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Photos courtesy Hollyhock Retreat 2010

## Hollyhock - Antioxidant for the Soul

Article by Reena Thar

Photos courtesy Hollyhock Retreat

You say no to plastic shopping bags. You may bike to work. Perhaps shop at the farmers' market all summer. You choose local, use the library, and you just plain buy less. All of these are great strategies for being a more conscious consumer who aspires to build more robust communities and a healthier planet.

There are all manner of how-to manuals for being responsible consumers. We can measure our trash and calculate our carbon footprint. The epic challenges of our times are complex, and it's easy to see that we need to do more than buy local and recycle, but what? The answer lies not only in what we buy, or drive, or eat. It's also in how we create, how we relate to each other, how we think and play. We need to be more skilled, wiser, creative and resilient.

There's no formula, no roadmap, no university degree or certification in personal resiliency. An elusive concept, it's about stretching yourself, deepening your capacity to engage in life. We develop it by nurturing our creativity, practicing wisdom and learning new personal skills. And while there are books and conceptual tools, there are few places that support and offer experiential learning that's essential.



Photo courtesy Hollyhock Retreat 2010

Hollyhock is one of these rare and unique places. Humbly tucked away on Cortes Island, British Columbia, it's a non-profit centre for experiential learning, leading-edge professional development, personal growth, as well as a stunning holiday destination. Hollyhock's programs reach into areas as diverse as leadership, painting, yoga, cooking, meditation and spiritual practice, and social change trainings.

Hollyhock is an antioxidant for the soul. The staff, volunteer board of directors and founders are a talented community of individuals dedicated to building and maintaining this magical experiment that's unlike any other retreat centre.

Small, beautiful and simple, the campus perches at the water's edge. You can't help but quickly become in tune with nature's rhythms of the tides, the sun and the moon. The breathtaking beauty of coastal mountains, rainforest, and the Salish Sea surrounds and infuses Hollyhock with an electric vivacity that's deeply nurturing and restorative. It's a place where you'll recall what it is to converse with, and be inspired by nature.



Photo courtesy Hollyhock Retreat 2010



Photo courtesy Hollyhock Retreat 2010

A visit to Hollyhock is a full sensory experience. Be prepared to be livened and awed. The convivial chatter of shore birds, the quiet burble of life in the intertidal zone, being watched over by eagles, the garden of vivid colours and intense perfume. And if you're not in paradise yet, then the dinner bell will certainly call you to heavenly pleasure three times every day. Fresh, tantalizing food delights taste buds and tummies.

It's easy to understand how it's possible to spend hours, even days, simply taking in the sound of the waves and the sublime garden scents, yet the average day at Hollyhock is filled with a wonderful array of activities and opportunities. Not to be missed are the morning yoga and movement classes, world-class bodywork, naturalist-guided excursions, sailing adventures, and hiking. On any given evening, you may find yourself with the option of lingering on the seashore, sampling local oysters grilled over driftwood, or heading out for a night-time kayak paddle to explore the sparkling bioluminescence.

This all may sound like relaxation and indulgence, however, for CEO Dana Solomon this sort of rejuvenation is vital refuelling.



Photo courtesy Hollyhock Retreat 2010

"Places like Hollyhock are crucial in times like these when there's so much we need to step up and do in our communities, local and global. The greater capacity each of us has to be wise, compassionate and creative, the greater chance we have for survival as a species on this planet," she says.

Hollyhock is a recipe for growing personal resiliency through growing a juicy life. Like improvising in the kitchen, it's a place to try new flavours and get creative. Add a touch of this, or a pinch of that. You can mix it up. Let it marinate. Savour for a lifetime.

Whatever the reason that takes you there, you can be guaranteed to find unexpected gems. You'll find yourself in a place where you can try things on, learn, grow, then take home new skills, integrate, and share with others.

For more info check out: [www.hollyhock.ca](http://www.hollyhock.ca)

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