







# HERBS AND HERB GARDENING



*By the same Author*

The Scented Garden  
Gardens of Delight  
The Story of the Garden  
Shakespeare's Wild Flowers, Fairy Lore, Gardens,  
Herb and Bee Lore  
Oxford's College Gardens  
A Garden of Herbs  
The Old English Herbals  
The Old English Gardening Books  
The Old World Pleasaunce  
Gardencraft in the Bible  
The Garden Lovers Days  
The Fairy Lovers Days  
Etc., etc.





*A Posy of Herbs*

*by*

*Hilda M. Coley*

# HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

By  
ELEANOUR SINCLAIR ROHDE

Author of  
*"The Scented Garden," "Gardens of Delight"*  
*"Shakespeare's Wild Flowers"*  
*"The Story of the Garden"*  
*etc.*

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TO  
MY MOTHER

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By HILDA COLEY & GWENDY CAROE.\*

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## PREFACE

Twenty years ago I wrote *A Garden of Herbs* and I have naturally no wish to supplant a book that is still selling merrily. That book consists largely of recipes. In this book I have treated of my subject chiefly with a view to the making of a herb garden and the use of herbs for decorative effect in the flower garden.

Parts of this book have appeared in article form in *The Field*, *The Queen*, *My Garden*, *The Countryman*, *Good Housekeeping* and *Good Gardening*, and I am indebted to the editors for their kind permission to reproduce those that have appeared in their respective journals.

For various details in connection with the commercial growing of herbs I am indebted to the Bulletin on Herbs issued by the Ministry of Agriculture.

As with most of my previous books, I am especially grateful to Colonel Messel for reading this book in proof.

ELEANOUR SINCLAIR ROHDE

CRANHAM LODGE,  
REIGATE, SURREY  
*September, 1936*





## CHAPTER I

### THE CHARM OF HERB GARDENS

The very word "Herb-garden" has a pleasant sound, for it suggests seclusion and peace; it conjures up visions of a quiet pleasaunce full of old-fashioned colours and perfumes, and plants with homely yet musical names, such as Sweet Cicely, Lovage, Balm, Lad's Love, Woodruff; of humble plants such as Thyme and Foxglove, beloved by bees and fairies through the centuries. Even in our gardens we seem to have forgotten the elves and fairies who surely have the first claim on them. Their inheritance has been wrested from them, but create a herb garden and they will surely return as to a familiar haunt.

The colours of the denizens of the herb-garden are rich yet restful—the gorgeous reds, purples, and mauves of the Bergamots, the sky blue of the star-like flowers of Succory, the golden-tasseled flowers of the stately Elecampane, the blues of Borage, Anchusa, and Catmint, the pink and rose-coloured blooms of Dittany, the soft mauves of Rosemary and Lavender, the yellow and gold of Woad and Marigolds, the mauve and pink branching heads of Clary, the blood-red stems and seed clusters of Orach, the rose-coloured heads of Germander flowers, to mention but a very few. And no less fascinating are the endless shades of green—the curious blue-green of Rue, the sea-green of Rosemary, the silver-greens of some of the Lavenders, Santolinas, and Artemisias, the variegated purplish-red toning to pale pink of Purple Sage, the rich greens, orange and silver of the Thymes, the soft greens of Balm, Camomile, Lovage, and Costmary, the pinkish tones of the lace-like leaves of Chervil when fading. How

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varied, too, are the scents of herbs ! Ranging from the sweet clean perfume of Lavenders, the tang of the sea in the bracing fragrance of Rosemary, the fruit-like scents of the Bergamots, the delicious perfumes suggestive of downland air in sunlight of Marjorams and Thymes, the vigorous aromatic smell of Sage, the curious scent of Rue, the bitter smells of the Wormwoods and Horehound, to the elusive scents of Sweet Cicely and Lovage.

And nowhere does an old sundial look more at home than in a herb garden. I know one herb garden where the narrow paths are stone-flagged and between grow varieties of prostrate Thymes, which even in winter look beautiful against the weather-beaten stones. At the end of one path is a sundial which came from a Devonshire farmhouse ; a sturdy sundial which looks as though it had not only lived with the same family for many generations, but as though it had also been loved by them and shared their joys and sorrows. The kindly herbs have long since made it welcome in this sanctuary and with them it seems to have some secret understanding.

In a herb garden we look as it were through magic casements into a past strangely different from this material and mechanized age. Some of the humblest herbs carry us back in thought to the dim past ages pictured in the oldest parts of *Widsith* and *Beowulf*, and to centuries when healing herbs were gathered with ceremonies associated with forms of religion so ancient that compared to them the worship of Woden is modern. Urban and suburban life have deprived the masses of our people not only of their birthright of forests, meadows, and fields, but the vast majority have never had even a glimpse of Nature in her

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untamed strength and grandeur. But herbs recall the centuries when Nature reigned supreme in these islands and the few scattered hamlets were on the verge of vast uninhabited stretches of country. We are reminded of our ancestors' beliefs in supernatural beings who infested the trackless wastes and impenetrable forests and of their belief in herbs to quell these powers of evil. For to these supernatural beings, always at enmity with mankind, were ascribed many of the ills to which flesh is heir. Some herbs were held so sacred they could be gathered only when the stars were auspicious and with prayers strangely intermingled with heathen incantations. Not a few of these incantations, such as "Nine were Nonnes sisters", preserved in the eleventh century Saxon *Lacnunga*, are curiously suggestive of children's counting-out games. Again, other herbs, notably Yarrow, Betony, Peony, Waybread, and



Betony.

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Mugwort, have been used as amulets from time immemorial. Beads made of Peony roots were worn as charms to ward off evil in Saxon times and within living memory by country folk in remote parts.

Some denizens of the herb garden are of even more ancient repute. Our Saxon ancestors were familiar with the Mandrake of Genesis, and the dates of introduction of Coriander, Cumin, Garlic, Parsley, Rue, Rosemary, Lavender, Marigold, Mustard, and the humble Garden Cress (*Lepidium pativum*) are equally unknown. In regard to Parsley and Garden Cress even the origin of the last-named remains a mystery but for Dioscorides vague statement that it came from Babylon, and the natural habitat of the former is still a matter of dispute.

Many great names are associated with the lore of herbs, but I think it is even more interesting to visualize the humble unknown folk whose lives were largely spent in tending, administering, and selling herbs. To the monks of old their gardens were doubtless a source of joy, to say nothing of the solace the sight of the flowers and herbs must have afforded the inmates of the infirmariums. Throughout the Middle Ages the healing herbs grown in the monastic gardens were almost the only medicines available for poor folk in towns. The apothecaries' shops of those far off days must have been very picturesque with their rows of great jars on the shelves and the bunches of herbs hanging from the ceiling. In most cities of any size certain districts were the province of the Apothecaries. In Oxford in the thirteenth century a district near St. Mary's was called the Apothecaria, and there the herbalists sold their goods in booths. In Shakespeare's time Bucklersbury was



SWEET CICELY  
(*Myrrhis odorata*)

WOODRUFF  
(*Asperula odorata*)



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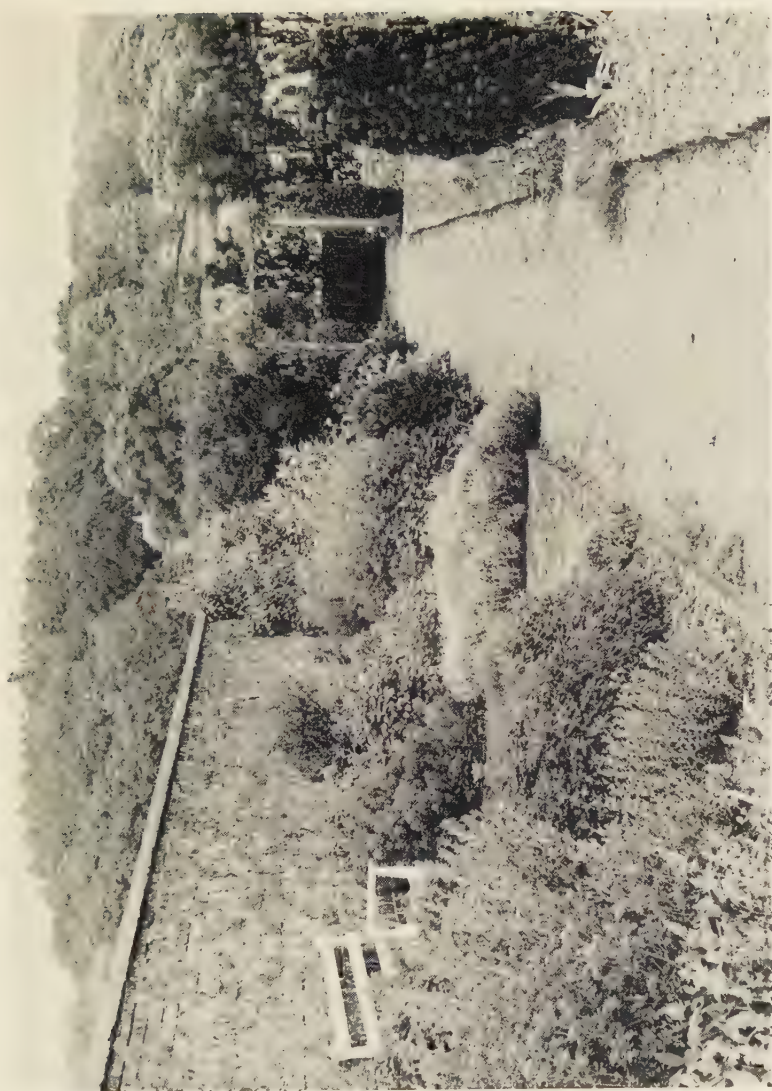
the centre of the apothecaries' trade in London. Nor can we forget the pedlars and mountebanks who sold herbs together with trinkets, ribbons, and other gauds. In that delightful thirteenth century play *Le Dit de L'Herberie* (the earliest French comic monologue), Rutebeuf immortalized a typical charlatan praising his wares in the herb market. According to the vendor they were rare and far-fetched, for had he not travelled to Sicily and the East, also to the strange lands of Prester John and Dame Trotte, who made a head covering with her ears? His unguents and medicines, he assured his audience, were such that a paralysed man would leap from his bed. These travelling herbalists were also vendors of poisons and charms. It was from a mountebank that Laertes bought the "unction" wherewith he anointed the sword used in his duel with Hamlet, and Brabantio complained :—

"Ay, to me  
She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted  
By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks."

Such men must have been excellent company, for their knowledge or supposed knowledge, of the medicinal values of herbs brought them into intimate connection with folk of all classes, and their experience of life must have been as remarkable as it was varied. Further, in remote parts they were almost the only means of obtaining news, and as such doubly welcome. Garden owners probably grew most of the herbs they required, and a knowledge of herbs formed part of the education of every well brought up girl :—

"Herbs, too, she knew, and well of each could speak,  
That in her garden sip'd the silvery dew ;





A Herb Garden at Highclere Rectory, Newbury, Berks



## THE CHARM OF HERB GARDENS

Where no vain flower disclos'd a gaudy streak ;  
But herbs for use and physic, not a few,  
Of grey renown within those borders grew ;  
The tufted basil, pun-provoking thyme,  
Fresh balm, and marigold of cheerful hue ;  
The lowly gill, that never dares to climb ;

And lavender, whose spikes of azure bloom  
Shall be ere-while in arid bundles bound  
To lurk amongst the labours of her loom,  
And crown her kerchiefs clean, with mickle rare perfume."

Before the invention of printing herb lore was handed down orally, and fragments of it are still part of the heritage of country folk. Maids were trained by their mistresses both in the garden and stillroom. Lawson concludes his *Country Housewife's Garden* with the sage advice that if the lady of the house allowed the maids to weed—"I advise the Mistress either to be present herself or to teach her maids to know herbs from weeds." It is pleasant to visualize an old herb garden, with the mistress and her maids in picturesque costumes, the well-ordered beds of physic and pot herbs, the broad borders of Lavender, the numerous Provence, Damask and Gallica Roses, Carnations in abundance in July, and the many other flowers and herbs grown both for their beauty and their manifold uses. The herb lore a mistress of a house had to acquire was remarkably varied. Physic herbs were of the first importance. The mistress of a large house was expected to treat the sick of her own household and amongst her poor neighbours, an onerous duty in parts where there was neither monastery nor doctor. Even in later days doctors were not summoned for every little ailment. To quote from *The Countrey Farme* (1616): "Let the housewife be skilful in

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natural physicke, for the benefit of her own folke and others ; for to have a physician alwaies when there is not very urgent occasion and great necessity is not for the profite of the house." Barnaby Googe, in his *Foure Bookes of Husbandry* (1577), observes : " If men would make their Gardens their Phisitians, the Phisitians craft would soon decay."

Apart from medicines for the body it was to herbs also they looked for cures for the far worse diseases such as sadness and fear that afflict the mind. Betony, we are told in an eleventh-century Saxon herbal, is as good for a man's soul as his body. " The vertue of the conserve of borage," says the author of *The Treasure of Hidden Secrets and Commodious Conceits* (1586), " is especially good against melancholie ; it maketh one merie." Of Nettle, in *The Boke of the Secrets of Albertus Magnus* (1560) we read : " He that holdeth this herbe in hys hand with an herbe called Mylfoyle is sure from all fear and fantasie or vision." Ram, in his *Little Dodoen* (1606), says : " To comfort the braine smel to camomill, eat sage . . . delight to heare melody and singing." " Gather Sweetbriar in June for it promoteth cheerfulness " is an old Scotch saying. And there are various references in the old herbals and gardening books to the custom of carrying a sprig or powder of some herb on the person. William Langham, writing of Rosemary, says in his *Garden of Health* (1579), " Carry powder of the flower about thee to make thee merry, glad, gracious, and well beloved of all men."

The uses of herbs were indeed manifold and in the average large house no inconsiderable time must have been spent by the ladies and their maids in making medicines,

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healing ointments, cordials, sweet and washing waters, perfumes, pomanders, sweet bags, aromatic vinegars, syrups of Cowslips, Roses, Gilliflowers, and so forth, pickling Violets and other flowers for salads, candying flower petals, making scented candles, preparing sweet powders for scenting linen and to keep away moths, making washballs, pomades and oils, Barcelona, Orange, and other snuffs, to say nothing of the home-made wines, ales, and mead flavoured with herbs and flowers. Apart from their medicinal, cosmetic and culinary uses, herbs formerly figured by no means inconspicuously in everyday life. From very early times floors were commonly strewn with herbs and rushes, and as time went on a greater variety were used, especially in the abodes of the very wealthy. Tusser in his *Five Hundred Points* (1577) lists twenty-one "Strewing Herbs of all Sorts". Parkinson records of Meadowsweet that "Queen Elizabeth of famous memory did more desire it than any other sweet herbe to strew her chambers withal". Furniture was rubbed with sweet herbs to give it a pleasant smell. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the elves were ordered thus to prepare the seats of honour in Windsor Castle :—

"The several chairs of order look you scour  
With juice of balm and every precious flower."

Herbs are still associated with many of our most picturesque old ceremonies, notably the Maundy Service at Westminster Abbey. King George revived the ancient custom of the King distributing the Maundy in person. Since the reign of James II it had been done by proxy. King Edward this year followed his father's example, and no one privileged to witness it could forget the simple



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beautiful ceremony at which His Majesty, like those about him, carried a nosegay of sweet herbs and blue and white flowers. Formerly, at every coronation herbs were strewn before the new King. The last coronation when this rite was performed was at that of George IV. In those days it was still the custom for the procession to go on foot from Westminster Hall round Parliament Square to the Western entrance of the Abbey. The King's Herb-woman, attired in white satin and a scarlet mantle, and attended by six maidens in white muslin with flowered ornaments and garlands hanging from their shoulders, walked before the procession, scattering blossoms from the baskets they carried.

Again, what other plants have such a remarkable literature as herbs? The old herbals and gardening books are a source of profound interest not only to gardeners and botanists but also to artists, folklorists, ethnologists, and philologists. To some of us no small part of the pleasure of wandering in the pages of these books is due to the charm of the writers' personalities. Many modern garden books savour of the study, but the best of the old volumes seem full of the fragrance of flowers and joy in their beauty, and above all they are pervaded with a spirit of humility and reverence. Lawson, the Izaak Walton of garden writers, who had had forty-eight years' experience of gardening, declares in his preface that he had only ventured to write "not daring to hide the least Talent given me of my Lord and Master in Heaven". "I confess freely," he continues, "my want of Curious Skill in the Art of Planting. I am not determined neither can I worthily set forth the praises of this Art; how some and not a few,



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even of the best, have accounted it a chief part of earthly happiness . . . how pleasant it is, how many secrets it doth containe, how loved, how much praised.” “These delights,” says Gerard, “are in the outward senses—the principal delight is in the minde singularly enriched with the knowledge of these visible things, setting forth to us the invisible wisdom and admirable workmanship of Almighty God.”

Browsing in this literature brings back not only a vanished past but also, to quote a seventeenth century herbalist, belief in the “very wonderful effects that may be wrought by the Vertues which are enveloped within the compasse of the Green Mantles wherewith many Plants are adorned”. From the books one’s thoughts stray again to the old herb gardens and the many generations who tended these secluded enclosures and in troublous times found peace and healing in herbs. Do we not also need places of refuge where it is possible to look at this distracted world with clear eyes and minds undisturbed by clamour? Are there not thousands of us who find in our gardens and especially amidst the old-fashioned plants, beloved through the centuries, times of refreshing and quietude, when, to quote a sixteenth century herbalist, we learn to “transact the days of our pilgrimage here in Peace and Tranquillity and prepare for the fruition of more compleat as well as endless Felicity?”

## CHAPTER II

### ROSEMARY

“Whenas on summer days I see  
That sacred herb, the Rosemary,  
The which, since once our Lady threw  
Upon its flowers her robe of blue,  
Has never shown them white again,  
But still in blue doth dress them—  
Then, oh, then,  
I think upon old friends and bless them.”

W. W. BLAIR FISH.

Rosemary—“dew of the sea”—is poetically and aptly named. Not only is the colouring of the plant with the rich green of the upper surfaces of the leaves and the grey undersides suggestive of the sea, but its delicious smell has something of the tang of sea salt in it. Possibly the name is due to the picturesque appearance of the shrub when the new shoots have grown. The old leaves stand out almost horizontally, but on the new shoots they are stiffly upright, thereby affording a contrast between the grey undersides displayed and the rich green of the older leaves, showing their upper sides, on the lower growths of the bush. The contrast is certainly suggestive of the dark green and grey of a troubled sea. Rosemary in its native habitats varies considerably in size and colour of the flowers according to the altitude at which it grows. For instance, at sea-level or a little above sea-level in Mediterranean regions, the bushes are much the same size and the flowers the same mauve blue as those grown in gardens in these islands. But in mountainous parts the bushes are very stunted and the flowers of a colour that rivals the corn-flower. The hill-sides of Mallorca are mauve and gold

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with Rosemary and dwarf Gorse, the Rosemary bushes being almost four feet high, but five thousand feet up the Puig Major, the highest peak in the island, the bushes are diminutive and starred with flowers of the richest blue.

Rosemary is clustered with picturesque traditions and beliefs. There is the well-known tradition that the flowers were originally white, but that when the Virgin Mary, on the Flight into Egypt, rested beside a bush and threw her robe over it, the flowers turned blue in her honour. In one of his best known poems, John Oxenham sets forth the tradition that when the Virgin Mary washed the Holy Child's clothes it was her custom to spread them over Rosemary bushes and that ever since the fragrance of the plant has been endued with mysterious virtue—

“And all the sweet, sweet, sweet of Him  
Clave to the bush, and still doth cleave,  
And doth for evermore outgive  
The fragrant holy sweet of Him.  
Where'er it thrives  
That bush forthgives  
The faint, rare, sacred sweet of Him.”

Through the centuries faith in the mystic powers of Rosemary has persisted. It has always been regarded as a herb of power against evil and even as late as the nineteenth century the peasants in Italy and Spain wore sprigs of it to avert the evil eye. Borrow records an instance in his *Bible in Spain*:—

“The night was very stormy and at about nine we heard a galloping towards the door and then a loud knocking ; it was opened, and in rushed a wild-looking man ; he wore a ragged jacket of sheep skin, called in Spanish, *zamarra*, with breeches of the same as far down as his knees ; his legs were bare. Around his *sombrero* or shadowing hat was tied a large quantity of the herb which in

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English is called rosemary, in Spanish *romero*, and in the rustic language of Portugal *alecrim*; which last is a word of Scandinavian origin (*ellegren*) signifying the elfin plant, and was probably carried into the south by the Vandals. The man seemed frantic with terror and said that the witches had been pursuing him and hovering over his head for the last two leagues. . . . I asked my friends, the contrabandists, why he wore the rosemary in his hat, whereupon they told me it was good against witches and the mischances of the road."

In the old French language of flowers Rosemary symbolized the power of rekindling lost energy, but in Perrault's charming *Sleeping Beauty* even Rosemary failed to waken the princess. The Sicilian peasants say that the baby fairies are put to sleep in Rosemary flowers, and it takes but little imagination to see them slumbering in the lower petals of the flowers, for these petals resemble miniature cradles.

The saying that where Rosemary flourishes the woman rules is well known, but perhaps not so well known is the saying that the man who does not care for Rosemary "for woman's love no care has he":—

"Who passeth by the rosemarie  
And careth not to take a spraye,  
For woman's love no care has he,  
Nor shall he though he live for aye."

The date of the introduction of Rosemary into this country is unknown. It is quite likely that, in common with many other plants, it was introduced and lost and reintroduced several times. It was certainly known to the Saxons, for it figures amongst the remedies in the Saxon *Leech Book of Bald* (circa A.D. 900): "For the sickly take this wort rosemary, wonderfully thou healest him." Traditionally Rosemary was introduced by Queen Philippa

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of Hainault. In the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a manuscript copied by a certain "danyel bain" from the original sent by the Countess of Hainault to her daughter Queen Philippa. The original MS. is in the British Museum. In the title of the copy "danyel bain" states that the Queen introduced Rosemary into England.

"This is ye lytil boke of ye vertues of rosmaryn . . . at instance of ye conwtesse of henowde. And sche send . . . rosmaryn . . . to her doughter qwene philyppe of yngelonde abowton ye yer of our Lord CCCLXII for befor yat tyme was non rosmaryn knowyn in engelond."

The original manuscript has never been published in spite of its interest. In several early sixteenth herbals the latter part of the manuscript is incorporated almost as it stands, the longest excerpt being that in Rycharde Banckes' *Herball* (1525).<sup>1</sup> The manuscript is too long to quote in its entirety, but I quote the beginning and a few parts, including that in which the writer states that Rosemary never grows higher than the height of Christ when He was a Man on earth, and that after thirty-three years the plant increases in breadth but not in height.

"Rosamina is bothe tree and herbe, And theise been the vertues as it is founden in dyuers auctors bokes of Phisik. And as the Clerke saithe that this litell booke wrote Atte Scole of Salerne to the Conntesse of Henaunde. And scho sente the cople to her doughter Quene of Englande. And it begynneth thus—Rosamarina is bothe tree and heerbe. And theise been the Vertues. Ffurste take the flowers, or ellis the leues whanne thou may not have the floures. Bothe is better to putte in brewes in stewes and in dischemetes in bake metes, rooste metes and foode meetes. It tempreth comforteth and saueth the brayne and all the heede. Also it casteth oute weykke humours in all the body. If thou use it beetyme. . . . Also the leues layde under the heede—whanne a man slepes—it letteth and dothe away euell spirites and vanytees

<sup>1</sup> This excerpt is reproduced in my *Garden of Herbs*.



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of the nyght, and suffereth not to dreeme fowle dreemes ne to be afeerde. But he must be oute of deedely synne, for it is an holy tree. Also sethe the leues in clere wyne. And wasche the brows therwith and the beerde. And thanne schall never the breeth fayle. . . . It is an holy tree and with ffolke that been iuste and Rightfull gladlye it groweth and thryveth. It passeth not comonny in highte, the highte of Criste whill he was man in erthe. Ne comonny as it is, three and thretti yeere oolde, it highheth not but growith in brede. . . . Streppe hem not ne make noughte bare but as it is saide yf thou noristh it—thou schalte haue Rosemarie plente. And grete helpe and conforte ther bi for alle maner of euelles in a manys body.”

“Cheerful rosemarie,” as Spenser called it, was apparently very largely grown in Tudor and Stuart times, for not only was it of exceptional value as one of the very few winter flowering shrubs then known and greatly valued for its beauty, but it was lavishly used on ceremonial occasions, in cookery, cosmetics, and medicine. It is also interesting to recall that the wood was used for many purposes. To quote Parkinson: “It hath served to make lutes or such-like instruments and here with us Carpenters’ rulers and to divers other purposes.” Paul Hentzner, in his *Travels* (1598), states that in English gardens it was customary to clothe the walls with Rosemary and that at Hampton Court “it was so planted and nailed to the walls as to cover them entirely”. Bushes of Rosemary were sometimes the decorative feature in the centre of a maze. Thomas Hyll, in his *Proffitable Arte of Gardening* (1568), suggests “a faire tree of Rosemary, or other fruyt, at the discretion of the Gardiner” for the centre of a maze as an alternative to “a proper herber decked with roses”.

Rosemary was also used for the topiary work, so popular in Tudor and Stuart times. Lawson, in his *New Orchard*

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*and Garden* (1618) says that the herb was “sette by women for their pleasure to grow in sundry proportions as in the fashion of a cat, a peacock, or such things as they fancy”.

Rosemary figures in heraldry, for it is the badge of the Scottish clan Rose.

The ceremonial uses of Rosemary were many and varied, and on both solemn and festive occasions it was formerly in frequent use. Possibly because it remains fresh and fragrant for so long after being picked. To quote Culpeper : “Rosemary is a herb of as great use with us as any whatsoever, not only for physical but civil purposes.” We know from *The passage of our most dread Sovereigne Lady Queen Elizabeth through the citie of London* (1558) that a poor woman offered the Queen on her progress through London a branch of Rosemary with her petition—“How many nosegayes did her Grace receive at poore women’s hands? How often times stayed she her chariot, when she saw any simple body offer to speake to her Grace? A branch of rosemary, given to her Grace with a supplication by a poor woman about Fleet Bridge was seene in her chariot till her Grace came to Westminster.”

At weddings sprigs of gilded Rosemary were handed to the guests :—

“Young men and maids do ready stand  
With sweet Rosemary in their hand.”<sup>1</sup>

Again in Barry’s *Ram Alley* (1611): “Know varlet, I will be wed this morning; thou shalt not be there, nor once be graced with a piece of Rosemary.”

Gilded sprigs of Rosemary were not only presented to the guests at weddings, but Rosemary tied with different

<sup>1</sup> *Roxburgh Ballads.*



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coloured ribbons was put in the bride cup and carried ceremonially before the bride. In the account of the wedding in *Marriage of Jack of Newbury* (1593) this passage occurs : " There was a fair bride cup of silver gilt carried before her, wherein was a goodly branch of rosemary, gilded very fair, and hung about with silken ribbands of all colours." Rosemary was also strewn before the bride. In Stowe's *Survey of London* we read of a wedding of three sisters together in 1560, and of " fine flowers and rosemary strewed for them coming home and so to the father's house, where there was a great dinner prepared for his said three bride-daughters with their bridegrooms and company ".

