

CHAPTER ONE: The Tall Standing Rooted Ones

THE HEALING TREES is concerned mostly with the edible and herbal qualities of Trees local to the Upper Ottawa Valley, Canada. This region amid the Northeastern Woodlands is a transition zone between the boreal forest and temperate mixed forest and thus offers a welcoming habitat for many different Trees. Most all, though not all, of the Tree species of the Northeastern Woodlands of this Turtle Island (North America) make their homes here. Many of these have a range far beyond this region and most have relatives elsewhere with similar qualities.

These edible and herbal qualities are found in all parts of most Trees: in the roots, sap, resin, bark, branches, wood, flowers (male and female), fruit, seeds, buds, twigs, leaves and needles, and even in the ashes of some. Trees are truly miraculous creations of our Creator. Many traditions around the world speak of people originating from Trees. There are also persistent folk tales about people being changed into Trees.

A few worthy Northeastern Trees are not mentioned at all, such as Hickory, Chestnut, Black Walnut, Locust, et al. These were not growing in the Wilno Hills near Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario where and when this book was begun. Elm is also hardly given attention herein. I have witnessed so many Elms dying from Dutch Elm disease, I don't want to encourage any further injuries to that family. Perhaps all those Trees absent herein will be addressed in a future edition if there is interest. Otherwise, other books in the Bibliography can help you find out more about them.

Trees endure the weather, the wildlife, and the changes of Life's seasons, usually in places where their ancestors and kin have lived before them. Thereby they are literally nourished by their ancestors' bones and humus. Some Trees have even evolved to survive grass fires (such as Bur Oak) and forest fires; at least to the extent that their progeny, seeds (like Jack Pine) or roots (such as Poplar), will rise again from the ashes.

This enduring quality of being Trees is something we can choose to partake of. Entering into their space, their aura, we can begin to feel this strength, this suppleness, this allowing life to

flow on by, this allowing of their leaves and branches to fall away while continuing to live ... albeit broken, yet living and enduring and ready to offer oxygen, shelter, shade, peace, and healing. At times when I feel less than whole, I often feel drawn to visit older Trees that are less than “perfect” in form and I usually return feeling much better about the shape I’m in.

Walking through a forest has similarities to walking down a busy city street. One is passing many conscious living beings who are actively living their lives. But in a city, the beings are carefully watching their steps as they move through and past the other living beings, rarely focusing on, communicating with, or even acknowledging the people they are passing; with most of their attention being on where they are going.

One could walk through a forest with the same mindset. However, in a forest, one is walking past the Tall Standing Rooted Ones who are mutually dwelling together. These Ones are only in motion thanks to wind and to being in a growing process that is relatively imperceptible to human eyes. Still, they are actively aware of who is passing by: birds, squirrels, butterflies, bees, and humans. And while constantly communicating with each other through their intermingling roots and mycelium and other ways, they are also open to communicating in dialogue with those humans who are also willing to tune in and dialogue.

We share life on Earth with these Living Beings about whom we know so little. At a time when Trees are threatened by the environmental changes of the times, as much as by corporate greed, I feel it is worthy to learn more about our tall standing rooted neighbours and how they can help us live healthier lives. In so doing, perhaps we can achieve such an appreciation that *we* can next learn how, and then be motivated, to help *them* live healthier lives.

We all know that the fruit of the Apple Tree is edible—at least when it is ripe. That many Tree fruits, seeds, leaves, buds, and barks are also edible is also true. Many varieties of flavour and texture are thereby available to the curious taster and the hungry person alike. People have been eating Tree parts for as long as memory can recall. The Judeo-Christian Bible speaks of Trees in Genesis 1:29 as a food source right in the beginning of that record of human existence.

Modern nutritional theories suggest that many human diseases are caused by nutritional deficiencies. Trees have been used

herbally as remedies or as palliatives for just about every malady known to Humankind. This suggests that Trees, with their roots deep in the mineral-rich Earth, their branches and leaves ever reaching for the sunlight, while continually exposed to wind and air, in many cases can provide the minerals and vitamins that a human body is lacking and is not getting from the common diet.

Many sources point out the nutritional contents of various parts of most Trees. One book claims that the main benefit of the herbal use of Trees is as nutritional supplements in a preventive health program. Self-care and self-medicating from what was locally available was an important part of our ancestors' way of life.

Herbs, including Tree leaves, nuts, fruit, and inner barks, have often been included in the regular human diet as a preventative medicine to help keep us healthy, and as folk remedies to help restore health. In the Adirondack Mountains of northern New York State, the people formerly living there before European settlement would regularly add Tree barks to their soups to provide nutrients that otherwise were missing from their diet, especially in winter. Their neighbours, the Haudenosaunee, called them the "Adirondack People," the "Bark Eaters."

Let's be clear, they were not eating the tough dry dead outer barks of Trees, they were eating the inner bark. In *The Healing Trees*, when I refer to using the bark of a Tree, I am talking about the living inner bark, the cambium, where the nutrient-rich sap moves up and down the Tree trunk.

This is not to imply that all or any Tree part tastes anything like the norm to which the so-called "civilized" palate might be accustomed. Nor are all parts of all Trees always edible. "Tree-nibbling" does add a wild spice to Life with different choices and flavours according to the season. It also adds the possibility of a new relationship with Trees.

Tree roots can go deep and bring up nutrients/minerals that are not necessarily available on the surface and/or in gardens. Many different Trees can provide similar nutrients/minerals (such as tannins in many barks and Vitamin C in all Evergreen Trees). This would help to explain why one Tree can be used beneficially for quite a few diseases and ailments, and why several different Trees can help similar symptoms. Nature provides many backup plans to make sure everything is covered. Choice, based on what is within reach, enters the story here.

GATHERING FOOD FROM the wild has been a human endeavour since long before agriculture began (as noted in that oldest written story from world literature, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, around 2000 BCE). It still continues all over Earth to this day; sometimes as the only source of food, and sometimes as a supplement to what is grown in gardens and on farms. Picking wild berries is a great example of this and is a very enjoyable and nourishing activity.

Like the traditional Native Americans who have had a use for almost every part of almost every animal they hunted, so, too, have humans found a use for almost every part of every Tree. American Natives gave the world many useful herbal medicines that are now used all over the world. Perhaps more helpful uses can still be found, and are being found, in the local Trees of the Northeastern Woodlands of North America that had not been considered before now. This is especially important with all the modern health challenges we are facing.

Many centuries of practical experimentation have evolved into what is herein presented. Considering that the researched sources come from various cultural and regional backgrounds, the reported results are generally amazingly consistent and related. At the same time, the more I researched, the more I realized that a book like this can never be complete. There is always more to learn; there is no limit to what humans can learn from, with, and about Plants, including Trees.

When approaching a Tree for food or medicine, I talk to the Tree, requesting help from it, while also asking forgiveness for any harm that I might cause. Many traditions include making an offering of tobacco or other personal gift to the Tree before cutting into it to harvest for food or herbal use.

A Tree seeks nourishment from Earth, Air, Water, and Sun. Many people find it nourishing to their inner being to hug a Tree, talk to a Tree, climb a Tree, walk among Trees, or to simply sit quietly near a Tree. YES!
