



Voices of the Earth

A joint-venture newsletter by Jaki Daniels and Marilyn Geddes

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Editor's Corner by Deborah Burke

My boots make a crunching sound as I step into the loose gravel on the trail. My legs are tiring, crying out for rest from the hard work of moving me up the steep, unrelenting mountain trail. The goal is the scree-clad, wind-blown summit where the birds bide their time soaring on the thermals that rise from the land below. Although at this point it seems unattainable, I know I will soon grind my way there. I will feel the wind in my hair as I gaze down over one of the most incredible views on our planet.

I pause to take a drink of water, and notice a patch of tiny Wild Rose plants growing amongst the stones. Knowing that Wild Rose is the subject of the upcoming Newsletter, I sit down on the rocks and dangle my legs over the edge of the cliff. Wild Rose has chosen a beautiful place to live. She looks out over a noisy little waterfall in a cleft on the side of the mountain. Although it seems as if she has little to root into, she firmly clings to her small patch of soil and fills the air with her beautiful scent.

It is easy to see why poets of bygone ages spoke of the intoxicating scent of Rose, for I am finding it difficult to avoid her charms. I believe you will too, as you turn the page to

Marilyn's Corner, where author and shamanic journeying specialist, Marilyn Geddes, shares her direct experiences of Wild Rose and the treasures gifted to her. As well, be sure to read our two new regular features. **Animal Wisdom**, a collaboration by Marilyn and Jaki, honours Crow in this issue. In **Elder Wisdom**, Cree Spiritual Elder Pauline Johnson (Fishwoman) teaches us about the traditional use of tobacco as an offering and sacred plant. Finally, I'd like to draw your attention to the original artwork of Wild Rose, generously contributed by artist and plant enthusiast, Linda Mummery.

I bid you welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. I hope that your hearts are touched as deeply as mine and that you are filled with wonder as you expand your understanding of our beautiful world.

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Marilyn Geddes

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~~Wild Rose~~ *Rosa acicularis*

What we commonly refer to as 'Wild Rose' is more accurately called Prickly Rose. The two plants are very similar, but a true wild rose has few thorns, which are found at the stem nodes only. The prickly rose is dense with bristles and thorns that cover the entire stem.

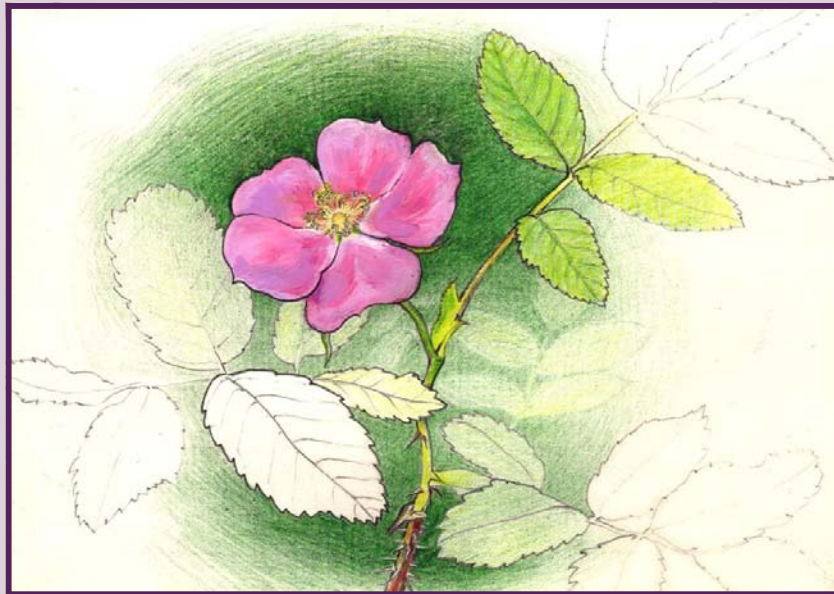


Marilyn's Corner

*"Only last week I went out among the thorns and said
 To the wild roses:
 Deny me not,
 but suffer my devotion.
 Then, all afternoon, I sat among them."
 Mary Oliver*

I wonder when I first met Alberta wild roses. Probably as a young child, when I went with my mother and father and my sister for a drive in the country. Probably, my mother looked out the window and said, "Oh look! The wild roses are blooming!" And, when we stopped for a picnic lunch, crawling through a fence into a roadside field, she

might have drawn our attention again to the roses, suggesting we kneel down to smell their beautiful perfume. I'm not sure that this is exactly what happened, but probably it is close to true. And I have loved the season of the wild roses since then. In late Spring or early



Summer, I will get off my horse, stop the car or interrupt a walk or conversation at the first sighting of a wild rose; crouch down, greet it as I would an adored old friend, close my eyes, bend close, inhale, and in doing so, open a direct link to Paradise.

