

Connect

winter to spring



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CHAPTER ONE

Gather





Here are four great reasons to step outside and explore. Four delicious, nutrient-packed plants that are easy to find and just as easy to add to your meals. Whether you're foraging in the wild or spotting them in your own backyard, these plants bring a fresh, seasonal touch to your plate!

Chickweed (Stellaria media – Vogelmuur)

How to recognize

Chickweed is a small, humble plant that often goes unnoticed, but once you see it, you'll find it everywhere. It has tiny, white, star-like flowers and soft, oval leaves. The easiest way to recognize it? Run your fingers along the stem—it has a single line of fine hairs running down one side, switching sides at each leaf node.

Lookalikes

Be careful not to mistake it for Scarlet Pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*/Guichelheil), which has similar growth but reddish or orange flowers instead of white ones. That one is toxic, so make sure to check those flowers before picking!

How to use

Chickweed is mild and slightly sweet, perfect for tossing into salads, blending into pesto, or adding to soups. You can eat it raw or lightly wilted like spinach.

Ancient uses

Traditionally, it was used as a cooling herb, often applied to itchy skin or eaten to soothe inflammation. Some even believed it helped with weight loss.



Hairy Bittercress (Cardamine hirsuta - Kleine Veldkers)

How to recognize

This little plant pops up in cracks, garden beds, and anywhere it can sneak in. It has small, rounded leaves growing in a rosette close to the ground, with tiny white flowers that open up like little firework bursts. If you touch the seed pods when they're ripe, they'll explode. Flinging seeds everywhere!

Lookalikes

It can be confused with Shepherd's Purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*/Herderstasje), which has more elongated leaves and tiny heart-shaped seed pods. The good news? That one's edible too!

How to use

Bittercress has a fresh, peppery kick, kind of like a wild arugula. It's great sprinkled over salads, in sandwiches, or even as a garnish for soups. No need to cook, just pick and eat!

Ancient uses

Packed with vitamin C, it was once a go-to plant for preventing scurvy (scheurbuik). Even today, foragers love it as a winter green when little else is growing.



Daisy (*Bellis perennis* – Madeliefje)

How to recognize

You know this one. Those little white flowers with bright yellow centers that dot the grass, always around even when everything else seems to disappear for winter. The leaves grow low to the ground in a rosette, spoon-shaped and smooth. They're easy to find, but most people don't realize they're edible!

Lookalikes

It's sometimes mistaken for Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare* /Margeriet), which is much taller and has deeply lobed leaves. Oxeye daisy is also edible, though its leaves are stronger in flavor.

How to use

The flowers add a bit of beauty to salads, and the young leaves are great mixed into greens. You can also dry them for tea. The taste? A little bitter, but nothing too strong.

Ancient uses

Daisies were once used as a wound healer. Roman soldiers carried them into battle to make poultices for cuts and bruises. They were also brewed into teas for colds and fevers.



Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica* – Brandnetel)

How to recognize

Nettles have a reputation. They sting, and you won't forget if you brush against one. The leaves are deep green, serrated like tiny saw blades, and covered in fine hairs that inject an irritating liquid. But don't let that stop you. Once cooked, they lose their sting and turn into one of the most nutritious wild greens you can find.

Lookalikes

People sometimes mix them up with Deadnettles (*Lamium* spp./Dovenetels), which look similar but don't sting. Deadnettles have square stems, often purple-tinged flowers, and are completely edible too.

How to pick without getting stung

Wear gloves if you want to be safe, but if you prefer to go without, there's a trick: grab the top of the plant firmly and confidently. The stinging hairs only work when brushed against, so a quick, decisive grip usually avoids a sting. Another option? Fold the leaf over itself before handling.

How to use

The young tops are best. Just blanch or cook them to remove the sting. Use them in soup, tea, or as a spinach alternative. Dried nettles make a great herbal tea, full of minerals.

Ancient uses

Nettles have been used for centuries as food, medicine, and even fiber for making cloth. In folk medicine, they were believed to purify the blood and strengthen the body. Some even say they help with allergies. Ironic, considering how they sting!

