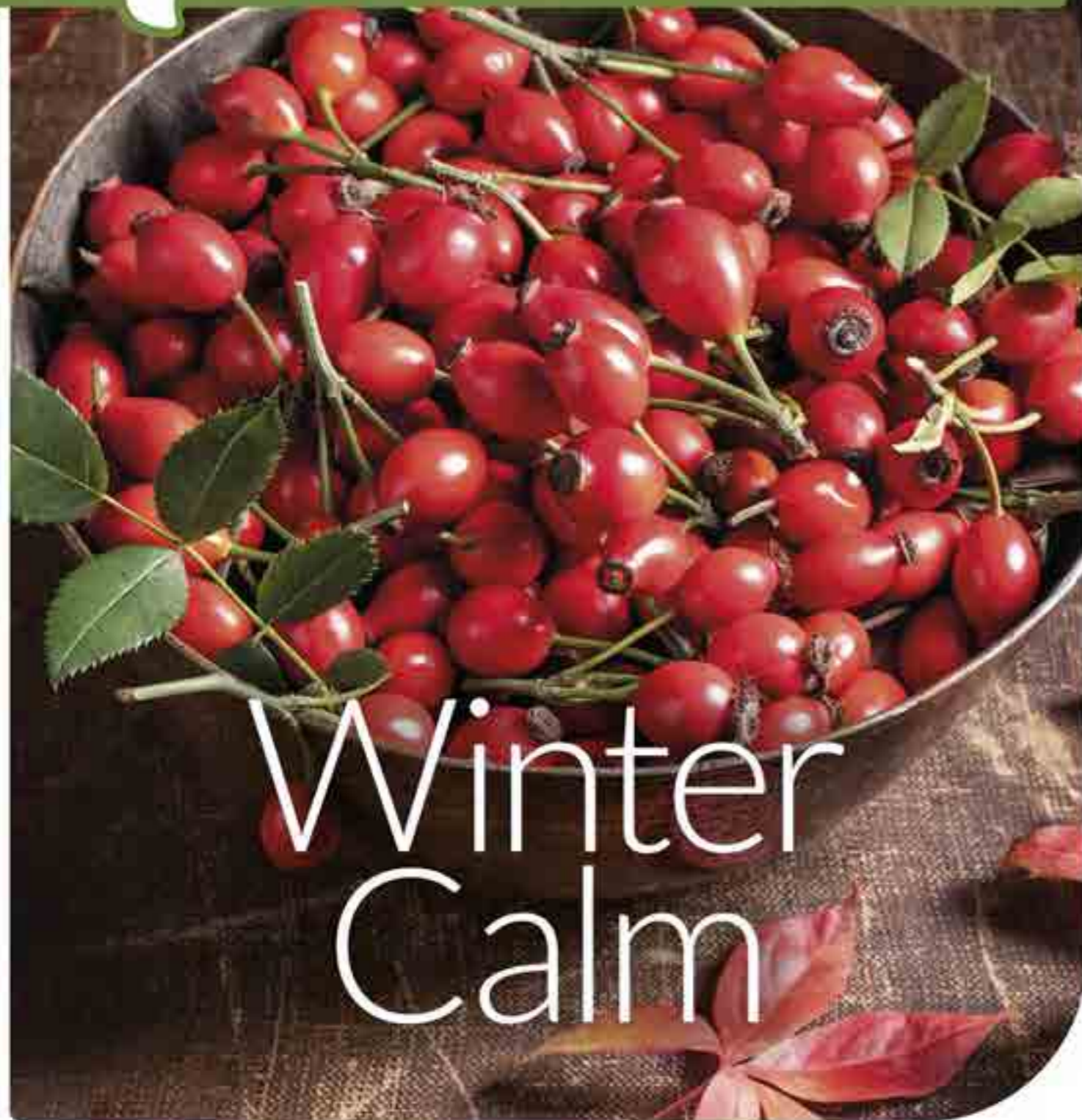


Winter
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OF MEDICAL HERBALISTS



Winter Calm

Strength in Diversity,
Strength in Numbers

New Zealand Natives
as Alternatives to some
Exotic Phytomedicines

Winter Foraging &
Kitchen Delights

FEATURE

VALMAI BECKER & ISLA BURGESS

The Community Herbalist: A Different Look at Herbal Education

PHOTOS: PHYTOFARM, ISLA BURGESS



Valmai Becker



Isla M Burgess
MSc.

VALMAI BECKER

In the 1980's Valmai owned *The Old Shipping Office*, an Akaroa restaurant popular for its provincial cuisine, artful plate design; use of herbs and edible flowers. She attained a Diploma in Naturopathy (ND) in 1980 and with this qualification she established and managed a clinical practice for eight years, specializing in using the philosophies and traditions of natural medicine and a holistic self-healing model of wellness. She used Herbal Medicine, Nutritional and Massage Therapy to manage acute and chronic conditions.

Valmai is a well-known Naturopath and Professional Member of New Zealand Association Medical Herbalists. Her passion for Natural Medicine took her into the realm of education and for 17 years she was a Co-owner and Director of Canterbury College of Natural Medicine. As the course director she wrote curriculum to New Zealand Qualifications Authority standard for the Diploma programmes taught at the college and was a teacher in many aspects of Natural Medicine.

ISLA M BURGESS

It is more than 50 years since I began my lifelong journey into the complex world of medicinal plants and an unopened packet of seeds still thrills me with delight.

