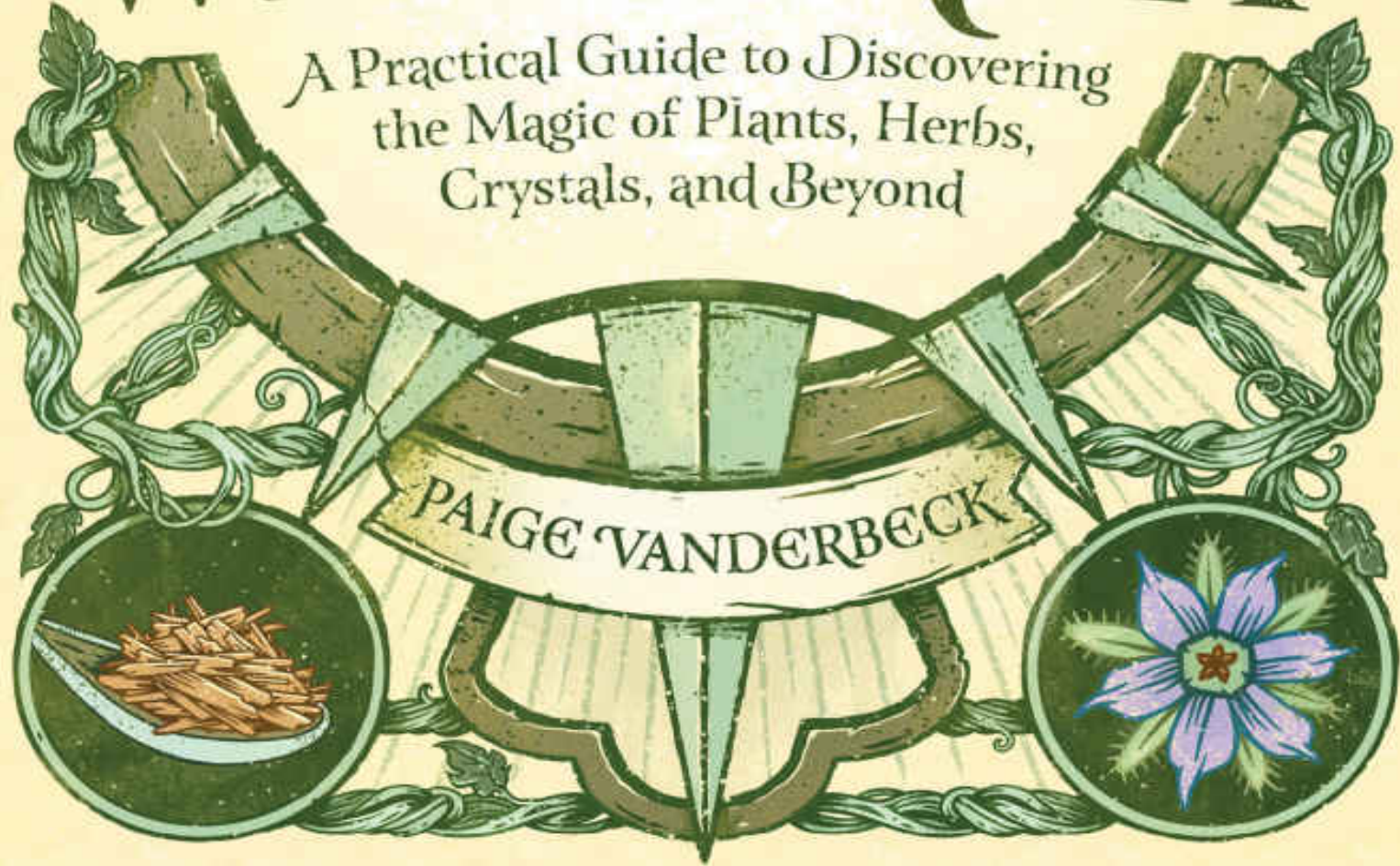




GREEN WITCHCRAFT

A Practical Guide to Discovering
the Magic of Plants, Herbs,
Crystals, and Beyond

PAIGE VANDERBECK



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Illustrations by Studio Muti

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Dedicated to Jimmy Hoppa—RIP my lucky moon rabbit.



