

Fernlare





REST

“That’s what winter is: an exercise in remembering how to still yourself then how to come pliantly back to life again.”

—Ali Smith, *Winter*.

Slowing down is a wonderful thing. When winter arrives we’re suddenly presented with an opportunity to pause and enjoy a quieter time of the year. It’s time to rest and recoup and prepare for another year ahead while reflecting on the year that passed. Our winter issue celebrates this time of the year where we find ourselves craving comfort and calm. Our illustrations and stories are inspired by things that interested us and brought us joy. We’re so happy to be able to share them with you.

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Nature Journaling for an Enriched Life.

"A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood."

—Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*.

As people we are naturally observant. Without realising it, you take in an incredible amount of information throughout the day. You unknowingly take in your surroundings while you're driving or walking, to watch out for danger or objects of interest. Most of this information you don't use. Your brain just files it away or discards it. If it's not relevant to you at that exact moment, you most likely won't remember it. And that's totally fine, if we were to remember every single thing we saw we would be overwhelmed! I used to just let things pass me by without really thinking about them. When I began studying plants and nature as a hobby, I realised just how much I was missing out on. We are surrounded by wondrous things. Even the things that seem unordinary, the moss on a tree or the plants in your neighbour's garden, are actually extraordinary in their own right. Those trees with the moss on your street could be decades old and play a critical role in the health of your neighbourhood. The garden your neighbour lovingly tends to? It's not just beautiful to look at. The plants that come to life every spring and summer are food to pollinators and are a haven to insects and small mammals. Everything has a purpose. Everything has its place. When you start looking at the world around you with intention, it becomes clear that we are surrounded by beauty and wonder. When you stop to





think about it, we are all just floating around on a rock in space. Everything about life on earth is worthy of our attention.

Throughout history, humans have kept nature journals in some form or another. We have always had an instinct to record our observations for our personal benefit. It was important to make note of planting and harvest cycles and what the weather was like at a certain time of the year for others to know later on. Patterns are valuable to learn, and recording these patterns ensures that future generations learn of them also. By keeping a nature journal, you become a naturalist of sorts. A naturalist is considered an expert in natural history, but as you record your own observations you are contributing to the community by sharing your findings. You don't need to attend school to become a naturalist. Naturalists are born from a sense of curiosity and desire to learn more about the world around them and aren't afraid to ask questions.

Nature journaling is a way to deepen your connection with nature. It's about the joy of discovery and curiosity. My personal experience with keeping a nature journal has impacted my life in ways I did not anticipate. I thought it would just be another hobby I would enjoy, but it fundamentally changed the way I observe the world. The person I am now versus the person I was prior to journaling are two very different people. I have kept a journal for most of my life. I was accustomed to the act of sitting down and writing down my thoughts and feelings, but they were almost always observations about myself. Very seldom did they have anything to do with nature or things I saw throughout the day that inspired me. I seldom journalled for joy. Starting a nature journal got me out of my head and into nature.

It started with the daily walks through the neighbourhood. I had been on many walks before in my neighbourhood and knew it quite well, but I had never really looked around. I noticed plants I had never seen before. Flowers that were so pretty I had to stop and

“Nature offers us a thousand simple pleasures - plays of light and color, fragrances in the air, the sun’s warmth on skin and muscle, the audible rhythm of life’s stir and push - for the price of merely paying attention.”

—Lorraine Anderson, Sisters of the Earth

take a photo of them. Neighbourhood cats would pop out of bushes to say hello and tilt their heads up for a scratch.

Birds nesting in trees along the street. Small details that would otherwise go unnoticed. I began to take notice. I started taking more photos with my phone and then I started to keep notes of what I saw while I was out. Back home I would try my hand at sketching out what I saw based on the photos I took and while my drawings weren't very good, there was something incredibly satisfying about spending the time drawing what I witnessed while out earlier in the day. I began to identify the plants and trees that I would see on a daily basis and over the course of a year, I would be able to see how they all change with the seasons. It felt special to witness these small everyday occurrences and at times it felt like it was all just for me. I no longer live in that neighbourhood and I know I will miss it as the years pass. I can't wait to start exploring and get to know my new neighbourhood.