Rosemary has always been the symbol of friendship. "As for rosemarie," wrote Sir Thomas More, " I lette it run all over my garden walls, not onlie because my bees love it but because it is the herb sacred to remembrance and to friendship ; whence a sprig of it hath a dumb language." Gilded rosemary sprigs were exchanged as tokens by friends and lovers :—

" O, thou great shepheard Lobbin how great is thy grieve !  
Where bene the nosegays that she dight for thee ?  
The coloured chaplets wrought with a chiefe  
The knotted rush-rings and gilt rosmarie ? <sup>1</sup>

Even as late as the eighteenth century it was the common custom for the friends of a dead person to throw sprays of Rosemary " for remembrance " into the grave. " Upon her grave the rosemary they threw," wrote Gay, in a poem describing the burial of a maiden. Thomas Hood speaks of the plant as " Dreary rosemary that always

<sup>1</sup> E. Spenser, *Shepherd's Calendar*.

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mourns the dead". The custom is still observed, though not so commonly as in past centuries.

For the Christmas festival, houses and churches were lavishly decorated with Rosemary and in churches not only were the pillars, etc., garlanded, but the floor was commonly strewn with small twigs of the herb. On Candlemas Eve all decorations in houses were removed, and Herrick, in his *Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve* records the superstition connected therewith :—

“ Down with the rosemary, and so  
Down with the bays and mistletoe,  
Down with the holly, ivy, all  
Wherewith ye dressed the Christmas hall,  
That so the superstitious find  
No one least branch there left behind ;  
For look, how many leaves there be  
Neglected there, maids, trust to me,  
So many goblins you shall see.”

Rosemary figures conspicuously in the custom of bringing in the Boar's Head at Queen's College, Oxford. No one who has witnessed that ceremony could forget it. The old hall and the great roaring fire on the hearth, the Christmas decorations and the bunch of mistletoe above the portrait of Her Majesty, Queen Mary, who, like every queen of England since the College was founded by Queen Philippa of Hainault, is a patron of the College ; the sound without of the horn, which has been used for six hundred years to summon to dinner, the singing of the choir, the huge boar's head adorned with Rosemary borne in on a salver carried on the shoulders of four men and the carol :—

“ The boar's head in hand bring I  
With garlands gay and rosemary.”

Finally the distribution of the sprigs of Rosemary amongst

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the choirboys and the scramble by the Oxford citizens, who have come in to witness the ceremony, for the remaining twigs.

Rosemary recipes in sixteenth and seventeenth-century cookery books are numerous.<sup>1</sup> The flowers were candied, Rosemary sugar was a dainty form of serving sugar and the flowers were also made into conserves. The leaves were used to flavour wines. Rosemary honey was a much esteemed dainty. In this connection I quote the verse sung under the village maiden Isabel's window by the captain in Calderon's *El Alcalde de Zalamea* :—

“ Las flores del romero,  
Niña Isabel,  
Hoy son flores azules,  
Y mañana serán miel.”

Translation :—

“ Flowers of the rosemary,  
Maiden Isabel,  
To-day are blue flowers,  
And to-morrow will be honey.”

As a cosmetic, Rosemary was highly valued and it was the chief ingredient in Hungary water, the favourite toilet water throughout western Europe for at least two centuries.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally the original recipe was given to Queen Elizabeth of Hungary, and it is still preserved in what was formerly the Imperial Library in Vienna. Rosemary is still largely used in hair washes but fresh Rosemary water is best. It is made by simmering a large bunch of Rosemary, stalks and all, in water, preferably rain water, for about an hour. In olden times charcoal made from Rosemary

<sup>1</sup> In my *Garden of Herbs* I gave ten representative recipes.

<sup>2</sup> For recipes see *A Garden of Herbs*.



WOAD  
(*Isatis tinctoria*)

ROSEMARY  
(*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

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wood was used as tooth powder. Rosemary is a favourite with bees and Tusser, in his *Five Hundreth Points* (1573), gives this advice :—

“Go looke to thy bees if the hive be too light,  
Set water and honie, with rosemarie dight.  
Which set in a dishful of sticks in the hive,  
From danger of famine ye save them alive.”

There are several varieties of Rosemary. *Rosmarinus officinalis* is the type, and there is a rare, white-flowered variety. I have it, but I do not think it is at all attractive. Gilded Rosemary was much admired formerly, though one rarely sees it now. I greatly value a plant of it I have, sent by a kind correspondent from Ireland. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, accurately describes it thus : “This Rosemary differeth not from the former, in forme or colour of the flower, but only in the leaves which are edged or striped or pointed with a fine gold yellow colour, which so continueth all the yeare throughout, yet fresher and fairer in summer than in Winter ; for then it will looke of a deader colour, yet so that it may be discerned to be of two colours, green and yellow.”

He also describes a broad-leaved Rosemary with leaves “larger, broader, and greener than the other, and little or nothing whitish underneath : the flowers likewise are of the same forme and colour with the ordinary but larger, and herein consisteth the difference”. He mentions also a double-flowered Rosemary which he had never seen. Of this he says : “It hath stronger stalkes, not so easie to breake, fairer, bigger and larger leaves, of a faire greene colour and the flowers are double, as the darker heele or spurre : This, I have onely by relation, which I pray



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you accept, untill I may by sight better informe you." I have never seen either of these varieties.

*R. pyramidalis* is a neat variety of *R. officinalis* and there is also *R. pyramidalis*, Robinson's variety. Miss Jessop's Upright is similar and it is notable for its very long straight shoots. I have recently been sent cuttings of the delightful Rosemary that grows at Monte Fiano, above Florence. This variety has thicker stems, larger leaves, and flowers both bigger and bluer than the type. It is not very hardy in this country. *R. prostratus*, found in the island of Capri, is of fairly recent introduction. It is decidedly tender. In mild parts it is a dainty shrub for the rock garden (see illustration) and its habit of growth is almost prostrate. I wonder it is not more commonly grown as a pot plant in cold greenhouses, especially in parts too bleak to grow Rosemary out-of-doors. Grown in a pot it attains about nine inches and the lower branches cascade over the side of the pot.

Rosemary is not altogether an easy plant to use for decorative effect. Except in the mildest parts, bushes grown in the open assume a shrivelled appearance. It is not so much the cold of our winters that affects them as the continual alternation of frost and damp. In a severe winter bushes in the open are apt to be killed outright. A sunny wall, or failing a wall, a sunny fence is essential. Grown against a house wall facing south or east is ideal.

The plant soon makes a large, stately bush, putting forth a few flowers all through the winter and spring till by June all the shoots made last season—and on a mature bush many will be two feet long—are so wreathed with the lovely aromatic flowers that from a little distance the

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spires look as though they were shrouded in blue mist. From what other shrub can one pick aromatic flowers six months in the year?

Bushes of Rosemary in a sunk garden are always delightful and in such a position they are well sheltered. Grown as they commonly are in the Riviera, tumbling down over walls or sunny banks, they are very picturesque. In mild parts of this country bushes can be planted at the top of dry walls facing south or east, but this is impossible in colder parts, for it is the root stock of the plant that suffers. A very good way of getting over this difficulty is to put a young plant a little way down the face of the wall and in such a way that a projecting stone (it need project only very slightly) affords protection to the root-stock. If there is any difficulty about putting in a young plant a cutting thrust vertically into such a position will soon root and make headway. But it is essential to choose a propitious time to put in the cuttings—a nice, warm, damp spell, and not a heat wave!

In the herb garden Rosemary associates well with Red Sage, for the foliage of the Sage and the flowers are much enhanced by the dark green background of the Rosemary. All the tall growing herbs look well beside Rosemary—notably Woad, Angelica, and Acanthus. Woad with its heads of yellow flowers in early summer makes an uncommon picture with the blue of the Rosemary flowers. Angelica and Acanthus flower later than Rosemary but are enriched by the contrast of the foliage of the latter.

Clipped Rosemary affords a lamentable spectacle, for the beauty of this plant depends on its stately pyramidal growth and its slender, graceful spires which are at their loveliest





Rosemary and Susan at Nymans



*Rosmarinus prostratus* by the terrace steps at Childesley



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in flower. Pruning Rosemary is not easy. If neglected, the result is long, bare branches with tufts of leaves at the end. What this shrub needs is not so much drastic pruning as careful watching to see that it does not become straggly. Branches showing bare spaces should be cut back to vigorous young growths.

Rosemary is usually increased by cuttings of flowerless shoots about six inches long pulled off with a heel, not cut, taken in May and struck in very sandy soil in part shade. The lower leaves should be removed and the cuttings put in four inches deep. In autumn they can be transferred to their permanent positions—a sheltered part in full sun. Except in the mildest parts they benefit by protection with leafless boughs their first winter. Slips taken with a heel can be taken in August, but these have to be wintered in a cold frame. If grown from seed it is sown in May out of doors. Rosemary has sown itself at the side of a gravel path on the south side of our house. Within six years it has become a largish bush.

Rosemary was formerly grown commercially in the Mitcham district, but though English oil of Rosemary is the best, we import most of our supplies from France and Spain. The oil is distilled from the green shoots. The old wood cannot be used as it smells strongly of turpentine. There is an increasing demand for Rosemary for Armistice Day, and bunches of good long shoots find such a ready sale that Rosemary-growing may once more become a minor industry in this country.

The scent of Rosemary, intensely aromatic, sweet and yet bracing, has always been one of the favourite herb scents. By the mysterious alchemy of Nature it absorbs

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the vitality of sunlight and air and breathes it out in warm pungent, exhilarating fragrance. To quote from an old herbal: "Rosemary hath power to comfort by the good odoure."<sup>1</sup> Gerard says: "It comforteth the hart and maketh it merrie, quickeneth the spirits and maketh them more lively." Had we understanding hearts we should perhaps know how to use its virtues to dispel gloom and depression, just as our ancestors used it to ward off evil dreams and other assaults of the powers of darkness, "for kindly it is contrarye agenste Devells and wykked Spirites."<sup>2</sup> Those of us who love Rosemary know how its fragrance braces one physically. Is it too much to believe that the mental effect of aromatic herbs is very great, attuning the mind to "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely."<sup>3</sup> I think the seventeenth-century Judge Hale had some such thought in his mind when he wrote his lovely poem:—

"And art thou come, dear Saviour? Hath thy love  
Thus made Thee stoop, and leave Thy throne above  
The lofty Heavens, and thus to dress  
In dust to visit mortals! Could no less  
A condescension serve? And after all  
The mean reception of a cratch—a stall!  
Dear Lord, I'll fetch Thee hence, I have a room—  
'Tis poor, but 'tis my best—if Thou wilt come  
Within so small a cell, where I would fain  
Mine and the world's Redeemer entertain,  
I mean my heart. 'Tis filthy, I confess,  
And will not mend Thy lodging, Lord, unless  
Thou send before Thine harbinger—I mean  
Thy pure and purging Grace—to make it clean

<sup>1</sup> *The Grete Herball* (1526).

<sup>2</sup> *Treatise on Rosemary*, sent by the Countess of Hainault to her daughter, Queen Philippa of Hainault, *circa* 1362.

<sup>3</sup> Epistle to the Philippians, iv, 8.

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And sweep its inmost corners : then I'll try  
To wash it also with a weeping eye.  
And when 'tis swept and washed, I then will go  
And with Thy leave, I'll fetch some flowers that grow  
In Thine Own Garden—Faith and Love to Thee.  
With these I'll dress it up, and there shall be  
My Rosemary and Bays. Yet when my best  
Is done, the room's not fit for such a Guest.  
But here's a cure—Thy presence, Lord, alone  
Can make the stall a Court, the cratch a Throne."

## CHAPTER III

### LAVENDER LORE

“Lavender and Rosemary is as woman to man and White Rose to Red.”  
*Treatise on Rosemary sent by the Countess of Hainault to  
her daughter Queen Philippa of England.*

Lavender is the veritable queen of herbs, and one of the pleasantest sights in late summer is surely that of a path bordered with great bushes of Lavender crowned with their fragrant spikes of flowers. Although Lavender “still grey”, to use Spenser’s epithet, is always a delight wherever placed, few plants depend so much on their setting. Many Lavender pictures flit through my mind. I think of Sibbersfield Hall, where one enclosure is known as the Garden of the Four Seasons. In this plot two runnels of water in stone channels are set crosswise and at the ends are exquisite early eighteenth-century French statues of children, each one representing a season. The rest of the enclosure is smooth greensward and the whole surrounded with a Lavender hedge. In the garden of Little Santon Farm, near Reigate, the Lavender path has been ideally placed, for it has the background of the Elizabethan farmhouse.<sup>1</sup> In the garden of Grangegorm, Overstrand, a Clematis pergola has on one side a rectangular enclosure with great Lavender hedges all round, and at the four corners old Italian oil jars with pink Geraniums hanging down the sides, and in the centre of the plot a small lawn. The effect of the pink Geraniums, Lavender, and smooth greensward together is delightful. Again, I think of a Lavender bordered path leading to a cottage door and behind the Lavender, pale lemon Sunflowers in clumps

<sup>1</sup> See illustration opposite.





A Lavender Hedge at Little Santon, a fifteenth-century  
farm-house near Reigate



PLATE IV



Lavender and Rose Pergola at Vachery

## LAVENDER LORE

and Hollyhocks of all colours, the sunlight glinting through the petals. Nor shall I ever forget rounding a lane in Norfolk and coming on a wall over which the tallest Lavender I have ever seen cascaded like a big wave, and in the dust at the foot of the wall sat a lovely, grubby urchin, with soft, red ringlets, humming a happy little tune, "most contentedly and long" and playing with a tiny bucket in the dust.

I have just been planning a herb garden, the entrance to which is a straight path bordered with Lavender (*L. spica gigantea*). Marigolds in front and Sweet Briars behind the Lavender. A clipped Sweet Briar hedge is a sight to make angels weep, but the bushes planted six feet apart and allowed to grow naturally soon attain a height of almost fourteen feet, throwing their graceful arching stems in all directions. In early spring, when the leaves are first put forth, they begin to exhale their fragrance; in June, when the long, slender branches are starred with their lovely flowers, they are exquisite; all through summer there is the pleasure of their scented foliage, a scent that is at its sweetest after a shower of rain, and in winter the myriads of brilliant red berries look like fairy lanterns, whose beauty will be enhanced by the grey of the Lavender in front. And unlike most Rose hips, those of Sweet Briar hang on till February and even March. Sweet Briars grow very quickly, and given sufficient space in a garden, they are naturally far finer than those that have to struggle for existence with other plants where they grow wild. A friend of mine who has a house aptly named Sweet Briars, planted a Sweet Briar hedge six years ago and put them six feet apart. The main stems are decidedly thicker

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than the average walking stick and the branches are quite fourteen feet high. Their fragrance fills the air for yards round. As a carpeting plant she has the pretty, old-fashioned Blue-eyed Mary (*Omphalodes verna*), a sheet of blue and white in April and May and lace-like with the delicate prostrate foliage. Blue-eyed Mary is not a herb, and if you are firm enough to keep out of the herb garden a plant with so charming a name, then the bed under the Sweet Briars could be carpeted with "Soldiers and Sailors" (*Pulmonaria officinalis*). Like Blue-eyed Mary, *Pulmonaria officinalis* needs part shade and enough would be afforded by the Sweet Briars. In the approach to the herb garden I have suggested the *Pulmonarias* would probably be invisible from the path, as the Lavender would hide them, but it would look attractive from the other side, instead of a strip of bare earth under the Sweet briars.

Everyone loves Lavender walks, but I think I like best of all Rose and Lavender walks. The accompanying illustration shows one in the garden of Vachery, Shere. When the Roses are hanging in festoons and the Lavender in flower, it is a lovely picture. Walks of this kind must be sufficiently broad, for Lavender takes considerable room. The walk shown in this picture is twelve feet broad and the posts up which the roses are trained are eight feet apart. Yet when the Lavender is in bloom there is scarcely room to walk! Dr. van Fleet is a lovely Rose to associate with Lavender. The foliage is first rate and the full-petalled flowers do not fade. It is best, however, to have a variety of Roses behind the Lavender hedges, as this makes for far better effect. Do not omit the "blue" Rose, usually listed as *Veilchenblau*. This fascinating Rose, with flowers

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of the richest amethyst Lavender, is a seedling of the Crimson Rambler, introduced from China in 1893. The deep Lavender of the Roses "picks up" the colour of the Lavender flowers with charming effect. Amongst bush Roses, Dainty Bess associates particularly well with the dwarf Lavenders. Indeed an edging of a richly coloured dwarf Lavender such as Munstead Dwarf surrounding a large square bed of Dainty Bess with her picturesque trusses of silvery-pink flowers, slightly frilled at the edges and gold and crimson stamens, the trusses carried beautifully upright, is a joy to behold.

Dwarf Lavender can also be used very effectively for the narrow beds usually so difficult to plan. The other day I saw a delightful arrangement—a small lawn shut in on three sides by various Wichuriana Roses, the posts to which the Roses were trained quite twelve feet apart, the Roses trained along the ropes and between the posts, tall growing perennials such as *Lavatera olbia* and *Echinops ritro* and in front an edging of Dwarf Lavender.

Lavender, again, is delightful for a sunk rose garden enclosed with a dry wall. The Lavender tumbling over the wall makes a perfect background and affords the Roses considerable shelter from wind. In such a garden it is usually best to plant the Lavender on the dry walls facing south, east, and west. Planted on the wall facing north, the plants are more likely to grow towards the south than to fall gracefully over the wall. In the accompanying illustration, taken in the garden of Dovers Green, the Lavender shown is facing east.

Nor, I think, is sufficient use made of Lavender, Rosemary, Hyssop, Santolina, and other evergreen herbs to

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secure the evergreen effect now so much desired in small front gardens. In one small garden I know, the house is low and the windows of the two sitting-rooms face the gate. The beds under the windows are planted with Lavender and the very narrow strip in front with Wall-flowers, Tulips, and Narcissi. The path is sheltered by a pergola of evergreen Roses (Emily Gray and Alberic Barbier) with Violas for carpeting. On either side largish, square rose-beds planted with the almost evergreen Zephyrine Drouhin are surrounded with clipped Santolina. The effect even in mid-winter is pleasing, instead of the usual bareness.

Nearly all herbaceous plants of medium height look well with a background of well-kept, tall-growing Lavender, but not all enjoy the same conditions. *Antirrhinums* not only revel, like Lavender, in a chalk soil, but they associate well together. A path bordered by Lavender on either side, and in front of the Lavender, *Antirrhinums* in mixed colours with an edging of *Alyssum*, is charming. They should be the tall or intermediate *Antirrhinums* and if they do not all grow the same height, so much the better. The greater the mixture of colours the better, not omitting white, for white is important to "light" the picture. Yellow is as important as in needlework, but as in needlework, must be used with discretion and not overdone. If there are Rambler Roses behind the Lavender hedge, a few yellow-flowered kinds should be included to "pick up" the yellows amongst the *Antirrhinums*.

I do not think we make enough use of Lavender and other low-growing shrubs for decorative effect on a large scale instead of flower beds.





Lavender in Kew Gardens

PLATE VI



Lavender hedge in a Rose Garden



## LAVENDER LORE

Formal gardens laid out in solid clumps of low-growing shrubs such as Lavender, *Berberis stenophylla* var. *coccinea*, *Santolina chamaecyparissus*, *Erica darleyensis*, etc., are not only most effective but they involve far less labour than those same beds filled with flowers. Further, the garden is attractive in winter if evergreen shrubs such as those cited, are used.

Whether in stately gardens with their clipped yews, their lichen-stained walls, their air of peace and ordered ways, or in humble cottage plots, Lavender, the queen of herbs, is equally at home—

“Sprawling for elbow room,  
Spearing straight spikes of bloom,  
Clean, wayward, and tough ;  
Sweet and tall and slender,  
True, enduring, and tender,  
Buoyant, and bold, and bluff,  
Simplest, sanest of stuff—

Thus grows lavender, thence breathes England.”

The sweet, clean fragrance of Lavender is unlike that of any other flower or leaf and for centuries it has been customary to dry the spikes. Even after several years Lavender properly dried retains its exquisite scent. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, describes the smell of Lavender as “piercing the senses”, and I think this phrase describes it with curious accuracy. Many people prefer Lavender scent even to that of Roses. On chalk soil the fragrance of Lavender is exceedingly good. I fancy there are few scents that make those living in far-away parts so homesick. Its exquisitely clean aromatic perfume must be almost painfully suggestive of gardens at home, smooth green lawns, spreading, shady trees, colourful borders of flowers that

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have been associated with our homes and gardens for centuries ; familiar sounds and the warm, pleasant radiance of late summer sunlight. A correspondent friend of mine, and by this phrase I designate people whom I do not know personally, but who are kind enough to write to me said in a letter that she had just had a daughter. As she lives in a remote township within the Arctic circle, I sent a parcel of Lavender from our garden to greet the little new-comer. In acknowledging it, she said that nearly everyone in that small township had come crowding in simply to smell Lavender from England.

Bowls of dried Lavender in almost every room and corridor have been traditional in our country houses for generations, and I hope this custom will persist in spite of the modern craze for empty rooms. To my thinking the fragrance of Lavender seems to absorb in some mysterious fashion memories of those who in past centuries dwelt in the place. We see very little of what is around us, but scents have many curious properties and I think that certain flower scents enlarge and deepen our perceptions. In old houses, especially in those in remote country parts, many of us are at times acutely aware of unseen presences, which occasionally are made more manifest. I give one small instance. A group of people were seated on the lawn of an old castle in Scotland. Suddenly a few of them noticed that the shutters of a window about thirty feet above the ground were being opened. A comely young woman in the servant costume of about two hundred years ago was opening them and this done she leaned her elbows on the window-sill and placidly looked out. Though she gazed down at the lawn, she seemed utterly unaware

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of the people seated there. The face was clearly visible but unknown to anyone present. After a few minutes she withdrew and closed the shutter. That is all. In common with the few ghost stories of which I have personal knowledge there is neither beginning nor ending nor any apparent reason. Those who are familiar with the place are perfectly aware of many unseen presences but this maidservant is the only one who has ever materialized, and so far as is known, only on that occasion. But the bowls of Lavender that have been exposed for some months in these rooms have to my senses absorbed some influence from unseen presences, the scent of the dried flowers seeming to have a property which I can only compare to that of a photographic sensitive plate, but vastly and more exquisitely sensitive. As I smell the flowers I become less conscious of the present, but acutely aware of the past. This may be fanciful, but to me it is very real. In an old room the flowers absorb the atmosphere of something intangible and of which one is only dimly conscious. But it is there.

Lavender has grown in these islands almost from time immemorial. The Romans would certainly have introduced a herb they esteemed so highly, and possibly it had been introduced even before their days. In common with most plants it has had periods of exceptional popularity. One of these periods was during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and possibly the Huguenots were responsible for this. We know from the gardening books of those centuries that Lavender was one of the herbs commonly used in making knot gardens. Apart from its use as a perfume and to scent gloves, linen and so forth, it was

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also valued for its medicinal virtues. William Langham, in his *Garden of Health* (1579), writes of Lavender: "Smell often to it to comfort and cleare the sight. Boyle it in water and wett thy shirt in it and dry it again and weare it. . . . Shread the herbe with the flowers and distill it and drinke two ounces of the water to helpe giddiness of the head and rub the head all over with it, and let it dry in by itselfe. . . . The flowers steeped in wine and set in the sunne a certain space in a narrow mouthed glasse well stopt and after distilled by glass in Balneo mariae with a soft fire (but if the fresh flowers may be had it need not be infused) this water is very precious against all cold griefes both inward and outward. Seethe lavender in water and temper thy wine therewith and also make a syrope with the said water and use it against swooning and to comfort the heart."

William Lawson, in his *Country Housewife's Garden* (1618), says of Lavender spike, "This flower is good for Bees, most comfortable for smelling except Roses: and kept dry is as strong after a year, as when it was gathered. The water is comfortable." Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, gives Lavender the first place amongst the herbs he admits into his "garden of pleasant flowers". "After all these faire and sweete flowers before specified, I must needes adde a few sweete herbes, both to accomplish this Garden, and to please your senses, by placing them in your Nosegays, or else where, as you list."

Lavender was amongst the earliest herbs taken to the New World by the early settlers, but John Josselyn, in his *New England's Rarities Discovered* (1672) records of it "Lavender is not for the Climate". The only book

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devoted solely to Lavender is a French botanical treatise, *Histoire naturelle des Lavandes*, by Baron Frederic de Gengins Lassaraz (Paris, 1827). The author states that, amongst the higher classes, Lavender was used not only for the toilet but as a remedy against the vapours, migraines, and other little maladies "to which those of high birth are subject". In modern maladies, however, there seem to be no class distinctions ! He states that the best Lavender water was that made by the nuns of la Magdelaine de Treinal. Lavender is still sold in the London streets but not so commonly as formerly. It was still a familiar street cry in late Victorian times and those of us who were children in those days well remember "Sweet Lavender, six bunches a penny !"

There are altogether about twenty species of Lavender, but only the hardier species are commonly grown in these islands.

*L. spica* is frequently described as Old English Lavender, but until the early nineteenth century, when de Candolle pointed out the differences, *L. spica* and *L. vera* were not regarded as distinct. *L. spica* attains three to four feet and the variety *L. spica gigantea*, or the Grappenhall variety is very fine. I see that these Lavenders, also Rosemary in standard form and at absurd prices, are now being offered. What next ? *L. spica alba* is very sweet and delicate. This lovely Lavender is not commonly grown, although much admired, and I think, the reason must be that it is apt to die out after three years. It is apparently not less hardy than the type, for we had bushes in the open that survived the severe winter of 1928 without injury, but for some unaccountable reason White Lavender is not long lived. At least that is my experience, and it is advisable



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to take cuttings every two years. Parkinson describes White Lavender as very rare, but Queen Henrietta Maria evidently grew quantities of it, for in the parliamentary survey of the garden at Wimbledon, which belonged to her, the "very great and large borders of Rosemary, Rue, White Lavender" are specially mentioned.

*L. spica* is the Lavender chiefly used in making oil of Lavender and Lavender water. But the best essential oil is that extracted from *L. vera*. The famous Mitcham Lavender water used to be made from *L. vera*.

The dwarf varieties are very popular now, especially for edgings. *L. spica nana*, the so-called dwarf French, attains about a foot and has dark lavender flowers. There is also a diminutive white-flowered form that attains about four inches and is a gem for the rock garden. It is not common. The Bowles dwarf variety is one of the best, with richly coloured flowers remaining a long time in flower. The well-known Munstead large-flowered early dwarf is first rate with large spikes of richly coloured, deliciously scented flowers. It attains about a foot. Where only one dwarf Lavender can be grown this is the one to choose. *L. nana atropurpurea* is more suited for the rock garden, for it attains about nine inches. Miss Donnington and the Felgate variety (the latter has paler flowers than the Munstead dwarf) are both popular dwarf forms. Middachen is a dwarf variety with rather glaucous foliage, and dark lavender flowers. Dutch lavender, not so tall-growing as *L. spica*, has beautiful foliage and intensely fragrant flowers, but it is later flowering than *L. spica*. Unfortunately it more frequently than not fails altogether to flower.



