



BAMBOO POWER!

What It Can Do For You

Blair LeMire, PhD

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“One of the most amazing experiences I’ve ever had was walking through an ancient bamboo forest. The bamboo, etching a path all the way to a gurgling waterfall, was so thick and tall that I couldn’t see the top of it. While I was walking, I could hear the bamboo singing and clacking the amazing rhythm and melody that bamboo plays. And then, at sunset, the birds came to sing along with the bamboo and waterfall— an incredible orchestra of Mother Nature.”

-Blair LeMire

Blair LeMire PhD was born in Chula Vista, California, in 1961. He first garnered the attention of the international press in 1998 when he performed his song *Linda Angel* at a vigil held for Linda McCartney at London's Trafalgar Square. The heartfelt tribute attracted the attention of news cameras and his impromptu performance was televised internationally. Later that same year, LeMire's band the "Phantom Love Horde" was chosen as the new favorite L.A. Indie-rock act by the television show *Spotlight L.A.* Having dabbled in the music scene, LeMire next turned his sights to animation- his next project was to create a cartoon short. The completed animation, entitled Moomie's Garage, was aired on Nickelodeon in 2002. Since that time, LeMire has been involved in a myriad of artistic projects. An avid vegetarian and lover of the earth, LeMire is perhaps best known as the "Bamboo Brother." He, along with his well-known bamboo-covered van *Vanboo*, has spent the past seven years spreading "bamboo consciousness" throughout the world.

B A M B O O P O W E R

What It Can Do For You

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Introduction

“As soon as we start doing, we learn how to proceed.”

-Bill Mollison

In the spring of 1999, I decided I needed to escape from my fast-paced Hollywood lifestyle. Up until that time, I had been living in an *ad nauseam* sea of self-indulgence. I'd have to say that I was swimming neither the backstroke nor the breaststroke but instead managing the ego-stroke all too well. In May of that year, I drove from California to Texas, where I attended Houston's annual Art Car Parade. After meeting a slew of interesting people, I decided to extend my vacation and use the extra time to venture on a few spontaneous side trips. Little did I know that this decision would open up a new and meaningful path in my life and would gradually connect me with the mysteries and wonder of the “boo.”

Finding A New World

My travels that spring eventually led me to Hunt, Texas. When I arrived at the small town, I was surprised by the lush tranquility of the land. I was also overwhelmed by the community's charm. Hunt's rich enclave of greenery immediately dissolved my preconceived image of Texas as an arid, dusty state overrun with cowboys and pickup trucks. After spending some time traveling through the Texas Hill Country, I decided to relocate to Austin, and forego my self-important life as the curator of a trend-setting art gallery and a fast-track toward becoming the next “Andy Warhol” of the Melrose art scene. This decision directed me towards the change I felt my soul was yearning for. From then on, I knew that I wanted to focus my efforts on making a difference in the world.

Several weeks later, I drove to the town of Denton, Texas to visit some friends I had met at the Art Car Parade. I experienced an awakened sense of purpose and connection soon after I arrived. While at my friends' house, I found myself drawn to a patch of bamboo in the backyard. I decided to settle into a spot amongst the ethereal, towering stalks so I could relax and clear my mind. Immediately, I found myself completely *bamboofied*.

Since that time, I've gradually become a fascinated student of the bountiful benefits of bamboo.

Although the idea to write this book had started to bubble in my brain for some time before I actually put pen to paper, I had my doubts at first as to whether I was the person to author it. This was probably because, in the past, I had always been the guy who learned how to do things by doing them incorrectly. Then I started thinking—maybe writing this book would be an opening for me to finally do something right! With this optimistic attitude in mind, I decided to hitch my proverbial pony to the super-grass and jump on the bamboo bandwagon with both feet. Yippee!

Bamboo Consciousness- Let the Boo Begin!

My “bamboo passion” stems from a variety of observations of its potential. The most important thing I have come to learn about this plant is that it is virtually inexhaustible. Bamboo is a sustainable resource. It is full of energy and can bring economic prosperity to those individuals

creative enough to see its potential. Among a growing list of attributes, some speculate that it even possesses a number of health-rejuvenating qualities. And that's not all. In this book, you will discover how bamboo provides alternatives to certain industrial practices responsible for stressing our global ecosystem. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are at the forefront of a revolution in the ways in which we live, work and play. Bamboo, and the multitude of gifts it has to offer, is poised to play a vital part in that revolution.