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Introduction

I felt the call of the earth from a young age. I couldn't keep my toes out of the mud, and I ate any fruit or vegetable right off the plant. I climbed trees (usually to get to the cherries or crab apples), made friends with the neighborhood animals, and raised tadpoles into frogs in an old claw-foot tub in the backyard. Living in the middle of the automotive capital of Canada, I would lie in the grass watching the city buses go by, dreaming about the day I, too, could be trusted to take this Chariot of the Teenage Gods to school. I share this because there's this myth that everyone who loves or connects with the earth lives on a farm or in the middle of the woods, but that isn't true. Anyone can develop a relationship with the earth, regardless of what part of it they currently happen to be standing on.

One of the first things I learned about real witchcraft was that it was a path for those who wanted to live in harmony with the earth—those who wanted to grow and harvest plants for magic and medicine, and to honor the spirits of the trees, the animals, and even the rocks around them. I knew right away I'd found the path I was meant to walk.

If you've found your way to this book, I imagine you've felt that same call from the earth: to slow down and listen to what it has to teach you. Maybe you've always had an incredible green thumb or have always wanted to learn to use natural medicine, or maybe you've recently realized you need to make a more meaningful spiritual connection with the earth.

Green Witchcraft is a guide to creating a relationship with all things natural and supernatural and for harnessing that energy in a way that can affect your everyday life. Many of the plants, flowers, stones, and more that you'll find in this book have ancient origins—both medicinal and mystical—but all the exercises are designed to work in the modern world.

