

Proposal for ASPB Education Foundation Project:
Three Years of Production & Nationwide Distribution of
“The Plant Detective” Public Radio Show

From applicants:

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

You are sitting in your car waiting for your son's cello lesson to end. Suddenly detective-y music comes over the radio. You look around for a gumshoe—then hear her speak. “Delaterre here, Flora Delaterre, plant detective. Drawn by the mystery of medicinal plants—and their alarming disappearance—I decided to investigate.” You are listening to *The Plant Detective*, a short-form program from Montana Public Radio about phytomedicinals.

Public radio listeners in Montana experience this radio program every Saturday night, and have for the past ten years. In September 2006, *The Plant Detective* will be made available to a national audience. Coproducers Montana Public Radio and ASPB member and freelance producer Beth Judy seek ASPB's support for production and the nationwide distribution of *The Plant Detective*.

Back in your car, you reach for the knob and turn up the volume. “Flora Delaterre” continues: “I'm in Veracruz, Mexico, on the trail of a brilliant chemist, Russell Marker, and the plant that birthed the birth control pill. In the 1930s, scientists saw that the sex hormones our bodies produce—like progesterone and testosterone—could be key in certain therapies and, possibly, in birth control. The problem was raw material for research. Four tons of ovaries from 80,000 sows yield just 12 milligrams of the female hormone estradiol. A ton of bull testicles produces just 300 milligrams of testosterone. Russell Marker believed he could use compounds from plants to synthesize these hormones—IF he could find the right molecule. For a decade he screened plants. Right here, in 1942, he found it: a species of Mexican Yam Indians had used for centuries. He synthesized progesterone, and research on the Pill took off. But it all started with the Mexican Yam.” After credits and a disclaimer, Flora reminds listeners: “Folks, medicinal plants are everywhere, and you've got to treat 'em right, 'cause some day, they might be treating

you.” Trumpets flare, and the show is over.

The Plant Detective began in 1996, the brainchild of a professor at the University of Montana School of Pharmacy who specialized in medicinal plants, and radio producer Beth Judy. The show teaches listeners about the inner workings of plants, phytomedicinal interactions with the human body, and the value of plants to humans. With a nod to popular culture and a touch of humor, the character Flora Delaterre delivers the information, making plant science more inviting and accessible to nonscientists. From some remote corner of the globe (or sometimes the neighborhood park or a back yard), Flora reports on one plant per show, orienting listeners to its medicinal qualities and also, as permitted by time and story, the plant’s botany, ethnobotany, and related lore. Until his retirement, UM Pharmacy professor Rustem Medora oversaw the show’s content. Recently, the science-based Botanical Medicine Department at Bastyr University (Kenmore, WA), headed by Robin DiPasquale, has taken over this role.

The use of herbal remedies has increased phenomenally in the past fifteen years, and continues to rise. Yet myths about medicinal plants, as well as incorrect or even dangerous usage, abound. *The Plant Detective* presents accurate information about the benefits, risks, and efficacy of individual medicinal plants. It also seeks to increase awareness of plants and their vital importance to people and thus to encourage the preservation of plants and plant species. *The Plant Detective* does not promote any one system of medicine, including herbal medicine; instead, science-based, it focuses on the plants themselves and what credible research reveals about them.

Phytomedicinal stories featured on *The Plant Detective* run the gamut. There are tales from the past (e.g., of the now extinct sylphion, used for birth control in ancient Rome; and the historical uses of marshmallow) and the future (can a protein in pokeweed help prevent HIV

infection?). The plants themselves may still be used (e.g., flaxseed as a source of alpha-linolenic acid, or foxglove, used in cardiac drugs) or, by now, have synthetics or semi-synthetics modeled after them (modern anesthetics from curare; compounds based on physostigmine, in calabar bean). Featured plants address a myriad of health problems, from circulatory disease (horse chestnut) to motion sickness (ginger), anxiety (kava) to psoriasis (gotu kola), and diabetes (devils club) to gout (autumn crocus). In subject matter, shows cross continents, cultures, and systems of medicine, and range from the sublime (the sedative passionflower, named for Christ's passion) to the prosaic (plantain, the source of psyllium and Metamucil).

Plant Detective listeners soon know that they can find phytomedicinals in herb shops, but also in over-the-counter and prescribed pharmaceuticals, as well as in their refrigerators, spice shelves, and gardens. Listeners hear about current issues such as patenting and biopiracy, bans and regulation of phytomedicinals, adulteration and testing, and cultivation versus wild-harvest. They hear tales from the history of science about the development of drugs from “folk remedies” and ancient knowledge as well as from freak observation (e.g., the development of the anticoagulant warfarin from clover, and cancer drugs from periwinkle). And they learn about the plants themselves—the surprisingly long lives of echinacea plants, for example, or the effectiveness with which Devils Claw, in an exceedingly harsh environment, protects its seed and stores water, or some of the survival strategies behind the potent compounds plants produce.

In 2002, as a test of the market, Montana Public Radio distributed CDs of the show to public radio stations nationwide. From that single mailing, 25 public radio affiliates from Alabama to Alaska took the show. *Plant Detective* producers were thrilled at the results. They also realized that, if they actively marketed the show, even more stations would play it. Toward that end, Creative PR, a firm in Los Angeles that specializes in community and public radio, has

accepted the show into its stable, provided a marketing plan, and stands ready to implement it. The plan includes a presence at least two key national conferences for public radio program directors and community broadcasters; the creation of print materials to accompany CDs; the targeting of stations likely to play the show; announcement of the upcoming launch through the proper channels; and followup contact and relationship-building with stations.

