

Luminara Star Florescu

Freedom Learning Project



What is Freedom Learning?

Freedom Learning has many other names:- Unschooling, Free Range Learning, Autonomous Learning, but all adhere to the educational philosophy that human beings learn best from the world around them.

As well as a practising artist, I am a parent of two children. We have been a home educating family for thirteen years using a Freedom Learning approach. With the encouragement and support of Zoe Li of Somerset Art Works, I have created this booklet of invitations for families to create and learn through the natural world. I use the word *Invitations* rather than *Tasks* or *Activities* as these two words often fill us with dread and can make learning feel like a chore for children.



Calendula flower heads after petals removed.

Through daily walks and explorations into the landscape around you, I invite you and your family to deepen your connection with nature in ways that may be unfamiliar. I also invite you to experience the healing and relaxing elements of working with plants. To understand the power and creativity of Plant Medicine as a path to learning and healing.

Bright Blessings, Luminara



Invitation 1

Plant Infused Oil

Most herbalists prefer to use plant infused oil rather than essential oil due to its more diluted and gentle nature.

Plant infused oils are simple to make although you do need a degree of patience as the oil takes around 4 -8 weeks to infuse. I always use Organic Sunflower oil as it rarely causes any allergic reactions.

For ages 5+

Method

You can use many herbs and flowers to create infused oil. For this Invitation we are going to use Dandelion flowers.

Health Benefits: soothing

- sore achy muscles
- arthritic joints
- rough or chapped skin

Dandelions are found in gardens, grasslands and hedgerows. Please make sure not to pick flower heads that come from an area that may have been sprayed with herbicides.





You will need:

- A jar with an air tight lid
- Enough flower heads to fill the jar half way
- Sunflower oil to fill the whole jar

Once you have picked flower heads, they will need to be spread out onto a paper towel and left to dry for a couple of days. This removes the moisture from the petals so that the oil lasts longer.

Alternatively, you can use undried flower heads if you plan to use the oil within one month.



Once flower heads are ready, fill a clean and dry jar half way with the flower heads and cover with sunflower oil right to the top of the jar. Avoid an air pocket between the oil and the lid. Placing a piece of grease proof paper on top of the jar before closing the lid can help to seal the jar tight.

The oil and flowers now need to stand in a dark, warm space for 4-6 weeks (undried flower heads) 6-8 weeks (dried flower heads). You can put the jar inside a paper bag or wrap it in a dark cloth and leave on a sunny window sill.

Once the oil is infused, pour the oil through a sieve and discard the flower heads.



Foot Massage

Our feet work hard, carrying us around all day. Dandelion oil is perfect to sooth achy and tired feet. Children can give their parent or carer this simple but relaxing foot massage.

- Fill a bowel with warm water and add some flower petals - rose petals are nice to use.
- Ask your parent or carer to soak their feet in the water for 5 mins.
- After 5 mins, dry each foot with a towel gently.
- Then massage a tea spoon of the dandelion oil into each foot.
- Finally, put warm, soft socks on each foot. Ask your parent or carer to put their feet up and relax for at least 15 minutes. Maybe you could make them a cup of tea while they relax.



Myth and Magic

In some magical traditions, the goddess Aphrodite is often connected with dandelions due to her association with bees. Whereas, the root of this plant is said to be connected to the goddess Hecate a deity of the underworld and of witchcraft.

Our ancestors used Dandelion as a tool for divination. Blowing the seed head and counting the seeds remaining was believed to determine the number of children you would have.

In Victorian Flower language, the Dandelion symbolised Love, Faith, the Sun, Welcome and Wishes coming true.

Image: 'Goddess' - Luminara Star Florescu 2020



Invitation 2

Plant Inks

Plant inks are simple to create and can be made from most plants although flowers often produce the best pigment colours for this method.

Age 5+

(young children will need adult supervision)



Method

Many different flowers can be used for making plant inks. Wild and garden flowers both are suitable. For this invitation I have used Giant Iris flowers.

