Remember Why You are Here with Asia Suler
Episode 87 Transcript
"Ancestral Plant Medicine"

(00:01):

If you want to pull through some of the wisdom of your ancestors, one of the most richest and vividus ways to do this is to practice ancestral plant medicine. Hello and welcome back to Remember Why You're Here, a podcast for seekers and sensitives where you can relax, receive, reconnect yourself, and remember the most important thing of all, why you're here. I'm Asia Suler, author, earth intuitive. And in this episode today, I'm going to revisit one of my favorite topics, and that is ancestral plant medicine. I actually had the intention to record a new video podcast for this week. And instead, my daughter and I, as well as my girlfriend, we all got super sick with some sort of virus, some sort of viral thing, and we just got absolutely laid out. You might still hear it in my voice right now. And it felt like, well, A, it felt a little early to have this kind of vibrant virus in the season.

(01:26):

I know we're entering flu and cold season, but it still felt a little bit unfair to immediately jump into full-blown fever virus mode. But it also felt like, I don't know, in some ways, a very fitting beginning to this month of October where there is just this opportunity to see what's going on underneath the surface, to peel back the veil. There's something about being sick that is quite psychedelic, especially when you are feverish, and it's been giving me the opportunity to practice ancestral herbalism. Every time I've gone ahead and reached for the elderberry syrup, that's exactly what I've been doing. Every time I've made me or my daughter a cup of sage tea to help clear our sad little sore throats, that's also what I've been doing. And it just feels like such a potent time to reconnect in this way. And in this audio recording that we're about to revisit, I talk about three specific ways to start working with the herbs that your ancestors were connected with.

(02:40):

I also talk about why ancestral herbalism in particular is so potent. I'm a really big fan of working with the plants exactly where you are, but there's a special magic to working with the plants that were near and dear to your ancestors. And it really feels like that magic comes online in such a particular way in this moment of the year, especially for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere as we are entering fall. Whether we realize it or not, a lot of us are actually already practicing. We are already having some ancestral plant practices. I remember realizing this at some point. I grew up in a very suburban environment and I loved the decorations of the hay with the decorative gourds on it and the pumpkins and all of that. And it really wasn't until I got older and I started having my own garden and harvesting things and bringing them in that I realized, oh, there's a reason why we have these decorations of pumpkins and apples and hay.

(03:46):

It's because this is the time of the year when you are making sure you have hay for the next season, hay for the winter for your animals. It's when you are harvesting the apples, it's when you are taking the pumpkins from off the ground and you're bringing them close to your house or just right within your house or wherever it is you store them. And so these things that we think of our decorations are actually ancestral plant practices. And I just absolutely love this, that it's almost like this time of the year we don't even realize that we are engaging in these practices that bring

us close to our own ancestors, that bring us close to... And what I talk about in this audio is bring us close to the ancestors who had really deep, meaningful, harmonious and profound relationships with their environment. That's who I'm talking about when I talk about connecting with the ancestors.

(04:44):

And I have seen basically every year, my entire life, that when the veil starts to thin, as I explored in the last episode, our ancestors just come close. They're in our dreams. We sense them around us. We start doing these things that we don't even think about like brewing chamomile tea or putting more cinnamon when we're baking and we don't even realize that we are touching this deep root in time. If you want to pull in, pull through some of the wisdom of your ancestors, these earth-based, wise ancestors, if you want to pull that thread through into your life now, I think one of the most richest and vividus ways to do this is to practice some ancestral plant medicine. Let's go ahead and drop into this audio now and we'll explore these three super accessible ways to start working with the medicines of your ancestors.

(05:57):

Autumn is the classic time of the year to connect with those who've passed on from the Day of the Dead Festival in Mexico to Obon in Japan or the Celtic holiday of Samhain. In autumn, we have the ability to communicate with those who came before us. As someone of European settler descent, I wasn't always connected to my ancestors until I was, and I found that there's actually a direct link between my herbal practice and my ancestors. If you're anything like me, this topic of ancestor work might come up and you might feel a little bit of resistance. I know for myself, as someone who is of European descent and is really distanced at this point in time from the lands that I'm originally from, I had a lot of feelings around ancestor work. Mix in there the history of oppression and colonialism that took place throughout much of the colonized parts of the world and as part of the Western imagination, it can feel really intimidating to want to connect with those who came before us.

(07:03):

I want to be specific here when I'm talking about this idea of ancestral herbalism. When I'm speaking of the ability to connect to those who came before us to deepen our herbal practice, what I'm talking to is the idea of connecting into those from your lineage who were deeply connected to the plants, those who had really vibrant, intact communities and knew how to speak to the plants and how to work with them for healing. All of our ancestors worked with plants. If they didn't, we wouldn't be here, but some of our ancestors were more connected to plants than others. When I speak of doing this kind of ancestor work to connect to those who came before you who really know how to work with the plants, what I'm speaking of is connecting with those who really were plant medicine people, those who lived in a culture where they saw the world around them as alive.

