

PLANT HEALER QUARTERLY

OCTOBER 2025 | VOLUME XV | EDITION IV



THE ALCHEMY OF DECAY

Reflections on the cycle of life &
death as we enter the harvest
season



"He found himself wondering at times, especially in the autumn, about the wild lands, and strange visions of mountains that he had never seen came into his dreams."

— J.R.R. Tolkien

Editor's Note



CELEBRATING THE ALCHEMY OF DECAY THIS AUTUMN.

THE HARVEST SEASON IS A PARADOX BETWEEN COZILY TEMPERATE AND THE HAUNTING SOUND OF AUTUMN TREES SHEDDING THEIR LEAVES. IT IS THE TIME OF THE WITCH, THE TIME OF THE HARVEST QUEEN BEFORE WE PLUNGE INTO THE ICY DEPTHS OF WINTER.

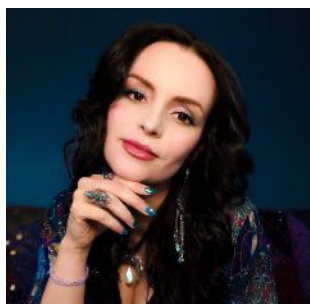
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*Plant Healer
Magazine*

Image by Monika Goździewska

OCTOBER 2025 | VOLUME XV

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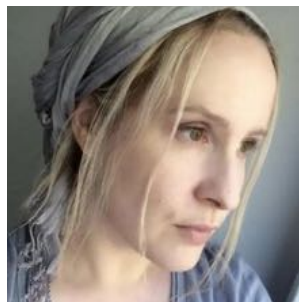
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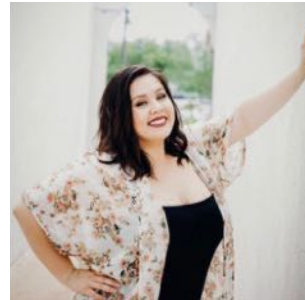
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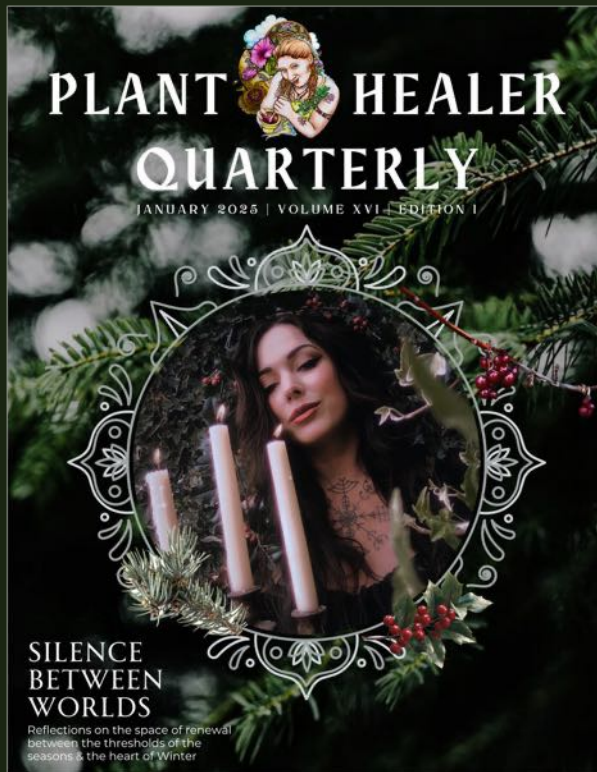
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Featuring Sarah Collins - Owner of Moon Goddess Magick Apothecary



Q&A

With Melissa Herold, Owner of NightBlooming

Plant Alchemy, Fairytale Hair, & the Magic of Ritual Beauty

Images are courtesy of NightBlooming

Q: What inspired you to create NightBlooming, and how did your journey with herbs begin?

I wanted red hair from the moment I knew people could have red hair. While many little girls had legions of blonde dolls, mine, to a one, were gingers.

The first time I dyed my hair, its boring-seeming brown was transformed into something bright and fiery. I was in love, and hopelessly hooked. But, as I learned, nothing fades like red dye. By the time my roots needed touching up the length was faded, so I'd pull the dye through the length to refresh the patchy color.