You will need:

- Two large handfuls of flower petals
- A mortar and pestle
- Boiling water
- A small, clean jar
- A bird's feather and white paper





Pick two large handfuls of brightly coloured flower petals. Use the mortar and pestle to crush the petals as well as you can. You will start to see the pigment being released from the petals.

Keep going until nearly all the petals are damp with the pigment.

Pour the boiling hot water over the crushed petals and let it sit for 24 hours.

Then, strain the coloured water through a sieve into a small jar. This is now your plant ink.

Plant inks will last longer if left in a shady and a cool, dry place. Some plant inks, such as Iris can turn very smelly if you put a lid on them.

Plant Spirit Drawing

Just like human beings, every plant is unique. They call us to interact with them in many different ways.

Hold some of the petals from the flower you used to make your plant ink, in the palms of your two hands. Spend a few quiet moments looking at the petals and ask yourself these questions:

Why did you choose to work with this plant? Was it the colour of the petals or the smell, or was it the shape of the flower?

Now take the feather and draw whatever comes into your mind. There is no right or wrong thing to draw. Do not think about it too much, just let your feelings do the drawing - or it might be words or a poem.

Image: 'Iris' - Luminara Star Florescu 2020



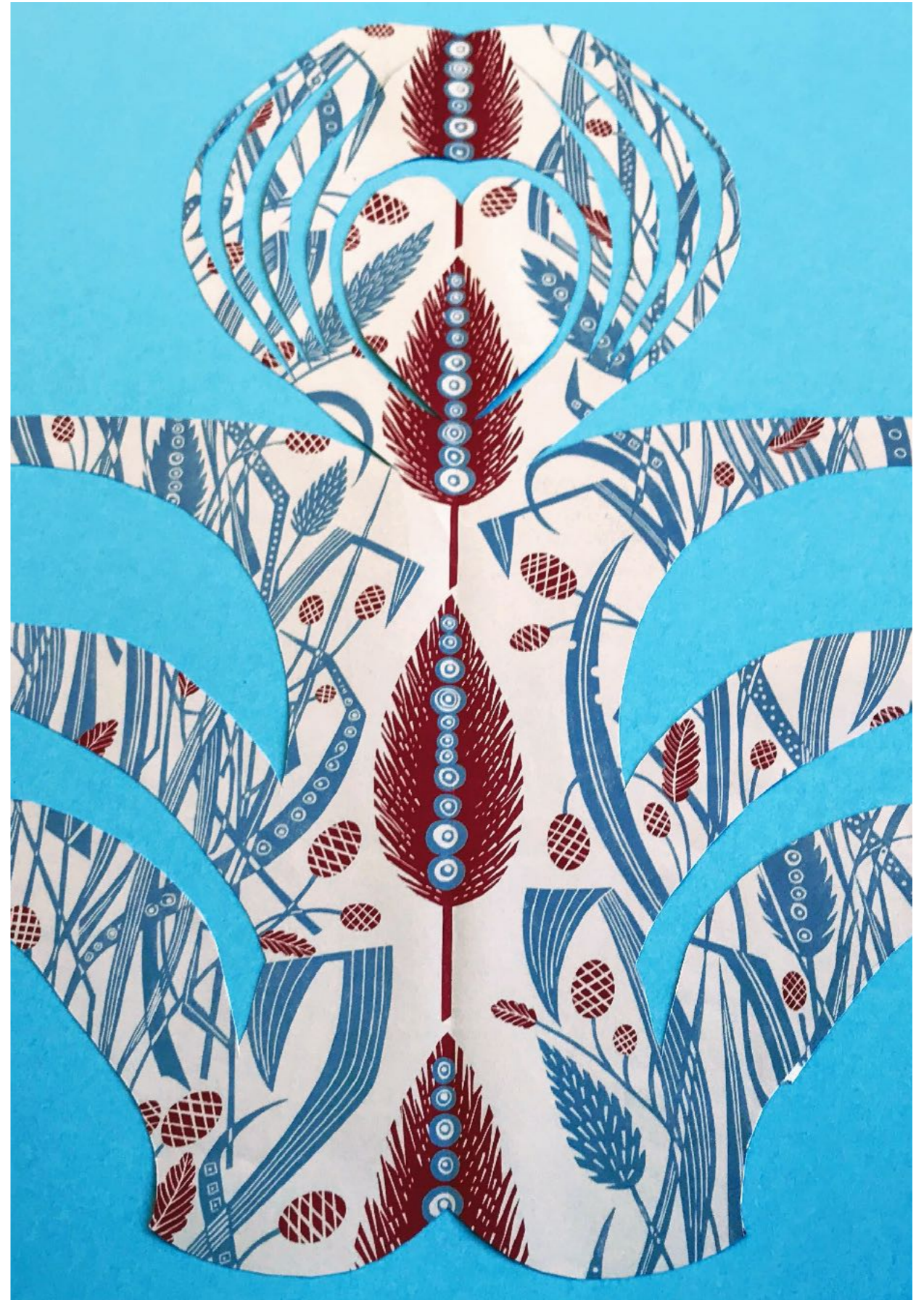
Myth and Magic

In some magical traditions, Iris is thought to represent the Rainbow Goddess. The flower unblocks old patterns inspiring us to beauty and grace, and restoring a path to art and creativity. It is sometimes called, “The paintbrush to the soul”.

The scent brings us to know ourselves through the Higher Self so we can connect more deeply with the universal principal of Divine Feminine.

Iris flowers are also known to heal and restore the skin's moisture levels. While soothing and comforting our busy minds.

Image: 'Corn Goddess' - Luminara Star Florescu 2018



Invitation 3

Herbal Teas

There are many plants and flowers around us in nature and in our gardens that can make refreshing and relaxing herbal teas.

Age 5+

(young children will need adult supervision)

