



Massia Officinale*

A radical herb garden in rural Estonia.

Massia Officinale is the working title for a medicinal wild herb garden in progress. Located on the grounds of Massia, a platform for artists, scientists, political activists and any individual or group that wants to think change radically.

The building used to be a school built in the 1930s and has been re-imagined as a place for radical work in 2016.

One of the visions for 2018, and beyond, is to create a space for radical herbal practice and research. Drawing connections between the herbal landscape of the surroundings and the medicinal herb garden to the practical space of a herb lab and apothecary for transforming plants into medicine and nutrition, and to a space for research and discourse where we can engage with the social, philosophical and political spheres of radical herb work and connect with artists, scientists, political activists and other individuals or groups for extended explorations of ecologies in the Anthropocene.

*The byname Officinale refers to the latin word's common use to name plants with an established medicinal or culinary use. It literally means „of or belonging to an officina“, the storeroom of a monastery, where medicines and other necessities were kept. It is related to opifex which means „worker, maker, doer“ (opus „work“ + -fex, -ficus, „one who does,“ from facere „do, perform“).

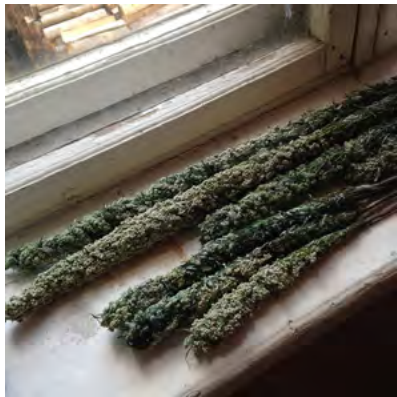
The name describes Massia as a space where we do work, make sense and interact useful with ecologies – including herbs and going beyond.



The vision

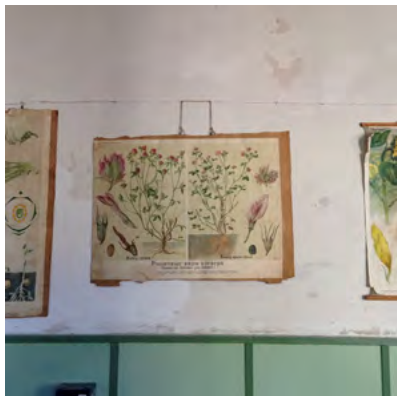
Massia Officinale wants to be a platform for

- herbal medicine & wild food practice and education: for all knowledge levels, from the curious to the professional
- herbal research for medicine, botany, social and natural sciences, arts...
- entanglements (existing & yet to come) with other discourses & practices engaged with ecologies in the Anthropocene
- experimentation with herbs



The special set up of a herb garden, a residency that provides accessible working and living space and the idea of its use as a platform for radical work give fertile ground to a focussed engagement with herbal work.

The space invites for both practical and theoretical work with herbs. The rich surroundings and the herb garden will provide a broad variety of plants to study and work with. The house provides work space for numerous people, a library with herbal literature (small but growing) and living space that allow for focussed studies over desired periods of time.



Massia Officinale intends herbs as an entry point to a rhizomatic exploration of ecological entanglements. Grounded on a broad understanding of health that includes ecological and social health. The Massia officinale rhizome wants to tangle with discourses on the health of the planet and its inhabitants – human and non-human – disenfranchised epistemologies, intersectionality, etc.



The broad variety of definitions of what a herb is, is metaphor for the blurred and biased lines that are being drawn across our thinking about world (between categories, objects, species, genders, classes, forms of knowledge...). The definition that seems most relevant is the one that defines a herb as a plant that is useful. Let's erase the lines we find unuseful and think and do world more healthily.

Massia is through its founder and the co-creators connected to similar platforms and an international network of researchers, scientists, artists, thinkers and doers – which also gives fertile ground to collaborations and meetings with non-herbal discourses and practices beyond the botanical and medicinal realm of herbal engagement.

An anthropocentric thinking and doing has led us to a situation in which we're facing the highest rate of extinction of non-human species and disturbed ecologies that point towards a future in which we cannot survive prosperously. Our concept of and relation to nature is in need of exploration. The work with herbs is the entry point for Massia Officinale to do so.

Next to the gravitas – this is a wonderful place that invites fun and experimentation.

The invitation

We want to invite you for a gathering in Early spring during which we can imagine possibilities and a program of how to create and use this platform together.

