

IN THE LEAVES

THE OLD ENGLISH HERBARIUM and ANGLO-SAXON MEDICINE. By Anne Van Arsdall Area. Routledge (Literary Studies), 2002. 288 pp. Hardcover \$90.00.

This is a translation of a 5th century medical reference. The old language has been translated into an easy to read book. One of the few herbal texts that were available to Western European herbalists, it was still being used well into the Renaissance. There are 185 medicinal plants listed, with traditional uses and formulas provided for each one.

A BRIEF HISTORY of THYME and OTHER HERBS. By Miranda Seymour. Grove Press, 2003. 2,000 color photos, 144 pp. Softcover \$14.95.

This A to Z compendium provides an illustrated essay on each herb. It gives the plant's characteristics and uses and includes obscure and entertaining historical facts and ancient mythical lore. For example, it describes herbs that were used by the Greeks as sleeping potions and how Henry VIII fined farmers who refused to grow marijuana(!) Literary and historical references accompany the herbal facts.

FLOWERS in MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS. By Celia Fisher. University of Toronto Press, 2004. 64 pp. 2004. Softcover \$19.95.

Plant and flower motifs were used to illuminate the borders of Medieval manuscripts. Originally, they had ornamental and symbolic purposes, but during the 15th century, illuminators in Ghent and Bruges achieved botanical realism with a great variety of style. The fascination of these artists with the flowers themselves is evident. The volumes they worked on were primarily religious or herbal texts. Fisher shows the artistic and historic development. She also wrote *Flowers and Fruit* (1999), a Pocket Guide from National Gallery London Publications.

MEDICINAL PLANTS in FOLK TRADITION: An Ethnobotany of Britain & Ireland. By David E. Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield. Timber Press, 2004. 31 color photos/57 line drawings, 432 pp. Hardcover \$29.95.

Two distinguished British scholars chronicle medicinal herbs used by the "plain folk" of Britain and Ireland, including herbs to treat animals. They distinguish the medicinal plants and practices of Northern Europe from those of the Mediterranean as they rewrite herbal history from a Northern viewpoint. The classical herbals are criticized for their "indiscriminate endorsement" of every plant and disregard to regional differences in the flora. Unique remedies and the specific area where they are used are recorded. Hundreds of sources, including manuscripts from the Irish Folklore Commission, back up uses for more than 400 plants. Engravings from famous 16th century herbals of Bock, Fuchs, and Brunfels, and photographs by herbal author Deni Bown accompany this engaging text.

Allen, the author of several botanical books, was president of the Botanical Society of the British Isles and the Society for the History of Natural History. Hatfield, a Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew researcher, holds a doctorate on Scottish medicinal plant history and is on the council for Ethnomedica, which preserves British medicinal plant tradition.

FLORA CELTICA: Plants and People in Scotland. By Dr. William Milliken and Sam Bridgewater. Birlinn, Ltd., 2004. Color illus., 320 pp. \$52.95 Hardcover \$40.00.

This historical book looks at the evolving relationship between Scots and their environment from the Stone Age to modern times. It describes diverse ways in which native plants have influenced Scottish culture by their use in healthcare, diet, culture, shelter, language, environment, and household crafts. Examples are the use of lichen for orange dye, heather to thatch a roof, and traditional dining on carrageen seaweed. Plenty of Scottish plant lore embellishes the text, along with practical tips, quotations, and case studies. Ethnobotanist Milliken is Research Associate at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. Both authors work with worldwide biodiversity. Bridgewater teaches botany at Edinburgh University.



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