Soon enough, the hair I had fallen in love with was no longer the hair attached to my head. After years of aggressive styling and dyeing, my hair broke off, inch by inch, from my hips all the way up to my shoulder blades. I developed a sensitivity to the chemical dyes, and each touch-up left my scalp red, irritated, and peeling. At its worst, my hair was a faded, patchy, straw-like broken mass of split ends, and my scalp was tender and red.

Distraught and despairing, I looked for a better way. Over the course of this journey I researched an immense amount about the structure of hair, how conventional treatments damage it, and how natural ingredients and unconventional care can offset that damage.

I traded salon cuts for microtrimming, began to wear my hair up with sticks and forks, and began to experiment, not only with natural off-the-shelf products, but also with creating my own. When I started to share this with others they were ecstatic, and asked if I would be willing to make some of my creations for them, and so NightBlooming was born!

Q: Your hair growth oils and henna products have a cult following. What's your creative process like when developing a new product?

Our world is saturated with meaningless purchases—every creative step I take for a new product is intentionally doing the opposite—I want customers to connect to my products through the stories around them, and to build small rituals around their use that fosters serenity and mindfulness. A lot of creative energy goes into defining not only the need and the ingredients that can fulfill it, but also

envisioning the experience of using it. I only commit to a new product when I am confident that I have a viable idea, that can be made with natural ingredients, and that will be a delight for my customers to use.

Q: How has your love of mythology and folklore inspired how you work with plants?

My love of folklore, literature, and mythology deeply inspired my love of working with plants. My formal degree is in English Literature and my graduate thesis was *Magic in Literature to 1700*, and my minors were in Philosophy and Biology. It's always been fascinating to me to see the “magical” properties attributed to plants that very often are rooted in truth! Being able to draw upon these literary and historical texts makes my products more than just a pile of ingredients, they're a homage to how much we've learned and the ways that nature can heal us.



Of course that cuts the other way, too! Many bits and bobs from folklore are not accurate to the true properties of some plants, and so here my background in biology helps me separate the proverbial wheat from the chaff. In the end this makes my products both inspiring and effective!

Q: What advice would you give to someone new to herbal hair care?

Read trusted sources and garner an in-depth understanding of the plants or plant-based products you want to use. I wrote an article about [10 Damaging Natural Hair Care Pitfalls](#) that is free for signing up for my mailing list because there's just *so much* to debunk!

Natural health and beauty products, and especially those coming from outside the country, are not subject to government oversight, and that means ignorant (at best) and unscrupulous (at worst) people and

companies can take advantage of people without a good knowledge base.

A lot of natural living blogs are just regurgitating content they read on some other blog, without trying it for themselves, or really understanding what they're writing about; it's untrustworthy content. The more damaging side effect of one blog copying another is that this repetition makes something seem to have a legitimacy that it doesn't.

My advice would be to look at multiple, credible sources and put in the time to truly understand what is possible and what is not. A great example of this is herbal hair colors—all herbal hair colors work by depositing color, and cannot lighten your hair (though sometimes they can make hair appear lighter). If a “herbal hair color” is claiming it can turn your black hair blonde, well, that's an impossible claim, and if someone is armed with that knowledge, they've just been protected from a suspicious product.





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Damaging Natural Haircare Pitfalls

(and what to do instead)

**Are you making one
of these mistakes?**

Sign up to have this 45 page guide
delivered right to your inbox, along
with special offers and discounts!

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Q: Can you talk about how you work with lunar cycles in your product creation and your hair/skin care?

Looking at NightBlooming's products, it's pretty obvious I draw a lot of inspiration from the moon! One of the things I do every year is provide a [Lunar Hair Care Calendar](#) for my customers, with a printable version available to Patrons. This not only gives me and my customers the most important lunar dates to take advantage of and avoid, it also helps develop impactful rituals depending on what phase of the moon you want to take advantage of.



Some of my product's creation is also tied to the moon! My favorite example of this is [Moondust Herbal Dry Shampoo](#), which takes an entire lunar month (from one full moon to the next) to make. To just add essential oils to the powdered ingredients would make it sticky and hard to use; instead, the essential oils are added to strips of natural silk and these are gently tossed in the orris root powder. Over the course of the month, the

essential oils infuse into the powder without making it damp or clumpy. At the next full moon, I sift out the silk, and the Moondust is ready to go to customers!