We can design the herb garden reflecting these imaginations and make plans for how to blow life into them.

We can plan and design a herb lab to create medicine, remedies and food, an apothecary for an extended community, a library, a herbarium, etc.

If this sounds interesting to you, please let us know if you would be available around Easter, 30.3.-10.4.2018, and we can work towards concrete dates.

infomassia@gmail.com

The garden

The building is surrounded by 2ha of grounds inhabited by old fruit trees, birch trees, oaks, pines, spruces, elms and linden, cohabited by tapestries of lichen. A rich carpet of wild herbs, mosses and mycelium.

The herb garden will be starting to grow in a little orchard with existing plum, cherry plum and apple trees, aronia and currant shrubs. Lots of herbs are already growing here: plantain, yarrow, selfheal, lady's mantle, valerian, meadowsweet, ground elder, wild strawberry, marjoram, wood sorrel, sorrel, red clover, pineapple weed, nettles, eyebright, cleavers, mugwort, cranberries, oxeye daisies, horsetail, dandelions...)

The current idea is to create a herb garden that is home to all locally growing and wild herbs and also invites cultivated herbs that come from all over the world and grow well in the baltic climate.

Hopefully we can shape this together during the gathering.



The landscape

Massia is located in an old school in Massiaru, a village in Häädemeeste Parish, Pärnu County in southwestern Estonia, close to the Latvian border. The location is about 180 km from Tallinn, and about 140 km from Riga (Latvia). 12 km from here is the baltic sea and its sandy beaches. 5 km from here is Nigula, one of the oldest bog reserves of Estonia with untouched swamp forests, lakes and importance to wildlife, specially birds.

The area is mainly inhabited by non-human nature, nature reserves, forests (sadly 70% are for commercial use, made up of pines, spruces and birches mainly), fields and wetlands. The topography constitutes a landscape that, from an anthropocentric perspective, feels like vast emptiness. A potentially transforming experience.



Estonia's right to roam allows for responsible gathering of medicinal plants, flowers, mushrooms, berries, nuts and other natural products on public land not under protection.

Estonia's long tradition of use of herbal products and healthcare, based on traditions and practice experience, is accepted and developed within the Estonian health regulations.



Massia

Massia is a platform for any individual or group, artists, scientists, political activists, etc. that want to think change radically – whether this concerns the arts, politics, education, prisons, hospitals, society, economy.

Massia aims to be a platform for experimentation, for taking risks with one's own work or with needs that cover a bigger ambition than only for oneself.

Massia stresses the notions of self-organisation and autonomy in a hospitable and easily accessible building in order to survive prosperously in the absence of authority and surveillance.

Not so far from Massia, at about 5 km into the Nature Protected Area is a cabin, available for the visitors of Nigula Reserve, where bears and birds and plants find a safe haven. This cabin functions like free accessible cabins for mountaineers in the mountains, safe havens, places for protection and rest. There are no instructions for use, nonetheless, they are always left clean even maintained. Not by the mountain administration but by the mountaineers themselves. Because they all understand that these cabins make sense, are useful, even life saving.

Massia tries to experiment with these notions of making sense, being useful, even life saving. It wants to be a building full of potentiality, never defined, never belonging to a specific idea or specific group, hospitable, easily accessible, an instrument for making work, for rethinking one's work, reinventing it, and for rethinking, reinventing society or aspects of it.



The house is under constant reconstruction. Currently there are 10 bedrooms, 15 beds (more of them in progress) and multiple working spaces. In summer more guests can camp on the grounds.

Furthermore the house provides:

A fully Equipped kitchen
Dishwasher, washing machine
and dryer

2 bathrooms

5 toilets

2 pianos

2 active speakers, mix board and
beamer for audio/visual installations

Spacious theatre hall

6 working spaces (each ca. 36m²)

2 bikes

1 car to rent (cheaply)

1 pond

1 greenhouse

Gardening equipment

Massia has no subsidy whatsoever. To enter the space you have to become a member for 12€. This membership is valuable for 12 months. Staying prices are 9€ per night per person when the stay is more than 4 nights and 10€ if under 5 nights. To stay for one full month costs 250€.

If you come to co-imagine Massia Officinale with us in April, you have to pay the membership and can stay for free for the duration of the gathering.

For more information, including travel info, visit www.massia.ee or write an email to infomassia@gmail.com