PLANT BULLIES PROCESS BOOK

by Inna Alesina

"Paying attention is a form of reciprocity with the living world"

— Robin Wall Kimmerer, the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*

As I walk the familiar trail in the park, I try to understand what gifts I can offer to this land. Some things are more visible, like picking up trash, keeping it from wildlife and the stream. Or freeing a tree from the invasive vines that threaten to strangle it. Most invasive plants were cultivated for various purposes but now escaped, wreak havoc on local ecosystems. Foraging for invasive plants and using them for food, medicine, and art, can be one way to give a gift of reciprocity to the land. Any plant reassigned for a new purpose, slows its encroachment on native plants.

My current creative project **The Gifts of Time, Space and Attention** explores the needs of the land where introduced exotic organisms threaten the biodiversity of the system. Since fall of 2020, my family and I volunteered weekly at Gunpowder Falls State Park, collecting trash, and working on Invasive Japanese Barberry control in an ecologically-sensitive area.

As an artist, I explored introduced invasive berries from many angles including: food, natural dye, medicine, sculpture, fashion, structural design, branding, participatory design, video, and more.

Inna Alesina

RECIPES

JAPANESE BARBERRY RICE PILAF

modified from **https://comfortfoodinfusion.com/barberry-rice-pilaf/**

INGREDIENTS

4 cups cooked basmati rice about 2 cups uncooked
1/3 cup barberries
1 onion sliced very thin
1/3 cup butter or vegan butter
1/2 cup sliced almonds
2 Tbsp. sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. fresh orange peel or dried and re-hydrated
pinch saffron crushed and soaking in 1 Tbsp. water

DIRECTIONS

- Cook rice according to package directions.
- Clean barberries.
- Crush a pinch-full of saffron, so that it is almost a powder. Add to the saffron powder, 1 Tbsp. water. Set aside for later.
- Combine onion and butter in a large fry pan over medium-low heat. Cook, stirring frequently until onions are almost caramelized, or a light golden brown (approximately 15 minutes).
- Add to the onions, the almonds, sugar and salt. Turn heat up to medium and cook for about 5 more minutes, stirring often. Add barberries (or cranberries), orange peel and saffron with water. Cook and stir for 5 additional minutes.
- Pour cooked rice into a large serving bowl. Top rice with barberry pilaf mixture. Serve.

FRUIT LEATHER WITH PLANT BULLIES AND ALL KINDS OF LEFTOVERS

HERE IS A LIST OF FRESH OR FROZEN INGREDIENTS I HAVE USED TO MAKE FRUIT LEATHER IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER OR QUANTITIES.

Orange peel, figs, pumpkin, nettles, apples, **autumn olives** pulp, **linden viburnum** juice, **Japanese knotweed shoots**, dried **Japanese barberry berries powder**, ginger root, kombucha scobi, cayenne pepper flakes, sugar, honey, wineberries, juneberries, peaches, apricots, cherries.

DIRECTIONS

- Blend ingredients in the blender to make puree.
- Taste the mixture as you blend to determine what to add. Most likely sugar!
- Pour blended mixture on the cooking trays covered with parchment paper.
- Dry in the oven at 200°F. Turn off the oven periodically to let it air dry.
- When dried enough to peel from the paper, cut into strips and place in the storage container. Optionally, make them into rolls.
- Store in a zip lock bag in the freezer or refrigerator.

COMPOTE WITH PLANT BULLY LINDEN VIBURNUM

INGREDIENTS

- Linden Viburnum clusters picked after the first frost
- Water
- Honey or sugar to taste

DIRECTIONS

- Rinse viburnum clusters. Keep berries on the branches, it helps to yield more juice.
- Crush the berries with hands or a tool of your choice. I find using hands the most enjoyable. If later in the season when berries are drier, add a bit of filtered water as you work.
- Strain the juice using sieve. Add water to the leftover pulp and repeat extracting juice. 2-3 times will still get you juice in various levels of dilution.
- Sweeten and dilute the juice to your taste. To store, freeze concentrated juice and use during the winter season.

SPRING ROLLS WITH PLANT BULLIES

INGREDIENTS

- Depending on the season, any edible shoots, flowers, leaves, roots, and mushrooms. Use fresh or blanched. Add protein of your choice (hard boiled eggs, cooked chicken or shrimp.)
- Spring Roll Rice Paper Wrapper
- Home-made peanut sauce or dipping sauce of your choice.