## LAVENDER LORE

The less hardy varieties are suitable only for mild parts. *L. stoechas* so highly esteemed by the ancients for its medicinal virtues, is a native of the south of France and North Africa. The Romans named the islands near Hyères the Stoechades, because this Lavender grew there in such abundance. This pretty species, one of the most familiar wild plants of the south of France, flowers in late spring in its native haunts, but in this country not till summer. The date of its introduction is unknown. It is mentioned in Turner and Gerard's herbals and Gerard describes both this Lavender and *L. dentata* as being grown "only with great diligence . . . covered in winter or grown in pots and carried into houses". Parkinson, who calls it "Sticadove, Cassidony, or French Lavender", also emphasizes its tenderness: "We keep it with great care in our Gardens." He also states that it is "of much more use in physicke than our Lavender". The peasants in France and Spain used to make oil of Lavender from *L. stoechas* by leaving the flowers in a bottle of oil exposed to the sun. There is a rare white-flowered form of *L. stoechas*. *L. dentata*, with dainty indented dark green foliage and heads of flowers rather similar in appearance to those of *L. stoechas*, is very attractive. It was also cultivated in this country in the sixteenth century, but it is almost as tender as *L. stoechas*. I have never seen *L. dentata* look so well as in the south courtyard at Nymans one summer—growing in fine old terracotta pots set four square in the centre of the courtyard. The colour of the pots and Lavender, the beds of "Cherry Pie", edged with Germander with its pinkish flowers and in the background the mullioned windows of the house. A delightful picture. *L. pedunculata*,

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which is closely related to *L. stoechas*, is a native of Spain and Portugal, but the flower spikes are shorter and broader. There is also a white form. The flowers have a faint lavender scent. *L. lanata*, a native of mountainous parts of Spain, resembles *L. spica*, but has much longer and more felted leaves. This Lavender is much esteemed by the Spanish peasants for its medicinal properties.

To secure really first-rate Lavender not only must the ground be thoroughly dug to a depth of three feet before planting but the soil round the bushes has to be kept well hoed and as near the main stem as possible. It is curious how frequently Lavender is neglected in this respect.

Lavender is usually increased by cuttings, choosing young growths about six inches long. Commercial growers now take very small cuttings less than three inches long, as plants raised thus are less liable to Shab disease. In gardens the cuttings can be set six inches apart and transplanted when well rooted and large enough to handle. Early spring or October are suitable times. Deep planting is essential. The plants should be put in leaving barely two inches of stem above ground and the soil round made very firm.

The only serious disease from which Lavender suffers is "Shab" caused by *Phoma lavandulæ*.<sup>1</sup> In spring this disease is easily recognizable as the young shoots turn yellow, and the disease soon spreads. There is no remedy and the affected bushes should be grubbed up and burnt and a new plantation made in fresh soil. Preventive measures should be taken by keeping the ground perfectly clear of

<sup>1</sup> See "The Shab Disease of Lavender," by C. R. Metcalfe, *Trans. Brit. Myc. Society*, 1931.

## LAVENDER LORE

weeds, particularly of White Goosefoot (*Chenopodium album*) which is frequently infected by the disease.

If Lavender bushes are not pruned every year, they deteriorate rapidly. The earlier in autumn this is done the better, in fact as soon as the spikes have been gathered. This gives the plants time to make growth before the cold weather sets in. The trouble is that where Lavender is grown purely for decorative effect and not for cutting, people are loth to cut it at the usual time for even when faded, Lavender spikes are picturesque.

If Lavender spikes are to retain their fragrance when dry, they must be cut at the right time. The blossoms should be open up to the middle and the top showing colour. The perfume of the flowers is at its richest and best at midday in hot sun. This is owing to the fact that the most valuable constituents of the oil are volatile. If picked in a hot midday sun or when a hot moist wind is blowing, this fragrant constituent will be lost. Leaving cut Lavender exposed in the open to sun and wind is a serious mistake. The spikes should be gathered early morning after the dew has dried off and taken indoors and spread out in a room and not in the direct rays of the sun. The more quickly the drying is effected the better, and consequently it is best to spread out on large sieves rather than on a table, for when spread on sieves the air circulates above and beneath the spikes. The spikes should be placed separately, for carelessly piled they will be spoilt by the moist heat engendered.

English oil of Lavender (obtained from *L. vera*) is the finest obtainable and commands the highest price. That obtained from *L. vera* grown in France is less expensive.

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Spike oil of Lavender (obtained from *L. latifolia*) exported from Spain and France is the cheapest. The scent-buying public are either less discerning or poorer, for the demand for the best Lavender scent made from English oil of Lavender is now much less than formerly, nor is English oil of Lavender exported to America in such quantities. Anyone who is familiar with Lavender scent made from properly matured English oil of Lavender would rather have none than use the inferior Lavender waters !

Harvest time in the Lavender fields is a picturesque sight. The rows of Lavender in bloom, the flower heads in the shimmering August sunlight, looking like a lavender-blue mist, the workers cutting busily, the mats laid out between the rows and covered as soon as filled with Lavender to shield the crop from sun and wind, and finally, towards evening, the rolling up of the mats to be carted to the distillery. After distilling, the oil is put in blue glass jars called Winchesters, holding about two quarts. The oil is left to mature in the dark for between three and five years. The amount of Lavender oil produced from one acre varies from about ten to eighteen pounds, but everything depends on the season and quality of the crop. The commercial growing of Lavender was formerly carried on chiefly in the Hitchin and Mitcham districts. Mr. Potter started growing Lavender and other "physical plants" at Mitcham in 1768. Lavender Hill, Battersea, commemorates the industry formerly carried on there. Lavender is now grown commercially chiefly at Mitcham, Hitchin, Beddington, Carshalton, and Wallington. It is also grown to some extent at Long Melford, Ramsgate, Canterbury, and Bournemouth.

## LAVENDER LORE

Our ancestors used Lavender in countless ways. Lavender figured largely in the sweet waters for washing purposes that were commonly made in households of any size.<sup>1</sup> Most seventeenth and eighteenth century cookery books and stillroom books contain directions for distilling Lavender. In *The Queen's Closet Opened*, by W.M., cook to Queen Henrietta Maria, there is a receipt for Lavender Wine, which is described as "a great Cordiall".<sup>1</sup> Lavender sugar was a seventeenth century delicacy made by pounding freshly picked Lavender flowers beaten into three times their weight in sugar. The sugar is thereby flavoured with Lavender. It is a very dainty confection. Our grandmothers made not only Lavender bags, but sweet bags filled with various mixtures of dried flowers and leaves. These dainty little bags were usually hung saddle-wise on wing chairs. A great aunt of mine had the pleasing custom of placing one of these fragrant little bags under the pillows of every guest room. The best mixture I know is made of equal quantities of dried Lavender, Verbena leaves and Sweet Scented Geranium leaves. The perfume of the leaves seems to bring out the perfume of the Lavender. A friend of mine makes charming "Lavender fans" for old ladies and invalids, and these fans are much in demand for bazaars. They consist of a bunch of long-stalked Lavender placed as flatly as possible and encased in two circles of rather stiff mauve muslin, stitched together with thick silk to match. The stalks are kept together and intertwined with pretty ribbons.

The quaintest Lavender recipe is, I think, that to be found in Turner's *Herbal* (1551). The Father of English

<sup>1</sup> For recipes, see *A Garden of Herbs*.

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

Botany gravely sets forth one of the virtues of Lavender thus : “ I judge that the flowers of Lavender quilted in a cap and worne are good for all diseases of the head that come from a cold cause and that they comfort the braine very well.”



## CHAPTER IV

### SAGES OF VIRTUE

“He who would live for aye  
Must eat sage in May.”

*Old Proverb.*

Sage—*Salvia officinalis*—is now as a rule an humble occupant of the kitchen garden and a very humble occupant at that, for with a few other culinary herbs it is usually relegated to some out of the way corner. Yet for centuries this herb was held in the highest esteem, and it would be easy to fill a volume with the eulogies of the old herbalists. “How can a man die who has sage in his garden?” is an age-old proverb. The very name of the genus—*Salvia*—of which the popular name is a corruption, commemorates the old belief in its health-giving properties. Walafred Strabo, author of that fascinating ninth-century poem, *The Little Garden*, gave Sage first place amongst the herbs: “Amongst my herbs Sage holds the place of honour; of good scent it is and full of virtue for many ills.” So highly did the Chinese value Sage that in the seventeenth century the Dutch carried on a profitable trade by bartering the dried herb for three times its weight in the best China tea.

Bushes of Sage, especially in flower, have a sedate charm of their own, and Red Sage in flower is a delight, for the soft mauve of the flowers tones beautifully with the reddish purple leaves. Certain herbs suggest royal palaces, or are associated with names of ancient fame—herbs such as Basil and Elecampane for instance. But “Sage of virtue” is a homely plant. Its netted uneven leaves of a colour that can only be described as “sage green”, are soft to

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

the touch; like the stalks they are covered with hairs, and this gives the plant a woolly, restful appearance, in contrast to plants with glossy leaves, for glossy-leaved plants almost invariably have an alert look. The habit of growth of Sage is pleasantly, but not conspicuously untidy, the flowers are pretty, but not arresting. All these characteristics combine to give the beholder a pleasant feeling of homely comfort. Sage is indeed a comfortable plant, and I use the word "comfortable" in the old, true sense, i.e. affording comfort. Not only is Sage homely and comfortable in appearance, but when I look at the plant I think of its manifold homely uses.

Cottagers, even in the last century, pinned their faith to Sage cordial for sore throats and colds, they ate Sage and Onion sauce with pork, they flavoured home-made cheeses with Sage. Dried Sage leaves are still largely used in stuffing duck, veal, and pork. Sage cheeses are still made in Derbyshire, and Sage is a favourite flavouring in soups, stews, rissoles, etc. In older days Sage figured conspicuously in daintier and costlier confections. Sage Cream made with crushed Sage leaves, cream, Rose-water, canary and sugar was a sweetmeat fit for a royal table, Sage conserve made by pounding Sage flowers and sugar, cooking the mixture in the sun, must have been delicious. W.M., Cook to Queen Henrietta Maria, gives the recipe in his *Queen's Closet Opened* (1655).<sup>1</sup>

Sage is a native of Southern Europe and grows in such abundance on the hillsides of the Dalmatian coast, that the gathering of it is one of the chief peasant industries. The date of the introduction of Sage into this country is

<sup>1</sup> See *A Garden of Herbs*.



SAGE  
(*Salvia officinalis*)

CHIVES  
(*Allium schænoprasum*)

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unknown, but it was evidently commonly grown in very early times, for it is frequently mentioned in the Saxon herbals.

There are not only several varieties of *Salvia officinalis*, but it is a plant that sports frequently. For instance, I have a Sage with leaves quite double as large as those of the common broad-leaved kind, and I value it chiefly because it was given me by the late Mr. Vicary Gibbs. The broad-leaved Sage is the one commonly grown, and it is seldom that one sees the narrow-leaved variety, notably the one with pink flowers. There is also a very rare white-flowered form. The old herbalists believed that the small-leaved Sage was of greater virtue than the broad-leaved kind. To quote Parkinson : " The small Sage is accounted to be of the more force and vertue." In my experience the small-leaved Sage is the more delicate of the two and in an exceptionally bleak spell suffers badly. Nowadays the broad-leaved Sage is the one used medicinally and for culinary purposes.

My small-leaved Sages I acquired by theft ! I have a great liking for going round empty houses and their gardens and sensing their atmosphere. One day when driving along, I saw a board up at an entrance and as the place looked interesting, I went to have a look. The property had obviously been neglected for years, and what must once have been a series of pleasant gardens was a mere wilderness. I came ultimately to the kitchen garden, which was almost waist-high in weeds, but down a central path a double row of old standard Roses were blooming. In the distance I espied some pink and blue flowers and on going to see, I found bushes of the old pink, also the old

## SAGES OF VIRTUE

blue narrow-leaved Sage flowering through a strangle of bindweed. I had not seen these Sages since my childhood and the temptation being too great I took a few cuttings. But my conscience asserted itself so loudly that I made inquiries locally, and having heard that the owner was abroad and the local house agent to be found in the town some miles away, I made, with extreme reluctance, a long detour in order to call on the latter. Red-handed, so to speak, I presented myself, but so far from being annoyed, he seemed pleased that anyone should take sufficient interest in a big place to walk round the gardens. For, as he sadly observed: "No one wants anything nowadays except a garage with sleeping accommodation attached." I suppose stolen goods should not flourish, but my narrow-leaved Sages appear to be in robust health though they suffer more in extreme cold than the broad-leaved kinds. My other herbs, I hasten to add, have been honestly come by!

Red Sage is one of the most decorative foliage plants, but I have no great liking for the variegated kind, though a really well variegated bush of Sage is very showy. Yet Parkinson chose variegated Sage together with golden Marjoram from amongst all the sweet herbs to place in his *Garden of Pleasure*: "Unto all these flowers of beauty and rarity I must adjoyne two other plants, whose beauty consisteth in their leaves, and not in their flowers: as also to separate them from the others of their tribe, before the sweete herbes that shall follow, as is fittest to furnish this our Garden of pleasure. This kind of Sage groweth with branches and leaves very like the ordinary Sage but somewhat smaller, the chieftest difference consisteth in the colour



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of the leaves, being diversely marked and spotted with white and red among the greene : for upon one branch you shall have the leaves severally marked one from another, as the one halfe of the leafe white and the other greene, with red shadowed over them both, or more white then greene, and red therein, either parted or shadowed, or dasht here and there, or more greene then white, and red therein eyther in the middle or end of the leafe, or more or less therein eyther in the middle or end of the leafe, or more or less parted or striped with white and red in the greene, or else sometimes wholly greene the whole branch together, as nature listeth to play with such varieties : which manner of growing rising from one and the same plant, because it is the more variable, is the more delightfull and much respected.

“ There is another speckled Sage parted with white and greene, but it is nothing of that beauty to this, because this hath three colours evidently to bee discerned in every leafe almost, the red adding a superabundant grace to the rest.”

Variegated Sage reverts to type very quickly. Consequently cuttings should be taken every year and set in May, choosing of course the most variegated parts for slips. In common with most herbs that are natives of the Mediterranean coast Sage does best in light soil, preferably a chalk soil, and a warm spot. In cold or exposed parts it flowers poorly if at all. The bushes deteriorate quickly after three years and consequently a fresh supply has to be kept up by taking cuttings at least every four years. Cuttings taken with a heel should be struck in part shade in early May. Raising from seed is a slow process, and Red Sage has always to be propagated from cuttings,



## SAGES OF VIRTUE

as raised from seed the plants revert to type. Sage plants should not be allowed to flower their first year.

If Sage has lost its reputation for assuring long life to those who make use of its virtues, it is still valued highly by those who know its tonic properties. Sage Tea is best when made before the plant flowers, but not during the cold weather we so often get in early spring. May is indeed the ideal time. Sage Tea is made by pouring a pint of water on two large handfuls of the leaves and drinking half a pint at a time. The old herbalists advocated taking it fasting first thing in the morning. The best Sage tea is that made from the flowers. It has a delicious, balsamic fragrance. As a flavouring Sage has to be used with discretion, for in excess it dominates all other flavours.

The Apple-bearing Sage of Candy is frequently mentioned by the old herbalists and in her most interesting study of Palestinian plant lore—*From Cedar to Hyssop*—Mrs. Crowfoot suggests that this is *Salvia triloba*, so much esteemed for its medicinal virtues by the peasants of Palestine to-day. Its popular name—*Miriamiya*—commemorates the legend Mrs. Crowfoot gives : “ This is the story of the Miriamiya. What time Our Lady Miriam fled from King Herod into Egypt with Our Lord Jesus and He was yet a little Child, she sat down, weary, under the shade of a shrub. And she broke a sprig from the shrub and wiped the sweat from her face with the leaves until she found refreshment because of its fragrance. Then she said to the plant, ‘ Be thou blessed for ever ’ and since that day the plant is called Miriamiya in her memory and truly it is blessed.”

Wild Clary (*Salvia verbenaca*) deserves a place in the herb

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garden, if only for the sake of its old beautiful name—Christ's Eye. The reason for the name is not quite obvious. The seeds when soaked in a little water produce a very soft mucilage, which, dropped into the eyes, brings out all dust, etc. without damaging the eyes or giving the slightest pain. Far less painful than twisting up the corner of a handkerchief to remove a tiny fly!

The handsomest of the Sages is indisputably Clary (*Salvia sclarea*) notably the Vatican strain. It is not only one of the handsomest herbs, but one of the most striking border plants. A friend brought me a seedling from the Vatican garden many years ago, and ever since it has sown itself like a weed on our sandy soil. This true Vatican strain is unobtainable from nurserymen. In some parts of these islands it is fairly common in gardens and in other parts is regarded as a valuable rarity. It is taller growing than the common Clary and frequently attains nearly five feet. With its large square stalks, covered with shiny hairs, its coarse, huge basal leaves sometimes nearly a foot long, also covered with hairs, its branching flower stems with pinkish mauve flowers and big pink bracts, it is indeed a striking object. The pink bracts are so large that from a little distance they dominate the flowers and give the impression that the plant has pink flowers touched with mauve. This fine strain of Clary is, I think, an ideal plant to associate with Delphiniums, for Clary remains in flower a very long time and after the flowers have faded, the pink bracts remain and look decorative well into October in the south. Further, the branching flower stems help to hide the "holes" in the border left by Delphiniums when the flower stems have been cut down. The common



Clary in our garden. "With its pink bracts and mauve flowers  
this herb associates well with hollyhocks"



## SAGES OF VIRTUE

Clary attains only about three feet and is also an attractive border plant. At one time we were bidden to call Clary *Salvia turkestanica*, but now we are again allowed to call it by its old name, Clary (*Salvia sclarea*). In the Middle Ages, Tudor and Stuart days, Clary was commonly grown and its popular name Clary or Clear-eyes denotes its virtue, i.e. to clear the eyes. Clary figures amongst the plants mentioned in John Gardener's *Feate of Gardening* (141):—

“ Percely, clarey, and eke sage,  
And all other herbage.”

And it was evidently amongst the earliest herbs introduced into America, for it is mentioned in John Josselyn's list in *New England Rarities Discovered* (1672). Even in these islands Clary, which is a native of the Levant, is hardy only in mild parts and it is not surprising to read in John Josselyn's quaint list:—

“ Clary never lasts but one Summer, the  
Roots rot with the Frost.”

The scent of Clary is very powerful and from a big clump it is perceptible at a distance of some yards. Some people dislike these rather coarse scents, but I think they have their attraction and afford a contrast to sweet scents. Brought indoors the scent of a large bunch of Clary is frankly intolerable. Long sprays would look lovely in a tall jar associated with Delphiniums and Campanulas, but no one would enjoy the picture unless from the other end of a long room! A few small sprays are bearable and give character to a bowl of mixed flowers. Incidentally,



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Clary does not take kindly to being cut for indoor decoration. The flowering stems fade in a few minutes and the only way of keeping them fresh is to bruise the stalks as one bruises those of Hellebores to make them last as cut flowers.

In spite of the strong scent, the leaves when cooked are not unpleasant. Formerly the tender leaves dipped in cream used to be fried and eaten with sugar and a flavouring of orange juice. They were also dipped in batter and fried. The flowers were amongst those used for strewing salads and the young leaves chopped very finely were a common ingredient in salads. Clary wine<sup>1</sup> was famed for its narcotic properties. The essential oil is used for fixing perfumes.

The Vatican strain of Clary associates delightfully in bold groups with all the tall-growing herbs—Angelica, Woad, Fennel, Lovage, Sweet Cicely, Elecampane and Succory. It is also useful for a very sunny dry border on poor soil. Borders such as this are not easy, and I think they look dull with the low-growing flowers usually planted in them. We have a very sunny border facing due south and drained of moisture by two large trees at the back, and last year it was a picture with Hollyhocks, crimson, pink, yellow, and white at the back; clumps of Clary with its tall branching mauve and pink heads and handsome rough foliage in front of and between them and for the edging a mixture of Sweet Williams, Pentstemons and Poppies.<sup>2</sup> Theoretically Clary is a biennial, but it frequently fails to flower well till its third year. It is very deep rooting and

<sup>1</sup> For recipes, see *A Garden of Herbs*, pp. 54 and 55.

<sup>2</sup> See illustration page 52.



## SAGES OF VIRTUE

consequently the site has to be dug quite three feet deep. It is easily raised from seed sown either in boxes in a cold frame or in the open, transplanting the seedlings as soon as they are large enough to handle.

The most deliciously scented of all the Sages are *S. Greggii* and *S. Grahamii*. They merit a place in the herb garden, for the dried leaves are a valuable ingredient in pot pourri. Both are natives of Mexico, and even in the south need a warm, sunny wall and protection in winter in the shape of boughs. They are delightful for planting against a house wall, because they go on flowering merrily from June till cut by frosts. They grow quickly, attain about five feet, are graceful in growth and the vivid carmine flowers produced in such continual succession are most decorative. The scent of the leaves is delicious—a scent suggestive of that of Black Currant leaves and the Balsam Poplar combined. Cuttings strike very readily in the open on a sandy soil and it is as well to take them yearly to replace those killed by a very severe frost. The difference between *S. Greggii* and *S. Grahamii* is chiefly in the leaves, the leaves of *S. Greggii* being about one and a half inches long, whereas those of *S. Grahamii* are double as long and round toothed.

Narrow beds against sunny house walls are by no means easy to plant, and I think it is a pity that more use is not made of these deliciously scented Sages and Rosemary where fairly tall-growing subjects can be placed, and Red and Variegated Sages, Hyssop and Rue, where small bushy plants are desired.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BERGAMOTS

"And then there are some flowers, they always seem to me like over-dutiful children: tend them ever so little, and they come up and flourish and show as I may say, their bright and happy faces to you."—*Douglas Jerrold*.

Those of us who were children in Victorian times and read, and re-read (as I think every child should) Mrs. Ewing's books, never look at the Scarlet Bergamot, once such a favourite with cottagers, without thinking of that passage in *Daddy Darwin's Dovecot*:—

"My mother says Daddy Darwin has red bergamot i' his garden. We've none i' ours. My mother always says there's nothing like red bergamot to take to church. She says it's a deal more refreshing than Old Man, and not so common. . . . She always says there's nothing like red bergamot, and my Aunt Nancy, she says the same."

Phoebe's mother was right, for the scent of Bergamot is indeed one of the most refreshing of all herb scents. This is owing to the fact that thymol is one of the predominating essences in it. And what a brave show the flowers make in the border. For indoor decoration a bowl of Bergamots in mixed colours—scarlet, mauve, pink, purple, and cream-white—look gorgeous. And I like a mixture of scarlet Bergamot and Horehound. The upright stems of the former and their tiers of flowers associate to perfection with the creamy white diminutive whorls of Horehound flowers and if grown without being tied up in orthodox fashion, Horehound throws its stems about in charming twists and curves. Both the Monardas and Horehound remain fresh a long time as cut flowers. Notwithstanding modern introductions and the skill of hybridists

## THE BERGAMOTS

the richest scarlet amongst flowers is still that of the scarlet Bergamot. And there is a curious fascination about its heads of flowers in whorls one above another, often attaining a height of nearly four feet. The square, grooved stems and the leaves tinged with a colour suggestive of a mixture of garnet and amethyst add to its attraction. Its popular name "Bergamot" it owes to the fact that the scent of the whole plant and particularly of its leaves and flowers resemble that of the Bergamot Orange. Incidentally oil of Bergamot is not made from Bergamot, but from the rind of the Bergamot Orange (*Citrus aurantium* var *Bergamia*). The scent of this oil, which is (or should be!) an ingredient in the expensive varieties of Eau de Cologne, is almost indistinguishable from that of Bergamot.

Bergamot (*Monarda didyma*) is a native of swampy parts as far south as Georgia. It was formerly known as Oswego tea, because in and around Oswego a refreshing tea was commonly made with the leaves. Cottagers in this country also called it Bee Balm, because bees haunt its flowers continually. Henry Phillips in his *Flora Historica* (1824) records that even in England, "Many persons prefer the infusion of the leaves to the tea of China." I like the phrase, "tea of China." It savours of eighteenth century elegance and leisure!

There are several varieties of *Monarda didyma*, the handsomest being "Cambridge Scarlet" which is decidedly taller than the type. *M. didyma* var *rosea* has magenta flowers. *M. didyma* *Kalmiana* with deep crimson purplish flowers and showy seen in mass is not often grown now. It attains quite four feet. *Monarda didyma*, the species most

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

commonly grown in gardens, was introduced in 1744 by Peter Collinson, the great Quaker gardener of the latter half of the eighteenth century. His garden was at Mill Hill. It was owing to his influence that John Bartram was appointed by George III, "Botanizer Royal for America." *Monarda fistulosa* was introduced into England in 1656 by John Tradescant the younger, son of John Tradescant, gardener to Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria. On his return from America, Tradescant the younger, introduced also the Michaelmas Daisy, the Tulip tree, deciduous Cypress, red Maple, Acacia, and American Plane.

*Monarda fistulosa*, the wild Bergamot of American woodlands, has grey mauve flowers and there are two handsome varieties with violet mauve flowers—"Parma" and *M. fistulosa violacea*. Both these attain about three feet. There are also pinkish shades. The white form, *M. fistulosa var alba*, is rather dwarf and is an admirable front row plant for the autumn herbaceous border. It has a very long flowering period, and owing to the touches of pink in the petals does not look chilly on cold days. In the border at Petworth it is delightfully associated with *Polygonum affine*. The dense tufts of the foliage of this low-growing *Polygonum* turn bright crimson in late summer, the flowers are a lovely pink, and the pink touches in the Bergamot petals "pick up" the colour in the *Polygonum*. Incidentally this *Polygonum* likes the same conditions as Bergamot—moist soil and part shade. *M. citriodora* (about two feet) is chiefly of value for the curious peppery, lemon scent of its leaves and young plants are tinted red. The flowers are pale pink. Mrs. Morgenthau Fox in her *Gardening with Herbs* mentions a salmon pink variety. There





Bergamot in a Cottage Garden





## THE BERGAMOTS

are also various hybrid Bergamots, mostly with purplish flowers.

A Bergamot one rarely sees is *M. florairiensis*. This variety was raised at Floraire Nurseries, Geneva, and at least one firm in this country stocks seed of it.

A species I have not seen for many a long day is *Monarda Russelliana*. It is mentioned in various Victorian gardening books and was apparently fairly commonly grown then. *M. Russelliana* has a quiet, quaint beauty of its own. The flowers, which are smaller than those of *M. didyma*, and *M. fistulosa*, are white with purple tinted pistils and its large bracts and the small leaves amongst the flowers are all deeply tinged purple. The leaves are larger than those of *M. didyma* and *M. fistulosa*, and those near the tops are tinted purple and the stems, which are rounded and channelled are also tinted purple near the top.

The genus *Monarda* is named in honour of Nicolas Monardes, a Spanish doctor living in Seville, who in 1569 wrote the earliest American herbal. This book, published nineteen years before the defeat of the Spanish Armada, attracted great attention; it was translated into Latin by the distinguished botanist, Charles de l'Ecluse, and into Italian, Flemish, French, and English. The English translation—*Joyfull Newes out of the newe founde world* (1577) went through four editions. The original work contains the first written account and illustration of Tobacco.

