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## A cure for what ails you might be growing in the woods

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By David Johnson



### EVERYONE HAS A STORY



Sequoia and Aoife Ladd...

People featured in this column have been selected randomly from the telephone book.

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MOSCOW - Sequoia Ladd says she chose her first name to replace her given name, Katie, after falling in love with northern California's ancient redwood trees.

"You can say it made a lot of sense to have a tall redhead nicknamed Sequoia," she reasons.

But her fascination with plants, Sequoia explains, goes much deeper than the roots of a redwood.

"I've been a clinical herbalist for 15 years," says the 35-year-old married mother of a toddler daughter named Aoife. "I had a clinic in Tacoma for seven years called Grassroots Botanicals."

Today, after coming to Moscow about four years ago with her husband, David Billin, Sequoia continues to work out of her home as an herbalist and wildcrafter, growing, harvesting and collecting medicinal plants.

"When I see clients, we'll go over nutritionally what's going on with them," she explains. "And then I'll make recommendations. Sometimes herbs work, sometimes not. Sometimes it's just food. In fact, a lot of times it's food."

Tall, taut and talkative, Sequoia appears to practice what she preaches about holistic lifestyles. Common sense rules in all things, she explains.

"Take whole foods. The whole is always greater than the parts. We see this in science, and it's the same with nutrition or herbs. Anytime you're looking at a food, whether it's at McDonald's, or the Co-op, or the grocery store, it's always going to be better for you if the food hasn't been broken down in multiple parts and been passed through multiple hands."

For the record, Sequoia confesses to eating at McDonald's as a teenager. But as the coordinator of volunteers at the Moscow Food Co-op, she now champions the virtues of organic cuisine to promote health and prevent illness. When the latter becomes a problem, she hails the medicinal qualities of herbs.

"It's as simple as what you put into your body is what you become," Sequoia says. "After years of doing treatment, I much prefer prevention." Having been raised on a six-acre farm in California between Stockton and Lodi, Sequoia credits her grandmother for teaching her about gardening, folk medicine and living close to the land.

The Moscow Food Co-op, she says, reflects much of what her grandmother taught. "In a community, I think the co-op, or the farmer's market, or when you have a store that's willing to really take a look at what producers are offering, it becomes healthier for the community."

But ailments like colds, the flu and more chronic conditions like fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome, can be debilitating for many individuals within a healthy community, Sequoia explains. To help such people, she turns to a shelf in her kitchen where numerous large jars are labeled with words like fire weed, hawthorn, fennel, lavender, orange, Oregon grape, peppermint, rosemary, rose hips, yaro, cramp bark, devil's glove and many others.

Most of the time, she concocts teas from the contents of the jars, mixing and matching what might work best for the specific conditions of clients who seek relief through her expertise. "Some of them I grow. The others I go out in the woods and collect. "I'm pretty much a tea herbalist. They're all free, self-sustaining and easy to grow."

While working part-time at the co-op, Sequoia says her most important job is staying home with Aoife. "She's only two and a half once. I don't get that back," Sequoia explains. Her husband, 33, is studying computer engineering at UI and working toward a master's degree. The two met in Seattle when he was a sound engineer with his own recording studio and she was singing backup vocals for a band called "Otis P. and the Jive Funk."

"We got along famously while we were recording," Sequoia recalls of getting to know David, "and we did a lot more talking than recording. By the time we were done, we were dating."

The two and Aoife, along with numerous pets and animals, including egg-laying chickens outside, live in a century-old farmhouse on the southern edge of Moscow. They're surrounded by the ever-growing trappings of town where agricultural fields used to prevail. David rides his bike back and forth to school, while Sequoia most often walks to work. When necessary, they drive the family Subaru which, of course, carries a bumper sticker that reads: "Who's Your Farmer?"

Sequoia says she and David hope to stay here, but are uncertain of their future amid these uncertain economic times. She also frets about Moscow's future, whether it will grow within sustainable confines or go the way of her home town in California.

"It used to be a beautiful little agricultural community. Now it's all paved over."

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