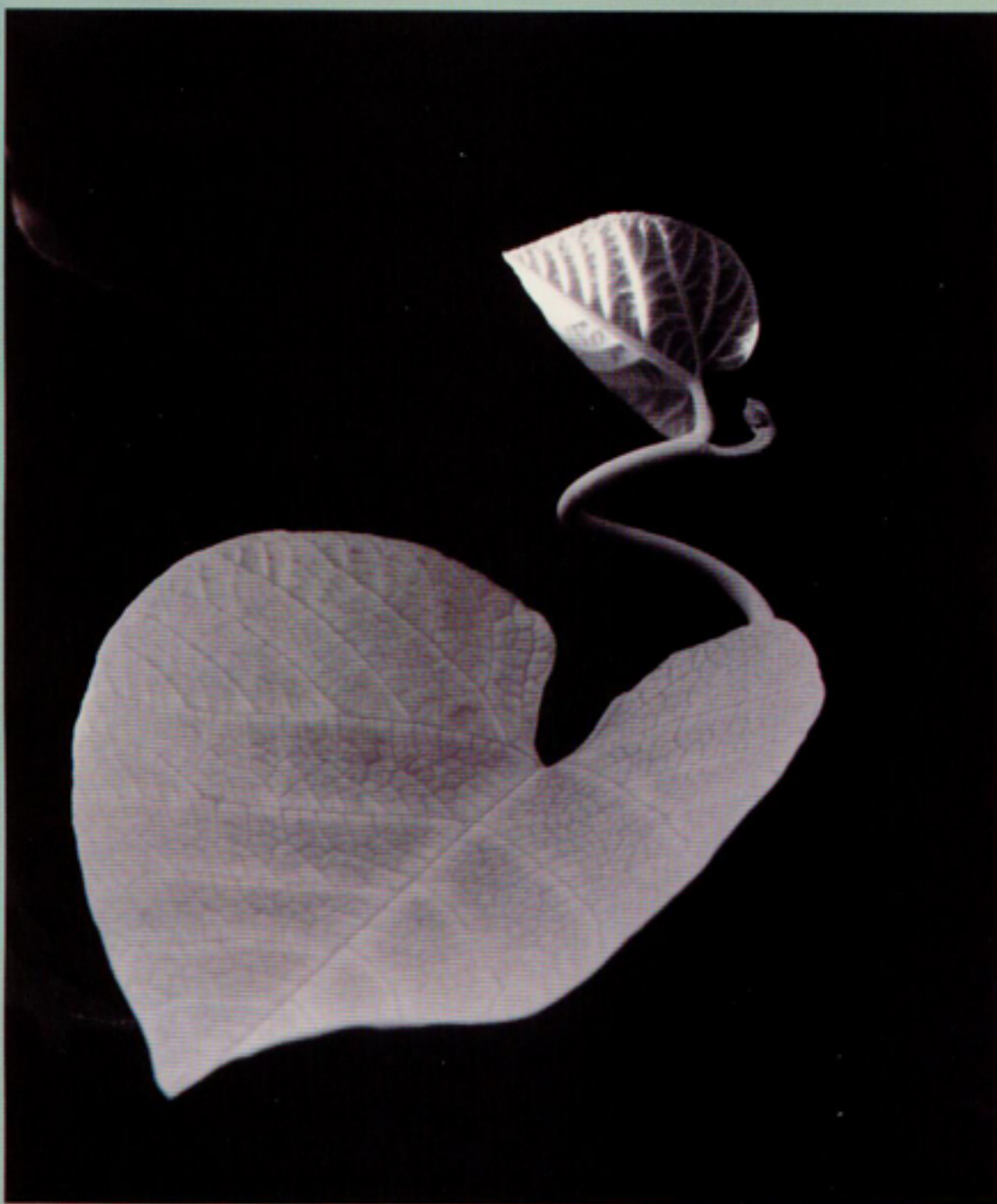


# Healing Arts <sup>Guide</sup>

SPA & WELLNESS PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

3rd Edition  
Fall New Products



Capitalizing On The Natural & Organic Marketplace

# Seeds of Innovation:



In **each** issue of The Healing Arts Guide, we will **feature** an inspirational **story** that highlights the **motivating** and compelling experience of an **entrepreneur**. Oftentimes, these **personal** accounts go unnoticed.

However, we feel that the **challenging** and adventurous beginnings of these **healing arts** heavyweights are just as **interesting** as their well-deserved **achievements**.