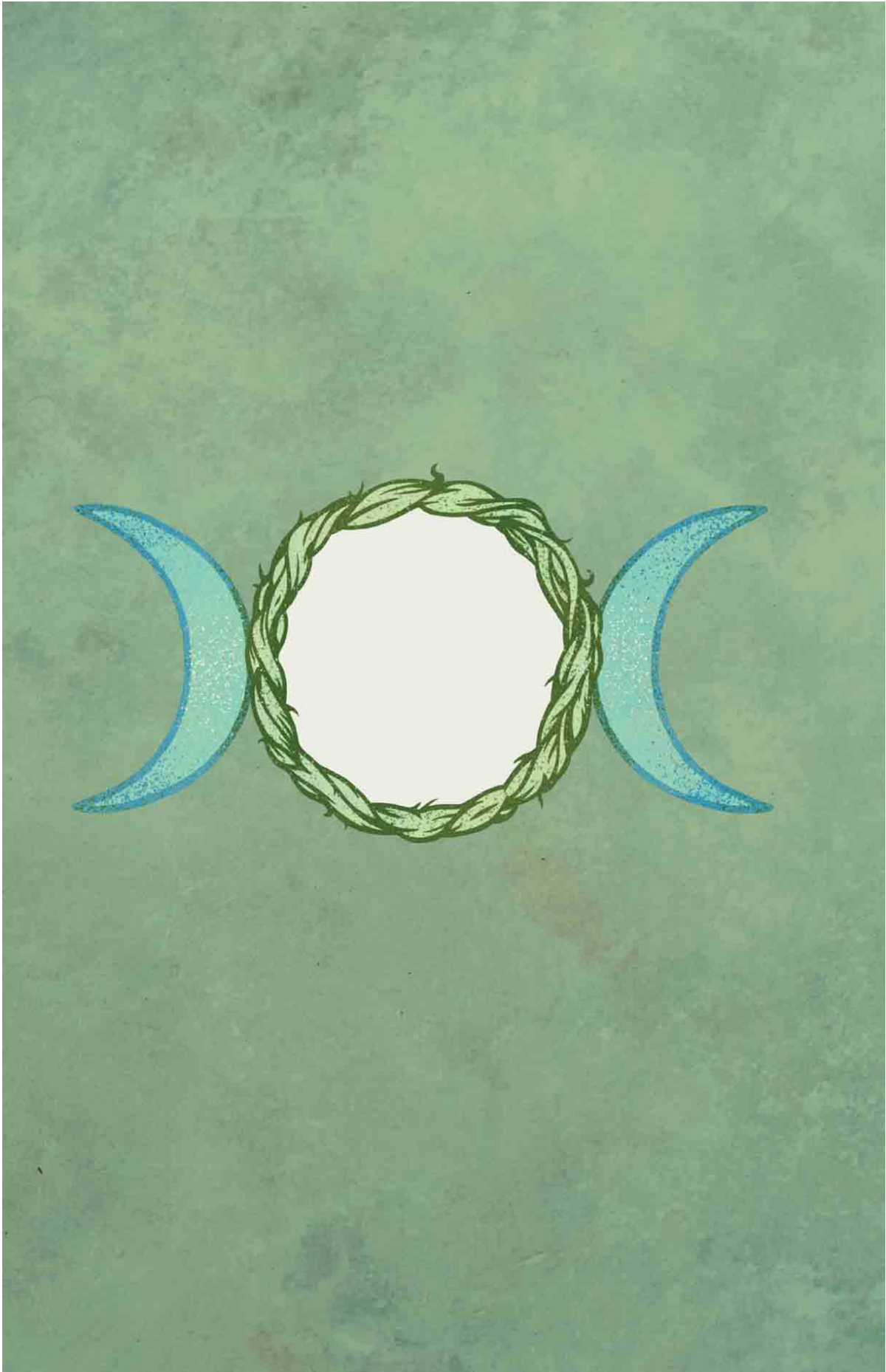
PART I

Understanding Green Witchcraft



In part 1 of this book, we'll cover everything you need to know before embarking on the path of green witchcraft, including some history, values and beliefs, the necessary tools, and making your space ready to work with plants and stones. I'll explain what words like "magic" and "energy" actually mean to witches, and some of the myths and misconceptions about magic and the people who believe in it.







Chapter One

The Way of the Green Witch

This chapter delves into the philosophies and practices that define green witchcraft and those who practice it, as well as its origins and focus on the natural world.








The Green Witchcraft Tradition

Green witchcraft is a practice and a lifestyle. It's also a relationship between you and the earth. The earth supports you, provides for you, and heals you, and you respond in kind. The more you put into your relationship with the earth, the more you get out of it. By studying and working with natural elements like plants, weather, crystals, and the cosmos, witches become in tune with the cycles of growth, evolution, harmony, life, and death. The wisdom of the earth is infinite, and so, too, is the learning process in which witches revel.

In researching witchcraft, you might find information about established traditions or even religions that incorporate the practice into their belief systems. The most popular witchcraft-based religion is called Wicca and is covered beginning [here](#). On its own, however, the practice of green witchcraft is not a religion. This path is open to people of all religions and cultural backgrounds. It can be practiced in tandem with any religion of your choosing or on its own as a spiritual practice.

If you're still unsure if green witchcraft is for you because you don't fit the image of a witch you have in your head, go ahead and give your head a shake because here's the truth—anyone can be a witch. I know that's a loaded word and may even scare you, so let's dispel some of myths and misconceptions about green witches.

“I can't be a green witch because . . .”

-  **“I like living in the city, working in an office building, and wearing makeup and high heels or a suit.”** Witches have come a long way since the days of Hansel and Gretel in the deep, dark woods. People from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, and with all sorts of interests have found their way to witchcraft and magic because they form a spiritual path that lets them make the rules about their own lives.
-  **“I believe in science and Western medicine.”** Believing in the power of nature and believing in the power of humanity are not mutually exclusive. You can protect yourself with both vaccines and a sprig of rue hung above your front door.
-  **“I have the opposite of a green thumb. I kill everything.”** This one is so common. There are so many different ways of working with plants, and growing them yourself is only one of those ways. We all have different skills. Maybe you kill every plant you bring home but draw the most beautiful renderings of living plants you encounter, or run an organization that works to fight climate change.
-  **“I'm a faithful Christian, and I was taught that witchcraft is evil.”** Witchcraft and magic are not evil, and the vast majority of modern witches you meet are not satanic or even anti-Christian. It may surprise you to know that Christian witches exist. There are also Jewish, Muslim, and atheist witches. If your religion enriches your life and provides you with comfort and understanding about the world, there's no reason to give it up or to think that witchcraft contradicts it.
-  **“Only women can be witches.”** This one is, without a doubt, my least favorite misconception about witches out there. Anyone can be a witch. There is no one set of rules about who can be a witch or how you have to look, dress, or love.