One of my favourite things about keeping a nature journal is being able to look through it to remind myself of the things that brought me joy throughout the year. Keeping a nature journal allows you to time travel, to revisit months past and see how everything has changed (or stayed the same). In what feels like a rapidly changing world, there can be comfort found in the minute observations you make, even if they're just for yourself.

“In the pages of a journal...we can get better at reading the body language of the world. The overall expression of a season, the measure of stress or of... vibrancy in a landscape, a garden, a cat, the psychic atmosphere of a city street, the meaning of the robin distress calls in the backyard.”

—Hannah Hinchman, A Trail Through Leaves

How to Eat a Pine Tree

... & Other Facts about Foraging

You might be wondering why on earth would you go rooting around in your local woods for ingredients when you can simply purchase them from your local grocery store, but there is some serious satisfaction in finding your own food. There is a community in foraging and it's a way to get to learn about the wild food in your area. You may surprise yourself. Foraging is for anyone willing to get outside and try, you just have to know what to look for. Educating yourself on the wild edible food you can find in your area is a good place to start your journey into foraging.

Foraging is a year-round activity. Winter isn't commonly associated with bountiful harvests like spring or fall, but there are still plenty of nutritious and surprising foods for you to find. Some of the more commonly known ingredients that you can forage during the winter months (depending on where you live) include rosehips, pine needles (and other parts of the tree), spruce tips, mushrooms and crabapples.

Rosehips are a fantastic source of vitamin C and are especially important during the winter months when your body can benefit from more of it. Found on wild rose bushes, they can be harvested all throughout winter and into spring. The best way to consume them is to boil them into a tea but they can be eaten fresh, although, be warned, they aren't for the faint of heart.

Did you know that every part of a pine tree is edible? No, seriously, every part of the tree can technically be consumed. It's not recommended that the bark be harvested from healthy living trees as this can potentially kill the tree, but when taken from a felled tree, the bark can be prepared for many ailments. Pine needles are another rich source of vitamin C and can be brewed into a delicious tea. The needles can also be added to bath salts to help relieve muscle pain and treat skin irritation. Medicinally, pine is astringent and a powerful antioxidant. Pine trees were used by First Nations in many different ways, but they used parts of the trees to make tea that helped relieve

