

French Adventures: Part II

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Home again and adjusting to the 100 degree temps, fuller days, and all that it takes to live right in the heart of a city with nearly one million people; I am inclined to reflect on more of my experiences in the Pyrenees. (Read Part I here!) There are undoubtedly some stark contrasts between the village of Ilhat, nestled in the foothills of mountains, and this bustling place in Texas that I call home. Yet, surprisingly, there are similarities as well.



Both Ilhat and Austin offer a sunrise and sunset with unique beauty each its own, both are filled with native birds that begin each day in song, and, while vastly different in species, the Pyrenees region and Austin are both homes to magnificent trees. While sitting with my tea each morning on my porch these past few days, I have given myself the opportunity to marvel at the beauty and resilience of our Texas trees. These wonders continue to thrive against all odds

in this inhospitable heat and unpredictable supply of water. What strength they have! (Which I surely call upon as I struggle to keep myself from melting into a puddle before the end of each day.) While I was captivated by the misty and mystical Beech tree forests deep in the Pyrenees, the canopy of shade from my Mexican White Oak, here in my Austin garden, provides a welcome daily respite.

I've taken to having my tea underneath this powerful Oak these past few jet lagged mornings, granting myself time to witness the awakening of each day. It's been a good way to reground myself in Austin and appreciate the beauty I often take for granted. Too often the scenery of our daily lives becomes merely the backdrop for our to-do lists and the purposeful act of observing it with fresh eyes can be revealing. I've been a lover of trees all of my life, but for different reasons at various times. Of course now, with all I have learned about the healing gifts the buds of trees hold for our bodies, my passion has obviously grown.



When I was 11, my parents moved us from the bustling California Bay Area to a farm in the Sacramento Valley. Far removed from neighbors and my childhood friends, I turned to nature for comfort. I would ride my bike along the canal road that lined our property and sit for hours alongside a wild and ungroomed stretch of **Putah creek**. When that was not an option, I found solace deep inside the curved branches and shady thick

leaves of a Fig tree. There's no telling how many adolescent hours I spent up inside that tree, but, now reflecting on the fact that the buds of the Fig tree support digestion on a physical and emotional level, it is no surprise that this tree provided me with exactly what I was in search of.

Sadly, I outgrew my tree-climbing and for many years life seemed to separate me from what trees had to offer. It wasn't until I moved to Heidelberg, Germany and began to share hikes with Joachim that the importance of trees came back into my life. From that point onward, they played a profound role in both my physical and emotional healing, leading me eventually to study the benefits of the extracts made from tree buds that we call Gemmotherapy.

This summer I learned even more about trees from my new dear friend and colleague **Stephane Boistard**, who I met this past year over our shared curiosity and intrigue with Gemmotherapy. Both practitioners and authors, we each bring an entirely different set of experiences and perspectives to the topic and it was a true gift to spend time in one another's presence.

Stephane told of how his interest in trees began when he was a young child and his parents arranged for him to escape the city and spend his summers with families who worked in the French forests. Later, he would join them in their work as forest caretakers, learning both the practicalities and the mysteries of caring for trees. His passion grew and he eventually chose to leave his study of architecture and pursue an advanced degree in forestry. It was his research here that led him to discover the natural healing powers of the forest itself.

Ten years ago, Stephane came upon Gemmotherapy and immersed himself in the subject and is now the leading expert in France. He is an outspoken and respected proponent of ethical care of forests in his home country and this informs his own

line of Gemmotherapy products. He has formed a small collective of bud pickers and producers in the area, allowing for a successful cottage industry with a line of 40 extracts sold to individuals and Naturopaths throughout France. Having now tried their product, I can say it surpasses any extract I have experienced! Stephane is also the author of, Gemmotherapie Les Bourgeons Au Service De La Sante' Guide Praticque et familial, which is currently the top seller in natural healthcare for Amazon France.

So, where might this friendship and love for Gemmotherapy and trees lead the two of us? Thus far, into some pretty exciting territory that includes translation and distribution of my books in France, all new teaching exchanges throughout the coming year, and the vision for a Gemmotherapy Summer School in the Pyrenees Summer 2018.



When it comes to trees, following my curiosity and wonder has definitely proven to be a very good thing for me!