When choosing plants please check with an expert if in doubt.





Method

When gathering plants and flowers from the wild or even the garden, stick to plants you know well. Nettle, Rosemary and Lavender are easy to identify.

You will need:

- Petals or leaves from your chosen plant
- A teapot and a tea leaf strainer
- Boiling hot water
- Gloves, scissors & gathering bag- if using nettles



Pick a handful of fresh leaves or petals.

Nettles: wearing gloves, snip the first 3 or 4 top leaves of the plants with scissors.

Lavender: best used once petals have dried on the plant.

Rosemary: Cut a sprig from main plant and pick off leaves ready for teapot.

Wash the leaves under cold water to remove any bugs.

Pour boiling hot water into the tea pot to warm it first.

Empty the warm water and place your washed leaves into the teapot.

Pour boiling water over the leaves and leave to brew for 5 minutes before pouring through a tea leaf strainer into cups.

Sit down, relax and drink tea slowly. You may need to add some honey to the nettle tea for taste.

You could also use a combination of plants to create a herbal tea mix.

Tea Ceremony

Tea ceremonies have been performed for hundreds of years. They create time to be still and bring our busy minds to the present moment.

Set a table with your best tea cups. Invite members of your family to join you. Follow the instructions above to make the tea. Pour each person a cup of tea and sip slowly. Allow yourself to taste the flavours of the tea on your tongue. Ask others to share what sensations or flavours they experience when drinking the tea. Enjoy this time of being together in the present moment.



Myth and Magic

In many shamanic and magical traditions, herbal teas are used for healing and divination.

In Chinese cultures, tea and ceremonies are older than Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. In a Chinese shamanism, known as Wuism, shamans and sorceresses would pick leaves in the mountains nearby temples and make them into tea. The tea was used during meditation, divination, and sorcery.

Romanian Gypsies traditionally told people's fortunes by reading the shapes made by tea leaves left at the bottom of a cup, after the enquirer had drunk the tea.