In 2002, during the national test drive of the show, an estimated 708,000 listeners were exposed to *The Plant Detective* and the concepts and information about plants that it contains. After the test drive, Beth Judy and Montana Public Radio refashioned the show to an even more marketable length (90 seconds, down from 120) and format (less fact-packed; more lively). Creative PR projects that, six months after launching the new version of the show, 60 stations will carry *The Plant Detective*, for an estimated listenership of 1,930,800. In year two, Creative PR estimates, carriage will rise to 100 stations, equivalent to 3,218,100 listeners, with 10 percent annual growth thereafter. Montana Public Radio is planning additional free distribution via internet sources. The show's producers intend to broaden awareness about medicinal plants, and they will measure their success by the number of stations reached. Experience has shown that, because most people think about health—their own or their loved ones'—every day, medicinal plants are a bridge to greater interest in plants in general.

While ASPB (and BSA) members may be familiar with other proposals for public radio programs about plants, *The Plant Detective* benefits from ten years of broadcast experience, during which listener feedback has continuously honed an effective show. The show's producers have actual experience with distributing a program nationwide—experience which has already served them well in their decision to hire professional marketing help. In addition, *The Plant Detective* differs from other proposed shows in that the inner workings of plants—their chemistry

and biology—always have center stage, surrounded by the plant’s human-interest aspects for lay appeal. For this reason, collaboration with ASPB is especially desirable because of the science being done by its members. Work by Eloy Rodriguez in the area of zoopharmacognosy; Kevin Walker, on genetic/technological advances in producing phytomedicinals; and others will inform and could perhaps even feature on *The Plant Detective*. The only other existing public radio program that features some medicinal content, is *The Peoples Pharmacy*, which runs an hour long, has a call-in format, and covers all drugs, not just phytomedicinals. *The Plant Detective* has the potential to do better since it is brief (easier to fit into a station’s existing schedule), is exclusively about medicinal plants, and is available to stations at no charge.

Public interest in medicinal plants continues to rise, and people need information not only about wise and correct personal use, but also, for the plants’ sake, about conservation. While the brevity of *The Plant Detective* precludes extensive delivery of information, producer Beth Judy has built a corresponding website, www.floradelaterre.com, which provides more in-depth information and resources about the plants and related issues. Past episodes of the program posted on this site are available for free.

The show’s brevity is both a limit and a strength. Not everything about a plant can be said in 90 seconds—in fact, most of it cannot. But *Plant Detective* producers believe this is a good thing if it makes the show more effective. If listeners can actually digest the information they have heard and they find it fascinating, they can pursue further knowledge on their own. Traditionally, for plants so rich in stories that they cannot be covered in one program (e.g., *Papaver somniferum*; datura; ergot), *The Plant Detective* has had multiple shows on one plant. We will continue this tradition and not allow format to compromise quality of information.

The missions of *The Plant Detective* and the ASPB Education Foundation are similar,

with emphases on general understanding, education, and the latest in science. Through *The Plant Detective*, support from ASPB will help broaden public understanding of medicinal plants as a sometimes endangered and sometimes renewable resource. The show has the potential to increase—into the millions—the number of people who view plants with respect and appreciation, and to sow seeds of awareness about this invaluable resource.

**Listen to episodes of The Plant Detective at:
www.floradelaterre.com**

The Budget

The nationwide launch and distribution plan will take three years. Each year the budget for production and distribution will be \$30,000, for a total project of \$90,000 in the three-year period. We plan to match ASPB funding 2-1 with cash funding from other sources. An additional \$90,000 will come from in-kind contributions.

Expenses (for each year – 52 episodes)

<u>Production</u>		
Research, writing, voicing	\$6,000	Producer, Beth Judy Part-time
Recording, editing, electronic distribution, CD production	\$5,000	production staff
<u>Distribution/Promotion</u>		
Contract marketing/distribution	\$5,000	Creative PR, Kathy Gronau. Phone and electronic sales/communication with 2,000 program directors

CDs	\$3,000	of public and community radio stations nationwide
Direct mail marketing items	\$2,500	Promotional and show distribution Letters, envelopes, and reply vehicle
Advertising	\$1,500	Trade newspapers, Conf ads, Conf stuffers, Conf Giveaways
Miscellaneous	\$1,000	Affiliation fees, electronic distribution fees, supplies
Conferences	\$6,000	Public Radio Program Directors & National Federation of Community Broadcasters conferences, booths, 2 attendees, travel, lodging, per diem

One Year Total **\$30,000**
Three Year Total **\$90,000**

Revenue (three years)

Revenue Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Grants - ASPB requested	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$5,000	\$30,000
Sponsorships - corporate-projected	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$45,000
Station Cash - membership and local sponsors	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
Totals	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$90,000

In-Kind Contributions

In-Kind Support for one year	Hours	Rate	Total
Station - production staff supervision	24	\$30	\$720
Station - studio time, non-profit rate	312	\$35	\$10,920
Station - fundraising and marketing	120	\$35	\$4,200
Producer - research, professional affiliation fees, fundraising	155	\$25	\$3,875
Bastyr University Faculty - science advisors	208	\$50	\$10,400
Total for One Year			\$30,115
Total Three Years			\$90,345