Foraged filling ideas
Flowers: dandelion, day lily, **rose-hip petals**, dames rocket, oxeye daisy, clover, **wisteria** flowers, dead nettles, milkweed flowers (cooked), nasturtium, borage, violet, common chickweed.
Leaves: sheep sorrel, wood sorrel, wood nettles, lambs quarters, purslane, common plantain, dandelion.

DIRECTIONS

- **Dip wrappers in water.** Fill a large shallow dish with an inch or so of water. Remove one rice paper wrapper from the package, and place it in the water to soak. Allow it to soak for about 10 to 15 seconds and then remove and place on a cutting board or counter-top. The rice wrapper should still feel pretty firm at this point. It will soften as it sits and as you add the filling ingredients.
- **Add filling.** Layer a bit of each ingredient on the softened wrapper.
- **Wrap tightly.** Fold the sides of the spring roll in over the ingredients. Then pull the side closest to you up and over the ingredients, sealing everything together tightly, and rolling it up like a burrito. Enjoy

DARK CHOCOLATE BARK WITH JAPANESE BARBERRY

INGREDIENTS

- 7 OZ semi- sweet chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 2 teaspoons ground **barberry**
- 1 Tbsp. coconut oil
- Optional 2-3 tablespoons fruit leather broken with coffee grinder.

DIRECTIONS

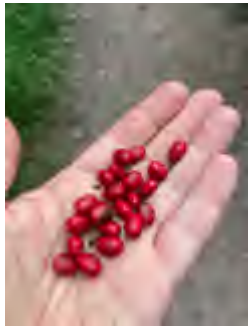
- Dry and Grind berries in the coffee grinder.
- If using fruit leather (see previous recipe) dry it before breaking it in the coffee grinder.
- Melt chocolate chips and coconut oil in a pan on a very low heat. It melts fast, so I mix it constantly not allowing it to burn.
- Add honey, barberry powder and optional fruit leather pieces.
- Remove from heat and keep stirring until all ingredients are incorporated.
- Pour mixture in the tray lined with parchment paper. Experiment by sprinkling orange zest, crushed nuts, more barberry powder.
- Refrigerate for about an hour.
- Cut into chunks and place in storage container. Enjoy!

GIFT IDEAS
FOR THE LAND

Making "Gifts of Time, Space and Attention"
process detail

Pick up random pieces of trash. Plastics are most harmful because they break down into micro plastics and travel up the food chain.

Keep trash out of the forest. Here, artist Yana Karp repurposes golf balls found on her walk into garden sculptures.



Collect seeds of various invasive plants to keep them from dispersing. Here, I picked Japanese barberry, Porcelain berry, Oriental bittersweet, and Asian jumpseed.
Each walk = a gift of time for the land.

Learn how to identify and remove invasive plants. Window cut is the best technique for vines. Cut at shoulder height and at base all way around tree.

Don't buy invasive plants. Replace your invasive plants with native alternatives. Talk to your neighbors about what you are doing and why.

Create an edible lawn. It is more fun than a store.

Leave a meadow area on your lawn.
Don't spray, don't mow.