Since green witchcraft is not a religion or tradition on its own, there's no initiation process or main governing body to put you on your path. That doesn't mean, however, that there's no one for you to learn from. The everyday uses, chemical composition, and growing cycles of plants and minerals are just as important to understand as their magical uses and energies. You can enroll in courses that teach herbalism, botany, geology, traditional Chinese medicine, and agriculture at many colleges and universities around the world, or you can join a local community garden or wild-crafting group. Starting [here](#), I've provided a list of resources, including books and websites, that can help you learn both the magical and mundane secrets of natural magic.

Spirituality & Witchcraft

The most popular Western religion that includes the practice of witchcraft is called Wicca, a modern religion created in the 1940s in England by a man named Gerald Gardner and shared with the wider public in the 1950s. Many of the concepts and structure of modern witch practices come from Gardner and his first coven. Wicca is an open-minded religion with positive views about sexuality and women's rights, and focuses heavily on communion with and service of the earth. Instead of worshipping one god, Wiccans usually worship a god and

goddess or even many gods and goddesses. Since Wicca's inception, the number of people practicing it or simply finding their spiritual path through witchcraft has grown exponentially. Currently, witchcraft is the fastest-growing spiritual movement in North America.

Spirituality, like witchcraft, is a big part of many religions but is not a religion in and of itself. It's more of a mindset. Spiritual people tend to understand that we, as humans, do not know everything and that one of the reasons we are all here is to seek out answers to questions, even those that may seem impossible to answer. Religion is one way in which many people scratch their spiritual itch, but it's not the only way.

Finding Your Path

Spirituality takes many paths. Those who find their way to green witchcraft typically feel a strong connection to the natural world. They may feel most at peace in the woods or by a body of water, may enjoy tending to a garden, or may consider themselves animal lovers or environmentalists. They understand that they—and everything they see—are deeply connected to the earth on which they walk. For those who are spiritually inclined, the path of green witchcraft may call to them in a million different ways, if they are listening and looking for an invitation, from falling leaves during meditation to the surprisingly medicinal weed growing in their front lawns to the sound of the wind rushing past leaves, whispering magical sounds. The natural world speaks to us in subtle yet powerful ways.

For those who are curious about green witchcraft or new to the craft, resources for honing their inclinations are plentiful. The Internet puts a giant repository of information just a few clicks away. A local library or bookstore can help you discover books like this one. And local metaphysical stores sometimes offer classes as well as ways for people to meet others on the same spiritual path. For those who prefer to learn on their own, the natural world is replete with all the tools and materials needed to create healing and magic through the use of some independent research and intuition. Once you make up your mind to follow the path of the green witch, a plush green carpet will unfurl at your feet.

Green Witchcraft through the Ages

“Witch” can be a pretty loaded word. Throughout time, people who called themselves witches, and even some who didn't, were put on trial and executed as blasphemers and heretics. It's no surprise that so many chose to go by other names instead, like “midwife,” “wise man or woman,” “healer,” “herbalist,” “shaman,” “apothecary,” or “medicine man or woman.” In some places and times, there wasn't even a word for “witch” because what we now call folk magic was just another common household practice. These are the spiritual and historical ancestors of the modern green witch. Though practices vary widely across the world, all these healers studied local plants and foods and their effects on the body, mind, and spirit, and could often be sought out for spiritual counsel. By learning about these ancestors, green witches come to develop a sense of their place in a long line of people who have harnessed the power of the earth to heal the body, mind, and soul. Today, the most similar paths to green witchcraft are kitchen and hedge witchcraft. All three share a connection to the earth and focus on using elements from the natural world for healing. While green witches are the most connected to plants, kitchen witches incorporate anything available in the home into their practice, and hedge witches may incorporate dream and astral journeying into their arsenal of tools.

Though witchcraft and science may seem to be at odds, many who walk a green path have found that technology is an excellent tool for getting in touch with the natural world. You can use technology to keep a journal of your work with plants, identify flora and fauna in the wild, and access several years' worth of research with the click of a button. Green technology, like solar and wind power, can connect you with the energy of the earth while working to protect the environment, and that, to me, is magic.

Acts of Magic

Magic is the art of creating change in ourselves and in our lives through acts of intention and a spiritual connection with all things natural and supernatural. This magic is not illusory. It's meant not to trick anyone but rather to provide another way of looking at the world.