I am a plant woman, a gardener, grower, medicine maker, teacher, writer, a holistic Scientist and have been for many years a Herbal Medicine practitioner. I have also been the director of The Waikato Centre for Herbal Studies and the International College of Herbal Medicine.

This lifelong focus has found me presenting at conferences here and overseas, participating in documentaries: 'Earth Whisperers Papatuanuku' (New Zealand) and Numen (USA).

The survival of biodiversity on the planet and the loss of medicinal plant species in the wild is one of my main concerns.

Books from Isla include:

- Weeds Heal. A Working Herbal
- The Biophilic Garden Connecting People, Plants and Inscape
- A Women's Health and Wellbeing Kete. A DIY Guide
- A Women's Health and Wellbeing Kete Volume II

You can reach Isla on her Website at www.islaburgess.com or follow her Blog at www.islasite.wordpress.com

Course participants in **The Community Herbalist (TCH) programme** come with an experience of either Valmai Becker's Apprenticeship course at Phytofarm (Little River), or Isla Burgess's 'The Traditions, Art and Science of Herbal Medicine' at Viriditas, Central Otago.

"During the Covid pandemic it became clear to both of us that what was lacking was having specialist herbal practitioners who had an in-depth knowledge of their local flora. Those trained people who could educate their local community about the plants, both wild and cultivated to enhance their and their whanau's

the
community
herbalist
PLANTS FOR PEOPLE

health.” As herbal educators with over 70 years experience between us, we are increasingly concerned that Herbal Medicine today in New Zealand, as a stand-alone efficacious option in health care, does appear to be relegated to second best. Pre-prepared tinctures and expensive over the counter isolated and/or concentrated constituents taking precedence.

In the first year of this course participants deepen their knowledge of and connection with 47 locally grown or locally gathered plants. In this year each plant is explored from a sensory, commercial, analytical, (its phytochemistry, pharmacokinetics, sustainability, research and clinical relevance), and wholistic perspective, with respect to its qualities and nature, its ‘Mauri’.

The group gathers for workshops at both Phytofarm and Viriditas. The first ‘From the Ground up’ covers a range of practical applications of water-based therapies including Hydrotherapy with the client as the focus. The participants explore the drying room, the extensive gardens, the Phytofarm product range and healing foods. This part of the course also includes a detailed coverage of all the documents and requirements for the establishment of a Herbal Medicine practice/business.



Hoheria populnea leaf and whole end stems

The second workshop at Viriditas practically explores Organolepsis as an evaluating tool for determining quality in Herbal Medicine. Participants question long held beliefs by creating research projects on optimal extracting menstruums (see comparison of Althaea officinalis and Hoheria populnea as one example). The understanding of polarity in extracting plant medicines and the role of Herbal Tonics in clinical prescribing and the research-based construction of these, is covered as well as the relevance of Hormesis and Chaos and

Complexity in health and wellbeing.

Year Two of this programme focuses on Herbal First aid (with Valmai Becker), the health issues experienced by ‘Children and Parents’ (with Asti Renaut as tutor) and ‘Ages and Stages’ (with Isla Burgess).

This year includes each participant actively working in their local communities, prescribing locally grown and prepared infusions, tonics and tinctures under supervision. Course participants complete two years of Health Sciences to nursing standards with prior learning being considered.

Dr. Nicky Baillie offers a workshop towards the end of the course that covers Scope of Practice, when to refer on, how to dialogue with mainstream medicine and her insights from her clinical practice as a Herbal Medicine Practitioner.

Looking ahead, other applicants who have studied Herbal Medicine outside of the programmes offered at Phytofarm and Viriditas will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Criteria will apply.

Here is a link to The Community Herbalist education group: <https://thecommunityherbalist.co.nz/>

Helen Dobson's project: Organoleptic Assessment of Althaea officinalis root and leaf and Hoheria populnea leaf and small stems.

Plant All in 25%	Texture	Taste	Look	Smell
Hoheria lf	Sticky Mucilaginous	Gum like Slightly antiseptic	Pale Yellowish green	Very slight antiseptic
Hoheria stem	Very Mucilaginous	Very gummy Sweet 'hit' Like Gin. Fruity, sweet/sour	Clear very pale colour	'Rounded' sweeter
Althaea lf	Syrupy	Slight bitter/sweet Smooth Low mucilage	Pale, clear greenish/yellow	Not nice, rancid
Althaea Radix	Smooth, Stringy Sticky	Slight bitter/sweet	Pale yellow brown	Slight Antiseptic aroma

RESEARCH PROJECT COMPARING THE 1:10 IN 25% FRESH PLANT EXTRACTS OF

- *Althaea officinalis* leaf and root
- *Hoheria populnea* leaf and whole end stems

This was both surprising as well as interesting. The Hoheria stem (not

just the lacy inner bark) contained the most mucilage, far more than the Althaea root. Althaea is not the easiest plant to grow requiring much moisture. Hoheria besides being 'local' coppices well and will likely be a more sustainable option in the future as the climate changes. Helen is researching other Hoheria species.



Organolepsis



Althaea officinalis leaf and root

ADVERTISEMENT

A Different Look at Herbal Education

THE COMMUNITY HERBALIST COURSE

is a two year course that will equip the participant with the knowledge and skill to work as a community herbalist.

The course content is written by **Valmai Becker & Isla Burgess**. The first year semester commences in October 2023. Please email to info@phytofarm.co.nz and receive all course information and application procedure or look at our website thecommunityherbalist.co.nz