CHAPTER TWO

Grow



What to Grow Now

using what you have at home

Even if it's still too cold outside, you can start growing future summer harvests right now, right on your windowsill. And the best part? You don't need fancy equipment, just a few things you already have at home.

Seeds

Tomato seeds are easy to collect: simply spread the inside of a tomato onto a piece of natural toilet paper and let it dry. When you're ready to plant, place the seeds into the soil along with the paper.

We like to plant three (up to five) seeds per hole since not all seeds will sprout. If all three do, you can gently separate the seedlings later, making sure to keep the roots intact.

DIY Plant Pots: upcycling what you have

Before you rush to buy pots, check your recycling bin! You can make perfect seed starters with:

🌱 **Toilet rolls** – Stand them upright in a tray, fill with soil, and plant appr. 3 seeds per roll. They break down naturally, so you can plant the whole thing in the ground later!

🌱 **Egg cartons** – Fill each section with soil, add seeds, and water gently. Just cut them apart when it's time to plant.

🌱 **Yogurt cups, milk cartons, or cans** – Poke some drainage holes in the bottom, and you're good to go.

What to plant now

🔥 **Tomatoes & Peppers (Paprika, Chili)** – These need warmth to germinate, so keep them in a sunny window. They take a while to grow, so starting early gives them a good chance to thrive once spring arrives.

🌱 **Herbs like Basil & Parsley** – Quick to sprout and great for adding fresh flavor to meals! They'll do fine on your windowsill.

🌱 **Lettuce & Spinach** – If you're impatient, these are fast growers. You can start picking baby leaves in just a few weeks!

Growing Tips

☀️ **Light:** Place your seedlings in the sunniest window you have. If they get too tall and spindly, they might need more light.

💧 **Water:** Keep the soil moist but not soaked. If the top feels dry, it's time for a little drink.

✂️ **Label Your Plants:** Use popsicle sticks, cut-up yogurt lids, or anything handy to mark what you planted!

By the time spring arrives, your little plants will be ready to move outside—or keep growing indoors for a mini home garden.

Have fun with gathering & growing, and if any question arises, just send me a message! Ciao, Bastiaan (+34644947091)

CHAPTER THREE

Go inward



Two Practices

to honor the winter inside you

Winter is a time of stillness, of going inward. Nature slows down, the days are shorter, and the air carries a quietness that invites us to pause. But as spring begins to stir in the distance, it's easy to start rushing ahead.

Before the world speeds up again, let's take a moment to truly honor the winter energy. To let everything else fall away for a while and just be.

These two practices are here to help you step into that winter space, to embrace the quiet before the next cycle begins.

Meditation: Sitting in the Nothingness

This practice can take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour, whatever feels right for you. Dress warmly, bring a blanket to sit on, and maybe another to wrap around you.

Find a spot outside. This could be deep in the forest or just a balcony overlooking a single tree. Let the spot find you. Follow your feet without thinking too much, and see where you end up.

Once you've arrived:

- 1** If you have a phone with you, switch it off or put it away.
- 2** Look around. Notice the shapes, the colors, the way the light and shadows play. Then, close your eyes.
- 3** Listen. Take in the sounds—far away, close by. Then, let go of listening. (You can even pull a hat over your ears if you want to deepen the quiet.)
- 4** Feel. Notice your body, the air on your skin, the way you are held by the earth. Then, let that go.
- 5** (Optional) Smell. What scents are in the air? Observe, then release.
- 6** (Optional) Taste. What's in your mouth? Observe, then let it go.

Now, simply be. Let thoughts and emotions come and go without holding on to them. More and more, focus on your breath.

Then, imagine this: Darkness is falling. Everything is dark. Nothing exists. No trees, no ground, no body. Just pure, empty space. Stay here for a while. Let yourself rest in the nothingness. When you feel ready, gently return, open your eyes, and take your time before standing up again.

2. Self-Ceremony: Clearing the Circle

This is a practice of creating space. For yourself, for quiet, for simply being. Again, dress warmly, bring what you need to be comfortable, and let your feet guide you to a place that feels right.