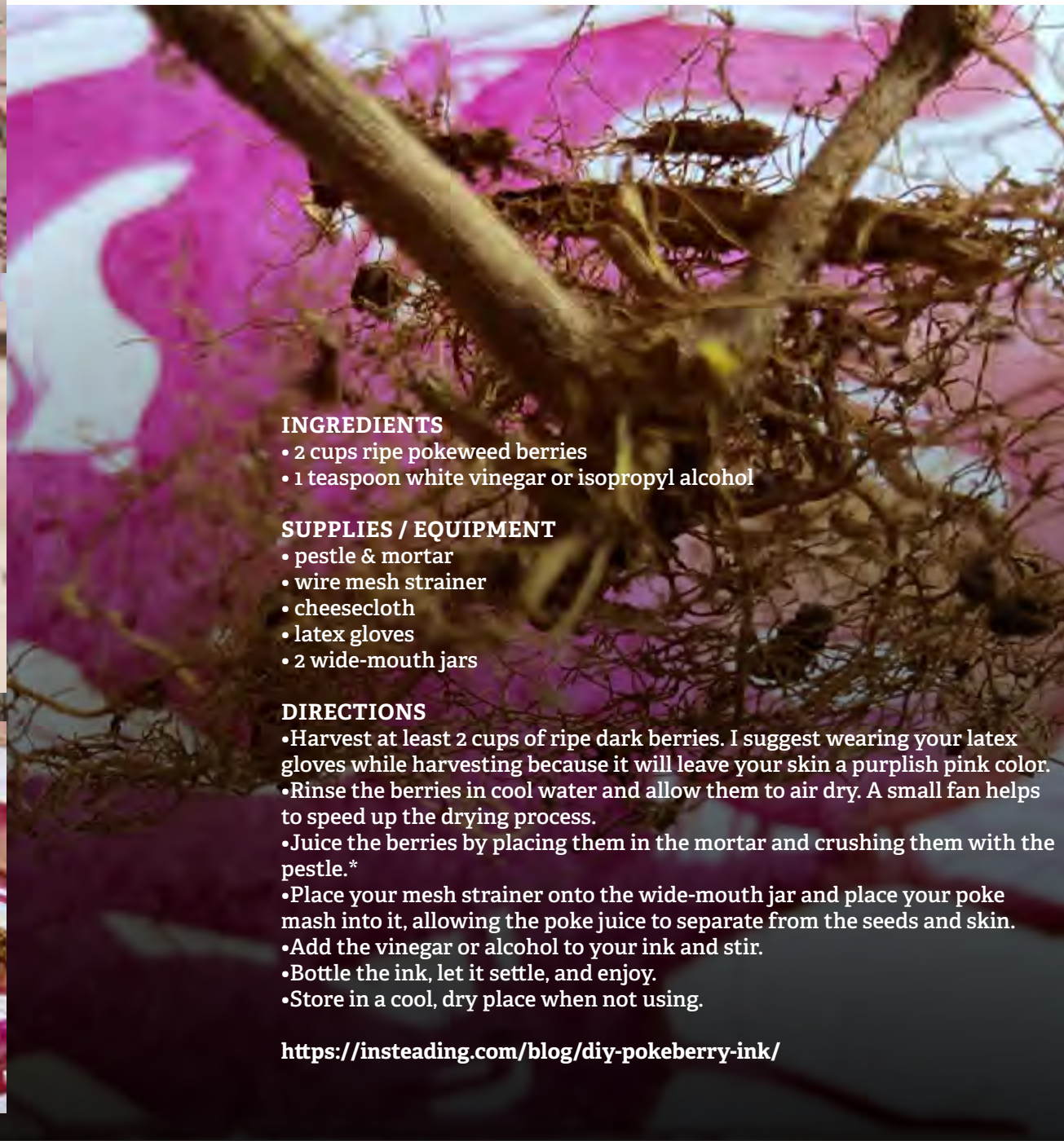
Plant native pollinator garden

Don't rake leaves. Leaves are home for fireflies and more.