## Q&A with Ann Thariani, co-founder of Gilden Tree

Gilden Tree is a small business in Omaha, Nebraska, that began when Ann Thariani fell in love. While attending college, she fell in love with Kumy, now her husband, who moved back home to Pakistan. After three years apart, she followed him to his land and the two were married. It is there that she discovered a local product, a funny looking, terra cotta, pumice stone called the Footscrubber, and Ann fell in love again. When they decided to move back to the United States, she and Kumy wanted to start a business together, so they started importing the Footscrubber—a unique product for the American market.

The Pakistani people who make the terra cotta tools are all women, and either close friends or related. Before they started making the Footscrubbers, there was no chance for

them to earn money, and their husbands were common laborers making very little. Ann and Kumy have helped these families in innumerable ways including paying for the education of the women in Pakistan as well as their children.

Through their company, they have created a support system that knows no boundaries. For the founders of Gilden Tree, creating high quality products in an environment that respects each individual's contributions, remaining enthusiastic about doing business the right way, and maintaining a broader world view mean hard work, but also great rewards.



## What Inspired you to begin your business?

My husband and I were living in Pakistan and planning to move back to the United States. He'd been an architect and I'd been teaching, but we wanted to do something together. We had lots of ideas, but thought there might be a need for a tool that was used locally for scrubbing feet.





**What is the philosophy/mission behind your work?**

Our goal is to bring about meaningful healing, where we help our bodies heal themselves. We believe that our own experiences and those of people around the world are very powerful and that many of the ingredients used in traditional medicine, such as Aloe Vera, Jojoba Oil and Shea Butter are part of a “natural apothecary” that truly help stimulate healing. We try to use as complete an ingredient as possible in high quantities in our products. We also have recently decided to make a commitment to using certified organic and wild-crafted ingredients.

**What were some of the early obstacles/sacrifices?**

A rough form of the Footscrubber, which was a common tool in Pakistan, was always available, but only in very small quantities. We began to work with a family to make them, and later another family joined in, too.

The women in these families made the Footscrubbers, and it was very challenging in the early years to help them set up a cottage industry that created a consistent, high-quality product. Most of these women had never been able to work outside of the home and had no experiences preparing product for export. Helping figure everything out was a challenge.

**What sets your experience apart from others?**

Kumy, my husband is from Pakistan and we were married and lived there for five years. Our son Ali was born there, and I always had a deep regard for the people of Pakistan. Once we were able, we knew that we wanted to give something back to the people who made our Footscrubbers. We decided to pay for the education of their children, and later for the women themselves.

Public education is almost non-existent, and the cost of books, uniforms, school fees and sundry expenses was beyond them. One of our most meaningful moments was when one of the workers said with a proud smile, “Oh, that daughter of mine always has her nose in a book!”

**How has your work changed life?**

We’ve been blessed with wonderful people to work with, and been able to follow our hearts and dreams. I was able to bring my babies into work with me for six months and able to offer the same experience to other mothers.

We’ve tried to create an environment where people can be themselves, and be valued and respected. Kumy and I have grown and learned and seen the tiny seed of a vision grow and blossom – a pretty amazing feeling.



# Seeds of Innovation:



## What impact has your company had on the healing art industry?

We hope that we've helped foster a sense of responsibility and caring based on respect. We do our utmost to make products that take our customers' needs into consideration, and if we don't have what someone needs, we try to help them find someone who does.

## What does the future hold for your company?

We're actually very excited about the growth of the spa industry, especially in the direction of natural healing. We are committed to using many more certified organic ingredients and expanding our line into hand and body care. We are also working on a spa-exclusive foot-care line.

## What advice would you give other hopeful entrepreneurs?

Think about what you really believe in to define your focus or vision. Find a need and fill it. You can always grow from there

as long as you stay true to your vision. Learn as much as you can from the market – people are surprisingly open about their businesses. Listen to your customers. They know what they need and want and if you can provide it, they'll buy it. Lastly, don't wait for a "perfect moment" that never comes to start helping people. You don't have to move a mountain; you just have to take a step.

**For more information on Gilden Tree products drop a note to Ann at: [gildentree@aol.com](mailto:gildentree@aol.com)**

If you are the founder of a product or service company in the wellness spa or beauty market and have a unique story to tell (or if you know of a founder who does), please contact the editor at [karen@healinartsguide.com](mailto:karen@healinartsguide.com)

