

## **Are Herbs Endangered Species?**

*By Cynthia Burrows, M.T. ASCP*

Many people around the world are alarmed at the disappearance of the rainforest in South America. But did you know that similar ecosystem destruction is occurring everywhere, even in our own neighborhoods! We tend to take our plants (and trees and animals) for granted with little or no thought to the seemingly endless supply of medicinal plants.

Rosemary, the herb of remembrance, and the memorable Rosemary Gladstar has much in common. Rosemary Gladstar is a “healer for the new millennium”. She is a leader and visionary in the field of folk herbalism for more than three decades, inspiring an entire generation of herbalists and a driving force in herbal education.

Although the resurgence of herbs for medicinal purposes is “positive”, it also has engendered these same plants worldwide. The World Wildlife Fund estimates that 30,000 to 60,000 plants are facing extinction! Even here in Texas, some of our native plants like Echinacea Purpurea, or purple coneflower, which many of us take regularly, are “losing ground”. There is now a growing demand for herbal products; herbal medicines are the fastest growing pharmaceutical in the U.S.. Have you noticed recently that there seems to be fewer wildflowers and less lush full fields of growth compared to previous years? Medicinal plants here in Texas and worldwide are disappearing due to urbanization, logging practices, over harvesting and deforestation. This has devastated many areas of former abundance.

If you are like me, you want to continue being able to use natural substances as much as possible and enjoy seeing fields filled with flowers and lush greenery. Today gardeners and farmers are discovering a means for cultivating organic plants by good soil management and giving spirit and energy to the plants.

Rosemary Gladstar is founder of United Plant Savers (UpS), non-profit grass root organization of concerned individuals; many are herbalists, dedicated to the conservation and preservation of native medicinal plants and the land where they grow. UpS was formed in the spirit of hope by those committed to protecting and replanting at risk species and to raise public awareness of the plight of our medicinal plants.

Rosemary says, “Everyday radiant well-being, in mind, body, and soul, is a function of everyday self-care. It’s a prescription for life. It’s a part of what you do, what you take into your body, and what you feed your mind. Radiant well-being is finding your joy in life. Exploring your passions... Whatever you choose to do, do it well, and do it joyously.” We are in partnership with the plants, so let’s give back what we receive...health, nourishment, beauty, and protection.

Join Rosemary Gladstar for a benefit conference for United Plant Savers called, “Planting the Future” on Sunday April 14, 2002 at the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower

Center. Join us for a day of workshops, herb walks and demonstrations with renowned herbalists from around the country.