ART
PROJECTS
& MORE WITH
PLANT BULBS

CYANOTYPE

POKEWEED BERRY INK



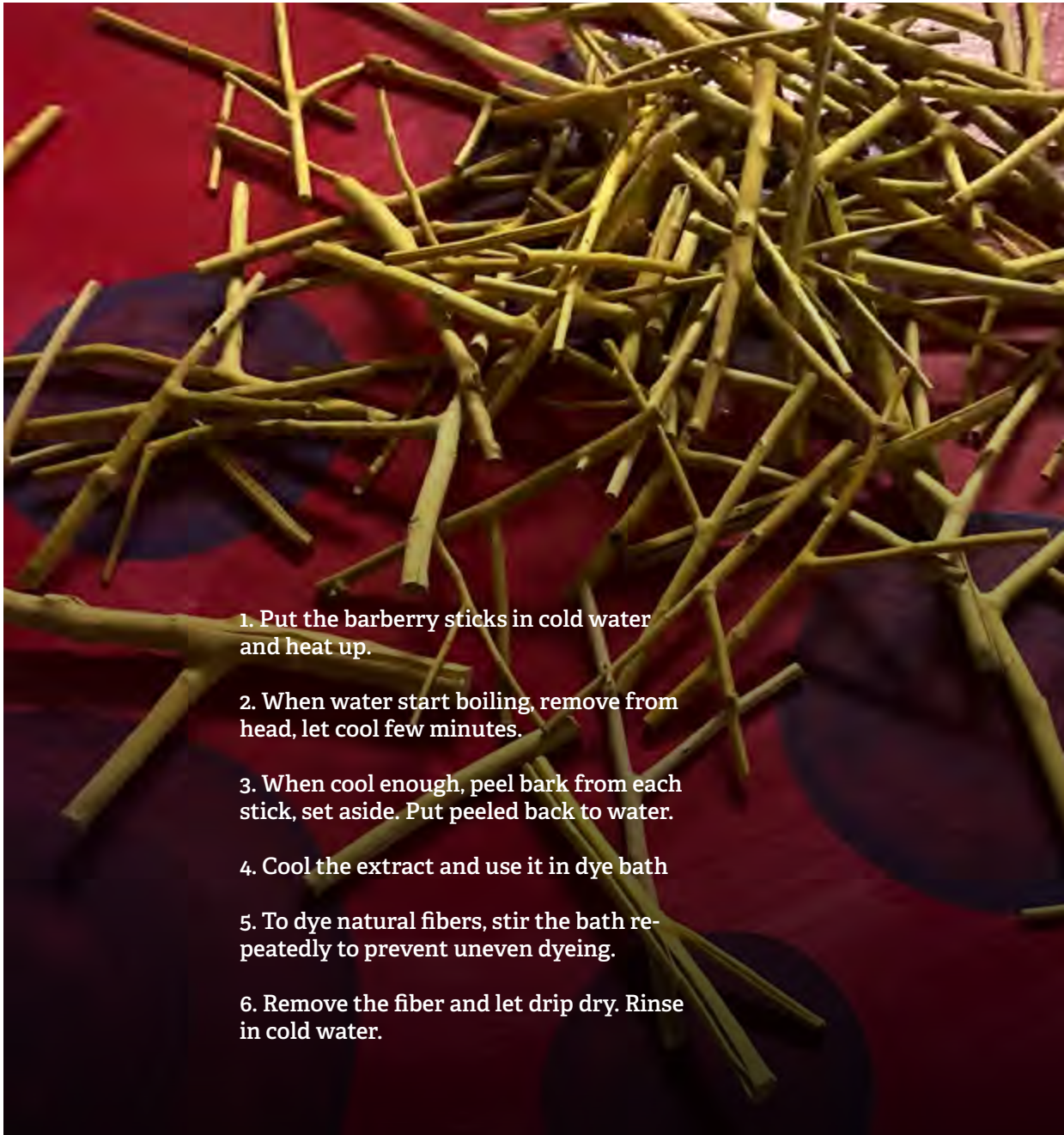
INGREDIENTS
- 2 cups ripe pokeweed berries
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar or isopropyl alcohol

SUPPLIES / EQUIPMENT
- pestle & mortar
- wire mesh strainer
- cheesecloth
- latex gloves
- 2 wide-mouth jars

DIRECTIONS
- Harvest at least 2 cups of ripe dark berries. I suggest wearing your latex gloves while harvesting because it will leave your skin a purplish pink color.
- Rinse the berries in cool water and allow them to air dry. A small fan helps to speed up the drying process.
- Juice the berries by placing them in the mortar and crushing them with the pestle.*
- Place your mesh strainer onto the wide-mouth jar and place your poke mash into it, allowing the poke juice to separate from the seeds and skin.
- Add the vinegar or alcohol to your ink and stir.
- Bottle the ink, let it settle, and enjoy.
- Store in a cool, dry place when not using.

https://insteading.com/blog/diy-pokeberry-ink/

JAPANESE BARBERRY STICKS AND DYE



1. Put the barberry sticks in cold water and heat up.

2. When water start boiling, remove from head, let cool few minutes.

3. When cool enough, peel bark from each stick, set aside. Put peeled back to water.

4. Cool the extract and use it in dye bath

5. To dye natural fibers, stir the bath repeatedly to prevent uneven dyeing.

6. Remove the fiber and let drip dry. Rinse in cold water.

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