Q: Will you share your number one tip for repairing damaged hair naturally?

I feel like this will be an unpopular answer, but there's two parts: 1) Do no harm and 2) Patience. Hair, other than the root, is not alive, and therefore cannot heal. This is why the title of my book is [Rehabilitating Damaged Hair Naturally](#), because while you can make some of the symptoms of damaged hair better, the hair itself cannot be restored to its former state. In that light, the most important thing to do with damaged hair is to stop doing the things that damaged it in the first place. That means giving up heat, chemical dyes, perms, relaxers, aggressive styling, and more. There is no miracle product that will repair damaged hair (though I developed [Féathelas Healing Salve](#) while I was rehabilitating my own damaged hair and that helps *a lot!*)



Q: Your bio says “An herbal alchemist, Melissa owns and runs NightBlooming where she blends up herbs and oils that grow real-life fairytale hair, including ones lifted right off the pages of *The Iyarri Chronicles*.” Can you tell us more about the fantasy world you’ve created and how your love of natural beauty has impacted your fiction?

I would love to! [The Iyarri Chronicles](#) is about a young woman, Aurelia, who discovers she is half-Iyarri, a winged forgotten race. Aurelia must harness her unique blood and long-unseen powers before they tear her body, her heart, and the Iyarri in two. Over the course of the series, Aurelia is plunged into Iyarri society, which is full of unguents and oils that are infused not only by plants, but also with magic.



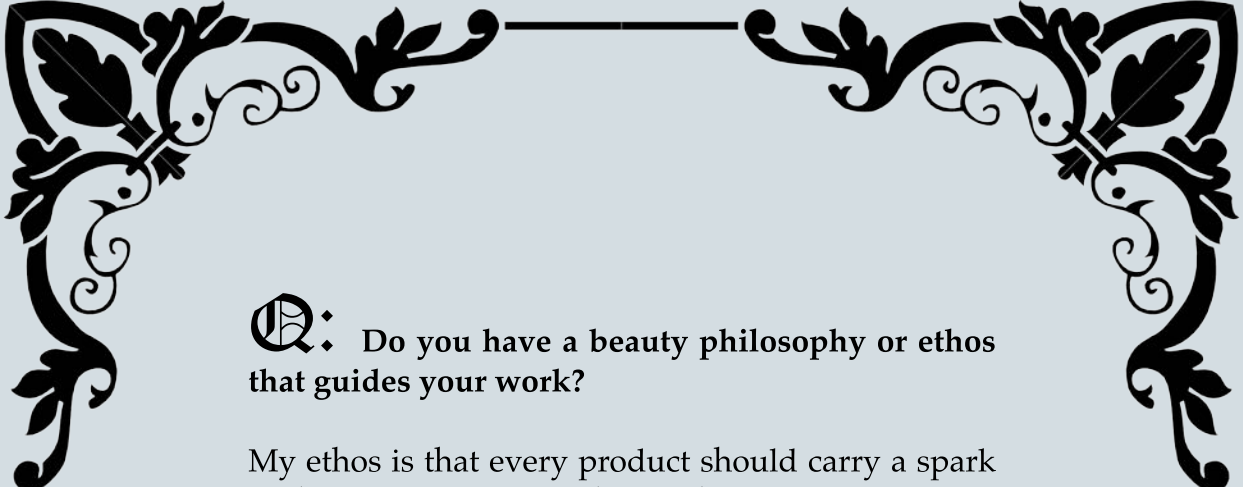
One of the many ways I got to show this in the books is describing the oils that the Iyarri use to clean their feathers—each has a unique blend—I created these at NightBlooming so that when reading the books the scented Novel Blends help people connect with the characters and immerse deeper into the world. The Iyarri live in natural stone bluffs, far away from humans when they can help it, and so this provided me the opportunity to capture the beauty of the natural world, from waterfalls, to endless forests, and frigid, sparkling swaths of ice.

Q: You’re well known for the gorgeous natural fragrances you blend for your products. How do you approach the process of scent creation?