Bamboo has affected me drastically and has shifted my life in a tremendously positive and rewarding way. It has created within me an environmental and spiritual awareness about this super-plant that I call "bamboo consciousness." Each experience with my dynamic friend strengthens my passion to discover and cultivate an understanding of bamboo's seemingly limitless potential in restoring our Mother Earth. This is why I have decided to share this information with you.

Bamboo is an oasis of vitality and an example of how we are all similarly interconnected. I believe it is truly a gift for all of humanity to employ and enjoy. Now is the hour for bamboo power!

-Blair Le Mire, June 2008

Stalk Stories: Vanboo and The Bamboo Ninja

My fellow traveler on this journey has often been my natural gas-powered, bamboo-ified GMC van that I call Vanboo. In addition to having good vibes and a funky design (the entire vehicle is artistically covered in strips of carefully-placed bamboo), the wagon is adorned with slogans displaying several important bamboo facts. Attracted by the wonder-plant's versatility (not to mention its unique exterior), people frequently ask me questions concerning bamboo's varied uses. I always tell everyone that I am no expert, just a fascinated student. However, peppered by constant inquiries, I realized it might be prudent to author some sort of primer that would expose the many benefits of bamboo. Thus, Vanboo too has been a source of inspiration and encouragement for this book!

In 2002, Vanboo and I passed through Santa Fe, New Mexico before hitting the mountainous roads up to Sol Fest, where Vanboo and I were promoting my documentary film Bamboozler. Sol Fest is an annual solar-powered festival that takes place in Taos. Upon arriving in Santa Fe, I decided to stop at a small coffee shop in the center of town. It was there that I met a guru of all things bamboo, a man I will call The Bamboo Ninja.

As Bamboo Ninja walked up behind me, I instantly felt his presence. I turned around to see a lanky, scruffy, unshaven, Indiana Jones-esque character limping in my direction. He had spiky blond hair, beady eyes, and he was wearing a long black trench coat. I noticed a slight hunch in his back as he walked. He was the type of guy you wouldn't want to meet in a dark alley. Despite his rather unconventional looks, however, the man appeared decent enough as he smiled at me through a mouthful of gold fillings.

Bamboo Ninja confessed that Vanboo had grabbed his attention, and he felt compelled to strike up a conversation with whatever bamboo-loving spirit was commandeering it. He also told me many interesting facts about the plant, which he had apparently acquired through his use of bamboo towards mercenary purposes.

"Did you know that in Osaka, Japan, scientists are creating a cure for AIDS with the help of bamboo DNA?" Bamboo Ninja asked.

Bamboo Ninja claimed to be a member of an elite global power force who controlled high finances through organized crime. To prove it, he opened his long, black coat to reveal a host of daggers made out of bamboo! At this point, folks, I was beginning to question whether I should

continue conferring with this character, but I had also grown accustomed to Vanboo being a freak magnet. By keeping myself open to all the “bamboo nuts” who came up to me during my travels, I have had a number of interesting experiences and interactions, and have learned quite a bit about bamboo that I might otherwise have never known.

Chapter 1: Why bamboo?

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”
-- John Muir

Throughout history, people have planted bamboo in front of their shops and houses to attract prosperity and good fortune. For thousands of years, it has provided beauty, shelter, good health, and sustenance. Bamboo’s age-old qualities of abundance, strength, endurance and longevity provide reasons for its utilization.

Bamboo to Soothe the Soul

In 2000, I had the opportunity to hike through an ancient bamboo forest on the Hana Coast near Kipahulu, Hawaii. The sound of bamboo clacking in the moaning wind echoed throughout the forest. At the top of the trail was a giant, beautiful waterfall cascading into a pristine pool. The experience of being within this setting was beyond words. I encourage you to visit this sacred place if the opportunity arises.

One of the powers of bamboo is the ability to provide a peaceful and soothing environment to rest and relax in. The sound of a gentle breeze rhythmically wafting through the tall plumes of cane creates music that soothes the soul. The simple act of growing bamboo, whether it is in your yard or in a planter inside your living room, is capable of providing a needed sanctuary in a stressful world. Read about the mystery that has surrounded bamboo as well as its cultural relevance throughout the world in Chapter Two. Chapter Three speaks more on this super-plant’s spiritual importance as well as some of the science and biology behind the “boo.”

