily absorption of chemicals.

According to a Bill Moyer's PBS report "Trade Secrets", there have been approximately 80,000 new synthetic chemicals released on the US market in the last 20 years. Of these, approximately 1,600 have been tested for human safety by the companies which produce them! There has been NO testing of the effects of combinations of these chemicals.

The last decade has shown a 26% increase in brain cancer in children and a 30% increase in asthma in the general population, to mention only two startling facts that reflect our increasingly polluted environment. Children are the most vulnerable (note the alarming increase in learning disabilities). We need to ask ourselves which chemicals are endemic to our personal environment, and how do these chemicals affect our health?

Formaldehyde is one of the most ubiquitous.

Formaldehyde is in the building materials of our homes (plywood, particle board, glues, fiberglass insulation, asphalt roofing materials). It is used widely in cosmetics, body lotions, deodorants, soaps, hair products, nail products, mouth wash and toothpaste. It is in detergents, household cleaners and disinfectants, air fresheners, paper towels, toilet paper and plastics. Formaldehyde is in the fabric of our clothing, in the upholstery of our furniture and cars, in the carpets our babies play upon. It is in our food, used for refining and preserving. (Eat only whole organic foods!)

Formaldehyde is in the office, at the construction site, in the gym, in the medical or the dental clinic. We encounter this cancer causing, central nervous system damaging, hormone disrupting chemical as we drive, kick back at home, build, shop, work or meet. Our children encounter it in their schools, in fast food restaurants, in their make up, in the library and in the mall.

Formaldehyde off-gasses into the air we breathe. It rubs off on our skin. It enters our water. It affects the clarity of our thinking, our balance and coordination (central nervous system), our moods and energy levels (hormone system). If we eliminated or decreased our use of this one chemical, we would positively affect our own health, the health of those around us, the market for safer products, the earth, the air, the water. (The earth, the air, and the water do NOT belong to the chemical companies!)

We might ask ourselves about the processes by which we produce a beautiful environmental book. If the processes are not available by which we can produce an instrument of good in an environmentally good way, then we might ask ourselves what compromises we are willing to make. This kind of thinking spurs creative development of safer materials. To me, this is the meaning of "deep ecology" and conscious living. This is the level of healing ourselves and the planet that I believe we must embrace at this time, to preserve what has been given to us, including our own lives.

When I reflect on being alive, I feel gifted, honored and loved. What I am talking about is a deep connection between life and love.

We must love ourselves enough to stop our headlong rush into extinction. We must love our Mother, who does her best to sustain us. We must love all our relations, who bear the affects of our follies with us. We *can*, with the power of our love, live our truth, that we no longer tolerate the poisoning of the earth.

Plant Revolution:

Evening Primrose:
Oenothera biennis

by Kalan Milhous Redwood

Meet my lady friend *Oenothera biennis*. Some of you may know her as the lovely Evening Primrose. She puts on a show every evening at sun down in my garden. When the cool mountain air falls from Lassen and the baking heat subsides, she knows her time has come.

Pull up a garden chair and grab your cup of tea, the show is about to begin. *Oenothera biennis* stands proudly to four feet with spikes of indeterminate flowers and seed capsules, and a green basal rosette of leaves at her feet. As her Latin name implies she is a biennial plant, meaning, she blooms, seeds and dies in her second year of life.

The seed oil of Evening Primrose has become a very popular natural remedy for a variety of health concerns. The compound in EPO that leads many to take it daily is gamma-linolenic acid, or GLA. GLA is an essential fatty acid along with omega 6 and omega 3, all of which are very important for vital health.



Evening Primrose - *Oenothera biennis*

Evening Primrose Oil is sweet, cool and nourishing, and is useful for many inflammatory conditions including PMS, hypertension, anxiety, eczema, arthritis, menopausal symptoms and autoimmune disorders. In Britain, EPO is an approved PMS treatment and has anti-clotting and blood pressure lowering properties, which would make it ideal for those at risk of stroke.

"What was that?" you exclaim, as the calyx suddenly pops, revealing butter yellow petals, poised to open. "It happens fast, so watch closely," I say. Thirty minutes later the show is almost over. Twenty flowers, two inches wide have bloomed in this time period. They are pristine in their beauty, and the delicate fragrance reaches your nostrils.

Evening Primrose Oil can be bought at a health food store as a supplement or it is possible to order the whole seeds from an herb supply company, such as Pacific Botanicals, to grind your own seed. Herbalist Michael Moore suggests combining the ground seed with an equal part of flax seed oil. Mix this and keep it in the refrigerator,

adding tablespoons at a time to smoothies, salad dressings and nut butters. You will find this a lot cheaper than the capsule supplements, and also less prone to rancidity.

But wait...that fragrance has also attracted two humming bird moths that visit this particular plant each evening. I do not know the moth's Latin identity, but instead give a description. The size of a butterfly, with the hovering ability of a humming bird, this night moth sips on sweet nectar, while playing the role of pollinator.

Once pollinated, the inch long seedpods of Evening Primrose will form and dry. It is not uncommon to see dry seedpods and a two-foot stem, with new flowers still coming on. The seedpods will open facing down, thus leaking seeds onto the earth. And life begins again.

Earth Walker Herbs:

Fall Classes 2006

Herbs for the Menopausal Years

Herbs for Digestive Health:

Oregon Grape Root-

Medicine Making

Herbal Discussion Group

(meeting monthly)

Call for dates and times

(530) 524-5537

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