In June 2006, as part of Jaki's Plant Spirit Medicine class, I met Alberta wild rose in a new way. I had spent some time with my coloured pencils carefully drawing the single blossoming plant that had volunteered to be my teacher. Our assignment was to offer tobacco, open ourselves completely to the messages of rose, and reveal ourselves fully in return. We were to pay attention to everything—every nuance, observation, sound, thought, emo-

tion, and bodily sensation, and to record them all.

Here is an excerpt from my notes:

I notice today, for the first time, that the petals of Alberta wild rose are heart shaped. I gently move away the grasses to see the stem more clearly, and am surprised by the sharpness of the prickles that grow along it. The older stems are brown, with fine filament-like thorns, while the younger branches are redder with short golden thorns. And, as I attune myself more to its energy, I recognized rose as hardy, confident, determined, and tenacious. I notice that although the wind moves each blossom individually with a rustling caress, there is an overall sense of harmony. I observe that birth and death

exist on the same branch, a wizened fruit from last season next to a fresh new bud, not quite ready to burst forth. As I gaze at 'my' blossom, I know that the fruit is already held within the flower, and I am reminded of cycles—the turn of the wheel from a b u n d a n c e

through lack to abundance again. I recognize that the roses live within the community of an entire ecosystem deeply interwoven over time into a complex co-mingling of plant, insect, and animal species. And although I am a visitor, I am also a part of this greater whole.

I choose a petal and place it in my mouth. The taste is pungent with an aftertaste of rose fragrance—the taste of a smell. And immediately, I am filled with a sense of openness and spaciousness, so powerful is the medicine held in one petal.

I lie back against the hummocky ground in proximity to bees and thorns, and feel a sense of protection and again, spaciousness. A hawk glides

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high above, silhouetted against the layered grey and white of the cloud. There are sounds from the passing vehicles on the nearby road, and I note the contrast of the enduring wilderness with the cityscape. Yet there is no disturbance in the system. From this perspective, the flowers extend to the horizon, reminding me that there is no division between earth and sky. As I sink into the perfection of the moment, a song of appreciation and love for all kindred beings wells up from deep inside me, and I am uplifted into joy. I am shown a scene of a nomadic tribe, walking. A message comes that the petals could be gathered, dried, and placed in a pillow of other aromatics as an aid for dreaming. I see young children running alongside the adults, picking rosehips to chew on. Women gather them in pouches to dry later and use in food preparation. There is a sense that the health, vibrancy, and plentitude of the roses presages the abundance of meat, food, and shelter in the year to come. The scene replays, ancient, reliable, steadfast.

Two years later, I once again sit with wild rose, this time with a particular intention and purpose. As I sink into the scent—so refined, familiar and exotic all at the same time, I close my eyes and ask to go deeper with the Spirit of Wild Rose in order to learn the gifts and medicines to use with those who come to see me. The message comes clearly:

“You know of our connection to joy, to the heart, to expansiveness and community. You recognize the magic and the mystery of our scent. So any preparation must embody the perfume of our blossoms. Rose will become one of your most treasured allies in your work. Bring it to those who have walled themselves off from others, who feel separate and alone. Their senses will be dulled from too much interior focus and protection. Our medicine will re-activate the delight of the senses, which is the first step to reconnection with the fullness and beauty and interconnectedness of all life. We will wake them up to feeling the simple pleasures—the warmth of the sun, the caress of breezes, the pleasure of landscape, the variety of sounds. As they leave, offer each a rose

hip to chew to awaken the palate. This connection with the senses is the gateway to the heart. Barriers must dissolve for the heart to open. Through dissolution comes connection. Through connection, an easing of tension; through relaxation, an ever widening awareness; through awareness, appreciation; and through appreciation, love. We are the catalyst for this journey. In offering the first step, we open the wider possibilities. Then, it is up to the individual, but each will go forward supported by our offering.”