Aromas are tied to our memories and experiences in a powerful way, so scent creation starts with imagining what I want that scent to invoke, be it a person (real or fictional, such as my [Aurelia](#) blend), a place (like a lotus pond), an era (like my Victorian blend), or something elusive (like Samhain Spell). After I know what that scent will (hopefully!) invoke for whomever smells it, I work backwards towards the individual notes to conjure that impression.







Q: Do you have a beauty philosophy or ethos that guides your work?

My ethos is that every product should carry a spark of the natural world within it, the caring intention it was created with, so it can be received and used by someone to reconnect with both nature and themselves as part of a self-care ritual. I believe everyone should feel loved, appreciated, and connected to the natural world around us, and that includes loving themselves!

The process of creating every NightBlooming product is mindful, and done with reverence for the plants and natural ingredients included within them. The finishing touches make them feel like a gift, and they *are* a gift even if it's one for yourself!





[Emily Glass](#) Feb 13, 2019

I LOVE fire genasi. It is seriously amazing. Easy to use, very forgiving, and 1000x better than chemical dyes. Helps my hair stay strong and frizz free. Did it before my wedding and absolutely love how it looks in the pictures—you wouldn't believe how many people commented on it! Thank you, NightBlooming!

Q: Do you mind telling us a bit about how you create the nuanced differences in your natural hair color options?

Oh I love this question! We've all heard claims that this henna is the most red, or this one is the most orange, and of my favorite experiments was comparing [6 types of pure henna by controlling every other variable](#). The reality is that each of us suffers from a tendency towards confirmation bias, the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories. Which means that if you spend a lot of money on henna that is 'the most red' you will tend to decide that you get more of a red color because you are expecting to. Or if someone tells you that a specific type of henna looks 'more orange' you might look at a

labeled picture of it among other strands and go "yep, that looks more orange" when you may not have thought so otherwise. I did this test hoping that if there was really a "most orange" henna that I'd use that in my more copper blends, if there was a "most red" henna, I'd use that in the redder blends, etc. Except turns out that good quality, pure henna has no meaningful difference from one to the next, but other variables will give a lot of variance in color.

Lawsonia (the orange-red dye molecule in henna) is red-orange, and so I push the color by diluting the amount of henna and balancing that ratio with other herbs such as cassia/senna, and indigo. I include a lot of recipes that break down exactly how to do this in [Coloring Hair Naturally with Henna & Other Herbs!](#)







Q: What would you say is the best way to create a natural detangler?

I don't think that making a natural detangler is something achievable for most people, Selkie is by far my most complicated product to make. [Maybe a DIY face mask that incorporates Selkie would be a better fit?](#)

Q: Is there one particular plant you have a special relationship with or that has had a lasting impact on how you approach beauty and wellness?

Oh that would be Stinging Nettle! I absolutely adore the plant because it's both powerful in natural beauty recipes, but if you've ever accidentally brushed up against a Stinging Nettle plant, you are well aware of how it got its name! This dichotomy really guides how I approach beauty and wellness—so many many

plants are so beneficial if used correctly, but can be dangerous if not respected or used appropriately. Taking the time to have a true understanding of the benefits and detriments of any plant, and using them responsibly is the lesson nettle taught me!



Q: What does having fairy-tale hair mean to you and how do you help other people achieve it?

Fairy-tale hair, to me, is long, with naturally tapered ends—like Galadriel from Lord of the Rings, or The Lady of Shalott as painted by John William Waterhouse (this is one of my favorite paintings).

The conventional beauty industry that makes money by making people feel less-than. It makes them feel that something is not-pretty or wrong and so must be changed so that one conforms to these destructive beauty standards. What good comes from buying a product because it made you feel less-than?

I help people achieve fairy tale hair by showing my customers that hair tended to

with patience and plant-based products, is both beautiful and achievable without having to change a thing about themselves. I help them find the magic and ritual in using healing products that make them feel beautiful, grounded, and worthy every single day.

Q: Thank you for sharing with us, and for everything you do. Could you let readers know where they can find your products?

Thank *you* for the opportunity to share! Readers can find my articles, books, and products at NightBlooming.com, and can get early access to products, discounts, and extra by becoming a [Patron](#)!



You can get \$5 off your first order with NightBlooming by using the code in the Resources section!



Photo credit @darkfaerietales_

THE TYARRI CHRONICLES

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