All the *Monardas* do best on rich, moist soil, but they are very accommodating. They are closely related to the Mints and ought to have the same conditions. Planted in full sun on dry sandy soil, they naturally do very poorly. They grow stunted and instead of handsome whorls of

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

flowers rising tier above tier, there is, as a rule, only one whorl and in a spell of drought the plants are almost certain to die out. On such soils it is best to give them a place in part shade. They are amongst the few really handsome herbaceous subjects that do well in part shade. I once planned a border for a herb lover with Sweet Cicely and that lovely tall growing mint *Mentha rotundifolia* behind and in front groups of various coloured Bergamots. *Mentha rotundifolia* grows quite six feet high in moist soil and its soft foliage and tapering heads of pinkish flowers associate charmingly with the great fern-like leaves of Sweet Cicely, which attains about five feet and together these plants make a perfect foil for the rich colouring and architectural beauty of the tiers of Bergamot flowers. In full sun the Bergamots look very striking with a background of tall Lavender and the Bergamots themselves interspersed with the Dwarf Lavenders and other late summer flowering herbs such as Winter Savory. All the Monardas, however, with the exception of the dwarf *M. fistulosa alba*, which I have mentioned as one of the most charming edging plants for the autumn border, need to be grown in big groups if their beauty is to be appreciated at its best. If grown in full sun on light soil the soil has to be enriched for the Bergamots with hop manure or humus in some form.

The Bergamots are easily raised from seed or by division. Plants should be lifted and divided at least every three years, otherwise they will deteriorate rapidly. The worn out centre pieces of the plants are useless and only the young outer parts should be used and of course planted in fresh soil. The outer parts can be taken off established

## THE BERGAMOTS

plants at almost any time. To secure first-rate blooms the plants should not be allowed to flower the first season.

The Monardellas are closely allied to the Monardas and are also natives of North America. The most attractive perennial kind is *M. macrantha*, with rose pink flowers on nine-inch stems. *M. candicans* is an annual with white flowers on foot high stems.

## CHAPTER VI

### PATHS OF THYME

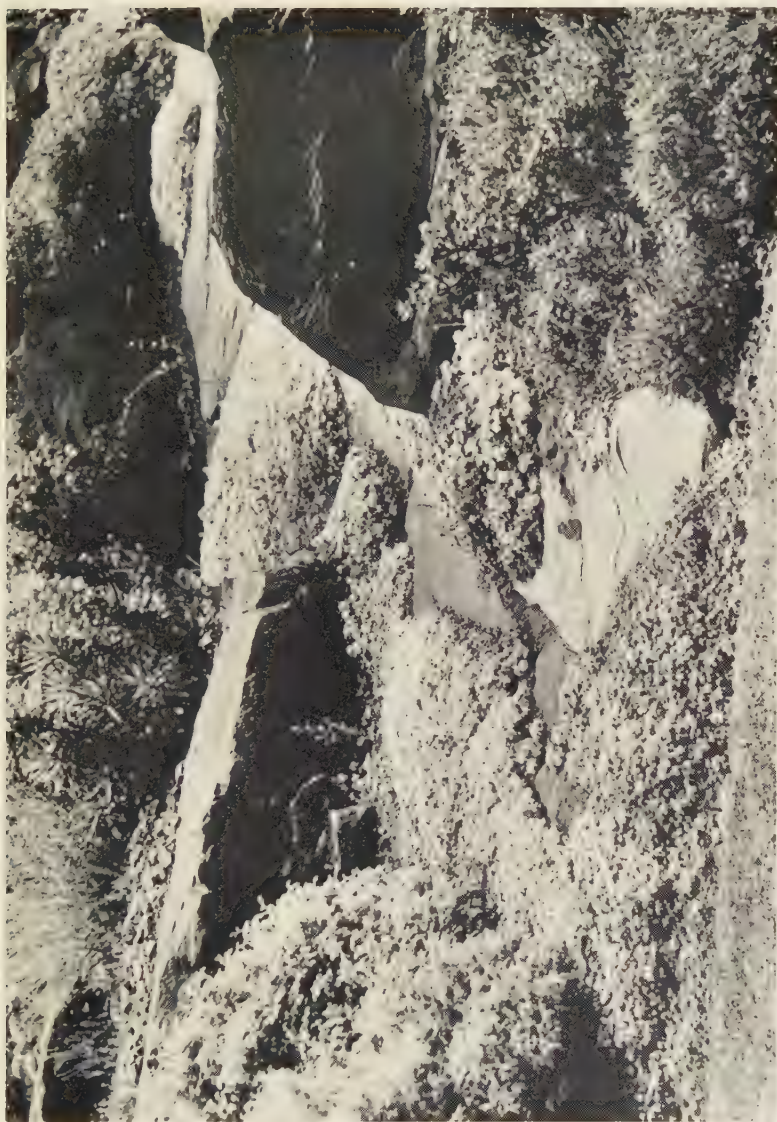
“ . . . awake to behold  
The opening summer, the sky,  
The shining moorland—to hear  
The drowsy bee, as of old,  
Hum o’er the thyme.”

*Matthew Arnold.*

From the Orkneys and far St. Kilda’s to the Channel Islands, our native Thyme is one of the loveliest and most fragrant of June and July wild flowers. Thyme and Eyebright frequently predominate in the exquisite mosaic of minute flowers that carpet chalky uplands, a mosaic to which these flowers contribute their crimson-purple, and pearl. Who can describe the scent of Thyme? A scent so imbued with tonic properties that, like the lark’s song, it transports one from this earth into the sunlight and blue heaven above. A scent full of bee-song and honey, of the sunlight of a new-born summer day, and suggestive, as are so many lowly flowers, of all that is pure and sweet, true and strong. Kipling, in his poem on Sussex, described Thyme on the downs as smelling “like dawn in Paradise”. A phrase suggestive of Tennyson’s lines in *Love and Death*:—

“What time the mighty moon was gathering light,  
Love paced the thymy plots of Paradise.”

Thyme being a favourite bee-herb was planted in abundance near the hives. Incidentally the old bee gardens planted with Thyme, Winter Savory, Balm, Wall-flowers, Borage, Bugloss “and many other sweet and wholesome bee-flowers” must have been very attractive, especially if the tradition be true that in a niche in the



A Path of Thyme





## PATHS OF THYME

enclosing wall it was customary to have a figure of St. Ambrose, the patron saint of bees. A bee garden is depicted in Worlidge's *Systema Agriculturae* (1681). Beehives were commonly rubbed with pleasantly scented herbs. To quote Gervase Markham: "You shall perfume the Hive with Juniper, and rub it all within with Fennel, Hyssop, and Time-flowers, and also the stone upon which the Hive shall stand . . . for in all clenlinesse and sweetnesse the Bees are much delighted." It was an old belief that the yearly yield of honey could be estimated by the floriferousness of Thyme. To quote Thomas Hyll: "The owners of Hives have a perfite foresight and Knowledge what the increase or yielde of Honey will bee everie yeare by the plentifull or small number of flowers growing and appearing in the Thyme about the summer solstice." And in what is to my thinking the most charming recipe in the English language—a sixteenth century recipe in a manuscript in the Ashmolean Museum headed, "To enable one to see the Fairies"—Thyme figures largely. It is enjoined that the Thyme be picked "near the side of a hill where fairies use to be."<sup>1</sup> Wild Thyme, *Thymus serpyllum*, is a native, not only of these islands, but of all Europe, most of Western Asia, and parts of North Africa. There are many varieties of it. The white-flowered form is rare as a wild plant, and has always been valued as a garden plant. Gerard says, "the flowers are as white as snow, and have planted it in my garden, where it becommeth an herbe of great beauty." This white-flowered form is very floriferous. *T. s. citriodorus* has a scent resembling that of Verbena. *T. serpyllum lanuginosus* has

<sup>1</sup> For recipe, see *A Garden of Herbs*.

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

both sides of its foliage and stems covered with silky grey hairs. *T. serpyllum angustifolius* has very narrow leaves and *T. s. ericoides* extremely small leaves. There are also garden varieties of *T. serpyllum*, the most popular being *T. s. coccineus*. In late June the foliage is almost smothered with rich crimson flowers and this Thyme is as much sought after by butterflies as by bees. *T. s. Annie Hall* has flesh-pink flowers. Then there is Hall's variety of *T. s. lanuginosus* which is in some ways better than the type, for though the foliage is not so silvery, the rich red flowers are produced in profusion. Both the type and Hall's variety do best and look very effective on a dry wall.

*T. chamædrys* is closely related to *T. serpyllum* and usually regarded as a sub-species. The leaves are larger than those of *T. serpyllum*, and the flowers are produced in spikes nearly three inches long. This attractive variety is not so common as *T. serpyllum*.

In the herb garden the varieties of *T. serpyllum* make delightful broad edgings. They are best, however, for a path of Thyme, as Bacon suggested long ago. A collection of the prostrate Thymes makes a fascinating mosaic for a path or a tiny lawn. Why does everyone remain so faithful to grass paths, when paths of the prostrate Thymes, Camomile, Pennyroyal, Burnet, and *Mentha requenii* make such an attractive change? A grass path perfectly kept is indisputably pleasant to look upon, but paths of the plants cited above are not only pleasant to look upon, but also to smell. And they require no more attention than grass paths, in fact, less, for there is no mowing, rolling, and clipping edges. Only weeding. Which reminds me of a

## PATHS OF THYME

remark I once heard : " Everyone talks about gardening, I do nothing but weed." I think we all feel like that sometimes.

To return to paths of Thyme. A path planted with the prostrate Thymes is charming, but does not improve by being walked on continually ! *T. serpyllum coccineus* is the most colourful Thyme to use, and the soft greys of *T. s. lanuginosus* and its varieties make a pleasing contrast. The prostrate Thymes are very popular for crevices in crazy paving on suitable soil and they almost ask to be used near a sun-dial.

The most effective Thyme path I know is that in the charming garden made by Mrs. William Cadbury at West Hills, King's Norton. A Thyme path twelve feet broad is one of the principal features of the terrace that surrounds the house on three sides. The path is admirably proportioned to the rest. All round the house is a bed planted with Snapdragons, then comes a belt of grass, then the Thyme path, then grass again with Rose beds, then a Yew hedge about four feet high. At the foot of the hedge are cobble stones with tufts of Thrift between. Why is it that cobble stones are so seldom associated with Yew ? For the two together make a picture of restful beauty. In summer, when the Thyme is in flower, the colour of these bee-haunted flowers picks up the colour of the rich pink, Thrift, and the Roses, and later that of the Snapdragons, which are neither rose nor pink but exactly the same colour as the Thyme.<sup>1</sup>

*Thymus herba-barona*, the little Corsican Thyme, is quite as prostrate as *T. serpyllum* and the scent is very strong and

<sup>1</sup> For illustration see p. 66.

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absolutely indistinguishable from that of Carraway seed. Our little Cairn, Jock, ever since he was a puppy, has been passionately fond of this Thyme. As a puppy, he used to roll on it, apparently in ecstasies of enjoyment, and now he has his occasional naps on it, so frequently, that my wonder is that the Thyme has survived. The likes of cats in regard to scented plants are well known, but dogs seem to have just as many fancies on this subject. *Herba-barona* spreads rapidly, which is fortunate, for people who do not know it are delighted with the smell and always want rooted bits !

Garden Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*) is a native of most parts of southern Europe, also of Corsica and the Balearic Islands. The date of its introduction into this country is unknown, but it has been grown at least since medieval times and probably long before. The most attractive variety is *T. vulgaris citriodorus aureus*. The scent is sweet, rather suggestive of Balm, and yet very aromatic. Unless planted in full sun this Thyme loses its golden colour, and in soil that is too rich it reverts to green. *T. citriodorus* and *T. citriodorus* Silver Queen are also pleasing. Occasionally one finds references to an orange-scented Thyme, a variety of *T. vulgaris*, but I have never yet been fortunate enough to secure this elusive treasure. The most charming variety of Garden Thyme is surely *T. vulgaris* var. *fragrantissimus*. This variety grows only half the height of the type, the foliage is grey and the scent delicious, with a suggestion of Geranium leaf in it.

All the Thymes like a warm, well-drained soil. On a chalky soil they flourish exceedingly and full sun is essential. The Garden Thymes are propagated either by





*Thymus erectus*



The Thyme-planted Pathway at West Hills





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division of old plants in autumn or spring, or by cuttings taken in early summer. If old plants are not divided they soon show bare patches and become straggly. When raising from seed the seed is planted barely a quarter of an inch deep.

Thyme is not used medicinally nowadays, except by country folk in out of the way parts, but formerly it was as much esteemed for its medicinal as for its culinary uses. It was chiefly valued as a tonic, and Gerard describes it as "profitable for such as are fearfull, melancholicke and troubled in mind." Parkinson in his *Paradisus* says: "To set downe all the particular uses whereunto Tyme is applyed, were to weary both the Writer and Reader." It was a favourite strewing herb. Our great grandmothers used to put away their furs and winter clothes with dried Thyme, Rosemary, and powdered cloves. A pleasanter scent than that imparted by moth-balls!

The other Thymes are rather out of place in a herb garden, though they are so fascinating that it is difficult not to include them. As Parkinson said of some of the rarer kinds of his day: "Wee preserve them with all the care we can in our gardens, for the sweete and pleasant scents and varieties they yield." *T. nitidus* and *T. carnosus* are two attractive species. *T. nitidus* is closely related to *T. vulgaris*, but far more attractive in growth, for it makes bushes over a foot high with grey-green foliage smothered with rose-pink flowers in June. *T. carnosus* has dark green foliage, and white flowers. It looks like a tree from a fairy forest, and its habit of growth suggests a miniature Yew. It attains a little over six inches.

*Thymus azoricus* as its name indicates is a native of the

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

Azores. It makes little, spreading cushions and the pinkish mauve flowers are exquisitely scented. I am sure if there were a Miss Muffet in Fairyland she would choose this Thyme for her tuffet. The scent of *Thymus azoricus* is sometimes described as orange-like, but I can never detect any scent of orange in it. *T. Marshallii* is minute, about three inches high, rather tender, and the pinkish flowers are very sweetly scented.

Then there are the rarer Thymes. *Thymus membranaceus* which was first shown by Mr. Ashton Lofthouse at one of the Royal Horticultural Society shows a few years ago, is a native of Spain, and grows at an altitude of 6,000 feet. The tubular white flowers are set in conspicuous membraneous cream-coloured bracts. The flowers have a sage-like smell and the foliage is very aromatic. It attains four inches and is a gem for the rock garden. Then there is *T. Doerfleri* from the Balkans. The foliage is grey and the richly fragrant flowers are rose-red. It is prostrate in growth. *T. neiceffii*, also from the Balkans, is as prostrate, the leaves are grey and the flowers deep red. *T. Chamaedrys* is also almost prostrate with green foliage and pink flowers. *T. Zygis* is a Spanish species like a dwarf Garden Thyme. It has conspicuous white hairs at the base of the leaves. The type has deep mauve flowers, and there is a white-flowered form which is common in the Balearic Islands.

Shenstone in *The Schoolmistress* dubbed Thyme "pun-provoking". The most pleasing example of this I know is to be found in that rare old volume, *Bulley's Bulwarke of Defence . . . kepte with Hillarius the Gardiner* (1562):—

"There be no flowers growing in fields or gardens better beloved of Bees than the flowers of Thyme. . . . And thus I do conclude

## PATHS OF THYME

of Time, desiring God that we may spende the tyme well to his glory, and profite of our neighbour : for tyme cannot be called againe, but by litle and litle slippes away ; they which godly observe the tyme, in tyme to come shall receive the fruites of theyr owne labours, wyth happy lives, quiet mindes, and blessed endes : whereas the shamefull abuses of time, and misusers of themselves, although cyll spent tyme seeme well unto them, yet theyr lives be wicked, their labour fruitlesse, and their end horrible ; as once shall appeare when death doeth come, whych is the end of every tyme.”

## CHAPTER VII

### A COLLECTION OF MARJORAMS

“Where the bee can suck no honey, she leaves her sting behind ; and where the bear cannot find origanum to heal his grief, he blasteth all other leaves with his breath.”—Prologue to *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*.

The quiet charm and warm aromatic scents of the Marjorams appeal to all those who love old-fashioned flowers. Our only native species, *Origanum vulgare*, the “Marjoram sweet in shepherds’ posies bound”, needs to be seen in its native haunts on chalky uplands to appreciate its beauty, for it is essentially a plant of wide open spaces. Its botanical name signifies “Joy of the Mountains”, a beautiful and very apt name. For do not we all know the sensation of lighting on a clump of Marjoram when walking over the downs and the curious sense of joyous elation the sight and scent of the flowers inspires? Far more joy-giving in the sweet air of the downs than that same plant in a garden. With its reddish stalks and corymbs of flowers, which, owing to the bracts look reddish from a little distance, and its warm, delicious fragrance, wild Marjoram is indeed a “Joy of the Mountains”. There is a somewhat rare white-flowered form with pale green stems, but it is not so attractive. The variegated form is quite pleasing.

Like most wildlings, isolated clumps of wild Marjoram look out of place in a border, but in the herb garden this plant looks at home. It makes a delightful edging and broad borders of its pleasant, deliciously scented flowers are homely and pleasant. In Tudor and Stuart times Marjoram and Thrift were apparently the only herbaceous plants



MARJORAM  
(*Origanum vulgare*)

TANSY  
(*Tanacetum vulgare*)



## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

used for making Knots, for which purpose the dwarf shrubs were more commonly used. Thomas Hyll, in his *Proffitable Arte of Gardening* gives a plan of a knot to be set with "Marjoram and such like, or Isope and Time". Whether he refers to Wild Marjoram or Sweet Marjoram is uncertain. Parkinson in his *Paradisus* also lists Marjoram as a suitable herb for knot gardens.

Wild Marjoram was formerly highly esteemed as a medicinal herb, whereas the cultivated kinds were more commonly used for culinary purposes. As a medicinal herb it has been used at least since the days of the ancient Greeks. Cottagers in this country as late as the last century used to gather and dry Wild Marjoram to make tea, which they valued as a tonic. The dried leaves, moistened with boiling water and put in a flannel bag, were used for fomenting rheumatic parts and for colic. Freshly gathered flowering tops were used for flavouring home-made ale and beer. They also made a dye from the flowering tops. The colour produced is a not unattractive dark reddish brown, but it fades quickly.

When Venus carried off the sleeping Ascanius to the groves of Idalia, she laid him amidst Marjoram. Virgil probably referred to Sweet Knotted Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*). Few herbs have been so esteemed for scent and for culinary purposes through the centuries. For its scent it was valued as a strewing herb and as such Tusser lists it in his *Five Hundred Points* (1577). Gerard described the scent as "marvelous sweet" and "aromaticall", and amongst other uses he prescribed a decoction of the leaves "for such as are given to over-much sighing". In his *Countrie Housewife's Garden* (1618) Lawson divided the



## A COLLECTION OF MARJORAMS

garden into two parts, the one to contain "the hearbes and flowers used to make nosegayes and garlands" and the other "all other sweet-smelling hearbes", and of this garden, in which he places Marjoram, he says: "And this may be called the Garden for hearbes of a good smell." According to Parkinson, Sweet Marjoram was used "to please the outward senses in nosegays and in the windows of houses, as also in sweete powders, sweet bags, and sweete washing waters".

Sweet Marjoram is a much smaller plant than Wild Marjoram. The appearance of the little flower heads gave the flower its popular name of "Knotted Marjoram", i.e. Marjoram with knops or buds, for the bracts almost hide the flowers. Sweet Marjoram has a peculiarly warm, sweet, balsamic odour and the leaves have an aromatic though slightly bitter taste, which makes them a valuable ingredient in salads. The dried leaves are, in common with those of Pot and Winter Marjoram, used for flavouring soups, stews, etc. Although a perennial, this Marjoram has to be treated as an annual in this country, sowing the seed either under glass in February or early March, or in the open in April or early May. In either case it must be sown in very sandy soil. It is best to sow under glass as seed germinates slowly in the open. When large enough to handle, the seedlings can be transplanted to their permanent quarters, putting the plants nine inches apart. Full sun, shelter from cold winds, and a warm, well-drained soil, are essential.

Pot Marjoram (*Origanum onites*) is a larger and more branching plant than Sweet Marjoram. The whole plant is reddish and the flowers are lilac-coloured, whereas those

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

of Sweet Marjoram are white. Pot Marjoram flowers rather later than Sweet Marjoram. Parkinson chose the golden-leaved form of this Marjoram together with variegated Sage to set "in this our Garden of pleasure" rather than amongst the herbs. He describes the foliage of this variety of Pot Marjoram as being "in summer wholly yellow in some, or but a little greene, or parted with yellow and greene more or lesse, as nature listeth to play : but in Winter they are of a darke or dead greene colour, yet recovering it selfe againe : the scent hereof is all one with the pot Marjerome". He also mentions a variegated kind, "parted with white and greene, much after the manner with the former". Raising Pot Marjoram from seed is a slow process as the seed is slow in germinating. The usual method of increase is by division or offsets in April, setting the plants a foot apart. If raised from seed this is sown in a warm spell in the open in March or April, putting the seeds a quarter of an inch deep and transplanting the seedlings when they are large enough to handle.

Winter Marjoram (*Origanum heracleoticum*) a native of Greece, is hardy in these islands in a warm well-drained soil and sheltered parts. It is usually increased by division of the roots in October, choosing a warm, wet spell.

"Marjoram gentle with leaves hoary and soft" to quote Parkinson, is probably *O. microphyllum*. This is the Marjoram immortalized by Skelton in his poem *To Maistress Margary Wentworth* :—

"With Marjerain gentle  
The flower of goodly head  
Embroidered the mantle  
Is of your maidenhead."

## A COLLECTION OF MARJORAMS

Few aromatic plants have such an exquisite scent. Sweeter and yet spicier than Lavender, with just a trace of Heliotrope. It needs a light soil and very sunny sheltered spot, preferably with the protection of a wall. It is usually increased by cuttings, which strike readily under glass. The tender Marjorams are gems for the rock garden in mild parts and warm, well-drained soils. *O. hybridum*, a native of the Levant, has rather heavy foliage and deep pink, hop-like flowers with lighter-coloured bracts. It attains about six inches, is very floriferous, and blooms in August. It succeeds admirably on a sunny, sheltered wall. *O. pulchrum* is bushy in habit, about six inches high, with rose-pink flowers in late summer. *O. aureum* is a gem, a diminutive bush eight inches high, with golden rounded leaves. *O. Tournefortii*, from the Grecian Archipelago, has greyish foliage, wiry nine-inch stems, pinkish mauve flowers produced early September. These rather tender Marjorams are increased by cuttings taken in summer, struck in pots of very sandy soil, placed in a cold frame and covered with a bell glass. The bell glass has to be wiped inside daily, or the cuttings will damp off. When rooted, they are transferred separately to three-inch pots and to their flowering positions the following spring.

In many respect *O. dictamnus* "Dittany of Crete" is the most pleasing of the tender species and it makes a charming pot plant for the cold greenhouse. The identity of "Dittany of Crete", the herb so highly praised by Theophrastus and Virgil was for long uncertain. There is little doubt, however, that the herb to which Turner applied the epithet, "Righte Dittany" is *Origanum dictamnus*. In the final edition (1568) of his Herbal he says: "I have seen Dittany

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

growing in England in Maister Riches garden but it groweth nowhere else that I know saving only in Candy." Sir Arthur Evans in his *Palace of Minos* mentions the plant *Origanum dictamnus* to this day called Diktamnus by the Cretan peasants and emphasizes the fact that it answers Virgil's description of Dittany.

Dittany of Crete is a bushy plant less than a foot high with thin stems, diminutive woolly leaves and spikes of flowers, suggestive of miniature pink hops. This species is of the easiest culture, provided that it is in a minimum temperature of forty-five degrees during the winter. The compost should be two parts fibrous loam and one part leaf mould and sand. During the winter the plants need the minimum of water and as much sunlight as possible. They are amongst the plants that do best "under potted", but if they have to be transferred to larger pots, this is done in March. The shoots are shortened back a third of their length and syringed every day till new growths show. Then the plants are re-potted and kept out of direct sunlight till established. When established, they need all the sunlight they can have. This plant is increased in the manner described above. A five-inch pot is usually large enough for a full grown plant.

Dittany of Crete was formerly a favourite pot plant amongst cottagers, almost as great a favourite as musk. Dittany of Crete is the popular name, but cottagers usually called it "Hop plant". When I see Dittany of Crete it takes me straight back to a friend of my childhood—Granny Dawkins. She was "Granny Dawkins" to everyone in the village and everyone loved and respected her. On her window sills she grew Sweet Geraniums, Musk, and

## A COLLECTION OF MARJORAMS

“Hop Plants”. In those days, Musk had not lost its scent and cottagers grew it trained up enchanting little ladders about six inches high, broader at the top than at the bottom. Granny Dawkins’ cottage faced the village green and I remember a Lilac tree at one side of her front garden and two diminutive beds neatly edged with Box. I also vaguely recall the old red Peony, the Columbines, Gardener’s Garter, and Pansies. It was always a treat to visit her, and I can see now the rather dark, pleasant room, the sunlight glinting through the plants on the window sill, the black cat with one white fore paw and a little white tuft beside one ear, asleep in a corner of the settle, the colourful piece of patchwork over the back of her big chair, the hearth-rug made of thick bits of cloth, the pieces of old gleaming brass, which always look “just right” in a cottage, whereas they look “just wrong” elsewhere, the cut cake with a wet piece in the middle, which at unexpected hours was often on the table (the wet part of the cake was easily the nicest) and the clock with a loud, impressive tick. Granny Dawkins had exquisite old-fashioned manners. When I left, she invariably sent her “duty” to my aunt, even though she may



Dittany  
*Origanum*  
*Dictamnus.*

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

have seen her the same day. I have not heard that expression for years now. I do not think anyone who had the happiness of knowing Granny Dawkins well could ever forget her and the friendly warmth and welcome that always pervaded that little room.



## CHAPTER VIII

### STATELY HERBS

“Of Simples in these Groves that grove,  
Wee’ll learn the perfect skill;  
The nature of each Herbe to knowe,  
Which cures, and which can kill.”

Michael Drayton, *The Quest of Cynthia*.

The stately herbs are a very decorative feature of the herb garden, especially if they can be grouped in mixed clumps. But they take considerable space! In a rectangular herb garden I planned we arranged for a mixed group of Acanthus, Succory (which in cultivation attains nearly eight feet), Angelica, Elecampane, Monkshood, Sweet Cicely, and Fuller’s Teasel at the outsides of the corners, and in front Fennel, *Anchusa italica*, Orach, Woad, and Lovage. The soil happens to be the ideal greensand in which all these herbs will flourish together. Were it a cool, moist soil, Acanthus would have to be in a separate part with plenty of sand added to the site. The herbs are a representative collection for a grove of stately herbs, for five of them have been used medicinally for centuries, three have been amongst the most esteemed kitchen and salad herbs (though not commonly used now to our loss), and one of these three is also the source of a delicious sweetmeat and cordial. One was formerly the deadliest known poison—an eminently useful herb in the days when poisoning was both an art and a trade; one figures conspicuously in the early history of cosmetics, and one was the source of a dye used by the ancient Britons; the most important of all dyes throughout the Middle Ages and used as late as the last century for dying the best blue cloth, notably that used for

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

policemen's uniforms. And one is still used by fuller's for the simple reason that no machine has been invented that raises the nap on some types of cloth equally well.

Except for these clumps of tall-growing herbs occupying a good deal of room at the corners, the garden will be enclosed with Lavender. In summer when the late-flowering subjects—Acanthus, Succory, Monkshood, Elecampane, Fennel, and Sweet Cicely—are in bloom at the same time as the Lavender, I think the effect will be very attractive. Earlier, the yellow of Woad and then the blue of the Anchusa and the noble proportions of Angelica will look well with the foliage of the Lavender as a contrast beyond. The bed all round will be various herbs of middle height in groups, edged with a dwarf Lavender, and the square centre bed edged with Garden Thyme will contain herbs of low growth—Marigolds, Horehound, Balm, Purslane, Opium Poppy, Valerian, etc.—arranged posy fashion, i.e. no two plants of the same kind together.