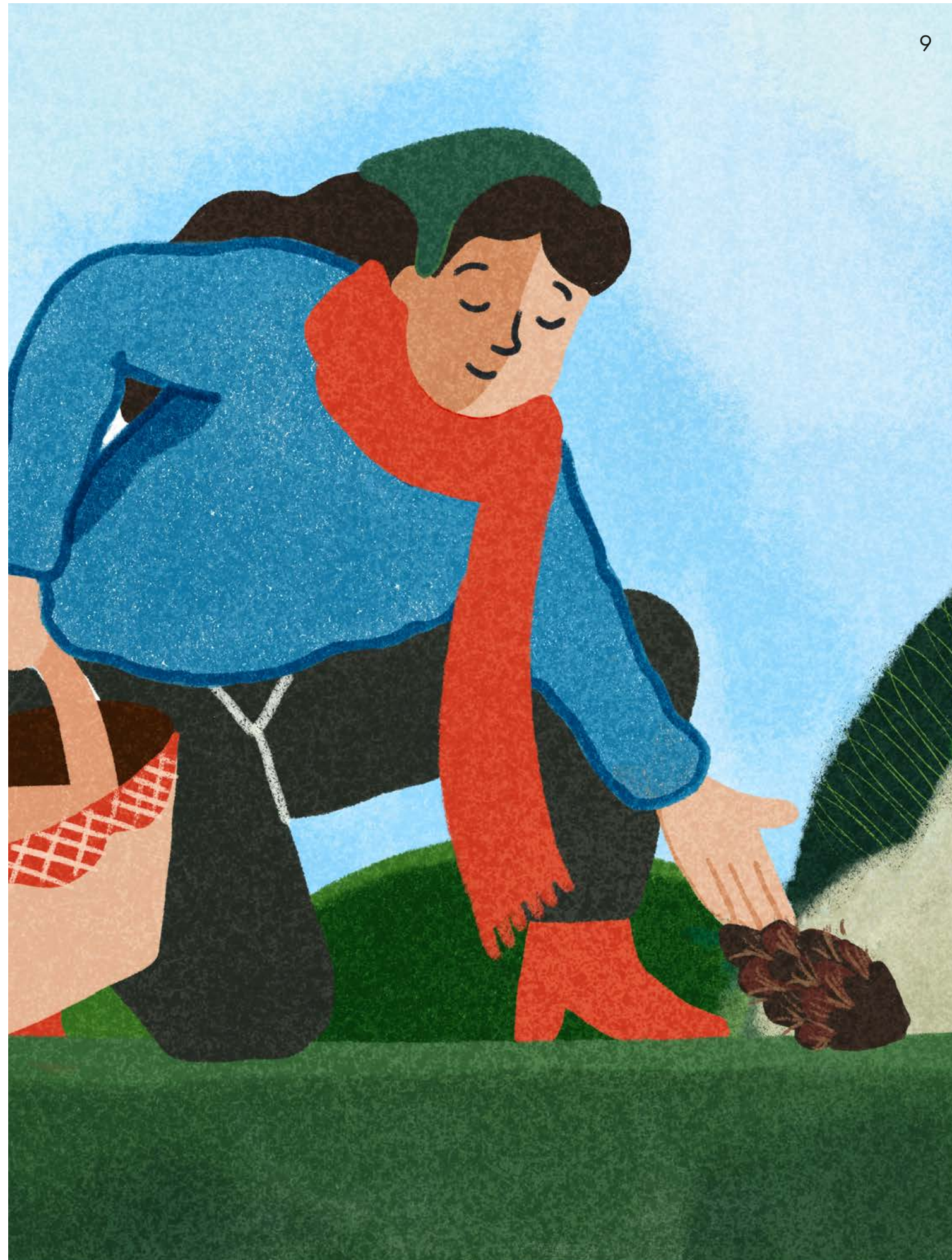
coughs. Today, many of the cough syrups on the market utilise the same ingredients.

Mushrooms are commonly associated with foraging. There are many types of mushrooms that you can forage, but not all of them are edible and will mess you up if you're not careful. It's highly recommended to familiarise yourself with the types of mushrooms safe for eating before you venture out to forage for your dinner. Some types of mushrooms you can find in winter include oyster, chaga, witches butter and turkey tail.

Spruce tips are yet another source of vitamin C (a surprising amount of vitamin C can be found in the forest, no?). This nutrient rich part of the spruce tree is used by First Nations as a cold remedy. It is also rich in potassium, magnesium, chlorophyll and other phytonutrients. A more festive preparation includes making a spruce tip beer - a unique and delicious beverage that tastes like trees, if that's your thing.

Crabapples are one of the most common wild edibles favoured by foragers. Part of the Rosacea (rose) family, this fruit is super high in pectin making it perfect for preserves. Crab apples are the wild counterpart to the cultivated apples that you can buy in a grocery store. They're sharp in flavour but can be eaten raw so if you do come across one in the wild feel free to tuck in if you're looking for a snack.

Foraging is not for everyone. Everyone can do it, but trekking around outside in nature looking for food just isn't going to be everyone's cup of tea. That being said, if you're at all interested in foraging there are plenty of places you can start. An internet search will direct you to local groups in your area you can meet up with and to resources to start the education process. You'll be surprised at what you'll learn along the way about the wild food you can find in your area and about yourself. Any time spent outside in nature is never time wasted. Foraging is just one of many ways to get outside more and get in touch with the natural world.





The Power of Preserves

“Jam on a winter day took away the blue devils. It was like tasting summer.”

— Sandra Dallas

I imagine this situation. You're at the grocery store trying to figure out what kind of snacks to buy for your hungry friends who are coming over that night. Chips? Sure, everyone loves a good chip. Cheese? Duh. But you want something a bit more substantial than chips and cheese. What if you buy the wrong flavour chip or everyone is lactose intolerant? Snacking shouldn't be stressful. Enter preserves. I'm not just talking about jams and jellies, I'm talking about food that has been pickled, fermented or canned. Food preservation has given us endless opportunities to snack better and to enjoy our favourite seasonal foods anytime of the year.

