Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland. David E. Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield. 2004. Timber Press, Inc., The Haseltine Building, 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204-3527. 431 pages, line drawing illustrations, \$29.95, hardcover. ISBN 0-88192-638-8.

Since its inception and even at its peak, ethnobotany has devoted much of its attention to plants used by indigenous cultures. Of the little research and writing into European ethnobotany, even more rare has been the investigation of plant uses in Great Britain and Ireland. While recently some research, including previous works by Gabrielle Hatfield [see *Country Remedies: Traditional East Anglican Remedies in the Twentieth Century* (1995) and *Memory, Healing, and Wisdom: the History of Domestic Plant Medicine* (2000)], has touched on these botanical traditions, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: an Ethnobotany of Britain and Ireland* marks the first comprehensive ethnobotany of these countries.

David Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield, while coming from differing academic backgrounds of archaeology–anthropology and botany respectively, have established themselves as well known folklorists. Researching and writing this book, both set upon a long, difficult, but much needed task of separating British and Irish ethnobotany from the wealth of imported plant knowledge shared throughout Europe. This project, over 16 years in the making, has resulted in an excellent book filled with a wealth of botanical knowledge distinctive to Great Britain and Ireland.

Surviving herbals and medical texts, such as those of Hippocrates, Dioscorides, and Galen, have long served as the foundation for much of the history of western medicine. Allen and Hatfield point out convincingly that this approach has two major flaws. First, it overlooks the fact that herbal knowledge in the classical world was based primarily on the flora of the Mediterranean basin and its surrounding areas, therefore having relatively little relevance to the colder and wetter parts of Europe. Second, this approach to history often ignores the traditional or folk use of local plants on which a majority of people depended daily. Since literacy was a requirement to access most botanical knowledge presented in old herbals, the majority of the population did not use these references, depending solely on local botanical knowledge. By sorting through an exhaustive collection of sources both botanical and folk, Allen and Hatfield were able to find remnants of this predominantly oral history of British and Irish folk medicine. The result is a book that is meticulously resourced, well organized, and beautifully illustrated with line drawings reminiscent of old herbals. Written in a clear and engaging style that makes it easy to read, this long awaited and much needed collection offers a real look into the botanical and medical traditions of Great Britain and Ireland. This is a must for the library of anyone with an interest in ethnobotany, traditional or herbal medicine, history of medicine, and folklore.

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