Acanthus or Bear's Breech are amongst the most decorative tall growing plants and yet one rarely sees these grand old favourites nowadays. In a very sunny border and in sandy soil, these natives of Southern Europe, do splendidly, attaining a height of four to five feet. Their beautiful, glistening leaves, said to have been copied for adorning pillars in Corinthian architecture, are evergreen and sometimes measure as much as four feet long and two feet broad. Parkinson says of Acanthus, "It hath always been used Physically as a mollifying herbe". Few late summer flowering subjects are so handsome. The best Acanthus species are *A. longifolius*, *A. mollis*, and *A. speciosus*. Of these the tallest and handsomest is the



*Acanthus mollis* in the Garden of Reigate Priory



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broad-leaved variety of *A. mollis*. The flowers are pinkish. The Acanthus look particularly well near eighteenth century architecture.

Possibly Acanthus are seldom grown now because they take time to establish themselves, but it is worth waiting for them. Growing them from seed is a slow process, for the plants usually do not flower till their fifth year. Plants of flowering size are, however, stocked by various firms. Once planted, Acanthus should never be unnecessarily disturbed. In common with most self-respecting plants they abhor cutting winds, and in any case they look their best with a good background such as a Yew hedge.

The accompanying illustration, which I took in the garden of Reigate Priory, shows how well they look associated with Yew. In this garden they are in their right atmosphere, for it is a place of ancient memories. At one time it was part of the large property belonging to Queen Eddeva (Edith), wife of Edward the Confessor. Gardens, so far as is known, however, were not made till the thirteenth century, when the Priory was founded by William Warren, Earl of Surrey. The monks' fish-pond remains to this day. Since then the place has been in the possession of many distinguished folk; amongst the most notable being Lord Howard of Effingham, the victor of the Armada. Incidentally, it was his first wife, Catherine, whom Queen Elizabeth is said to have shaken on her death-bed for not having delivered the ring sent to the Queen by Essex. Of old Lord Howard himself we know that he held the office of Lord High Admiral till he was eighty-three, and then "retired from public life and the rest of his life was peace and prayer".

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I think it is pleasant in an old garden such as this to sense the atmosphere and to recall the memories it holds of the past. During the latter years of Henry VIII's reign, John Foxe, the author of the *Book of Martyrs*, lived here, for he was tutor to the children of the Earl of Surrey. The famous Archbishop Usher died here in 1656 and it is recorded that his last words were "O Lord, forgive me! especially my sins of omission". He would have been buried in the Howard vault in Reigate Parish Church, but Cromwell intervened and insisted that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey. The old monastic buildings were nearly all demolished about 1799 and the present house built. But in this peaceful garden one is chiefly conscious of the old monks, especially in the lovely walk bordered by Irises and Poplars, leading to the fish-pond.

Acanthus leaves figure frequently in old needlework. An exquisite example in this country may be seen in one of the treasures of Durham Cathedral—the tenth century stole made in memory of St. Cuthbert. The stole together with the maniple bear inscriptions that they were made by the order of Queen Aelflad of Wessex, who died before 916. They were presented by King Aethelstan in 934. The magnificent embroidery, consisting of figures of saints, prophets, and apostles, has for a background sprays of Acanthus leaves and various animals. It is indeed remarkable that needlework executed within at the most fifteen years of the death of Alfred the Great should have remained in such remarkable condition.

Succory in cultivation is, to my thinking, one of the most charming stately blue-flowered plants. The petals are the colour of a clear summer sky, and the flowers are





Succory in the Garden of Sweet Briars, Reigate



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produced in continuous profusion from July till October. From a little distance the flowers look like blue stars set on their tall, decorative and extraordinarily tough stems. I wonder this beautiful herb is not more often grown in the herbaceous border, for it provides a lovely blue at a time when that colour is scarce. True, the flowers close in the early afternoon, no matter how sunny the day, but in spite of this peculiarity their loveliness is such that they deserve a place in the garden. To plant Succory in the kitchen garden merely to secure its succulent blanched shoots in winter seems a dull way of treating such a beautiful plant.

As a herb, Succory has been valued from time immemorial. The Romans used it as a vegetable, and a salad, and in this country it has been used for both purposes for centuries. In cultivation Succory takes space for its roots develop to parsnip-like proportions as befits a plant that throws its flower stalks eight feet high. In parts of the continent the young roots, though rather bitter, are eaten. Large crops are grown abroad, chiefly for the supply of ground Chicory to mix with coffee. The dried ground root is also used medicinally for rheumatism, liver complaints, etc. One old herbalist, but I cannot remember who it was, described Succory as "a fine jovial plant". It sounds like Culpeper.

Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*, syn. *A. officinalis*) is one of the very few scented plants that is a native of northern parts of Europe. It is abundant on the verge of the Arctic Circle, in Lapland and Iceland. In the plant lore of northern countries, particularly Pomerania and East Prussia, it figures conspicuously, and from very ancient times it has been held in high repute by the peasants of those countries

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for its medicinal properties. Traditionally the plant is so called because an angel revealed its qualities in a dream during a time of plague.

To quote from the chapter in Thomas Brasbridge's *Poore Mans Jewel* (1578)<sup>1</sup> on the properties of Angelica :—

“Uppon what occasion this excellent name was first given vnto it ; I know not : vnlesse it were for the excellent vertues thereof, or for that God made it knowē to men, by the ministerie of an angel. I suppose the former cause rather to be true. Howbeit as I am not able to proue the other : so I thinke no mā can give any good reason to the contrairie. For this we know, that G.O.D. hath made his Angels ministring Spirites to serue us for the safegarde of our soules ; and also of our bodies. But uppon what occasion so euer the name was given it is excellent.”

In Tudor and Stuart times Angelica was held in the highest esteem in this country, especially as a preventive of plague. Gerard describes it as “a singular remedy against poyson, and against the plague, and all infections taken by evill and corrupt aire ; if you doe but take a piece of the root and hold it in your mouth, or chew the same between your teeth, it doth most certainly drive away the pestilentiaall aire, yea although the corrupt aire have possessed the hart, yet it driveth it out againe”. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, placed Angelica first of all amongst “herbes of the most especiall use” which he suggested—“Country Gentlewomen” should grow. He points out in his *Theatrum Botanicum* that all Christian nations call the plant by names signifying its angelic associations “All Christian nations likewise in their appellations hereof follow the Latine name as near as their Dialect will permit, onely in Sussex they call the wilde kinde Kex and the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 160.

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weavers wind their yarne on the dead stalkes ”. Parkinson emphasizes further the fact that all parts of the plant are scented and taste well : “ The whole plant, both leafe, roote and seede, is of an excellent comfortable scent, savour and taste.” In his days it was customary to make a syrup of Angelica by the simple process of making a large gash in each green stem, filling up with sugar and after three days cutting these stems and draining out the resulting syrup. Parkinson describes this confection as “ a most delicate medicine ”. In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries Angelica leaves were candied as well as the stalks, the roots were made into preserves, and Angelica water was a favourite cordial.<sup>1</sup>

Garden Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*) is easily distinguishable from our native Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*) by the flowers and stems. The former has smooth, hollow stems and greenish-yellow flowers. The latter has purplish, hairy stems, conspicuously furrowed and the flowers are white, slightly tinged with purple. Both species attain five to six feet. With its handsome foliage, large flower-heads, and rather spreading growth, *Angelica archangelica* is a very stately addition to the herb garden. Indeed largish plantations of these stately herbs are well described in Michael Drayton’s apt phrase, “ Groves of Simples.” Angelica likes part shade, and a rather moist soil but it is accommodating and succeeds in most soils. Grown by a stream side, it attains grand proportions. It is important to sow the seed as soon as it is ripe. Though botanically a biennial the plants rarely flower till their third year and after seeding the old plants die. If the flower-heads are

<sup>1</sup> For recipes, see *A Garden of Herbs*.



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cut before seeding the plants last many years. The Angelicas flower in May. Seedlings can be transplanted but not older plants. When moved to their flowering quarters they should be at least three feet apart. If the stalks are to be candied they should be cut in May and June, when they are tender and green.

Angelica has to be planted on a fresh site every few years, as it deteriorates rapidly if grown on the same soil for long. It is curious that Angelica is not more commonly grown, for apart from making that delectable confection, home-candied Angelica (and to my thinking candied Angelica is the best of all "sweets"), the stems can be used in jam-making. The stems are at their best when Rhubarb is in season and Rhubarb jam made with Angelica is anyhow tolerable. Some people would describe it as excellent, but I happen to dislike Rhubarb, however it may be served, as much as I like Angelica. The amount of Angelica used must be varied according to individual taste. It should be at least a quarter as much as of Rhubarb. Raw Angelica stems cut in May are delicious. The taste is sweet and yet slightly bitter and imparts a pleasant glow. To my thinking it is superior even to candied Angelica, for the flavour is not impoverished by the flavour of sugar. I can understand why Angelica water was reckoned an excellent cordial. For centuries it has been known that chewing Angelica stems is excellent for people who suffer from indigestion. The seeds have a very hot, aromatic taste. Unlike the main stems, the flowers stem eaten raw have a bitter, unpleasant taste, but when cooked they are palatable. Commercially Angelica is chiefly grown for the supply of candied Angelica, and the seeds are used in the





ANGELICA  
(*Angelica archangelica*)



ELECAMPANE  
(*Inula belenium*)

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making of Chartreuse, Vermouth, and some of the Muscatel wines.

I was recently asked for a recipe for candying Angelica. It seemed to me it should be possible to find one in any good cookery book, but after consulting at least a dozen books I failed to find even one. The following is a recipe from my collection of old flower recipes. It is dated 1837 :—

“While the stalks are tender cut them in lengths of three or four inches. Cover close and boil with very little water. Peel them, and boil again till green; then dry them with a cloth. Put a pound of sugar to a pound of the stalks in an earthen pan. Let it stand covered two days and then boil the Angelica till clear and green and put it into a colander to drain. Strew as much pounded sugar over as will adhere to it and let it dry, but not become hard, in a slack oven.”

Elecampane (*Inula helenium*) one of the stateliest of herbs, associates delightfully with Acanthus, Succory and Monkshood. The deep blue of the Monkshood, the gold of the Elecampane, the pinkish tones of the Acanthus and the pale blue stars of Succory make a pleasant picture. Elecampane takes considerable space for its basal leaves, produced in a rosette, are often eighteen inches long and the plant attains five feet. The vivid yellow flowers, measuring quite three inches across, are produced in July and August, According to tradition, Helen of Troy had her hands full of these flowers when carried off by Paris, and another legend is that they sprang from her tears. Although one of our native plants it was cultivated for centuries in herb gardens for its medicinal properties. It is frequently mentioned in the Saxon herbals and was esteemed

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throughout the Middle Ages for its virtues. Gerard gives a delightful description of the plant. He accurately observes that the roots are "not long, oftentimes blackish without, white within and full of substance, sweet of smell and bitter of taste". In his day "loochs" (which he explains as "a medicine to be licked on") were made from the roots for chest complaints. These "loochs" or tablets, as they were called in later times, were sold in confectioners' shops as late as the nineteenth century, but Dr. Fernie, writing in the middle years of that century, observes "though called Elecampane candy, confectioners no longer make it from Elecampane".

Sweet Cicely—who, I wonder, bestowed on this herb this pretty, gracious name? A name that describes it to perfection for if Lavender is the queen of herbs, Sweet Cicely is surely the princess. A shy, elusive princess adorned with beauty, grace, and dignity. Parkinson truly described the plant as having "divers great and faire winged leaves, very like and resembling the leaves of Hemlocks" for when mature, Sweet Cicely attains quite five feet and with its great, lace-like, silky leaves, measures a good four feet across. Although it occupies so much space, this plant always gives an impression of slender grace. Sweet Cicely flourishes in cool, moist, mountainous parts and is a native of hilly parts of North England, Scotland, and Wales, as well as in various parts of Europe as far east as the Caucasus. But like Angelica, Sweet Cicely is accommodating. Even in our dry, sandy soil in this warm part of Surrey, it does well. Parkinson, who was a keen observer of both scents and savours, describes the scent of the leaves as of "so pleasant a taste that one would verily thinke he chewed the

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leaves or seedes of Aniseedes in his mouth ". The flavour is very subtle, sweet, yet suggestive of Aniseed and tincture of Myrrh. The root Parkinson describes as " of a sweete, pleasant and spicie hot taste, delightfull unto many ". I have never tasted the root, for Sweet Cicely grows extremely slowly. It is quite six years before the plant attains its full stature and one is naturally loth to dig up a plant merely to satisfy one's curiosity about the taste of the root. It is a very long-lived perennial, a characteristic noted by both Lawson in his *New Orchard and Garden*, and Parkinson in his *Paradisus*. But I have often tasted the inch long seeds when still green. They are very spicy.

Sweet Cicely is useless for indoor decoration even if put into water immediately, for the four feet long main stems are hollow. We are very fond of having big jars of different green leaves in summer for they look so cool. I once tried Sweet Cicely, but never again. The big lovely fern-like leaves drooped within a few moments of being put in water. I then tried floating them in a bath for some hours before again putting them in water. They revived perfectly, drooped badly in half an hour or so and by next day recovered a little and then faded quickly during the heat of the day.

Formerly all parts of this plant were used both in salads and for medicinal purposes. The leaves cut up finely are a pleasant addition to mixed salads and formerly Sweet Cicely was such a common wild plant that the roots were boiled as a vegetable, also preserved and candied and reckoned a good preservative in time of plague. Gerard says : " The leaves of sweet Chervill are exceeding good, wholesome and pleasant among other sallad herbs, giving

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the taste of Anise seed unto the rest. . . . The seeds eaten as a sallad whiles they are yet green with oile, vinegar, and pepper, exceed all other sallads by many degrees, both in pleasantness of taste, sweetnesse of smell, and whole some-nesse for the cold and feeble stomacke. The roots are likewise most excellent in a sallad, if they be boiled and afterwards dressed as the cunning Cooke knoweth how better than my selfe." John Evelyn, in his *Acetaria* highly commended Sweet Cicely for salads, and the roots "boiled and eaten cold for aged persons".

Though a common wild plant, Sweet Cicely was very generally grown in gardens for its beauty, the fragrance of its crushed leaves, and its culinary and medicinal uses. It is a lovely plant for a shady border and in part shade looks charming with Bergamot in front. It is easily increased by seed sown either when ripe in autumn or in spring. Once established, it sows itself freely.

Now, alas, Sweet Cicely is becoming one of our rarer wild flowers destroyed largely by trippers brought in pestilential cars to the few secluded peaceful parts that remain for our enjoyment. Trippers, like the rest of us, are kindly, well-meaning people and would surely protect rather than destroy did they but pause to consider that the flowers are there not only for the few but everyone's pleasure; that wild flowers when gathered last very little time in water; and above all, that though they have the power to destroy in a few seconds, they could not re-create what they destroy in all eternity. Plants gathered in flower cannot seed and most wild flowers increase by seeding themselves.

Fuller's Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) is handsome though



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it has no beauty of flower. It flourishes in any soil. From time immemorial the sharp, bristly heads have been used by fullers and on certain cloths it is impossible to raise the nap by any other means. This plant collects little pools at the bases of the leaves and hence possibly the botanic name.

Monkshood (*Aconitum napellus*) deserves a place in the "Grove of Simples", if only for its historic interest. Before mineral poisons were introduced, Monkshood was accounted the deadliest of all poisons. Yet it is now one of our most useful medicines! To quote Gerard: "Helmet-flower or the great Monkes-hood, beareth very faire and goodly blew floures in shape like an Helmet; which are so beautifull, that a man would thinke they were of some excellent vertue, but *non est semper fides habenda fronte.*" Both Gerard and Parkinson state that the flower was commonly grown in gardens for its beauty and for indoor decoration, "to be laid among greene herbes in windowes and roomes for the Summer time". The plant derives its popular names Monkshood, Helmet-flower, Friar's Cap, etc., from the hood-like shape of the conspicuous purple sepals. Parkinson points out in detail the resemblance. Monkshood grown in poor soil is rather weedy, but in rich, moist soil it is altogether a different plant. It attains nearly six feet, the leaves are the richest green and the flowers handsome. Associated in bold groups with Elecampane, the effect is striking. Bees, especially humble bees, haunt the flowers of Monkshood continually.

Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) has been an inhabitant of herb gardens from very ancient times. Walafred Strabo in his *Little Garden* (early ninth century) says of it "Fennel



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deserves high praise both for its taste and smell. It is good for weak eyes." Fennel was largely grown in monastic gardens for the chopped leaves were commonly strewn on fish. Poor people used to eat the seeds to relieve the pangs of hunger on fast days. Hence the poor woman's statement to the priest in *Piers Plowman* :

"‘ I have peper, peonies’ quod she ‘ and a pound garlike,  
A farding worth of fenel-sede for fastyng dayes.’ ”

The seeds were also commonly used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to flavour broths, apple, and other fruit pies, also bread. Even in these days, some people store Fennel seeds for flavouring winter soups, but the taste is not to everyone's liking. In Tudor days Fennel was the emblem of flattery. Thus in Ben Jonson's *The Case Altered* (Act II, Scene 2).

Christopher : No, my good lord.

Count : Your *good lord*. Oh ! how this smells of Fennel !

Sweet Fennel (*Foeniculum dulce*) or Finnocchio, still one of the most popular vegetables in Italy, was apparently introduced into this country in early Stuart times. Parkinson states in his *Paradisus* that Sir Henry Wotton sent it to John Tradescant together with directions as to how it should be served " for they used to white it after it hath been transplanted for their uses, which by reason of sweetnesse by nature and the tendernesse by art causeth it to be more delightfull to the taste ". This Fennel, unlike our stately native Fennel, attains little over a foot. Our native Fennel thrives in any soil, but Finnocchio needs a rich moist soil, frequent watering in times of drought, and when the bases of the stems swell they have to be partially earthed up, i.e. the tubers half covered. This Fennel can

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be grown in rows a foot apart. Properly grown and cooked it is a delicious and fragrant vegetable. It should not be cooked in water but in a casserole in a good stock and served with a cream sauce. Grown in the kitchen garden our native Fennel is kept cut down to about a foot in order to maintain a supply of its leaves. These leaves, after the coarse stalks have been taken out, are finally shredded and make a pleasant alternative to parsley sauce. Like Parsley, Fennel makes a much better sauce if shredded in melted butter than in the customary white sauce so beloved by English cooks. Allowed to attain its full stature of five and frequently six feet and with its lovely polished stems, feathery leaves and heads of yellow flowers, Fennel is indeed a noble denizen of the herb garden.

“ Above the lowly plants it towers,  
The fennel with its yellow flowers,  
And in an earlier age than ours  
Was gifted with the wondrous powers  
Lost vision to restore.”

Unfortunately the capacity of this plant for seeding itself in all directions is almost past belief and it is essential to cut off the flower heads before the trouble begins. In one garden I know there is a fennel hedge, and a softer hedge to walk past, brushing its fragrance as one goes, it would be difficult to imagine. From a little distance it looks like a soft, rich, green wall. The Fennel hedge was made in order to shield a charming little Primrose garden from the sun in summer. As full sun was required in winter to secure early flowering of the Primroses it was equally necessary to have a hedge which should be non-existent in winter. And the answer was Fennel !

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*Anchusa italica* associates well with Fennel, for when the former's flowering period is over and it looks untidy, the widely spreading stems of the clumps of Fennel hide the gaps. A plant of Fennel that measures about a foot across at the base is quite four to five feet across at the top when in flower. The rind of the root of *Anchusa* yields a red dye which is still used to impart a red colour to ointments. It has been used since the days of ancient Egypt as a face paint, and was used by ladies in this country for that purpose, anyhow as late as the seventeenth century. Anchusas flourish in any good soil but are apt to die out in heavy soil and consequently it is best on such soils to raise a fresh supply annually from seed or root cuttings. Root cuttings are taken in September or early October. Cuttings, about two inches long, are placed two inches apart, putting uppermost the part of the root nearest the stem in boxes of sandy soil in a temperature of 50 degrees. When the leaves have developed the plants are potted up in three-inch pots and kept in a cold frame through the winter.

Orach—I like that name—figures in nearly all lists of pot herbs in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and early nineteenth-century gardening books. It seems to have been introduced in early medieval days into this country, for Jon Gardener, in his *Feate of Gardening* (1440) mentions it amongst the herbs to be sown in April. Until the introduction of Spinach it was a favourite spring pot-herb. It is listed nowadays as *Atriplex hortensis*. The red kind is the most pleasing, and though so slender, very decorative, especially in seed. It attains about five feet, and the seeds, which, like the leaves and stems, are deep crimson, hang

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in little tassels. From a short distance this plant looks like blood-red exclamation marks, and I wonder it is not used more for the sake of its colour in the autumn border. The only border I know in which it is used is at Petworth. Coming through the grey stone archway with the gorgeous old specimens of *Rosa Moyesii* on either side, the Orach is very noticeable in the herbaceous borders beyond. In the herb garden it can be sown freely amongst stately herbs, for it takes so little space. In mild parts Orach sows itself but in most parts it is best treated as a half hardy annual.

Every British child knows Woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) by name, but how few children know the plant by sight! Just how our British ancestors used it none can say for certain, though I remember that in my childhood we were taught that they rubbed themselves with the juice of the plant. This simple method would have dyed their skins as rich a blue-black as "woadmen's" hands are dyed when they crop and ball Woad.<sup>1</sup> All through the Middle Ages Woad was the most important dye, for apart from blue it was combined with other dyes to produce various red, violet, and purple colours. Thomas Fuller, the seventeenth-century author, described Woad as "*color ad colorem*, the stock whereon other colours are grafted. Yea, it giveth them truth and fruitfulness who without it prove fading and hypodritical". The Woad industry in these islands was formerly a very important one; the most important centres being Somerset, Lincoln, and Cambridgeshire.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For other possible methods, see Mr. C. B. Plouright's article on Woad in the *R.H.S. Journal*, 1901-2.

<sup>2</sup> For a full account of the woad industry see Professor J. B. Hurry's *The Woad Plant and its Dye*.

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The Woad market in London was probably in Candelwyk-strete, now Cannon Street. The last surviving Woad mill in these islands, that at Parson Drive, Cambridgeshire, was pulled down during the Great War. At Wisbech the industry had been carried on for generations by certain families who had traditional songs which they sang when picking the leaves. In *Aunt Judy's Annual* for 1883 the first verse of one of these songs is given :—

“ Molly of the Woad and I fell out,  
O, what do you think it was all about ?  
For she had money and I had none,  
And that is how the strife begun.”

It has often occurred to me how interesting it would be to make a collection of all the traditional songs sung during the picking season, ranging from herbs to fruits. The reference in Isaiah to vintage shouting (Isaiah xvi, 10) is presumably amongst the earliest records of such songs. Alexander Neckham, the twelfth-century writer, refers in his *De Naturis Rerum* to the song of rejoicing sung by the gatherers when they reach the last row. In this country many such songs are still extant, ranging from the pretty old songs sung by children when gathering cowslips to reapers and haymakers' songs and the wassailing songs addressed to Apple trees.

Lovage (*Ligusticum levisticum*) is a native of Mediterranean regions and has been grown in gardens in these islands for centuries. It was esteemed in medieval, Tudor, and Stuart times, not only for its handsome appearance but for its use in salads and broths and for scenting baths. To some extent it was used medicinally and Tusser includes it in his list of “ Necessary Herbs to grow in the Garden of Physic



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not rehearsed before". It is interesting to recall that the great Dr. Johnson advocated Lovage for rheumatism. In a letter from the doctor to Bennet Langton, dated 17th April, 1775, he says: "Take equal quantities of flour of sulphur and *flour* of mustard seed, make them an electuary with honey or treacle; and take a bolus as big as a nutmeg several times a day, as you can bear it: drinking after it a quarter of a pint of the infusion of the root of Lovage. Lovage, in Ray's *Nomenclature*, is *Levisticum*: perhaps the botanists may know the Latin name."

Lovage is one of the handsomest of the Umbelliferae for though it does not attain more than about four feet in height it has, unlike most of the Umbelliferae tribe, beautiful polished foliage. Every part of the plant is strongly scented. The root has a strongly aromatic fragrance, the leaves have an aromatic, fruit-like scent with a suggestion of Parsley scent, the stalks smell rather like Celery and the seeds are very aromatic. We always include a leaf of Lovage finely chopped in our salads for the taste is most pleasant and unusual. It likes a moist soil but we find it very accommodating on our sandy soil. It can be propagated either by seed sown in early spring or autumn, or by root division in spring or autumn. Lovage is a long-lived perennial.

Black Lovage (*Smyrniium alusatrum*) is the "Alexanders" or "Alesanders" which figure so commonly in old gardening books, ranging from medieval times to the nineteenth century. In flower this plant looks like Angelica, but it attains only about three to four feet. The seeds when ripe are almost black and hence the popular name, Black Lovage. Although a native of coastal parts, Alexanders was formerly grown in gardens as a pot herb. Early

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nineteenth-century gardening books such as Loudon's contain full directions for its culture.

Scotch Lovage (*Ligusticum scoticum*) that grows on waste ground near the coast in Scotland and the north of England, is not so tall growing and the taste is inferior to garden Lovage. I have occasionally seen the Scotch Lovage near the ruins of monasteries in the north, and presumably the plants had seeded themselves since the days when this Lovage was cultivated as a pot herb in monastic gardens.

## CHAPTER IX

### KITCHEN AND SALAD HERBS

“There is no question but that very wonderful effects may be wrought by the Vertues which are enveloped within the compasse of the Green Mantles wherewith many Plants are adorned.”—WILLIAM COLES, *The Art of Simpling*, 1656.

Although fruits and vegetables figure more and more largely in our meals, the majority of folk still fail to appreciate the value of herbs especially in salads. In most houses salads are rather stereotyped affairs, yet a tablespoon of freshly gathered, finely chopped mixed herbs turns a dull into a well-flavoured, interesting salad. In addition to the well-known herbs, such as Mint and Parsley, less commonly grown herbs, such as Lovage, Dill, Sweet Cicely, are invaluable for they have distinctive flavours. Further, some of these herbs, notable Fennel, Lovage, and Sweet Cicely, are bushy plants nearly eighteen inches high when other salad herbs, such as Mint and Parsley are scarce.

That salad-making is an art has been acknowledged through the centuries, but the gatherer of salads needs to be equally skilful. As John Evelyn observed, nearly three hundred years ago, he could “by no means approve of the extravagant fancy of some, who tell us that a Fool is as fit to be the gatherers of Sallets as a wise man”. In the composure of a salad he observed “every Plant must bear its part and they must fall into their places like the Notes in Music, and there must be nothing harsh or grating. And tho’ admitting some discords (to distinguish and illustrate the rest) striking in the more sprightly and sometimes gentler Notes, reconcile all Disconancies and melt them into an agreeable composition”.