I am humbled by these words, and moved to tears. I have been blessed with a method to help those who feel isolated and have withdrawn from life. I long to jump up to share the teachings immediately, but I am the only human in this field of flow-



ers! So I call my dog, Lila, and give her a great big hug. I thank the Spirit of Wild Rose for his generosity. And I realize that this will be my last visit of the season, for the rose blossoms are giving way to the forms and hues of later blooms. The making of the preparation will have to wait until next year.

The wheel turns through the seasons, and once again, I seek out the wild roses. Because I was away for most of June, I worry that I've missed them, but there are advantages to a long, cold Winter and a cool Spring! They are waiting for me, or so it seems—hundreds of them—when I venture into the flower field. I know I have work to do, gathering petals for the preparation of the infusion, but first, I must greet my friends. I speak aloud my welcome and delight, offer tobacco, kneel down, close my eyes, and breathe. Once again, I am home.

Animal Wisdom Corner

By Marilyn Geddes and Jaki Daniels

For the first time in 15 years, a pair of Crows nested and raised its young near my South Calgary home. Before sunrise each morning, my husband Clint, and I were rudely awakened by their hoarse, strident calls, which intensified as the young were born and then fledged. We observed the parents attacking squirrels, washing animal parts in our bird-baths, and leaving the soggy, undesirable bits behind. The parents brought their young to our yard to drink; the family then spent many hours of every day in the adjacent tall, leafy poplars. Clint was furious with them. Not a day went by when he did not berate these noisy visitors; he was immune to my reminders that they are indigenous birds with a place in the great cycle.

One Sunday afternoon, I was working in the kitchen when I heard the loud shriek of a hawk. A hawk? In our neighbourhood? I heard it again, and again. I opened the back door and called to my husband, "Can you hear that hawk?" He proudly replied, "I sure can. It's coming from a CD playing in my truck. I ordered it from the internet. It's called *Crow Be Gone*." And gone they were, for several days, until Clint went out of town for a work engagement. When he left, he let me know that he'd carefully hidden the CD, just in case I was tempted to dispose of it!

When I shared this story with Jaki, we agreed that many people felt the same way about Crow. Yet in our work, we have learned to look beyond the annoyances into the teachings and spiritual essence that each Creature of the Earth brings into our lives. We decided on the spot to inquire about the 'medicine' of Crow for this newsletter, in the hopes of bringing forward clarification, understanding and balance.

Below are several excerpts from the teachings we received.

Jaki: "Crow's voice sounds harsh to you, some would even say unpleasant; it is neither. It is a sound that pierces through illusion and daydream, bringing you back into the present moment, which you often avoid. Crow is a medicine of compassion. You may be

surprised to hear this. But compassion often involves the most direct route to the goal, clear without being cruel or harsh. They are the birds that no one wants, they make the sound that no one enjoys. They do not consider



humans, they consider themselves. Are you any different? See it, smell it, want it, take it. Simple, clear, direct. If you are not in the way, you will not be affected. Ahhhh, but you humans are so possessive, and you anthropomorphize the creatures you like. Because of these two things, you are quick to have opinions about Crow. You are quick to feel that they are taking something away from you—your songbirds, or your peace and calm."

Marilyn: You ask of the gifts and medicines of Crow. The first is camouflage. Our darkness makes us perfectly adapted to the flitting, shadowy regions of treetop hideaways. When we are tree bound, what attracts you? Certainly it is our call. Were we to remain quiet, you would seldom notice our presence. And how does this relate to your kind? It is to remind you that you have the choice of when to stand out, and when to be hidden. It is not up to others. Take control of what you show, how much you reveal. Caution and consideration can give you an advantage.

Another of our gifts is association with the night. We rest at night, tucked in upon ourselves, with the warmth of nearby bodies holding us in comfort. And we dream. Does this surprise you? Perhaps, but it is true. So our gift to you is the gift of dreaming. Call us to your nights, and ask to be delivered clearly into dreaming. We will assist you in this process. Similarly, when you spy us in the daylight hours, stop for a moment and consider—"Of what dreams is Crow reminding me?" Think back into the night, and see what you remember. Take a moment, and acknowledge that Crow might be activating your daytime dreams as well. "CAW! CAW! What is it you are wanting? CAW! CAW! You want to fly? Well, fly then. It is up to you."

