

GROW A ROW

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In my early twenties, I volunteered for a domestic violence hotline. This experience informed my understanding of domestic violence, sexism, and misogyny. Violence against any person who identifies as female is prevalent worldwide. When I first learned about Eve Ensler's work in the Congo Region (www.vday.org) assisting women who have been raped and violated, I wept and asked, "How can I be of help?" The answer was "grow a row of calendula."

Calendula is a remarkable herb for healing wounds and for filling the body and spirit with vitality and light. Used as an oil or salve, it heals all kinds of wounds, soothes and heals inflamed, infected or traumatized vaginal tissue, and lessens scarring. As a tea or tincture, it offers many health benefits as described in the handout titled Calendula's Healing Gifts.

The Grow a Row Project

The Grow a Row project is a grassroots initiative. The vision for this project is as follows:

Anyone who has a small or large organic garden can "grow a row" of calendula, collect the flowers regularly, and dry them. Store the dried flowers in a glass jar in a cupboard or in a clean brown paper bag. See handout for preparing calendula oil and salve.

Contact your local or county organization that serves women and children who have been raped or violated. Share with a staff person about the Grow a Row project and ask to donate calendula oils or salves that you have made. Print off and give information to the staff about the Grow a Row project and the educational sheets about calendula's healing benefits. This exchange builds community among people and plants.

My hope is that this grassroots initiative will encourage all people to grow and dry calendula, and will create more dialogue, community support, and understanding of the root causes of violence and oppression within families, schools, the health care system and government agencies. Planting seeds and sharing herbs is a way to bring about positive change.

Information sheets about growing, collecting, drying, and using calendula in teas, baths, oils, and salves are available at www.debsoule.com. Please give freely.

Resources

- **Healing Herbs for Women and How to Move Like a Gardener: Planting and Preparing Medicines from Plants by Deb Soule**
- **Rosemary Gladstar's Medicinal Herbs by Rosemary Gladstar**
- **Sacred Instructions: Indigenous Wisdom for Living Spirit-Based Change by Sherri Mitchell**
- **The Garden Awakening: Designs to Nurture our Land and Ourselves by Mary Reynolds**
- **Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness by David Treleaven**
- **Your Resonant Self by Sarah Peyton**