

1. Documentation of your work

1. Kara Vaneck, apprentice to Marion Harless, has developed an urban demonstration garden featuring (in this photo), from foreground to background, blueberries, strawberries, walking onions, a currant bush, a peach tree, comfrey and a hazelnut bush, amongst other wild edibles like dandelion and chickweed. Kara's yard has been transformed into an edible, permaculture landscape that is open to the public for tours by appointment and is located at 515 Center Avenue in Weston, WV 26452. June 2018



2. Marion Harless, master artist is shown here making a dandelion frittata with fresh dandelions from her garden. To make a dandelion frittata, first lightly fry a handful of dandelion blossoms in grapeseed oil, add three whisked eggs and cook covered on the stove or in the oven for 5-10 minutes. May 2018



3. A view from Marion Harless' "mulch patch" garden showing an edible ostrich fern and a witchhazel tree. Kara and Marion will make witchhazel lotion later in the season. Witchhazel lotion is astringent, antibacterial, and antiinflammatory and can be used for ailments ranging from cuts and scrapes to bacterial infections. May 2018



2. Biographical information

Marion Harless, Master

Born 6/29/1935 in Steubenville, Ohio and currently resides in Kerens, WV

☐ Brief (350 words or less) description of the art form/tradition. Description may discuss aesthetic, technical, and/or historical aspects about the tradition.

MARION HARLESS, Master

Like many other West Virginians whose families live around the edges of the state, I was born in a hospital in the adjacent state. I attended public schools in Weirton and earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees at West Virginia University.

My parents, Everett and Jane Hoag Harless, like many others of that era, were very knowledgeable about native and cultivated plants and their uses. My father grew up in Logan and my mother spent her first six years just across the Pennsylvanian border. After an apartment, they built a house on three wooded acres which expanded to seven and then to ten. Cleared areas for gardens, orchard, vineyard, chicken house had most trees removed, but many trees and shrubs were left in the area around the house. By the time I was five, I knew the names of the 21 tree and shrub species in the yard.

Until my final years in high school when my mother had taken a job and my father was again remodeling our house, we had a large garden. We preserved tomato juice and grape juice in gallon jugs. We made many kinds of wine. Hundreds of quarts of pears, peaches, blackberries, corn, green beans, vegetable soup et cetera provided nutritious meals. Pints of strawberry, raspberry, blackberry, currant, gooseberry and fruit preserves, jams and jellies provided extra nutrition and flavor. Zesty additions were sauerkraut and an array of pickles, relishes, chow-chow, tomato butter and more.

My brother Ron and sister Merrill all learned planting, cultivating, harvesting and processing techniques. We didn't eat a preponderance of "wild foods." Besides our cultivated grapes, cherries and asparagus, we had wild ones. We pick, picked up, got, gathered, dug, et cetera. We never "foraged" but were always pleased to encounter new things in our explorations (Harry Caudill pointed out that is what "remoors" do and it often indicates rather mindless searching.) "Go see if – is ready" was a common instruction. We knew where things grew.

In 4-H (ages 13-21), I took many projects each year – always including cooking, baking, insects, birds and trees. 4-H then emphasized conservation, neighbors, relatives, nature and conservation camps, Audubon and great professors in a huge variety of forestry, biology and botany classes all added to my knowledge of plants and their uses.

Kara Vaneck, Apprentice

Born 7/24/1984 in Fairview Park, OH and currently resides in Weston, WV

KARA VANECK, Apprentice

Science recognizes 391,000 species of vascular plants in the world, according to a report by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in the United Kingdom. Nearly all of them are green, with the exception of the saprophytic and parasitic ones that feed on dead and living tissue, respectively, instead of sunlight. Traditions, in the context of this apprenticeship, shrinks this number considerably, narrowing the focus to those plants native to West Virginia and used by West Virginia inhabitants.

The topic Green Traditions touches on the biology, taxonomy, growth habits, evolutionary characteristics, uses, ethnographic persuasions, historical significance and aesthetic aspects of plants. As a gardener and herbalist, studying plants from all angles enhances my ability to design gardens and medicines, in the same way the painter's study of color and light improves her work.

From roots to fruits and soil to boil, plants provide nourishment, shelter, medicine and water. Aside from being critical to human survival, they are truly the most fascinating medium an artist could ask for, and they appeal to all the senses. Marion has a handsome Hanson's Double Rugosa tea rose that

welcomes visitors to her “mulch patch” garden with a fragrance to be remembered and a stunning display of decadent blossoms. Step too close, however, and its torturous thorns will not-so-politely discourage one’s approach. The feelings that arise when one is near to this plant are akin to those evoked by the most romantic of paintings. A cup of tea made from its hips or petals further delights and impresses. One of nearly 400,000, this plant demonstrates the richness of the artform we’ve coined Green Traditions.

☑ Up to twelve accomplishments or personal milestones, including learning and education, presentations, exhibitions, as well as events that have influenced your development as a traditional artist/tradition bearer.