I love to cook and entertain and my pantry is always well stocked with ingredients that I can turn into a delicious meal at a moment's notice. Shelf stable ingredients like pickled vegetables or tinned fish can easily be transformed into dinner when combined with other ingredients like noodles or rice. Making sure you have some preserves on hand means that you will no longer stare into the abyss that is occasionally your pantry at dinner time wondering what the heck you're going to eat that night.

Entertaining brings on a whole other array of potentially problematic situations. What do you serve a group of people so that everyone is happy? Well, the

good news is that everyone enjoys a charcuterie board. It's a classic choice to put one out when you have company over. A collection of cured meats, cheese, crackers and fruit. It's a delightful experience only made better with the introduction of preserves. Adding a chutney or red pepper jelly to your charcuterie board or even some pickled red onion turns an ordinary charcuterie into something your friends won't stop talking about for weeks after (well, maybe. I'm not promising your charcuterie will be a transcendent experience, but you never know).

In winter time you can fully appreciate preserves for their simplicity and ingenuity. The fruit and vegetables you grew in the spring and summer can be saved for later when pickled or turned into jam. It's a good way to reduce waste and make sure you get to enjoy all of the fruits of your labour. Imagine standing in your kitchen making toast and spreading strawberry jam you made in the summer over your piece of organic sourdough. Sounds pretty heavenly right? What is jam if not summer in a jar? That is the beautiful thing about preserves. Each jar or tin of food is a memory waiting to be consumed. How many times have you tasted something and it brought you right back to a certain moment in time? Food is powerful but preserves are even more powerful as they have the ability to preserve time as well.

An Ode To Sleepy Time Tea

A bear on a box helps me get to sleep.

Ah, bedtime. For many of us, bedtime is a welcome time of our day. It's time to unwind and let the day go and prepare ourselves for a night of rest. Those who are fortunate enough to merrily tuck themselves into bed at the end of the day without any problems probably don't rely too much on products that will aid in shuttling you off to sleep (please, tell us your secrets!). Others, myself included, need a bit more than a bed to get to sleep at night. Making it through an entire day takes a lot of effort. Some days, it takes even more effort. Being a person in today's world takes its toll on our well being in an insurmountable number of ways - no wonder most of us lie awake at night tossing and turning, anxiety running rampant through our minds which are supposed to be shutting down for the night. How does one get enough sleep to face the next day? Sleep is so important and vital to our very existence. Try having a productive day with little to no sleep - it's a struggle! There are what feels like endless products on the market targeted towards sleep deprivation. Pillows, mattresses, sound machines, eye masks, ear plugs, weighted blankets, drugs, natural sleep aids. The list is extensive and it can feel overwhelming to find the right solution. Sometimes there is no one solution, and everyone's experience with sleep is different. A commonly used and inexpensive product is tea.

A hot cup of tea is there for me at the end of long days when I need a little help settling down. It's also there for me on days when I'm just not feeling like myself. I'm not just talking about any old tea, I'm talking about Sleepytime Tea. The Sleepytime Tea. The one with the snoozy bear on the box wearing the adorable sleep cap sitting precariously close to a roaring fire. I have a box on hand at all times. Sometimes more than one if I panic at the grocery store and can't remember if I have one at home already. The soothing blend of chamomile, spearmint

and lemongrass is a delightful combination that will knock you out so fast you won't know what hit you. Well, hopefully. At the very least it'll make you feel like you're on your way to snoozeland. There is something so comforting about this particular tea. I've tried dozens of other "sleepytime" teas,

but none of them shine in comparison to this beloved classic. Celestial Seasonings - the quirky company that produces other hits like Red Zinger and Bengal Spice - has been around since 1969. They introduced Sleepytime Tea to the world in 1972 and since then it has been extremely popular. So popular, it actually sells around 4 million (!!!) boxes a year. The people love the bear! Making a cup of Sleepytime tea has become such a favourite routine of mine. My brain, so accustomed to having this tea strictly at bedtime, immediately reacts and sends a message to the rest of my body that it's time for sleep. I'll sip while sitting in bed and within minutes I feel my eyes get heavy and I definitely feel tired, or dare I say, sleepy? That sneaky little bear.