Step 1: Create a circle

Gather objects from your surroundings, sticks, stones, pinecones, whatever is at hand, and use them to make a circle on the ground, big enough for you to sit inside. This is your space.

Step 2: Bring in what's present in your life

Now, find objects that represent the things and people that are dominant in your life right now. A pinecone could be your work, a stone could be your partner. Just pick what feels right. No need to overthink it.

Step 3: Letting go

Sit inside your circle with these objects. One by one, pick them up, connect with them, feel your relationship to them. Then, when you're ready, move them outside the circle. Gently placing them, rolling them away, or giving them a powerful swing, whatever feels right.

Do this until the circle is empty, except for you. If another thing or person pops up in your mind that you need to let go of (at least for this moment), find an object and do the same.

Now, sit in the empty space. Just you. Close your eyes and connect to this moment of just being here, without anything else. Stay as long as you want.

If you'd like to talk about your experience with the practices or Growth Canvas (next chapter), I'd love to listen and reflect with you. Send me a message, and we'll plan a 1:1 call for a friendly C2C price.

Abrazo, Jorien (+34644027657)

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflect



Growth Canvas

Beneath the soil, seeds are stirring, getting ready to break through and grow. Nature is in full preparation mode, and so are we. This is a perfect time to reflect on what you want to grow in your own life this season.

Take a moment to tap into your desires. What do you long for? What feels missing? This can be anything: from something more abstract like "more rest in my life" to something concrete like "start growing my own veggies."

Some ideas to get you started:

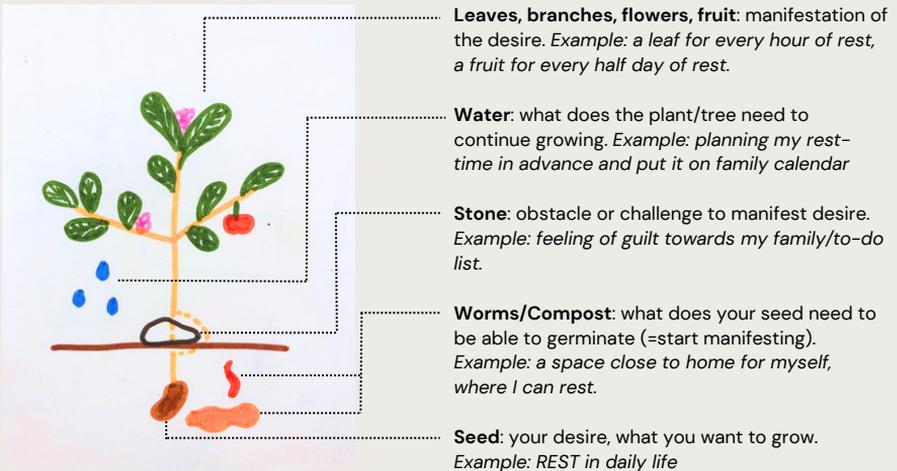
- 🌱 A deep desire you want to fulfill
- 🌱 A project you want to start or complete
- 🌱 A habit you want to adopt
- 🌱 A goal you want to achieve
- 🌱 A dream you want to bring to life
- 🌱 A skill you want to learn
- 🌱 A relationship you want to deepen

There are only two rules. **One**, it has to come from you. Something you have impact on. So if your wish is that others would change ("I want my boss/partner/mother to act differently"), shift it to how you want to show up. For example, "I want to react with more patience." And **two**, formulate it in a positive way ("more peace of mind" instead of "less stress")

Bringing it to life

- 1 Take a sheet of paper and draw a simple line. This is your soil.
- 2 Draw a seed beneath it. This represents your desire or intention.
- 3 As time goes on, let the drawing grow. Each new experience, action, or moment that reflects your desire adds a leaf, a branch, or a flower.

Be as creative as you like! You can add all kinds of metaphorical elements. Doodle, paint, collage, whatever makes it feel alive for you. The beauty is in the process. Here is an example.