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Salads vary infinitely, but roughly they may be divided into green and cooked salads. Green salads should have the oil, lemon (or vinegar), salt, and pepper added just before they are to be served. In one house I know the master of the house invariably performs the rite and tosses the salad with the air of one presiding at a religious ceremony. His salads are unequalled. If cold, cooked vegetables are used these should soak in the salad dressing for at least an hour. Incidentally, cold, sliced artichokes are an unusual but excellent ingredient in a salad of cooked vegetables served with a good mayonnaise sauce. Cooked vegetables of all sorts—Peas, Beans, Carrots, Turnips, etc., rubbed through a sieve and flavoured with chopped herbs, Lemon, Nutmeg, or Cinnamon, and masked with a good sauce make a good salad, served very cold on diminutive strips of well buttered thin toast or thin biscuits. Salads of uncooked, grated root vegetables, are greatly improved by the addition of finely chopped herbs. Finely grated Carrots, Turnips, Artichokes, mixed with finely chopped herbs with a good dressing or sauce and piled on Lettuce leaves make admirable, individual salads.

Although Lettuce, Beet, Carrot, etc., are used in salads, they are usually regarded as vegetables rather than herbs and therefore I am not including them amongst "kitchen and salad herbs".

Few herbs have retained their popularity throughout the centuries so unvaryingly as the Mints. Curiously enough, in France, where herbs for flavouring are so highly appreciated, Mints are not at all popular. It is in Great Britain and America that they are so largely used. The species and sub-species are bewildering and

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the botanists are not in agreement. In fact, as Walafred Strabo wrote in the early ninth century: "Mints I grow in abundance and in all its varieties. How many they are. I might as well try to count the sparks from Vulcan's furnace beneath Etna." That Mints were used in Biblical times is evident from the fact that the strict Pharisees paid tithes on this herb, also Anise and Cumin. How long the cultivated Mints have been grown in these islands is unknown, but the Romans would certainly have introduced a herb they valued so highly. Mints are mentioned in most early English plant lists and Chaucer refers to a little path "of mintes full and fennell greene". Formerly the Mints were used as strewing herbs. "The savour or smelle of the Water Mint" says Gerard "rejoyceth the heart of man, for which cause they use to strew it in chambers and places of recreation, pleasure and repose and where feasts and banquets are made." The Mints were also used for scenting baths. For this we have the authority of Parkinson, who, in his *Paradisus* states "Mintes are oftentimes used in baths, with Baulme and other herbes, as a helpe to comfort and strengthen the nerves and sinewes". Medicinally the uses of these herbs were manifold, ranging from poultices for sores to the bites of mad dogs and bee-stings. Culpeper, who lists over thirty uses for Mint, recommends the use of hot Rose petals and Mint leaves applied outwardly for sleeplessness. Some of the Mints were probably introduced into America by the Pilgrim Fathers, for Spearmint figures in John Josselyn's *New England's Rarities Discovered*.

The handsomest of the Mints is *Mentha rotundifolia*, sometimes known as Apple Mint. It is so handsome that





APPLE MINT  
(*Mentha rotundifolia*)



RAMPION  
(*Campanula rapunculus*)

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it well deserves a place in any herbaceous border, for in good soil it will attain about six feet and more. In flower, with its big heads of pinkish white flowers and its lovely leaves, very wrinkled above and very woolly beneath, it is a striking object. In the herb garden it associates delightfully, as I have already stated in the chapter on the Bergamots, with those flowers and Sweet Cicely. In moist, rich soil in which it sometimes attains well over six feet, it is a suitable plant to include in a "grove" of stately herbs. In poor soil, where it attains about four feet, it looks well with the Opium Poppy. For clumps of these Poppies, white, royal purple, and reddish purple, the woolly foliage and soft flower heads of this Mint are the perfect foil. Apple Mint was evidently appreciated by the monks of old, for Monks Herb is one of its popular names. No less an authority than Mr. E. Bunyard says in his catalogue that it is the only authentic Mint for Mint sauce. I have no opinion on the subject, because Mint sauce comes very nearly at the top of the list of things I dislike most. Other members of this household appreciate it, however, and they tell me that the best Mint sauce is that made from a mixture of this and Spearmint. Unlike Spearmint, *M. rotundifolia* is not affected by rust.

Spearmint (*Mentha spicata* var. *viridis*) is the Mint most commonly grown for Mint sauce. In northern parts it is not so susceptible to rust as in the south. There is no cure for this disease. The usual method is to dig up and burn the affected plants and make a fresh plantation in new soil at some distance from the original bed. The Ministry of Agriculture, however, advocate burning straw or some such material on an affected bed, choosing a fine

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day in September or early October. The straw has to be well worked in amongst the stems and spread a foot or so beyond the beds all round. The burning has to be brisk, not smouldering. Properly done, the underground stems are uninjured and the old diseased stems and spores fallen on the ground will be burnt. The Ministry advocate applying this method to all established beds of Mint every autumn.

*Mentha longifolia*, which closely resembles *M. viridis*, is commercially grown to some extent, because the young shoots are fit to cut earlier than those of *M. viridis*. The young leaves are only slightly hairy, but the older leaves are conspicuously so and more mature shoots therefore do not find such a ready sale. The flavour is decidedly poorer than that of *M. viridis*. The useful hybrid *M. villosa nervata*, a cross between *M. viridis* and *M. longifolia*, is now largely grown under glass for the supply of forced Mint. Horsemint (*Mentha sylvestris*), one of our commonest weeds, closely resembles *M. viridis* in taste, but owing to its downy appearance it is very little used for Mint sauce. The most deliciously scented of the Mints is, I think, *M. citrata*, sometimes called the Bergamot Mint. It is a valuable constituent of pot-pourri and it is for this purpose that it is chiefly grown in gardens. This Mint is not easy to get.

Recently some interesting Mint recipes were published in *The Times*. Mrs. Winkfield wrote: "When in Morocco last year I found the Arab tea very delicious. Nearly half a tumbler was filled with the heads of young, fresh Mint and the glass filled with hot water, the whole being sugared. I suppose it could be drunk cold." Lady Jane Gathorne Hardy sent the following recipe for Mint or Turkish

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lemonade : “ Here is a recipe for Mint, or Turkish lemonade. Take a handful of fresh Mint, five teaspoonsful of sugar. Pound well together. Peel three lemons and pound the skin and the flesh together with the Mint syrup. Add one litre of water. Stir well and leave standing for an hour. Strain through a fine cloth and serve iced, with sprigs of Mint and bits of Lemon peel.” Mrs. Hobart wrote : “ As an American, gladly within your gates, may I respond with one very simple recipe ? It is called Mint Tulip, to distinguish it from a famous Southern drink, decidedly alcoholic, called Mint Julep. Juice of lemons, a small amount of Canada dry ginger ale, Mint leaves crushed and mingled and floating among the water (or soda) and cracked ice. Sweetening by sugar or saccharine as desired. Weak cold tea may be added, but is too stimulating for a sleepless invalid.

Here is another good recipe for Mint cordial. Gather a large bunch of Mint ; pick off the leaves, and wash them. Then bruise in a bowl and add the juice of two large Lemons. Leave for two hours. Boil a breakfast cup of sugar with a pint of water for fifteen minutes and pour into the bowl containing the Lemon juice and Mint leaves. Strain, add juice of two sweet Oranges and half a pint of Pineapple juice and water to taste. Serve in slender glasses half filled with crushed ice, adorning each “ cup ” with a spray of Mint.

Peppermint (*M. piperita*) is not a very common wild plant, and it is largely grown commercially for oil of Peppermint. Formerly, 300 acres in the Mitcham district of Surrey were under Peppermint.<sup>1</sup> There are two varieties,

<sup>1</sup> See J. G. Miller, *The Cultivation of the Mentha piperita plant.*

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Black Peppermint (*M. piperita* var. *officinalis*) and White Peppermint (*M. piperita* var. *vulgaris*). Oil extracted from the latter commands the higher price. The black variety, however, is the more commonly grown as it yields a greater quantity of oil. The stems and leaves of Black Peppermint are a dark purplish brown, and the stems of White Peppermint a palish green and the leaves green. In the nineteenth century large quantities of Peppermint were grown at Mitcham and it is still the chief Peppermint district. In Michigan and Ohio enormous quantities of Peppermint are grown, thousands of acres being devoted to the cultivation of this plant. Peppermint oil is largely used medicinally and old-fashioned people have great faith in a tea made from either the fresh or dried leaves for curing colds. In the chapter on Bitter Herbs I have described that delicious confection, Mint or Herb Pasty. Although Mint figures so largely in it, I put it in the Bitter Herbs chapter because it owes its peculiar tang to the addition of just a soupçon of bitter herbs.

Our native Water-mint (*M. aquatica*) should be seen in its native haunts, growing in masses by the stream-side to appreciate its beauty. In the garden I think it looks out of place. Bacon in his famous Essay, recommends the making of paths of Water Mint and Burnet as well as Thyme. Water Mint grows naturally two feet high, so for a path has to be kept cut. I once made a path of Water Mint. Certainly it was pleasant to walk on, but it spread so rapidly in every direction that it had to be dug up. I came to the conclusion that Bacon had in mind lordly Elizabethan pleasaunces with immense staffs of gardeners.

A path of *Mentha requienii* is even more fragrant. In



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a shady part a path of this Mint with its minute leaves and tiny purple flowers looks very attractive. The scent is that of rather sweet Peppermint. There is a path of *M. requienii* at Leonardslee. *Mentha requienii* is a native of Corsica. It is a garden escape in several parts of England and in Ireland there is an interesting tradition that it was first introduced at the time of the Spanish Armada. Hence the popular name, "Spanish Mint".

Pennyroyal, the prostrate variety, makes a path that can only be described as glossy, and it does well on a heavy soil. In the courtyard of a well-known Sussex house parts of the paths are grass and parts are Pennyroyal, but very few visitors seem to notice the fact except those with a keen sense of smell. Pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*) is the most diminutive of all the Mints, and its name is a corruption of *Pulegium*, the name bestowed on it by Pliny, owing to its reputation for ridding rooms of fleas. This species has more popular names than any of the other Mints—Lurk-in-the-ditch, Run-by-the-ground, and Pudding grass. The first two refer to its habit of growth and the last to the fact that formerly this herb was in great esteem for stuffings. Indeed a stuffing of Pennyroyal, Pepper, and Honey was considered fit to serve before a king. Formerly Pennyroyal was largely used for medicinal purposes, and Gerard records that it grew in abundance at Mile End, whence the herb women used to bring it to sell in the London Market. In out-of-the-way parts Pennyroyal is still grown in cottage gardens for its medicinal qualities. Though the scent of this Mint is so attractive, the taste is anything but pleasing, as it is decidedly acid. In fact, tastes that were much appreciated by our

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ancestors are frequently far too harsh for their descendants in these degenerate days!

Parsley ties with Mint for popularity in the kitchen, and there are even more varieties—well over forty. The original habitat of Parsley (*Carum petroselinum*, syn. *Petroselinum hortense*) was for long uncertain. It is now believed to be a native of Sardinia. The date of its introduction into this country is unknown, but it was evidently a familiar herb in the Middle Ages, for it figures in Jon Gardener's *Feate of Gardening* (1440). In the *Grete Herball* (1539) the information is given that to obtain crisped Parsley the seeds should be stuffed into a tennis ball in order to bruise them!

It is curious that we do not grow the large rooted Parsley which was cultivated in these islands in the eighteenth century as a root vegetable. This variety was introduced by Philip Miller from Holland. He says in his *Gardener's Dictionary* "This sort was many years cultivated in Holland before the English gardeners could be prevailed upon to sow it. I brought the seeds of it from thence in 1727, but they refused to accept it so that I cultivated it several years before it was known in the markets". This Parsley is still eaten in parts of Germany. The root is the size of a smallish Parsnip and the taste is nut-like and slightly aromatic. Sometimes it can be obtained at Covent Garden Market. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, commends the taste of the boiled roots. "The rootes likewise boyled or stewed are of very good relish as I have proved by the taste; but the rootes must be young". I agree with Parkinson as to their flavour. The young roots have indeed a most pleasant taste and as

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Parsley is very wholesome, it is curious that the roots are not more commonly used.

The chief kinds of Parsley grown now are the plain or "Italian" Parsley, the numerous curled and fern-leaved kinds and the dwarf varieties. Freshly gathered Parsley is always desirable, for dried Parsley is poor, unless dried very quickly. Parsley is notoriously slow in germinating, particularly in early spring. The superstition is still prevalent that it is unlucky to transplant the seedlings. The moss-curled and fern-leaved varieties are now the most popular, but they are not suitable kinds to stand the winter, as the leaves hold damp and snow. The plain-leaved kind is best. Many people dislike the plain-leaved Parsley, owing to its resemblance to the poisonous Fool's Parsley (*Aethusa cynapium*). With the aid of cloches and cold frames, however, it is possible to have the more popular kinds the year round. If grown in a cold frame all decaying leaves must be removed immediately and the soil has to be kept well aerated with a small hand-fork. Except in severe weather and at night the frames should not be kept closed. Parsley is usually sown in succession, the first sowing being made in February. Parsley to be used for drying has always to be sown early. For summer use the April sowing is the most useful. Plants to stand the winter are sown in August. Early thinning is essential to secure first-rate Parsley. In spells of drought the rows need liberal watering. As a rule the plants are of little or no value after their second year.

Parsley sauce nowadays is nearly always made with white flour, the form in which Henry VIII apparently liked it.<sup>1</sup> But I think it is best in a melted butter sauce.

<sup>1</sup> I gave the recipe "used to King Henry the Eighth" in *A Garden of Herbs*.

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Most of the parsley superstitions are well known, notably that the seed is so slow in germinating because it goes seven times and back to the Devil ; and that it is unlucky to transplant it or to give away the roots. Recently there has been some interesting correspondence in *The Times* on the subject of Parsley superstitions. Those cited are apparently not confined to this country, for one correspondent stated that when he was in France and was one day planting out some Parsley, the "gardener shook his head over this operation and remarked 'Repiquer le persil, repiquer sa femme'." Presumably he meant that if I planted out Parsley, I should soon plant out my wife". In Cornwall even Parsley leaves are not given away, though they are sold. A vicar's wife wrote that when in Cornwall she brought Parsley seedlings to a woman who had just moved into a cottage and had complained to her that there was no Parsley in the garden—"I saw an expression of fear and horror on her face as, holding up her hands, she exclaimed 'Oh, ma'am, ye'll never see the year round'." Another correspondent contributed the information that in the Midlands there is a saying that "If the mistress sows the Parsley it always flourishes and so does she".

In Devonshire they say where the Parsley thrives the missus is master. Another correspondent cited the old belief that mothers of daughters do not like to see the Parsley flourishing, because it means spinsterhood for the daughter. From Wiltshire came the information that in that county the older people make a point of sowing it on Good Friday "else the devil gets into it". An Essex correspondent replied to this that in their county, country folk believed that Parsley should always be sown on

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Good Friday, to ensure happiness and luck throughout the coming year. A Cheshire correspondent wrote "I recollect another old superstition as to Parsley. In days when holidays were very rare, a man who worked in his own garden on Good Friday, averred: 'If you sow Parsley on Good Friday, it comes up double-curled.'" From a Cheltenham correspondent came this information: "A paper read eighty years ago stated that a Vale of Gloucester gardener, when ordered to remove a bed of Parsley was quite willing to root it up and destroy it entirely, but transplant it he would not, nor did he know anyone who would willingly take upon himself the consequences. The Parsley would go (according to a later Cotswold tale) nine times to the devil before coming up."

I was particularly interested in a letter on the subject of Parsley and fleas, for though I knew that formerly country folk used to strew Rue to rid rooms of fleas, I had never heard of Parsley being used for this purpose. The letter was as follows: "Some years ago I was told by an artist who had stayed in primitive lodgings in the West of Ireland and whose children had been tormented by fleas in the bedding, that she was advised to strew freshly gathered Parsley under the beds. This remedy completely cured the pest. My friend was a person of some erudition and she further said that the Chinese name for Parsley is 'Kill-flea'."

I have never heard of the superstition that Parsley should be planted lengthwise in the garden and not across it. Mr. P. R. Pridgeon, of University College, Nottingham, wrote, "I am told that it is unlucky to set Parsley across a garden and that it should always be set along the plot,



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but I cannot find out how the trouble is to be overcome in the case of a square." Another correspondent wrote: "One factor in the successful cultivation of Parsley was given me by an old gardener. Stopping to admire his allotment, I complimented him on a very excellent show of Parsley. "Ah," said he, "as my old dad says, it takes an honest man to grow Parsley well." I went home reflecting on my own unsuccessful attempt to get a flourishing bed of Parsley."

Professor H. J. Rose, of St. Andrew's University, wrote that the popular belief "that the ill-repute of Parsley is due to its funereal associations in ancient Greece, is refuted by the fact that Parsley had no such associations there. The plant used for funeral wreaths and similar purposes was σέλιον, which is not Parsley, though often so mistranslated, but a kind of Celery, *Apium graveolens* (see the ninth edition of Liddell and Scott)". Dr. J. R. Whitwell wrote: "I do not think that it has been noted in your correspondence that the botanical name of Parsley, *Petroselinum* (πετροσέλιον) was given to it by Dioscorides Pedacius (circa 200 A.D.). Guainerius (circa 1447) held that it was possible to tell by it whether a given person was or was not subject to epilepsy—namely, by rubbing between the hands some fresh Parsley and then holding it beneath the nostrils of the person; if he fell down in a fit he was an epileptic, and the converse."

Old-fashioned gardeners assert that if Parsley is planted all round the Onion bed it keeps away the Onion fly. They offer no explanation for this, but people who have tested this for years find that their Onions are free of fly.

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Horse-radish (*Armoracia lapathifolia*, syn. *Cochleria armoracia*) is not a native of these islands, though frequently found wild as a garden escape. It has been cultivated since very early days and was formerly esteemed not as a condiment but as a medicine. Gerard mentions its use as a condiment amongst the Germans, and by Charles I's reign it was used to some extent as a condiment in this country also. Not with meat, however, but with fish. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, says, "And some use to make a kinds of Mustard with the rootes and eate it with fish."

Nearly all our supplies nowadays are imported. For commercial purposes long, unbranched roots are required and to secure them the plants have to be grown in a moist, but sandy loam, with plenty of well-rotted manure in the bottom spit or the plants will be poor. Cuttings of young roots about eight inches long and half an inch in diameter are planted fifteen inches apart each way and covered with soil. Beyond weeding and hoeing no further attention is needed. The roots when ready can either be dug and stored or lifted as required during the winter. After three years a fresh plantation should be made.

Certain herbs, notably Savory, Borage, Balm, Sorrel, Chervil, Salad Burnet, the Basils, Purslane, Costmary, and Corn Salad, were formerly grown in almost every kitchen garden, but many modern cooks seem to prefer bought flavourings to these wholesome herbs.

Both Summer Savory (*Satureia hortensis*) and Winter Savory (*Satureia montana*) have a strong, very pleasant aromatic flavour, and it is strange that they are not more frequently grown. Before the use of the East Indian spices became common, these two herbs were the most strongly

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flavoured herbs in use in the kitchen. The date of introduction of Savory into this country is unknown, but the Romans probably introduced both species for they made great use of them in cooking. In Tudor days Winter Savory was one of the favourite herbs used in making knot gardens and dwarf shrub mazes. Hyll, in his *Proffitable Arte of Gardening* (1568), gives a plan for a dwarf shrub maze "and it may eyther be set with Isope and Tyme or with winter Savory and Tyme. For these do well endure all the winter through grene". Lawson lists Savory amongst the herbs to be planted in "the garden for hearbes of a good smell". All the writers of the period commend "sound Savory", to use Spenser's phrase<sup>1</sup> as a kitchen herb. Parkinson, in his *Paradisus*, states that Savory was more appreciated abroad than in this country, and this is true to-day. In France Summer Savory is nearly always boiled with Broad Beans just as we boil Mint with Peas. Either Savory is an excellent ingredient in Lentil soup. Summer and Winter Savory were introduced by the early settlers into America, for they figure in John Josselyn's list. To this day country folk know the value of Savory for rubbing on wasp or bee stings.

Summer Savory is an annual. Seed is sown in April in shallow drills a foot apart, the seedlings being thinned to nine inches apart. Full sun and a light, rich soil are essential. The seeds are slow in germinating. In cold parts Winter Savory is raised from seed in the same way and the same time as Summer Savory. In mild parts it is a dwarf perennial shrub about fifteen inches high and a foot through. It is easily increased by cuttings with a

<sup>1</sup> *Muiopotmos*.

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heel taken in June and struck in very sandy soil in part shade under a hand-light.

In the herb garden Winter Savory is a decorative shrub, especially in late July and August, when it is in flower. In a rectangular herb garden edged with Dwarf Lavender groups of Winter Savory at the four corners make a good contrast to the grey of the Lavender foliage. Both Winter Savory and Summer Savory associate well with the Bergamots, also with Marigolds.

Borage (*Borago officinalis*), though now naturalized in these islands, has for centuries been cultivated in our gardens, not only as a herb for flavouring claret cup, but because it is a favourite with bees. The leaves have a faint cucumber-like flavour. Formerly the young leaves finely shredded, were a common ingredient in salads. The flowers were candied. The flowers are blue and star-shaped and their prominent black anthers give them great character. There is also a white-flowered variety. Borage flowers figured very often in Tudor and Stuart needlework. Parkinson says: "They have alwaies been enterposed among the flowers of women's needleworke." I think much of the charm of the needlework of those days is owing to the fact that there were no stereotyped patterns. Embroiderers worked from the fresh flowers and it must have been an additional pleasure if gathered from their own gardens.

Borage is a humble-looking plant, yet such are its virtues that John Evelyn said it "would revive the hypochondriac and cheer the hard student". It has always been regarded as a herb of sovereign virtue, for dispelling melancholy and inspiring courage. Gerard quotes the old couplet:—



BORAGE  
(*Borago officinalis*)

LUNGWORT  
(*Pulmonaria officinalis*)



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“I, Borage,  
Bring alwaies courage.”

“Those of our time,” he continues, “do use the floures in sallads, to exhilerate and make the minde glad. There be also many things made of them, used for the comfort of the heart, to drive away sorrow and increase the joy of the minde. The leaves and floures of Borage put into wine makes men and women glad and merry, driving away all sadnesse, dulnesse and melancholy.”

Borage is an annual or biennial that once planted sows itself freely. Seed is planted in April and the seedlings thinned out to fifteen inches apart. It can also be increased by division in spring. In the herb garden Borage associates well with Balm and Horehound. The lush foliage of Balm in June contrasts well with the bristly leaves of Borage and the habit of growth of Horehound is a good foil for both.

Until the introduction of Lemon Verbena, Balm (*Melissa officinalis*) was, by universal consent, the best of the lemon-scented herbs. The modern cook uses Lemon Verbena and Balm is now seldom required in the kitchen. I prefer the slightly aromatic lemon scent of Balm to that of Lemon Verbena and Balm is a hardy, outdoor plant, whereas Lemon Verbena grows out of doors only in very mild parts. Balm has always been a favourite with cottagers and its botanic name indicates its importance as a bee plant. In the herb garden a broad edging of Balm with its rich, abundant foliage, is delightful, and it looks well with Sweet Cicely, Angelica, and other tall-growing herbs. A low-growing edging would be out of keeping with such herbs, but Balm in rich, moist soil attains well over

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two feet, and a border of it, two feet wide, looks very handsome. Although a native of southern Europe, Balm has naturalized itself in the southern parts of these islands. In the garden it is a rampant grower. It can be increased by seed, cuttings, or division of roots in spring or autumn. It does well in any soil and any position, but does best in full sun and moist soil. Variegated Balm is a pretty plant, particularly in late spring, and I wonder it is not more commonly associated with late spring-flowering bulbs, such as Tulips. It is not such a vigorous grower as the type.

Balm, like Borage, has always had the reputation of cheering the heart and dispelling sadness. "Bawme drunke in wine," says Gerard, "comforts the heart and driveth away all melancholy and sadnesse." Parkinson says: "The herbe without all question is an excellent helpe to comfort the heart, as the very smell may induce any so to believe. It is also good to heale greene wounds, being made into salves: and I verily thinke, that our forefathers hearing of the healing and comfortable properties of the true naturall Baulme, and finding thie herbe to be so effectuall, gave it the name of Baulme, in imitation of his properties and vertues." Young Balm leaves cut up finely are a good addition to mixed salads and Balm tea made by pouring boiling water on two big handfuls of the leaves has a sweet and delicate taste. Balm was the principal ingredient in Eau des Carmes, a favourite scent before the introduction of Eau de Cologne. The fresh leaves were, like those of Sweet Cicely, used to scent baths.

As a flavouring, Sorrel is not very popular in this



BALM  
(*Melissa officinalis*)

ANCHUSA  
(*Anchusa officinalis*)

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country. Our native species, *Rumex acetosa* is extremely acid but the cultivated varieties of the Continental species *R. scutatus*, are better in this respect. The best variety is *Oseille large de Belleville*, and this is the one recommended for flavouring omelettes or making Sorrel soup. In Brittany fish soups are flavoured with Sorrel, Mint, Parsley, and spring Onions. Before the introduction of French Sorrel our native species was used in cookery and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cookery books contain many recipes. Parkinson says "Sorrell is much used in sauces, both for the whole and the sicke . . . procuring unto them an appetite unto meate when their spirits are almost spent with their furious and fierie fits, and is also of a pleasant relish for the whole in quickening up a dull stomacke that is over-loaden with every daies plenty of dishes. It is divers waies dressed by Cooks to please their Masters' stomacks". Country folk used to cut up the leaves finely, pound them, and make them into a sauce with vinegar and sugar. Hence the old popular names Green Sauce and Sour Sauce. A little shredded Sorrel is a good addition to salads. John Evelyn said that this herb "imparts so grateful a quickness to the salad that it should never be left out". The herb is not to everyone's taste, however, and like Spinach it disagrees with many people. Sorrel does best in a lime-free soil. It is increased either by seed sown in spring and the seedlings thinned to six inches apart or by division of roots in spring. If not allowed to flower the plants remain productive for about three years. Herb Patience (*Rumex alpinum*) was also a popular green vegetable in past times. In monastic gardens it was grown for its medicinal qualities which are similar to those

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of rhubarb. Patience Dock, and Monk's Rhubarb are its other popular names.

Chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*) is a dainty attractive herb, especially in early autumn, when its lace-like leaves fade a pale magenta pink. It attains less than a foot and makes a pretty edging. The cultivated form has very curled, decorative leaves. Chervil seed has to be fresh as it soon loses its germinating powers. Seed can be sown either in autumn or spring and once established it sows itself freely. The leaves cut up are good in a mixed salad. We rarely use the roots now, but Parkinson describes them as being "of a sweet, pleasant, and spicie hot taste, delightful unto many. . . . The roots being boyled and after eaten with oyle and vinegar are an excellent salad. The preserved or candied roots are of singular good use to warme and comfort a cold phlegmaticke stomack and is thought to be a good preservative in the time of plague". The French and Dutch, he states, used this herb "stewed in a pipkin . . . to make a Loblolly". I wish we could revive the use of that word—Loblolly. It has such a cheerful sound.

Salad Burnet (*Poterium sanguisorba*) is one of the commonest wild plants of our chalk downs and it is much appreciated by sheep, especially in winter when other greenstuff is scarce. Formerly it was commonly grown in gardens as a salad herb, for the young leaves have the cool quality of a freshly cut Cucumber. Only a very few leaves, finely shredded, should be used, as the taste is rather astringent. The old leaves are too tough to eat. On account of its cool quality Burnet was used like Borage in cool beverages. To quote Gerard, "It gives a grace to the drynkyng." Bacon recommended the making of



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paths of Burnet as well as Water Mint and Thyme. I have never made a Burnet path but I am always intending to do so if only for the sake of its pretty old name—"God's little birds." Turner, in his *Herball* (1551), says, "It has two little leaves like unto the wings of birdes, standing out as the bird setteth her wings out when she intendeth to flye. Ye Dutchmen call it Hergottes berden, that is God's little birds, because of the colour that it hath in the topp."

