

## 2020 Artist Profile for West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship

Leenie Hobbie, Traditional Herbalist

Born in Alexandria, Virginia on December 28, 1960

Currently lives in Kirby, WV (Rio, WV postal zone)

### **Practitioner Bio (350 words or less)**

I have been a traditional home herbalist for the past 30 years here in West Virginia, growing and wild-crafting native plants for use as food, folk medicines, art supplies, body and home care preparations. I live with my husband of 35 years in our hand built home where we birthed, raised, and homeschooled our four children who are all grown now. From seed to apothecary and pantry preservation, I have tried to stay close to the Earth, make use of what grows abundantly and conserve, protect, and steward the native medicinal plants of Appalachia.

My work as an herbalist has been primarily for my family, as was the case for most traditional Appalachian herbalists. Additionally, I have prepared a variety of herbal preparations for supporting optimum health for neighbors and community members, sometimes selling at local farmers', master gardeners, and artisan markets. My primary focus has been on teaching others to make their own products to meet their everyday needs. While knowing the plants that are nourishing and healing may have once been an essential survival skill, it still has value in our modern culture and I have devoted my life to preserving these skills through my daily choices, through teaching, and currently as I work on my first book compiled from 30+ years of keeping home herb journals.

### **Description of traditional art form (350 words or less)**

Herbal traditions of Appalachia go back hundreds of years and are woven of strands from many other traditions, including Native American, African American, and a variety of European ethnic groups. One thing that was common to all is a sense of gratitude for the bountiful and healing plants and a sense of responsibility to care for their families and communities using plant allies. This common knowledge formed the foundation of a folk tradition that has endured and continues to be pertinent today.

Long before the days of pharmacies, drug stores, or even nearby general stores, when doctors and hospitals were few and far between, most homes had at least one person who was knowledgeable about plants for every day challenges such as colds and fevers, teething or colicky babies, achy joints, and for basic first aid. And a community often had one or more "Granny Women" who could be called upon to assist a woman who was giving birth, as well as provide specific remedies that might be needed. While these traditions may seem quaint and outdated with the advent of antibiotics, vaccines, and the range of tools available via modern medicine, there is still a place for this traditional knowledge. Again

and again modern scientific research affirms the effectiveness of traditional tonics and remedies such as Elderberries and Echinacea. One thing that the folk tradition teaches us clearly is that remedies and preparations that do not work are not passed on generation after generation. If people are still using Elderberry syrup to prevent and treat colds and flu it's because it was effective over time.

We are fortunate to be living in a time and a place where we are free to choose and make use of both the latest advances in medical science as well as simple plant based remedies from our gardens, woods, and open meadows to address common health challenges in an economical and personally empowering way.

**Optional Accomplishments/Milestones (up to 12)**

\*Home-birthing our four beautiful children naturally with traditional direct entry midwife in attendance.

\*Studied with a variety of traditional herbalists including Jeanne Rose, Rosemary Gladstar, Jeannine Baker, Doug Elliot, and others both formally and informally in West Virginia and elsewhere.

\*Led many wild herb identification walks in my community and region.

\*World Fire Cider Making Day participation with local community members for many years.

\*Apothecary Skills classes taught locally.

\*Keynote speaker at the Shenandoah Valley Herb Gathering in 2019.