Celebrate



Welcoming the Spring Equinox

For a moment, the world stands in perfect balance. During the Spring Equinox, day and night are equal, light and dark in harmony. It is the transition from winter to spring. It's a time to pause, feel the shift, and welcome what's to come. Even in the modern rush of life, we can take a moment to recognize this change—to celebrate balance, growth, and the energy of new beginnings.

What happens physically?

The Spring Equinox (around March 20–21 in the Northern Hemisphere) is the point when the sun crosses the celestial equator, moving from the southern to the northern hemisphere. For us, that means longer days, shorter nights, and the steady return of warmth. From now until the Summer Solstice, daylight will keep increasing.

Nature is already responding. Trees bud, animals come out of hibernation, birds return from migration. Life is waking up. And maybe you feel this shift in your own body too. More energy, more movement, a pull toward the outside world.

Symbolism: the energy of the Equinox

🌱 Fertility & growth – This is the season of planting, not just in the soil but in life. What do you want to cultivate? What do you want to bring to life?

☀️ Moving toward the light – Darkness isn't gone, but light is now stronger. This can be a time to shed the heaviness of winter—both physically and emotionally—and step into clarity.

⚖️ Balance – Equal day and night remind us of the constant dance between opposites: rest & action, stillness & movement, introspection & expression. Where in your life do you seek more balance?

🌅 Awakening – Just like nature, we're waking up. This is the time for fresh ideas, energy, and opening up to new possibilities.

How the Celts celebrated (and how you can too)

The Celts honored this time with festivals, fires, and offerings to the earth. They celebrated the fertility of the land, the union of sun and soil, and the balance of the seasons. Many traditions from the later festival of Ostara (named after a Germanic spring goddess) carry echoes of these older ways: eggs as symbols of fertility, hares (which later became the Easter Bunny) representing abundance and new life

Inspiration to create your own celebration:

- 🔥 Light a fire or candle – Symbolizing the returning warmth of the sun.
- 🌿 Spend time in nature – Notice what’s waking up, and reflect on what’s awakening inside you.
- 🥚 Work with eggs – Decorate them, cook a special meal, or simply hold one in your hands as a reminder of potential and new beginnings.
- 🌱 Make an offering to the earth – This could be planting seeds, leaving a simple gift (like a flower or a handful of herbs), or just taking a moment of gratitude for the land around you.
- ⚖️ Reflect on balance – Where do you need more balance in your life? What are you ready to let go of from winter? What do you want to welcome in?

However you choose to celebrate, this is a time to step into the energy of growth. To set intentions, to honor the balance, and to welcome the shift toward light.



CHAPTER SIX

Join



Join us: Living with the Land retreat

Reading, reflecting, and practicing on your own is powerful, but there's something truly transformative about being **together** and practicing together. That's why we created the Living with the Land retreat: a deep dive into connection, in the flesh.

For a week, we step out of daily life and into a space where inner and outer nature meet. We work with our **hands**, our **hearts**, and our **heads**: learning practical skills, exploring deep-rooted practices, and weaving ceremony into our days. It's about slowing down, but also about feeling excited, and following your curiosity. About rediscovering the rhythm that feels true to who you are.

This retreat is a chance to truly experience what it means to live in connection, with yourself, with others, and with (the rest of) nature. Even more important, you'll leave with tools, skills, and practices to **continue (re)connecting at home**, so it becomes part of daily life, not just a beautiful memory.

If this guide has sparked something in you, the Living with the Land retreat is for you. We'd love to have you join us. It's happening May 17-24th, on our finca in the north of Spain.

Curious? Here you can download the brochure and sign up.

<https://www.theschoolofnature.org/livingwiththeland>

Want to chat first? Any doubts or questions? Just write us a message at +34644027657

We wish you a calm end of winter and a exciting start of Spring!

Bastiaan & Jorien



ps. The next **Call2Connect** will be on **Wednesday June 11th, 20:30 CET**. It's completely for free. See you there?

pss. credits to the amazing Gabriela Hengeveld (www.gabsphotography.nl) for the photo on this page and Max van der Wal (www.maxvanderwal.com) for the other photos (except for the just-plant-photos in the Gather chapter).