

Notes from Europe: Week Two

Greetings this week from the forests of the Vosges Mountains of France and Friedrichsruhe, Germany! After eight years in Texas I can easily find myself captivated by the experience of exploring a forest, completely ruled by the cycles of nature. When truly present to all of its wonder, a forest provides such incredible lessons of both interdependence and impermanence.

Last week I began my series from Europe with our arrival in Le Thillot, deep in the Vosges Mountains of France. We had decided as a family it would be important to give ourselves a strong dose of nature at the start of our four week visit in order to shake off a year of deadlines, tight schedules, and way too much time on our laptops. So, following an overnight at Joachim's childhood home, we were on our way to France along with my mother-in-law.

It was truly the perfect way to begin our weeks in Europe and so important to step completely out of our schedule and task driven world from the start. Renting a house in the midst of the Vosges was ideal. Each day, with very little organizing, we could head deep into the forests for magnificent hikes. As one can imagine it would be difficult for me to step into a lush European forest with Silver Fir, Oak, and Hazelnut lining the trails and not think of Gemmotherapy. In each direction that I cast my eyes I can encounter a vine, shrub, or tree that gives life to this amazing medicine derived from plant growth material that offers healing and support for specific organs and organ systems. So many of the extracts I use daily with my clients can be discovered with each step!



Interesting patterns indeed began to emerge first over the stretch of consecutive days hiking in the forests of the

Vosges Mountains and now during my daily walks in the Friedrichsruhe near Oehringen. While the two forests differ, both share layers of plant growth similar to groupings of Gemmotherapy extracts that often work well together. Additionally each layer of the forest serves a purpose much like each grouping of Gemmotherapy extracts. I am certainly not the first student of Gemmotherapy to note this as The Drs. Franck Ledoux and Guéniot Gérard share antidotes about the natural growth of these trees and shrubs in their 2012 book *Phytoembryotherapy, The Embryo of Gemmotherapy*. I also fondly recall long walks in the Romanian forests with my mentor Dr. Sorina Soescu discussing the groupings of the plants of the forest and how this might relate to possible protocols for our clients. It is probably because of this daily immersion in the forest setting, their ideas began to come to life for me.

I noted that the outer edges of the forests were thick with a collection of berries, bountiful this time of year. The berry vines and shrubs serving as a protection to the entrance of the forest included European Blueberry and Black Currant shrubs along with Blackberry and Red Raspberry vines. Here they were thriving as harmoniously together as I often group them in protocols.



Making up the next layer were Hazel shrubs along with young Birch trees on the banks of the creek. Often found under the canopy of an Ash tree, all three being water regulators in the body working to remove acidosis; Hazel supporting and protecting the lungs, Silver Birch the liver, and Ash the kidneys.



Going deeper into the forest I was greeted by Beech that purifies the blood and Hornbeam that increase platelets. These were followed by Silver Lime that regulates the nervous system along with Horsechestnut and Sweet Chestnut that improve circulation and lymphatic cleaning. Threaded in the underbrush of these great trees I discovered Black Honeysuckle, used acutely for inflammation of the throat, and Lilac, used in protocols for cardiovascular health and emotional heartache.



Towering over all in the heart of the forest were the conifers Silver Fir and Pine, known in Gemmotherapy for supporting vertical alignment and the musculoskeletal system. So much healing potential and this is only a mere glimpse into the forest world! It is a good reminder that nature holds so much of what we need not only emotionally but also to serve and heal our mental and physical bodies as well.

My days ahead should allow an evening walk through the Friedrichsruhewald, pictured below. While not as lush as the forests of the Vosges, it possesses a magic all of its own. On the edge of this forest lie the house, farm land, and orchards

where my mother-in-law was born and raised. Still full of life and love, it is now the home of her brother and his family making this forest even more special to my family. To see my son appreciate the trails that were walked by his father, grandmother, and great grandparents is heartwarming and a tradition I am sure he will pass along to his family.



I look forward to checking in with you all next week as I head off with my husband to Laupen, Switzerland to pay a visit to my favorite Homeopath and teacher, Dr. Heiner Frei.