Take a moment to reflect. How do you feel about Crow?



Elder Wisdom

Cree Spiritual Elder Pauline Johnson

TOBACCO

Tobacco, in our culture, has been an exchange for thousands of years. Anytime we receive anything or take anything from Mother Earth, tobacco must be there.

For me as a spiritual elder, when we say 'bring me tobacco', we have many forms, including the tobacco we make for ourselves from other plants. I use the very natural tobacco (herbs) in my sacred pipe. For many years, I don't know if my ancestors used the word tobacco in my language. We use the word 'steem ow' (phonetic spelling), a sacred symbol of shredded leaves to give to the ancestors to acknowledge you respect them enough to give, when asking for blessings. In our culture we were always told 'tobacco moves first'. Tobacco, ceremonial smoke and smell - the spirits seem to really want an exchange.

For some reason unknown to me, the essence and smoke from that tobacco seems to reach out and touch the Great Spirit and the ancestors in a powerful manner. It's the first thing we do if we talk about medicines. If people smoke it, you have to smoke it for the ancestors, not for other reasons. I don't smoke, so I will lay it on the ground, the earth, or put it into the fire. A story I was told: the ancestors sit and smoke it alongside you. Even when you place it on the ground, they are there, joining you and doing ceremony with you. It is a powerful movement for my people, to know that tobacco moves that strongly between this realm and the unknown. When tobacco is used in the wrong context, like cigarettes and addictive tobacco, you are just using it for your own purpose and not for working with spirits. That in itself is abusive.

Not all Nations use tobacco as an exchange of thanks, some First Nations people do. We do. For myself, it has been there for generations and generations. I just know it works. Tobacco touches the heart of Creator. Anytime, if I don't put tobacco down I foresee that my ceremony is not complete. As a young person or beginner you might forget, and for some it is not a steady routine in their lives. For me it is constant.

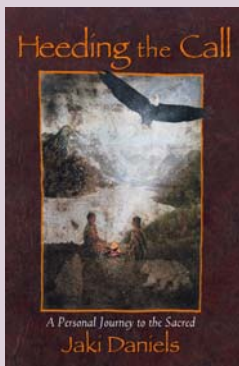
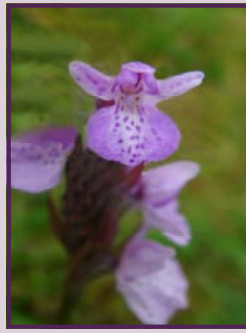


In our next issue: Jaki's Corner. Watch for it.

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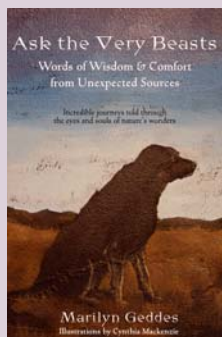
Plant photographs by Jaki Daniels.

Our graphic designer, Jeri-Lee Rose, is the Office Manager for Hearthlight Publishing, Assistant to Jaki Daniels, and a student of ARC Energy Body Work. She has dedicated her life to learn and grow through the teachings of Spirit and Love.



Within the pages of this book you are invited into a sacred circle, where the intimate and personal details of the author's journey to a world of ancient healing practices, shamans, ceremony, and the powerful forces inherent in nature are revealed. Let yourself be carried along as she shares her six-year quest, catalyzed by a mystical experience in Alberta's Rocky Mountains, followed by travels in the US, Mexico, and Peru, and culminating in accepting herself as a modern-day medicine woman, willing and able to offer the healing gifts she has been given.

Step outside the ordinary. Learn how to venture into these otherwise hidden realms and experience for yourself how the shamanic spiritual ways can be a personal doorway to the sacred.



Ask the Very Beasts is an inspired compilation of magical conversations with animals—and also some unexpected sources—that will touch the heart of anyone who has ever loved a pet or marveled at the sighting of a wild creature. From perspectives that are not typically available to us, the unique offerings from these non-human teachers speak to our deepest longings and most profound questions with clarity, grace, wisdom and humour. Through their words, we are humbled and uplifted, for we cannot help but recognize that *everything* in our world has value, intelligence, and a capacity to inform us. This book will change forever your understanding of your true place within the web of life.