The Basils, both Bush Basil (*Ocimum minimum*) and Sweet Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) have a very pungent, clove-like flavour, but they have lost their old popularity. Possibly this is due to the fact that in this country they have to be treated as half hardy annuals, and as bought flavourings are cheap, they are not considered worth the trouble. They are best raised under glass in March or early May and planted out nine inches apart in mid-May. They are worth growing, however, if only for their peculiar fragrance. Formerly their scent was much appreciated and Tusser lists them as strewing herbs. Parkinson says: "The ordinary Basill is in a manner wholly spent to make sweet or washing waters, among other sweet herbes, yet sometimes it is put into nosegayes. The Physicall properties are to procure a cheerfull and merry heart." Basil was also a favourite pot plant. Tusser describes it as such, besides listing it as a strewing herb:—

"Fine basil desireth it may be her lot,  
To grow as the gilliflower, trim in a pot;  
That ladies and gentles to whom ye do serve  
May help her, as needeth, poor life to preserve."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T. Tusser, *Five Hundred Points* (1573).

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I have only once seen Bush Basil grown as a pot plant, not for its fragrance, but for its association with *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*.

Hyssop is a pleasant old-fashioned evergreen shrub formerly grown in every garden. Its uses were manifold. Mazes were set out with Hyssop, the leaves were used in salads and broths, a decoction of the herb was a common remedy for chest complaints and the golden Hyssop Parkinson describes as "of so pleasant a colour, that it provoked every gentlewoman to wear it on their heads and on their arms with as much delight as any fine flowers can give". I have never seen this variegated Hyssop. The type has blue flowers and there are pink and white flowered varieties. In common with most natives of Southern Europe Hyssop likes a light soil and full sun. It is easily raised from seed or cuttings. Left unclipped Hyssop makes rather an untidy shrub between two and three feet high and nearly as much across. It takes kindly to clipping but this sacrifices the flowers.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is one of the herbs whose native habitat is unknown. It was commonly grown in the Middle Ages and sixteenth century authors commend it for various afflictions, ranging from "blastings by lightnings or planets" to soothing "the teeth when they are an edged". It was a favourite salad herb and recipes for pickled Purslane are to be found in most old cookery books.<sup>1</sup> The Golden Purslane (*Portulaca sativa*) is not quite so hardy as Green Purslane. Both are annuals and can be sown in the open from mid-May onwards. They need a light, rich soil, and full sun. Kept well cut

<sup>1</sup> I gave a selection of these in *A Garden of Herbs*.



SOUTHERNWOOD  
(*Artemisia abrotanum*)

HYSSOP  
(*Hyssopus officinalis*)

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back they produce two and three crops of leaves. Although they attain only about six inches in height, the Purslanes are decorative on account of their reddish fleshy stems and the Green and Golden Purslanes grown together make a charming edging for a bed in full sun. The small flowers are produced in July. Most people associate Purslane with Herrick's well-known *Grace* :—

“ Lord, I confess too when I dine  
The pulse is thine—  
And all those other bits that be  
There placed by Thee,  
The worts, the purselain, and the mess  
Of Water Cress.”

Costmary (*Tanacetum balsamita*) is allied to Tansy, but it has a far pleasanter taste. It has always been a favourite with cottagers, who usually call it “ Mace ”, “ Allspice ” or “ Alecost ”. It is a native of Asia and was introduced into these islands in very early times. Spenser, in his *Muiopotmos* associates it with Camomile—“ Fresh Costmarie and healthfull Camomile ”. It was valued as a flavouring herb especially in ale and Parkinson says “ and thereupon I thinke it tooke the name of Alecost ”. Costmary attains about three feet, the leaves, unlike those of Tansy, are entire and the clusters of yellow flowers are produced in August. Costmary does not set seed in this country. It is a perennial and is increased by division. It does best in a warm light soil and in full sun.

Corn Salad or Lamb's Lettuce (*Valerianella olitoria*) is a common weed in cultivated ground in these islands, but it has also been cultivated in gardens for centuries. It is an annual and attains about a foot. The greenish flowers are very small. Corn salad may be sown at almost

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any time, except in mid-winter. For salads only the very young leaves should be used as the old leaves are tough.

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) is the most diminutive of the Onion tribe and for flavour it is the epicure's choice. It is a native of all Europe. In the kitchen garden it is seldom allowed to flower but in the herb garden it may be allowed to do so for the pinkish flowers on nine inch stems are charming. They are particularly attractive when the outer flowers are wide open and lilac coloured, contrasting with the tightly-packed pink buds in the centre. They look like miniature Victorian bouquets, and are a pretty addition to mixed bunches of small flowers.

Chives make a very attractive edging. The grass of this herb cut up finely is an invaluable addition to Cucumber salad, also for flavouring omelettes. The plant is usually increased by division in autumn. In mild parts the "grass" may be gathered almost the year round, and with the help of cloches very early in spring. Garlic (*Allium sativum*) comes at the other end of the scale, for it is the most powerfully flavoured of the Onion tribe. In this country it is neither commonly grown nor commonly appreciated. It deserves a place in the herb garden, not only because of its classical associations, but because in flower it is so decorative. Garlic does best in a rich but well-drained soil and in full sun. There are about ten cloves to each bulb and the cloves should be planted separately about two inches deep and six inches apart. Planted in March the bulbs are usually ready for lifting in late August.

Good King Henry (*Chenopodium Bonus Henricus*) will perhaps be revived as a pot-herb, for the taste is not unlike that of spinach. People who are unable to eat spinach



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can as a rule eat Good King Henry with impunity. In Lincolnshire Good King Henry, though a native plant, was commonly grown in early Victorian times in cottage gardens, and in past centuries in most kitchen gardens. In old gardening books, it is frequently listed as "Blites". Other popular names are English Mercury, Mercury, Goosefoot, Fat Hen, and Shoemakers' Heels.

*Orobus vernus* (Wood Peaseling or Bitter Vetch) might well be included amongst kitchen herbs now that vegetables and salads are so much more appreciated. The roots of this charmingly decorative Vetch were formerly roasted or boiled by poor folk. The flavour and consistency is that of roasted chestnuts and they make a good addition to a dish of mixed vegetables. The roots are not fit to eat till the second year. I wonder that this Vetch is not more commonly planted for spring effects in the garden. It is bushy, in flower attains about fifteen inches, the young leaves are a pale emerald, and the pea-like flowers produced in great profusion, are pink and mauve.

Rampion (*Campanula rapunculus*) was formerly grown both for salads and as a pot herb. Seed should not be sown before May if the roots are required as a vegetable. The roots are ready by November. Rampion likes a light soil and part shade.

Marigolds, including the old Pot Marigold (*Calendula officinalis*), have for some years been coming into favour again, but when I was a child they were regarded as rather "common"; in fact, scarcely worthy of a place in the garden! Yet they are the richest yellow of all garden flowers, and no modern introductions can compare with the vivid splendour of their golden colouring. Great

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drifts of Marigolds in sunlight are almost dazzling. For indoor decoration they are singularly beautiful, but they need the right setting. They should never be put in glass, but either in great earthenware bowls, or if you possess such treasures, alabaster bowls.

Our medieval ancestors called Marigolds simply "Golds", a charming name. At some time the flower was assigned to the Virgin Mary, and hence the name Marigold. From very early times the flower's regular opening and closing with the rising and setting of the sun has been noted:—

"The marigold that goes to bed wi' the sun,  
And with him rises weeping."

Thomas Hyll, the author of the earliest book on gardening printed in the English language, says of the Marigold: "Some terme it ye Sunnes floure or the folower of the Sunne . . . others name it the Sunne's Bride in that the flowers of the same follow the Sunne as from the rising by the South into the West . . . Such is ye love of it knowen to be towarde that royall Starre, beeing in the night time, for the desire of him, as pensive and sadde, they be shutte or closed together but at the noone time of the daye fully spred abroad as if they longed or diligently attended to embrace their Bridegroom."

Joseph Hall, who was Bishop of Exeter in the first half of the seventeenth century, wrote a beautiful passage about Marigolds in his *Occasional Meditations*, comparing the faithful soul to the Marigold ever turning to the Sun and Lord of Life.

Marigolds were formerly, and indeed are still, often called Pot Marigolds, owing to the fact that they were amongst the few flowers commonly used as pot herbs.

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The dried petals were used in broths and stews, and Gerard states that the demand for them was so great that in the grocers' shops they were stored in barrels. "No broths," he concludes, "are well made without dried Marigolds." The flowers were also used to impart a yellow colour to cheese. Marigold puddings were made with the petals finely chopped, cream, and breadcrumbs mixed and baked. The flowers were also used in pickles and cordials, and Charles Carter, who was Cook to the Duke of Argyll in 1737, gives a recipe for Marigold wine in his *Recipe Book*. The petals are still not infrequently used in salads by those who do not object to eating flowers. The young leaves are also edible, but seldom used. They have a curious taste, at first slightly sweet and then like salt. Turner, "the Father of English Botany" observes in his *Herbal* that women used the petals to deepen the colour of fair hair, "not beyinge content with the natural colour which God hath given them."

In the Middle Ages the flower symbolized Jealousy and Chaucer wrote of Jealousy wearing a garland of Marigolds. But in that charming old Dutch carol, "Lord Jesus hath a garden," the Marigold figures as the symbol of obedience.

"The lovely damask Rose is here called Patience ;  
The rich and cheerful Marigold Obedience."

For many years we have had both the single and double Pot Marigold, but I have never seen the freak Marigold described by both Gerard and Parkinson, the flower, which, like the "childing daisy" was surrounded by a ring of smaller flowers. Gerard gives this abnormal marigold the name "Jackanapes-on-horsebacke". A kind

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correspondent in Ireland has sent me a seed of this Marigold so I look forward to seeing it this year.

Although a native of Southern Europe the Marigold is perfectly hardy in these islands and flowers in most parts from June till cut by severe frosts. In mild parts it flowers, as its botanic name signifies, the year round. Marigolds in the herb garden associate admirably with Horehound and Winter Savory, indeed, with all the low-growing herbs. In the flower garden I think they look best as a broad edging or in beds of annuals arranged posy fashion, i.e. no two flowers of the same kind together.

Modern Marigolds are very showy, but being old-fashioned, I prefer the old Pot Marigold, especially the single one with the dark centre. Although so easy to grow, all Marigolds need attention in the way of keeping dead flowers cut off. If allowed to run to seed, the plants soon cease to bear flowers.

Amongst herbs used in confectionery Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) is one of the most interesting. Most people associate Liquorice with "Pontefract cakes", a sweet that is especially popular in the north. Traditionally, the Black Friars introduced Liquorice into the Pontefract district in the sixteenth century and it has been grown there in large quantities ever since. Even now there are about twenty-five acres devoted to this plant. The soil at Pontefract is the ideal, deep, light loam that is required to obtain the long, straight roots required for growing Liquorice for commercial purposes. We grow very little Liquorice, however, in comparison with what we import, for hundreds of tons are imported from Spain and Southern Italy and Germany. There are several other species of

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Liquorice, but *G. glabra* is the best. Liquorice has been used medicinally from very early times, for the ancient Greeks learnt the use of it from the Scythians. Stowe, in his *History of London*, says that in this country "the planting and growing of licorish began about the first year of Queen Elizabeth (1558)". Parkinson in his *Paradisus* describes Liquorice grown in this country as "far more pleasing to us then that Licorice that is brought us from beyond Sea". We evidently grew our own supplies then for he states further, "Our English Licorice is now adaies of more familiar use than the outlandish." In his *New England's Rarities Discovered* John Josselyn gives the recipe for the beer, which he used to brew for Indians who came to him to cure their bad colds. The beer was flavoured with Liquorice, Elecampane, Sassafras, Fennel seed, and Aniseed.

As a plant Liquorice has a quaint charm of its own, for the pinnate foliage is wide-spreading and graceful and the small flowers are pea-like. The roots in good ground penetrate to a depth of four feet. *G. glabra* is a perennial and young plants can be put in their flowering positions either in spring or autumn. Where grown commercially, planting is done in early April. The underground stems are cut into pieces each about four inches long and having two buds. These are planted in groups of three, and a foot apart between the groups. The old crowns are planted between the groups. In the event of a very cold spell, half the crop may be a failure. The roots are lifted late September or early October.

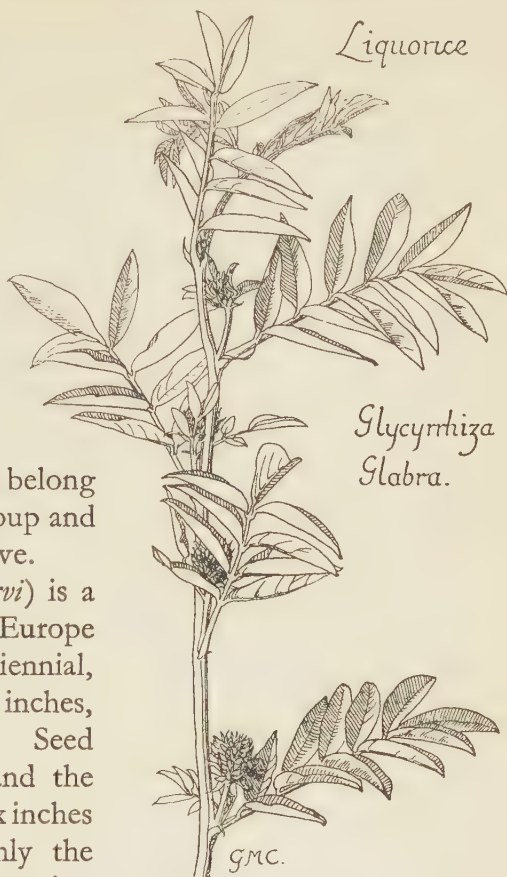
Certain herbs have been grown for centuries in these islands for their intensely aromatic seeds, used in flavouring, confectionery, pickles, etc., Of these herbs the chief are



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Caraway, Anise, Coriander, and Dill. Cumin seed is rarely used now, but if you do not grow the plant in your herb garden, you will soon be obliged to do so, for it is a herb everyone asks to see on account of its Biblical associations. All these plants belong to the Umbelliferae group and are not very decorative.

Caraway (*Carum carvi*) is a native of large parts of Europe and Asia. It is a biennial, attains about eighteen inches, and flowers in June. Seed is sown in August, and the seedlings thinned to six inches apart. Nowadays only the seeds are used for flavouring and much appreciated by people who like "seed-cake". Formerly the seeds were served with roasted apples. Parkinson says: "The rootes of Carawayes may be eaten as Carrots, and by reason of the spicie taste doth warme and comfort a cold weake stomacke . . . a very welcome and delightfull dish to a great many, yet they are somewhat stronger in taste than Parsnips." Caraway



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comfits were a favourite sweet in my childhood, but I have not seen them for years. Caraway seeds used to be included in love potions.

Anise (*Pimpinella anisum*) is little grown in these islands nowadays, for in cold summers the seed ripens poorly. The plant is a native of Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt. It is a pretty little annual, attaining about eighteen inches, and flowers in July. It needs a light, warm soil and a sheltered spot in full sun. Seed is sown in April and seedlings thinned to a foot apart. They are best sown where they are to flower, but can be raised under glass in early April and transplanted in May. Aniseed is largely used for flavouring liqueurs on the Continent and in South America and for cakes in Germany. Aniseed balls were formerly a popular remedy for coughs.

Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) is a native of Southern Europe. It is taller growing than either Caraway or Anise, indeed, Gerard describes it as "a very striking herb". It attains about three feet and flowers in July. Seed is sown either in spring or autumn. The tiny, round seeds have a very disagreeable scent, when fresh, but the longer they are kept the more aromatic they become. The seeds have been used as a condiment from very ancient times. Manna was compared to Coriander seed—"And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna, and it was like Coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey."<sup>1</sup> This is the only mention of Coriander in the Bible. The Israelites must have been very familiar with Coriander, for the best Coriander, according to Pliny, came from Egypt. It was cultivated in this country

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xvi, 31.

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in very early times and is mentioned in Jon Gardener's *Feate of Gardening*, 1440. Formerly it was grown commercially in this country, but our main supplies now come from Holland and Russia. Coriander is still a favourite condiment in the East and is an ingredient in curry powder. Coriander, Dill, and Anise were introduced into America by the early settlers. All these figure in John Josselyn's list thus :—

“ Coriander and  
Dill and

Annis thrive exceedingly, but Annis Seed as also the Seed of Fennel seldom come to maturity ; the Seed of Annis is commonly eaten of a fly.”

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) has of recent years lost its popularity in this country, though formerly it was grown commercially in Essex, Bedfordshire, and Hertfordshire. Dill was one of the herbs tithed by the strict Pharisees, but the Greek word was erroneously translated Cumin. In the margin Dill is given as the correct translation. In this country Dill was a favourite herb in the Middle Ages, on account of the pungent quality of the leaves and seeds. The popular name according to Prior<sup>1</sup> is derived from the old Norse *dilla*, to lull. A decoction of the seeds was used to soothe children to sleep. Formerly the leaves were used for flavouring soups, stews, and pickles. Dill vinegar was made by steeping Dill seeds in vinegar. In the eighteenth century pickled Dill and Cucumber was still a favourite condiment.<sup>2</sup> Addison

<sup>1</sup> *Popular Names of English Plants*.

<sup>2</sup> In *A Garden of Herbs* I quoted the recipe for pickling cucumbers in dill from the *Receipt Book* of Joseph Cooper, cook to Charles I, 1640. Also John Evelyn's recipe.

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mentioned this pickle in *The Spectator*; "I am always pleased with that particular time of the year which is proper for the pickling of Dill and Cucumber." Dill, a native of all Southern Europe, is an annual of the easiest cultivation. Seed is sown in March or April and the seedlings thinned to a foot each way.

Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*) is a native of Egypt. It is twice mentioned in the Bible.<sup>1</sup> It is not a very attractive little plant. It attains only about a foot, the leaves are like those of Fennel and the flowers, which are produced in umbels in July, are a pale magenta pink or white. The fresh seeds have a most unpleasant taste, but the ripe seeds are aromatic. Cumin is an annual and seed is best planted under glass in spring and the seedlings transplanted with a good ball of earth as soon as large enough to their flowering quarters. Cumin does best in a light, warm soil, and full sun. In the Middle Ages it was a favourite culinary spice and was used medicinally for many purposes. Spenser described it as "Cummin good for eyes".<sup>2</sup> Gerard mentions various uses, both medicinal and culinary, for the seeds. He concludes thus: "Being quilted in a little bag with some small quantitie of Bay salt, and made hot upon a bed-pan with fire or such-like, and sprinkled with good wine vinegar, and applied to the side very hot, it taketh away the stitch and paines thereof and easeth the pleurisie very much."

Home dried herbs are vastly superior to those sold in packets. To secure well-flavoured herbs for winter use they should be gathered before they flower and after the

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxviii, 25, 27. St. Matthew xxiii, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Muiopotmos*.

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dew dries off them, but before the sun is at its hottest. It is essential to dry in shade and as quickly as possible. Hanging the herbs tied in small, loose bunches in a hot attic with a current of air blowing through is ideal. Failing the hot attic, any warm room will do almost as well and it is better to hang up the herbs than to spread them out on tables. If spreading on tables is the only possible way, they should be spread as thinly as possible, and turned at least twice a day. In a very wet summer it is sometimes necessary to dry in the oven, but this must be done at a very low temperature. The best way is to remove the oven shelves, and balance rods across, resting the ends on the shelf supports. From these rods the bunches of herbs can be suspended.



## CHAPTER X

### BITTER HERBS

“With bitter herbs they shall eat it.”

EXODUS XII, 8.

A distinguished dietician once told me that the health and food laws of Moses are the last word in science and that if people obeyed them to the letter there would probably be an amazing decrease in illness. Amongst the minor things we neglect are the bitter herbs, so highly esteemed by the ancient civilizations and commonly grown in this country even in cottage gardens till the latter years of the nineteenth century.

The Wormwoods are the bitterest of herbs. Nearly all the *Artemisia* family are bitter, but the Wormwoods excel in the quality of bitterness. So bitter, indeed, that since Biblical times they have been regarded as the symbol of bitterness. The Common Wormwood, Sea Wormwood, and Mugwort, are natives of these islands. *Artemisia absinthium*, the Common Wormwood, which gives its name to the well-known liquor, is a native of Europe, and has become naturalized in America. “Wormwood” is listed in John Josselyn’s *New England’s Rarities Discovered* (1672). Sea Wormwood or Old Woman (*A. maritima*) is a native of salt marshes in these islands, also parts of Europe and Northern Asia. It is not so tall-growing as the Common Wormwood, has no fragrance, and is less bitter.

Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) is one of our commonest wayside weeds, and even in poor soil attains over three feet. The derivation of its popular name is doubtful. Possibly it was called Mugwort because used in mugs to

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flavour drinks, or from Moughte = moth, because in common with all the Artemisias it was used to strew amongst clothes to protect them from moths. It was also administered as a wholesome spring tonic. To quote an old saying:—

“ If they’d drink Nettles in March and Mugwort in May,  
So many fine maidens would not go to the clay.”

A characteristic of this plant on which I have never seen a comment in any book is the extraordinary toughness of its stems. Like Blackberry stems it is impossible to break them. From earliest times this herb has been greatly valued. In the Saxon *Lacnunga* Mugwort is described as one of the nine sacred herbs. Hung up in houses, it was believed to protect the inmates from evil spirits. For instance, in *The Grete Herball* (1539) we find “ If this herbe be within a house there shall no wycked spyryte abyde ”. A spray of it carried on the person or put in the shoe was said to render the wearer unconscious of fatigue. William Coles, in his *Art of Simpling* (1656) says “ If a Footman take Mugwort and put it into his shoes in the morning, he may goe forty miles before noon and not be weary ”. In these islands before the introduction of Hops, Mugwort was used to flavour beer and cottagers in the last century commonly used it to flavour their home-brewed beer.

Roman Wormwood (*Artemisia pontica*) is a native of Southern Europe and has been cultivated in gardens in these islands for centuries. It attains the same height as the common Wormwood (about thirty inches) but the flowering tops are smaller and the flavour less bitter. This was the Wormwood commonly used for making Worm-

*Artemisia  
Absinthium.**Wormwood.*

wood wine and flavouring brandy. In *The Queen's Closet opened by W. M., Cook to Queen Henrietta Maria* (1655) there is a recipe for making Wormwood wine by steeping two pounds of Wormwood in two gallons of Rhenish wine for three or four months and then straining it. The herbalists varied greatly in their estimation of the comparative value of the different Wormwoods. An old miller whom I know ascribes his excellent health to the fact that throughout July he takes an infusion of the flowering tops of Roman Wormwood. All the Wormwoods are excellent tonics but they have to be used with moderation, for we have not the hardy constitutions of our ancestors!

Some people find chewing a few Wormwood seeds acts like magic on nervous headaches.

Until the introduction of chemical moth balls

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dried Wormwood was commonly strewn between furs and winter clothes to keep them free of moths. It was also used to rid rooms of fleas.

“ While Wormwood hath seed get a handful or twaine,  
To save against March, to make flea to refraine ;  
Where chamber is sweeped and Wormwood is strowne,  
What savour is better (if physic be true)  
For places infected than Wormwood or Rue ? <sup>1</sup>

The most deliciously scented of the *Artemisias* is *Artemisia abrotanum*, commonly known as Old Man or Lad's Love, a native of Southern Europe. Walafrid Strabo in his *Little Garden* (early ninth century) says of Southernwood: “ Southernwood of the hair-like leaves cures fevers and wounds ; it has well-nigh as many virtues as leaves.” The date of its introduction into this country is not certain. It was well known, however, in the sixteenth century. This *Artemisia* rarely flowers in this country and it is chiefly valued for its sweet, aromatic fragrance ; a scent unlike that of any other herb and to my thinking one of the very best. A scent of which one never tires. In common with all *Artemisias*, however, the taste is bitter. Cottagers used to have a great affection for this fragrant herb and it was commonly grown trained in and out of the low, open, wooden palings enclosing their front gardens. Grown thus the plants attain a height of quite three feet, but they are lanky. Southernwood looks its best grown bush form and ruthlessly pruned every spring, cutting back each branch to two buds. The prunings can be used as cuttings and they strike easily if planted in very sandy soil in part shade. The cuttings should be at

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Tusser, *Five Hundred Points* (1577).

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least nine inches long, they should be stripped of their leaves from three-quarters of the length of the cutting, the whole of the stripped part being set below the surface of the soil. Being a native of Southern Europe the cuttings when well rooted should be transferred to full sun. Southernwood makes a charming edging if kept pruned to about fifteen inches high. Like the Wormwoods, dried Southernwood was formerly strewn between clothes to keep away moths and on account of its pleasant smell was most popular. Hence the old French name "garde-robe". For centuries it has been recommended by herbalists for baldness—the ashes of burnt Southernwood mixed with salad oil. A sweetmeat made of Southernwood was once popular for sleeplessness. This Southernwood confection was made by pounding four ounces of very finely chopped fresh leaves of Southernwood with six ounces of white sugar till the whole was a paste. A piece the size of a nut to be taken three times a day. In the days when countrywomen took little posies of strong-smelling herbs in their prayer books to church Southernwood with Bergamot, Balm, and Mint were favourites.

I wonder that *Artemisia tridentata*, the "Sage Brush" of the plains of North-West America, is not more commonly grown. It is as sweet-scented as Old Man but not so aromatic. A shower of rain has the same effect on the leaves of *A. tridentata* as on sweet briar—i.e. the air for yards round is pervaded with the delicious fragrance. A curious feature of this *Artemisia* are the leaves. They are wedge-shaped and crowded on the stems in clusters they look like miniature triangles fastened to the stems by their apexes. The silvery velvet sheen of this foliage



## BITTER HERBS

in spring is particularly attractive and groups of the fuller grown shrubs which ultimately attain about eight feet make one long to see them in their arid native parts.

The Artemisias are a bewildering genus of plants and the Tarragons are the most bewildering of all. They are natives of Europe, North Asia, and North America, and vary remarkably. Besler classified the cultivated Tarragons as *Artemisia dracunculus* var. *sativa* and the wild species as *A. dracuncul* var. *inodora*. Ledebour made the Siberian varieties a separate species and named them *Artemisia Redowskij*. *A. dracunculus* var. *sativa*, commonly, though inaccurately, known as French Tarragon is the one esteemed as a salad herb. This Tarragon is a native of Central Asia and it was not known in Europe till early Tudor times. Though it flowers in Europe it never sets seed and as Gerard observed three hundred years ago, "the flowers never perfectly open." This Tarragon is one of the few Artemisias that is not bitter though the flavour is tart, spicy, and slightly suggestive of camphor. It is one of the most valuable kitchen herbs and too seldom grown nowadays. The finely chopped leaves are an excellent ingredient in salads and Tarragon vinegar is the only vinegar that should be used for Sauce Tartare. That great authority on salads, John Evelyn, commends Tarragon as being "highly cordial and friendly to the head, heart, and liver". Tarragon vinegar should be made with the best white wine vinegar, "Fill a wide-mouthed glass jar with the leaves picked clean of stalks. The leaves for vinegar should be gathered before the plants flower. Pour in the vinegar, covering the leaves and allow to

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stand for a fortnight. Then strain through flannel, pour into bottles and cork."