The Bountiful Benefits of Bamboo

New uses for bamboo are being developed every day. Not only is bamboo being used to create new foods, products and medicines, it is also being used to create biofuel and electricity. As an environmentally-friendly alternative to plastic, wood and metal, bamboo is now being used widely as a building material for fences and homes. It is also being used to construct surfboards, bicycles, clothing, jewelry, musical instruments, furniture, garden accessories, fly-fishing poles, kitchenware

and more. Because bamboo poles are flexible and vary in width, they can be used in an almost endless number of ways. They also provide an especially versatile material for arts and crafts. Chapter Four will introduce you to the ways bamboo is used medicinally as well as in many culinary dishes. Chapter Five will connect you with its use in the arts. Check out Chapters Seven and Eight for more on construction and other uses in the home.

Sustainability and Regeneration

A patch of bamboo is actually a powerful family connected by one unified underground root system, which is called a rhizome. Each main bamboo stalk, also called a culm, is connected to the horizontal root-grid beneath the soil. In its prolific, interwoven pattern of growth, bamboo may serve as a teacher, showing us how we can benefit by cultivating these very qualities within ourselves and in the world around us. Perhaps bamboo can provide us with an example of true unity consciousness and how we all can work together to be the positive change we wish to see in the world.

In concrete ways as well, bamboo also sends us a much-needed message of sustainability and regeneration. Once harvested, bamboo can grow back in a span of just eight months. Chapter Six further discusses bamboo's benefits for sustainability.

Stalk Stories: The Endangered Panda

Did you know there are now less than one thousand Giant Pandas in the world? We have all heard about this animal's love affair with bamboo, which grows all over the animal's habitat and provides it's sustenance. In zoos throughout the United States, pandas help bring bamboo to the attention of the American public by their insatiable appetite for the plant. Have you ever wondered why Giant Pandas eat bamboo for nearly every minute of their waking life? Could consuming such massive quantities of bamboo create a subtle medicinal or mood-enhancing effect? Pandas certainly look content while eating it, don't they? If these adorable, sturdy creatures could communicate to us, I wonder if they would reveal the true reason for their obsession with bamboo. On second thought, maybe they would keep the information a secret, for fear that we humans would eat it all up ourselves if we knew!

FACT: Bamboo is the fastest growing woody plant on the planet.

(Ref: Bamboo Oasis, www.bamboooasis.com)

Choose Bamboo That's Right For You

Are you ready to improve the world by being a bamboo gardener? Whether you live in an apartment in the city or on acres of land in the countryside, there is a place for bamboo in your life. Bamboo can be planted in pots, in backyard gardens, as a border between neighbors or as a biomass for farming. Knowing the different kinds of bamboo and your intended uses for this wonder-plant is of

utmost importance when starting to plant with bamboo. In Chapter Nine, we'll explore the different ways to grow bamboo and share some helpful hints on how you can improve your bamboo green thumb.

These chapters are intended to be merely an introduction to what could be a life-long love affair with your sexy, wise and ancient new friend—bamboo!

Stalk Stories: Beware The Bamboo Imposter!

Before I continue, I must expose an impostor who has been stealing bamboo's thunder for far too long. This impostor, called Lucky Bamboo, can be found at numerous retail outlets—malls, casinos, hardware stores, you name it. But Lucky Bamboo is not really a bamboo at all! It is a type of lily, scientifically known as Dracaena sanderiana. And where is the proof that this so-called Lucky Bamboo can bring the charity that bamboo has bestowed on us for so long? There is none to be found. Lucky Bamboo is neither lucky, nor is it bamboo, so I encourage you not to be bamboozled by the popularity of this impostor! It's like I often say: "If a pauper dresses like a king, does he then possess the power and virtue to administer the compassion and authority of a true king? Ó

Bamboo Benefits: Bamboolicious Boo!

- **Bamboo creates a soothing environment when brought into your life and home.**
- **Bamboo is a strong example of prosperity, abundance, and sustainability.**
- **Bamboo has qualities which exemplify rooted and powerful connectivity, and sustained generosity.**
- **Bamboo inspires the graceful steps towards a unified familial and societal way of living full of fun, harmony and ease.**