(08:01):

Now, some of us might be farther away from this mindset than others. I know for me, I'm probably at least a thousand years away from ancestors who are truly living in an animistic

viewpoint. That said, it's in all of our blood. All of us have ancestors who were indigenous of a place. And when we learn how to connect to them during this autumn time where the veil is thin, we can actually ask for their help and their guidance to deepen our practice with the plants and our life path in general. When we can connect with our well ancestors, we can receive their blessings, their knowledge and their wisdom. But for me, it's been a very essential viewpoint to actually start to see ancestors as a way to connect to plants and plants as a way to connect to the ancestors. I've had the privilege now of being able to visit a couple places in the world that my family are actually from, and I was amazed when I actually got my body on that landscape, how much I resonated with those places.

(09:06):

And I was also amazed to see that some of the plants that I had an innate connection to were growing there in proliferation and were actually ancient parts of the culture that had lived there for thousands of years. For example, when I went to Ireland and I met the hawthorns that lived there, it was like I understood for the first time why I've always been so deeply drawn to this plant, this plant that is known to be a gatekeeper to the realms of magic and the fairy realm, a heart healer and a grief assuager. When I met the hawthorns there, something deeply clicked into place inside of me. That said, you don't have to go to your place of origin in order to make these connections. You can do a simple research project to find out what were the important plants of your ancestors, your land-based ancestors.

(09:59):

This could be ceremonial plants, food plants, or medicine plants, and try connecting with these plants, this autumn, to open a gateway to communicate with your ancestors, the ones who are very well vibrant in spirit, who knew how to live in harmony with the earth so that you can start actually bringing this knowledge back into existence now for yourself and the lineages to come. A couple ideas to incorporate this practice into your rituals this fall. One is to actually make a dish for your ancestors to give as an offering based on what would've been their favorite foods, their ancestral foods. Not only does this connect you to the plants, but it helps you connect to the ancestors through this bridge of the plants. You can also look up and find a flower essence made in that land that perhaps you're from. You might still live in this landscape or if you're someone like me, you might not, but you can actually find a maker who makes flower essences on that land and have it shipped over to you and connect that way.

(11:05):

In general, this time in autumn is such a rich space for exploring our consciousness. This is the classic time of the year in which the veil between the worlds thins. If you're intrigued by this idea of deepening ancestor work and connecting to the Otherworld, this place where the ancestors, the fairies, the plant spirits, and the unseen beings live, then come join me for Herbs for the Otherworld. In this online class, we explore some of those potent rituals, plants, and practices for connecting into the medicine of Autumn. The course includes a guided journey into the Otherworld as well as suggestions for how to celebrate this time of the year.

(11:51):

If you are interested in Herbs for the Otherworld, I will go ahead and put that link here. It's been so sweet to see some folks joining that class again this autumn. It's one of my absolute favorites. And if you'd like to go deeper into herbalism, in particular herbalism as a highly sensitive in this season, I am a part of Ecoversity's online Herbal Medicine Making Summit, which is starting this week. If you are listening this week, this is a free summit live with 38 teachers. It's actually quite special that this is all happening live. And I will be teaching on October 15th, and I'll specifically be teaching a class called Herbs for Sensitive Nervous Systems. This is the class that I wish that I had taken when I first started in herbalism to understand why herbs tend to work different in my body, what needs to be different in terms of the way I interact with herbs, dosage, the kind of plants that work for me.

(13:01):

We are going to talk about specific plants that help those of us with sensitive nervous systems in general in our life, and I'm really excited to just dive into this topic that's really been at the core of my practice forever. And it's something I think my own ancestors would be particularly delighted to know that I have been sussing out, figuring out over time, because we know now that sensitivity is an inherited trait that many of us are born sensitive as highly sensitive people, as empaths, et cetera, because our ancestors were sensitive as well. And so this feels like such a big nod to my ancestors to teach this class. And I also find those of us with sensitive nervous systems, we're also the ones who tend to be receiving messages through the veil, interested in connecting with the ancestors, and also here to transform some of what we've been carrying from our ancestral lines.

(14:00):

If you are interested in this totally free class, Herbs for Sensitive Nervous Systems as a part of Ecoversity's Online Summit, I will also go ahead and put that link below. However you are marking this time with your, whether it's pumpkin spice lattes or you've got your decorative gourds out or you're out there making yourself some elderberry tea, know that this is a time for deepening. This is a time when the life from the upper world goes into the roots where things like the canopy get clear, but also the things within us get clear, our visions of our own lives, of what's possible for us. And may, as this time of the thinning of the veil occurs for you, this time of seership, as we've been exploring this month, may it help you come home to yourself, may it help you deepen into life in all the ways, and may it help you remember that most important thing of all, why you're here.