Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

How Plants Help Us

Dan Matthews · Wednesday, April 24th, 2019

I was invited to a plant meditation and writing workshop a few days ago. I thought I had misunderstood what the person had said; however, my hearing was perfectly fine. What she was proposing was a session of seated meditation while surrounded by numerous plants and using them as a muse for an inspired writing session.

I have to admit, it piqued my interest. I ended up signing up for the workshop for later this month. The concept ignited my interest regarding the inspiration this woman had for creating this workshop. After looking into the reasoning behind it, I wasn't surprised to learn of the many benefits that humans receive from plants—both passively and consciously.

Magic in the Air

There is a reason why so many people give plants as housewarming gifts. House plants act as natural air purifiers in our homes. Depending on the plant species, you could be pulling chemicals, mold, or other pathogens from the air. Your little plant friends work to reduce the amount of harmful airborne particles you would otherwise be breathing in.

Perhaps you were unaware you were gifting more than just a house plant. As the Beatles once said, "I get by with a little help from my friends." Much like our friends, plants actually make us happier. All your plants ask for in return is some space, sunlight, and to be watered on occasion.

Aromatherapy is another way to spread plant love and magic in the air of a room. Using essential oils (extracts of flowers) in a diffuser emits odors that can work to help with various issues. The smell of lavender can help to relieve stress and anxiety, orange essence can brighten your mood when you feel stagnant, and peppermint can help you to feel more alert. It is incredible how walking into a room with a diffuser can change what is happening in your mind and body.

Botanical Medicine

The aroma of certain plants can have a deep impact on your mind, but what about ingesting them? Plants have always been used as medicine throughout recorded history. We have developed vaccines and antibiotics from plant roots and flowers.

Botanical medicine is such an incredible gift from nature. Without the development of the millions of medications currently on the market, our lifespans would be shorter and many of those affected with chronic pain would have a poor quality of life.

Many people use plant medicine on a daily basis as nutritional supplements. Herbs, plants, and flowers are dried and put in a capsule to ingest, just like other medications. They are also made into tinctures, teas, and elixirs for us to enjoy (like elderberry liqueur). They are used for a wide range of issues and are a natural alternative for people who do not want to support pharmaceutical giants.

Sometimes it is simply the presence of plants that can help to relieve ailments and symptoms. Many hospitals and therapists incorporate plants into their treatment rooms. Doing so helps to bring cheer to places some people associated with negative emotions. The Japanese practice of forest bathing has been prescribed since the 1980s. It has a long list of benefits including:

- Strengthening the immune system
- Lowering blood pressure
- Reducing feelings of stress and anxiety
- Improving your mood and ability to focus
- Accelerated recovery from surgery or illness
- An increase in energy level and passion for life
- Improvement in falling and staying asleep

Plants as a Muse

There is a long list of notable writers who have devoted their entire careers to writing about plants and the mysticism of nature. A blossoming rose, spring buds on a cherry tree, resilient desert flowers — each of these can evoke poetic thoughts and reflections on life.

As I run my hands over the spines of the books in my library, I feel silly I ever had a second thought about participating in a plant meditation and writing workshop. Especially after reading the following, written by the recently deceased poet Mary Oliver:

> *… I don't know exactly what a prayer is.*
>
> *I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down*
>
> *into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,*
>
> *how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,*
>
> *which is what I have been doing all day.*
>
> *Tell me, what else should I have done?*
>
> *Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?*
>
> *Tell me, what is it you plan to do*
>
> *with your one wild and precious life?*

If you are looking for inspiration, take the time to walk out the door and seek out a green space to sit and watch the world go by. By being submerged your psyche in the outdoors, surrounded by plants, your brain is given the space and time to hit a reset button. Our daily lives are too often plagued with to-do lists and burdensome schedules

If we can find the time to sit and observe plants and flowers, what else is there to learn? The rewards we have of incorporating them into our home, daily meditative practice and use as medicine have served us well so far. If we take the effort to recognize the value of plantlife, there is only potential to further understand their magic.

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