I can't promise you that tea will solve all your problems. It most likely won't if I'm being totally honest. But, I will promise you that taking a few minutes at the end of your busy day to brew a cup of tea (any tea!) and just sip it quietly before bed, you will feel marginally more relaxed and your brain will feel quieter. I strongly feel that drinking tea is a small act of self care and we can all afford to be a little kinder and gentler to ourselves. At the end of the day, it's just tea. It's just a bear on a box trying to sell you a promise of a better night's sleep. I'm a sucker for good branding and Celestial Seasoning knows how to sell you a box of tea, but I will happily give them my money if it means I get to enjoy a cup of the only tea that helps get me to sleep. Even if it's all in my head.



A Love Letter to Moss

“Mysterious and little-known organisms live within reach of where you sit. Splendor awaits in minute proportion.”

— E.O. Wilson, Biologist

I will start by saying that I am not a botanist, biologist or bryologist. I'm just a regular person, who loves plants and who really, really loves moss.

That's the terrific thing about plants. We don't have to be scientists to fully appreciate them and all they have to offer. Buying a new house plant for your bedroom window can bring you an immeasurable amount of joy and a walk in the woods can calm even the most restless of minds. Plants are a balm to life's stings and scrapes and bind us all together by being a critical component of our very survival. All plants are worthy of our attention and affect us all in one way or another. I am fascinated by all plants but moss has always fascinated me the most.

To some, mosses are like set dressing. They blanket the ground and trees and if you live somewhere where there is a lot of it, it tends to just blend into the background. It's such a common sight it's natural to not give it much thought, but that would be a mistake. Often overlooked, mosses are one of the world's most diverse plants. Small in stature and slow growing, bryophytes consist of nearly 15,000 - 25,000 different species, making them the second most diverse group of plants. An ancient plant, moss is said to have first appeared around 400 million years ago and is one of the first plant species to colonise the land. Mosses are non-flowering and rely on spores to ensure their survival. They grow very slowly and lack a root system, instead relying on root-like threads called rhizoids. This makes them surprisingly resilient to changes in temperature. When faced with extreme drought, mosses will dry out and go

dormant, sometimes for years, until they have access to water again. This allows them to survive in the harshest conditions where most plants struggle. Sensitive to air pollution, the health of moss in an area is a reflection of air quality. Lots of moss growing on the trees in your neighbourhood That's a good sign. When the moss disappears, that's when you should worry. Patches of moss resemble tiny forest and are home to invertebrates mites and springtails, small animals like mice and vole and amphibians. It's its own world and it's teeming with life. It's mysterious in the same way that a vast forest is mysterious, you never know what you'll find when you start exploring.

My love of moss began when I started going for walks in the forest. I live in Vancouver, British Columbia so it's pretty rainy here a lot of the time and as a result, our forests are lush and green and are home to a variety of flora and fauna. Our rainforests are beautiful and will transport you, making you feel like you could be walking in a fantasy novel. You half-expect a wizard to pop out from behind a tree and ask you to go on a quest. Cat-tail moss (*Isoetecium myosuroides*) hangs down from the branches of douglas fir trees and red roof moss (*Ceratodon purpureus*) perches on top of a rock with its perky (and sort of cute) stems reaching upwards. You run your hand along a patch of broom moss (*Dicranum scoparium*) and take delight in its softness and wonder what it would be like to take a nap on it (probably very comfy). Moss invites you in to take a closer look and encourages you to slow down. By its very nature, moss is an example that good things take time to grow and remind you to not rush the journey. To spend time with moss is to spend time with yourself. It can be a very philosophical experience.

Maybe this is what I love so much about moss. I admire its resilience and fortitude while trying to survive in a changing world. Much like people, moss can adapt to its ever-changing environment, a process that takes time and patience. Plants are the foundation of life on earth. If we all took more time to get to know them and understand them, maybe we would start to really appreciate just how precious life really is. So, the next time you're outside, take a good look around. I bet you'll find moss wherever you look, growing where you least expect it. and ecosystems on the planet. While I may be surrounded by some of the largest and oldest plants in the world, my favourite is much smaller.