MARION HARLESS, Master Artist

- 1) 1949 - Mon Hancock County 4-H Demonstration Day competition with my sister Merrill, with three tree grafting techniques (“Trees” projects)
- 2) 1951 – Presented with honorary biology award at Weirton High School (unique award)
- 3) 1952 – 1959 – Counselor at Nature Camp at Oglebay Park and 1953 Nature counsellor for Chicago and WCA Summer camp in Indiana on Lake Michigan
- 4) 1954-1961 – Naturalist – New York – New Jersey Conservation Commission. Regional Nature Museums – Palisades Interstate Park Commission
- 5) 1960 – Top A in 5-hour graduate class in Linnology (fresh water plant and animal ecology)
- 6) 1973 – Sold collagraph “A Tree for Emily” to two professional artists (previously unknown to me).
- 7) 1974 – Hired on Venezuelan government two-year contract to help set up an individualized instruction program at Institute Universitario Pedagógico de Maracay. Trained faculty, helped them write materials for their disciplines, prepared materials in psychology, scientific methodology, creativity. Set up experiments for psychology lab.
- 8) 1979 - Hired as last CETA Director – Augusta Heritage Arts Workshops 1979, 1980
- 9) 1979 – Turtles: Perspectives and Research published by Wiley Interscience, 695 pages. Favorite review comment – “Harless and Marlock (co-editor) set out to do the impossible and did it.”
- 10) Late 1980s – Founding member of Mountain State Organic Growers and Buyers Association, an outgrowth of the West Virginia Herb Association. Edited newsletter several years.
- 11) 2009 – Taught for the 32nd year at Augusta – Herbs, Herbs at Home, Herb Gardening
- 12) June 2018 – Just took outdoors Seville orange trees started from seed from my mother’s garden in Tucson in the 1980s and Key Lime tree from seeds in limes brought back from Florida by my neighbors in 1977.

Kara Vaneck, Apprentice

- 1) 2007 – 2010 – Farm Hand at The Silva Project’s organic kiwi farm in Kerkyra (Corfu), Greece; learned basic orchard management, discovered the two-faced nature of stinging nettle, became familiar with the kumquat and how it came to be the fruit of the small Greek island, worked to analyze a population of wild ponies that evolved on the island of Skyros, Greece, enjoyed the health benefits of Greek Mountain tea
- 2) 2011-2013 – Farm Manager at Whippersnapper Farm Project – Here I learned how to manage a community supported agriculture produce subscription program and how to grow fruits and vegetables for a market garden.
- 3) 2012 – 2015 – Owner of Smooth Ride Smoothies, a traveling, bicycle-blended smoothie business; sold fresh fruit and vegetable smoothies at Mother Earth News Fair in Seven Springs, PA and at other events throughout West Virginia
- 4) 2015-2017 – Vice President of the West Virginia Herb Association
- 5) 2013-2015 – Apprentice to Dot Montgillion of Smoke Camp Crafts

- 6) 2013 – Presenter at WV Small Farms Conference
- 7) 2018 – Better Processing School Graduate. Over the course of the 2-day class, I learned the basics of food processing and fulfilled one of the requirements for operating a commercial food manufacturing facility, like the one now used to produce Smoke Camp Crafts' products

3. Artist statement

Recipients shall include an artist statement, addressing his or her influences and how the recipient became an artist. This statement must be limited to 250 words or less.

MARION HARLESS, Master

Telling people about plants and their uses is one of my favorite things to do. Being able to work with one very interested person over an extended period is wonderful and I'm very grateful that the Humanities Council is allowing us to do this.

Our title "Green Traditions" is meant to be very broad in order to explore numerous aspects of plants.

My long time experience with wild and tame plants is extensive, but I am always learning new things. Publications of all sorts arrive frequently in my mail box, and I am an avid reader and rememberer.

Four papermaking workshops at Augusta for example, added a new dimension to plant uses. Selling naturally dyed, hand spun, handwoven scarves of local wool and mohair and selling produce, herb plants and herb products at home, a health food store in Texas and at the Elkins Farmer's Market is another component. Incorporating plants into printmaking classes at Midwestern State University and the University of Texas at Arlington was another expansion. Teaching people from age 4 to in their 80s has been a constant pleasure and I learn something from nearly everyone.

KARA VANECK, Apprentice

Having grown up in a suburb of Cleveland, my early childhood exposure to plants was limited to the tamed and manicured landscapes so ubiquitous in urban housing developments. When I was six, my parents took me to visit my great grandmother Elizabeth Rado on the east side of Cleveland where I rambled through fields of wildflowers that had taken the place of the once prolific vegetable gardens and picked raspberries and currants that tasted like nothing I've had since. That memory stayed with me throughout the rest of my childhood and teenage years.

It wasn't until after college when I moved to Corfu, Greece to work on an organic kiwi farm, that that my passion for plants blossomed. Most people in Greece kept gardens of their own and I observed them closely. I still employ some of the practices that I learned from those small homestead gardens, one of which is the use of irrigation ditches between garden beds through which rainwater from my roof is directed.

Countless subsequent experiences, including running a small market garden through the West Virginia Small Farm Center and an apprenticeship with Dot Montgillion, a long-time West Virginia herbalist, provided me with the requisite knowledge to work with Marion Harless, whose expertise in the fields of plant ecology and Appalachian ethnobotany is unmatched.

4. Contact information

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