"Russian" Tarragon as a kitchen herb is vastly inferior, in fact, not worth using. It closely resembles "French" Tarragon, the chief difference being that it sets seed. Tarragons owe their botanic name to the serpentine coils of the roots.

The Tarragons like a sandy soil, shelter from cold winds, and though they like a warm spot, they do not object to part shade. They are increased by division in April, and during severe wintry weather the plants should have protection in the form of bracken or litter. They should be planted out two feet apart. Tarragon plants become lanky and worthless after four years and a supply of fresh plants should be maintained.

Rue (*Ruta graveolens*)—how can anyone fail to grow Rue? One of our oldest and most interesting garden plants and so clustered with lore and traditions that any adequate account of it would fill a small book. The appearance of this herb has always fascinated me. Its curious blue-green foliage, as vivid in mid-winter as in summer, its quaintly decorative, albeit small, yellow flowers and its old-world air, all combine to give it a character apart. Its powerful scent is usually described as disagreeable, and many people agree with Spenser that it is "rank-smelling". With this I cannot agree. I think that strong, sweetless—I know there is no such word, but how else can one describe aromatic scents in which the sweet element is conspicuous by its absence?—fragrance, such as that of Rue, is attractive not only as a contrast, but for its rich, assertive vigour. Scents such as these (Crown Imperial



RUE  
(*Ruta graveolens*)



HOREHOUND  
(*Marrubium vulgare*)

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and Clary are two other examples) seem to open up a new world to the sense of smell, and the more one smells them, the more interesting it is to try and analyse the reasons for their attraction.

Rue and variegated Rue associate well, the foliage of the latter being a perfect foil for the somewhat sombre blue-green hue of the former. Variegated Rue is, indeed, one of the ideal shrubs for the small winter garden, for even in mid-winter its charmingly variegated foliage—frequently more cream than green—suggests spring. Rue flourishes in most soils, provided lime is not absent, and best in full sun in a rather poor calcareous soil. In a limeless soil the bushes soon assume a lank, starved appearance. Being a native of Southern Europe it should in bleak parts be grown in a sheltered position. It does admirably near a wall. It can be increased either by seed sown in spring or by cuttings taken in late spring and rooted in a shady border.

The flavour of Rue is less bitter than the Wormwoods, but even more pungent. As a bitter herb it has been esteemed for its valuable properties from time immemorial. It is generally believed to have been introduced into this country by the Romans, but may have been known even before. It is undoubtedly one of our oldest garden plants and during the Middle Ages it was credited as it was by the ancients with anti-magical powers as well as medicinal properties. Further, it was believed to improve the sight, and in this connection it is interesting to recall that in *Paradise Lost* Michael the Archangel purged Adam's sight with "Euphrasy and rue". There is a belief that it was formerly customary to sprinkle holy water with Rue

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and hence the popular name Herb of Grace, but there is no definite evidence to support this belief. Loudon, writing in 1838, stated that Rue "is to this day called Ave Grace in Sussex". So highly was Rue valued to ward off contagion that for many years the dock of the Central Criminal Court at the Old Bailey was strewn with sprigs of Rue. This custom was begun in 1750 after the outbreak of jail fever at Newgate, and the bouquets presented to judges at the assizes commemorate the custom. But for many centuries those who went about in plague-infested parts used to carry sprigs of Rue to ward off infection. Rue was the chief ingredient in the famous Vinegar of the Four Thieves, which is said to have enabled four thieves during the great plague in Marseilles to enter stricken houses and rob with impunity.

Old still-room books contain many "Preventives against the Plague", and in these Rue invariably figures conspicuously. For instance, in that rare Elizabethan still-room book *The Good Housewife's Jewell* (1585), a decoction of Rue, Sage, Sweet Briar, and Elder steeped in a quart of white wine with ginger and a little treacle is prescribed as a prevention against the plague. I know several old-fashioned country folk who use Rue for almost every ill, ranging from indigestion to bee stings. They take a few sprigs steeped in a cup of boiling water for indigestion, they rub their rheumatic limbs with the leaves, and they apply crushed Rue leaves to bee stings. We use Rue in this household in salads, but the leaves of a small sprig finely chopped are enough to mix into a large salad.

Rue is one of the few herbs that figure in heraldry. In 1181 the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa granted to the



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first Duke of Saxony the right to include in his arms a chaplet of Rue borne bendwise. The order of the Crown of Rue was founded by the first King of Saxony in 1801. This order was conferred on his late Majesty King George V as Prince of Wales in 1902. Sprigs of Rue figure in the Collar of the Order of the Thistle.

Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) is one of those pleasant old-fashioned plants one rarely sees in modern gardens. I associate it with cottage plots of Victorian days, old women in sun-bonnets, straw bee skips, the clank of buckets being brought back from the well, indeed, with all the everyday sights and sounds of a world that has long since vanished. Have you ever eaten Mint pasties flavoured with bitter herbs? No? Then you have missed something very good. They are made by mixing equal quantities of finely-chopped Mint, currants, and brown sugar, real brown Barbadoes sugar, not elegant crystallized Demerara, and to this you may add to each pound of the mixture just a salt-spoonful—literally a salt-spoonful, or you will overdo it—of mixed pungent herbs, such as Tansy, Rue, and Horehound. Pound together, crushing the currants well, and then spread the paste between layers of very thin pastry. Delicious. A few years ago I was given one in a farmhouse in an out-of-the-way part of Yorkshire. It took me straight back to my childhood. This pasty can be varied in all sorts of ways. For instance, a few chopped fresh cherries in summer or the pulp of a baked apple in autumn, but the Mint, currants, and brown sugar must be the staple ingredients, and it is the Mint and salt-spoonful of pungent herbs that give this sweetmeat its character and unexpected flavour.

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Garden Tansy is a pretty edging plant, but it has not so powerful a flavour as the wild Tansy.

In Elizabethan times Tansy was a favourite strewing herb and as such figures in Tusser's list of "Strewing Herbs of all Sorts" in his *Five Hundred Points* (1577). Possibly it was a favourite because it was believed that the smell of it kept rooms clear of fleas. The origin of the name is doubtful, but is probably derived from the Greek Athanatos (undying). The herb is connected with numerous and interesting old customs and, according to Culpeper, the Tansy cakes and puddings formerly eaten at Easter were in memory of the bitter herbs eaten by the Jews at the Passover. Several old rhymes commemorate this custom of eating Tansies as they were called.

"Soone at Easter cometh Alleluya  
With butter, cheese, and a tansey."

Again :—

"On Easter Sunday be the pudding seen  
To which the Tansey lends her sober green."

Most sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cookery and still-room books contain recipes for Tansies<sup>1</sup> and they vary greatly, ranging from simple (?) affairs made with seven eggs, a pint of cream, a plate of bread-crumbs mixed with shredded Tansy, Thyme, Marjoram, and Parsley all mixed together and fried, to elaborate concoc-tions containing in addition to the above, pounded Almonds, Nutmeg, syrup of Roses, Lemon, butter, and brandy. John Nott, who was cook to the Duke of Bolton in 1723, gives a recipe for an Apple Tansy made thus : the apples were sliced and fried in fresh butter and before

<sup>1</sup> I quoted many in *A Garden of Herbs*.

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serving a sauce was poured over, the sauce consisting of ten eggs beaten up with a quart of cream, a quarter of a pint of Spinach juice, a quarter of a pint of Tansy juice, and a little Rose-water. Cooking was a lordly affair in those days !

Horehound—*Marrubium vulgare*—one of the bitter herbs of the Passover, derives its botanical name from the Hebrew Marob—"bitter juice." It is well named. For though Horehound is not as intensely bitter as Wormwood nor as pungent as Rue, it is far more painfully bitter. Chewing a leaf of Horehound even for a few seconds makes one's mouth feel as though it had been screwed up. I do not believe anyone could chew a leaf of Horehound for a whole minute. The origin of the popular name is doubtful. It is a native of all Europe, including these islands. As a bitter herb it was highly esteemed in ancient times and last century it was still commonly grown by cottagers for flavouring home-made beer, for Horehound tea (a popular remedy for colds and coughs) and for Horehound candy. The tea is made by pouring a pint of boiling water on to an ounce of fresh leaves, the dose being quarter of a pint three times a day. The candy is made by boiling down the fresh leaves and then allowing a pound of sugar to every pint of the liquor and boiling till it sets when cool. The most remarkable use cited for Horehound that I know is to be found in Walafrid Strabo's *Little Garden* (early ninth century): "Drink Horehound hot from the fire if you are poisoned by your stepmother."

Horehound is very graceful in growth and its woolly stems and felted leaves have a quiet beauty of their own. Even in winter there are plenty of sprigs in leaf to pick

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and they associate charmingly with Aconites, Snowdrops, early Primroses such as Wanda, little sprays of Viburnum, and so forth. Allowed to grow naturally and not tied up in the distressing way gardeners love to tie everything that does not grow bolt upright, Horehound throws its branches about in lovely curves. It associates well with Marigolds and the Opium Poppy. Dried Horehound is scentless. The scent of the fresh leaves is curious—a dusty Eastern fragrance with a suggestion of musk in it.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME HERBS USED IN MEDICINE AND MAGIC

“If men would make their gardens their Phisitians the Phisitians’ craft would soon decay.”—BARNABY GOOGE, *Four Bookes of Husbandry*, 1577.

It has been estimated that in this country alone there are about seven hundred herbs of healing for every ill to which flesh is heir. Obviously it is impossible in the space of a chapter to say more than just a little about a few. I am taking two of outstanding historic interest, and for the rest a handful of representative herbs that were commonly grown in physic gardens.

Nor is it possible to draw a line of demarcation between “medicine” and “magic”. Our Saxon ancestors, for instance, in spite of the denunciations of the Church probably ascribed as much to the efficacy of the heathen rites and incantations they used, when gathering herbs, as to the virtues of the plants. The line is equally hard to draw in these enlightened times. The most powerful medicine-men to-day are surely the skilful advertisement writers, who laud nostrums, herbal and otherwise, and who lay their potent spells on their readers. The arts thus practised are no less magic for being up-to-date magic.

The Mandrake is unknown by sight to the majority of folk nowadays, yet there must be few who do not know this remarkable herb by name. Through the ages it has, been accounted a plant of mystic power and according to authorities of repute not only are there still peasants in Syria and Turkey who assign to the roots the same virtues as those associated with it by Rachel in the Book of *Genesis*, but in America the roots still find a sale amongst



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certain classes of the orthodox Jews. The true Mandrake, *Mandragora officinarum* var. *vernalis*, is indigenous to Mesopotamia, Palestine, North Africa, and Spain. Few historic plants are so uninteresting in appearance. Its large disc of long, glossy leaves lies almost flat on the ground, and its flowers, frequently almost stemless are purplish and cup-shaped. The fruit, about the size of a small tomato, is yellow and soft. The scent is pleasant, but the taste less pleasant. Mrs. Crowfoot, in her book, *From Cedar to Hyssop*, states that "Palestinian children eat them with delight. If they eat too much of it or if they incautiously swallow the seeds, their eyes dilate and their heads ache and worse even may befall. We heard of one child last harvest who was so overcome with the poison of the fruit that he was "as mad for a day and as dead for a day but he ultimately slept it off and recovered".

The date of the introduction of the Mandrake into this country is unknown, but it is mentioned and figured in the Saxon translation of the Herbal of Apuleius and in Archbishop Aelfric's Vocabulary (tenth century). Throughout the Middle Ages Mandrake was the most popularly used pain-killer and as such highly valued. It was also renowned for its supposed mystic properties. The digging of the herb was associated with various picturesque rites and beliefs—circles drawn round the plant with a sword and the digging done only in a favourable wind and to continue till sunset, a dog to be tied to the root to pull it out, so that evil should befall the dog rather than the digger, and strangest of all, the belief that the root shrieked when torn from the earth.

The first avowal of disbelief in the legendary powers of

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Mandrake is to be found in *The Grete Herball* (1526). Turner, the Father of English Botany, wrote of the danger of using this opiate in excess. "If mandragora be taken out of measure, by and by slepe ensueth and a greyt losing of the streyngthe with a forgetfulnesse." Gerard describes the beliefs as "old wives tales" and adjured his readers "from henceforth cast them out of your book and memory". Parkinson also threw scorn on the legendary powers of Mandrake. Both Gerard and Parkinson state that they had never seen roots of the plant that were human in shape, yet in Sibthorp's *Flora Graeca* the root figured is almost painfully human in appearance. The only roots I have seen were more human in shape than the average doll.

Mandrake was apparently commonly grown in both large and small gardens. In Tusser's *Five Hundred Points*, a book that was certainly not written for owners of large gardens, Mandrake is listed amongst "Necessary Herbs to grow in the Garden for Physic", but the demand for the roots evidently exceeded the supply, for imitation Mandrake roots were made from Bryony. William Coles, in his *Art of Simpling*, states this fact and adds that the roots were used in witchcraft—"Simple folk make thereof an ugly image by which they represent the person on whom they intend to exercise their witchcraft."

Mandrake is not an easy herb to acquire. If raised from seed, the seed must be sown in sandy soil as soon as it is ripe in autumn. The following autumn the seedlings must be transplanted to their permanent positions in full sun. Though best raised in sandy soil, Mandrake needs a good, rich soil. On poor soil the plants do not flourish. The

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ground has to be well dug, for in time the roots go down four and even five feet deep.

It is a far cry from the Mandrake of Genesis, the herb lauded for its aphrodisiacal properties in classical times and associated with Circe and Venus to the herb Tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) introduced into Europe from the New World in the sixteenth century. No other American plant, not even excepting the Potato, aroused such widespread interest. It was hailed as a universal all-heal and as such grown in parts that were mild enough in the physic gardens of western Europe. By James I's reign it was a well-established physic herb and also valued for its beauty as a garden plant. Parkinson says, "With us they are cherished in gardens as well for the medicinable qualities as for the beauty of the flowers. . . . The herbe is out of question an excellent helpe and remedy for divers diseases if it were rightly ordered and applyed, but the Continuall abuse thereof in so many doth almost abolish all good use in any." Incidentally, we have Parkinson's authority for it that Tobacco was named *Herba regina* by the French queen to whom Nicot, the French ambassador in Portugal sent it. But the botanical name commemorates Nicot and not the Queen to whom he sent it. The Queen must have been either Catherine de Medici or Mary Queen of Scots, for Nicot was French ambassador in Portugal in 1559.

The most interesting account of the early history of Tobacco is that given by Monardes. His book, translated into English by John Frampton, evidently aroused keen interest in this country, for *Joyfull Newes out of the newe founde worlde*, as Frampton entitled it, went through four

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editions. We learn that the herb Tobacco was one "of much antiquity" amongst the Red Indians, that they called it Picielt and taught the Spaniards the use of it as a wound herb. He gives a lengthy account of the use of Tobacco in the religious ceremonies of the Indians, to enable them to see "visions and illusions". On this the author comments, "And as the devil is a deceiver and hath the Knowledge of the virtue of hearbs, so he did shew the virtue of this Hearb, that by the means thereof they might see their imaginations and visions, that he hath represented unto them and by that meanes deceive them." The Indians, he states, also used the herb to enable them to travel "in a dispeopled countree where they shall find neither water nor meate". For this purpose they made small balls of the leaves and chewed them "and in this sort they journey three or four dayes without having neede of meate or drink, for they feel no hunger nor weaknesse nor their travel doth trouble them".

Monardes states that Tobacco was first introduced into Spain "to adornate gardens with the fairnesse thereof and to give a pleasant sight but now we doe use it more for his mervelous medicinable virtues than for his fairnesse". In Spain the herb was hailed as a wonder. In Seville, Monardes states, "they know not what other to doe having cut or hurt themselves but to run to the Tobacco as to a most readie remedie. It doth mervellous workes without any need of other Surgery but this only hearbe." A whole chapter is devoted to an account of the cures effected. Nicot, the French ambassador, Monardes describes as "the first founder out" of the medicinal qualities of the plant; he experimented with it on many people,

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including his own cook, who had "almost cutte off his thombe with a great chopping Knife". The botanical name commemorates this early enthusiast for Tobacco. The name Tabaco was given by the Spaniards, who named it either from the island Tobago or from a native word connected with the use of the dried leaves for smoking.

James I's dislike of smoking possibly accounts for the decline of the popularity of Tobacco as a wound herb. But in the last century Tobacco was still official in the British Pharmacopœia.

*Nicotiana tabacum* is a decidedly tender annual. It attains about five feet. The leaves are large and handsome and the flowers a rose pink. The plants are raised from seed sown in very light soil under glass in late February or early March. When large enough to handle, the seedlings should be transferred to boxes filled with a compost of two parts fibrous loam and one part leaf mould and sand. After hardening off in a cold frame in May, plant out in flowering positions. All the Tobaccos like a light but rich soil.

Unlike Mandrake and Tobacco most of the herbs grown for physic by our ancestors have homely English names. Names, such as Houseleek, Germander, Holy Thistle, Comfrey, Lungwort, Camomile, Woodruff, Mullein, Herb Bennet, Betony, Catnep, and Creeping Jenny are suggestive of the humble folk who grew these herbs and knew their virtues.

Houseleek (*Sempervivum tectorum*) is one of the oldest herbs grown in these islands both for its medicinal and supposedly magical properties. It is literally a house plant, for it grows on roofs and even now cottagers in



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out-of-the-way parts believe that to have Houseleeks growing on the roof is a protection from bad luck and lightning, and old-fashioned folk much resent Houseleeks being removed from their roofs. Charlemagne ordered the plant to be grown on the roofs of all houses in his domains. Houseleek is a native of mountainous parts of Central and Southern Europe, but it was evidently introduced into this country in very early times, for its popular name is Saxon. Sengreen (or evergreen) is another old, popular name and I remember a cottager who used to make "Sengreen ointment". Houseleek leaves, freshly gathered, were formerly and in remote parts are still used as a remedy for scalds and burns, also corns.

Houseleek is very decorative, and gives roofs, especially thatched roofs, an old-fashioned peaceful appearance. The plant is of the easiest culture, for it will grow on any dry spot such as a roof or top of a wall. Once established, it spreads rapidly and a large clump is very effective. To increase it, all that is necessary is to detach the offsets and place them on the roof, sticking them on with a little damp earth. The purplish, succulent leaves are beautiful, especially in sunlight when the hairs with which they are fringed are very conspicuous. The leaves taste very acid. The flowers, which are rosy purple, are not freely produced and like the leaves they are scentless.

Germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*) is rarely seen in modern gardens, though it is one of the most attractive edging plants. Formerly it was very commonly grown, for not only was it a valued physic herb, but it was also used to set out knot gardens and indoors used as a strewing herb on account of the pungent fragrance of the leaves when

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crushed. Medicinally it was used as a remedy for many ills—for agues, headaches, falling sickness, melancholy, dullness of spirits—and for centuries it was regarded as a specific for gout. Charles V is said to have been cured of gout by taking a decoction of this herb. As a herb for curing melancholy, Germander figures conspicuously in that delightful nonsense rhyme, *Robin Goodfellow ; his mad pranks and merry Jests, full of honest mirth and is a fit medicine for melancholy* (1628). The writer was, I think, poking fun at both physicians and magicians! I quote the first verse:—

“ And can the physician make sicke men well,  
And can the magician a fortune devine,  
Without lilly, germander and sops in wine?  
    With sweet-bryer  
    And bon-fire  
    And straw-berry wyre  
    And collumbine.”

Germander is not very hardy and does well only in the south. It needs a light but rich soil and full sun. It is increased by division of the roots in autumn, setting the plants a foot apart. In the herb garden it makes an admirable thick border, especially if it can grow falling over a stone edging. When the rose pink flowers are in bloom, against the setting of the abundant foliage, the effect is delightful.

Holy Thistle (*Carduus benedictus*) has indeed fallen from its high estate, for throughout medieval, Tudor, and Stuart times it was regarded as a remedy for every ill. Hence the popular names—Holy or Blessed Thistle. Holy Thistle is curiously attractive in appearance, with its long, decorative leaves and its pale yellow flowers, held in prickly involucre covered with brown bristles. It attains about

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two feet. The plant is an annual and seed is sown in spring, thinning the seedlings to about two feet apart each way. It needs full sun. In mild parts seed can be sown in autumn. Holy Thistle associates well with Lovage, Sweet Cicely, and Tansy. This annual Thistle is a native of southern Europe and the date of its introduction into this country is unknown. Its virtues are extolled by Turner in his Herbal, and it was universally used in times of plague. Holy Thistle and Angelica were recommended as the best remedies for plague in Thomas Brasbridge's *Poore Mans Jewell that is to say a Treatise of the Pestilence, unto which is annexed a declaration of the vertues of the hearbs Carduus Benedictus and Angelica which are very Medicinable, both against the Plague and also against many other diseases* (1578).

This rare little book is unique in one respect, for it is, I believe, the only book of plant interest dedicated to a Lord Mayor of London. The dedication is as follows :—

“To the Right Honorable, Sir Thomas Ramsey, Knight, Lord Maior of the Citie of Londō, Thomas Brasbridge wisheth continuall & godly prosperity.

“Right Honorable, as you being the Head and Governour of the Citie, and careful and painefull, for the preservatiō of the helth, and wealth thereof : so if every member, and inhabitant be readie to do that he may & ought to do : our care and paine, may take the better effecte. For the head deviseth and prouideth for all the bodie : but the hands, feete, mouth, stomacke, and other parts serue it as God hath ordained : by which meanes it continueth in lively estate so long as God hath appointed. So I being one of the leaste members of the Citie, have taken paines to penne a short treatise of the Pestilence : wherewith it is oftentimes annoyed : being persuaded, that if it be generallie receyued, it maye doe much good, for the preseruatiō of the Citizens, and other inhabitantes, from the daunger of this disease. Therefore I have thought good to present it to your Honor : not doubting, but as your office moueth you to be careful, and you are careful

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according to your office : so you will have care to publish this little Booke, so faire forth, as you shall understand by your owne judgement, and by the advice, both wise and learned, that it may profite the Citie : Vnto the which, and vnto the whole Realme, I wish continuall health, and godly quietnesse : and unto your Honor perpetual and true felicitie.”

The second edition (1592) is dedicated to Marten Anthony Cope Esquire and Mistres Frances Cope of Banbury. I quote this dedication also because it depicts, although the writer had apparently no intention of doing so, the terror inspired by the Plague.

“Right Worshipfull, of all the rods wherewith almightie God vseth to chastise his people, that stubbornely spurne against his ordinances : the sicknes called the Plague, is one of the sharpest. The which I have very often times seen whisking about mine eares : but through the great mercie of God, it never touched my bodie. The towne of Banburie (I being a childe) was very sore infected therewith : at what time it was in one of the next houses vnto my father, and when I was Student in Oxford, it was very hote in this citie : and also in some Colledges in the Vniuersitie : yea even in the Colledge wher I was : so that all the Students, saving two or three, and a few singing men (in whose logings the infection was) fled into the countrie ; I being one that remained : and in some sort accompanying the infected. After that I dwelling at London ; there was (as diuers yeers together, so especialy one yeere a very great plague, both in the citie, and suburbs : the which did compasse me in such sort, that I could not go out of mine house, either at the fore, or backe doores, neighter on the right hand, nor on the left ; but I must needs have passed by an infected house, neat, or very neere adjoining vnto mine owne. Yea both I, and my wife had schollers that fell sicke at our feet ; and (as I may say in our laps) who going home, died, within two, or three daies. Yet such was the goodnes of almighty God, that neither I, nor any of my familie were infected therewith. but ‘God takes . . . and leaves the bad, too bad to take away’. Vpon which occasion God did put in my minde to write *Treatise* against the Pestilence : the which I entituled : ‘*The poore mans Jewell* : bicause it is a very soueraign preservative against that sicknes ; and also is very easie to be gotten. I made

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it especially for the vse of the inhabtance of London : both bicause that citie was most commonly, and most greuously visited with that sickness : and also bicause I myselfe was an inhabitant there. And I am presuaded that almightie God did give no smal blessing vnto my small labours. And so much the rather bicause (as I hope) they did in some measure vse, not onely the naturall (as they call it) but also the supernaturall, that is, not onely the bodily, but also the spirituall preseruatiue : the which (as most fit, and most necessarie) I have set in the first part of my booke. The which (that it might be the more gently and more generally receiued of the citizens) I dedicated vnto the Lord Maior of the citie, that then was. Who now is departed this life. Therefore (minding to print the booke againe) I have thought good to dedicate it vnto your Worships : as vnto personages resident neere vnto my habitation ; as also vnto whom I am very much bound : perswading myselfe, that through your Worships fauor ; the little booke will be the more generally receiued of my countrie men : vnto whom (as vnto al men) so to them especially I have wished all good. And although the sicknes (thanks be to God) do not at this present raigne among vs : yet the Treatise is not in vaine. For a preseruatiue, serueth not to cure that evill which is present : but to keepe away that which may come, if meanes be not vsed to the contrarie. And the Treatise is so much the more necessarie for that the preseruatiues in it both naturall, and supernaturall, are helps, not onely against that sicknes (wherof it chiefly in-treateth ; ) but also against many other rods, wherewith almightie God vseth many times to scourge his disobedient, and vnthankful seruants. For which cause chiefly, as also for som other causes (not doubting your Worships will accept of this small token of my good will, and thankful minde) I have thought good the second time to set fovrth this Treatise ; and to present it vnto you : desiring almightie God, to grant you many happie yeers, together with that peace, and perfect joy, the which our Sauour Christ hath left vnto his elect, and chosen seruants. Banburie the 20 of Januarie, 1592.

“ Your Worships most bounden in the Lord :

THOMAS BRASBRIDGE.

The treatise is purely of medicinal interest but I cannot refrain from quoting also “ The Conclusion of the Booke ” :—

“ Thus much I have thought good to write of the Plague and of these hearbs Carduus Benedictus & Angelica : which (as some



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men use to speake) is called a great secret : either because it is not known to many men or else because they would have it kept close & Known but to a few. But I do not thinke meete that any thing should be secrete which may be profitable for man. For God hath not made anything for the use of a few, but for the commoditie of all men, and we that are the children of God ought to frame ourselves so, that we may be like affectioned unto our father who is beneficiall to all men, who hath made his Sunne to Shine & his raine to raine vpon the wicked as well as vpon the good, that is to say he feedeth all men both good & bad. For by heat and moisture, which proceed from the Sunne and the raine, all things growe vpon the earth whereby man's life is maintained. Hereof I conclude, that for as much as Almighty God is good unto all men we ought to be like minded, and not to Keep anything secrete, nor to hide anything from men that may profite him. Thus I make an end, willing all men rightly to use the good creatures of God and to give him heartie thanks for

all his bene-  
-fites."

FINIS.

I have quoted this extract not so much for the substance as for the manner of writing. The author's lovable personality shines through every line.

The Milk Thistle (*Carduus marianus*) is a common wild plant in England, but not in Scotland. Mary Queen of Scots is said to have planted it on the rock of Dumbarton. The leaves of this beautiful thistle are conspicuously veined white and traditionally originated in the milk of the Blessed Virgin which fell on the leaves. One of the popular names of the plant is Virgin Mary's Thistle. Medicinally, the Milk Thistle was regarded as being almost as valuable as Holy Thistle. Gerard described it as "the best remedy that grows against all melancholy diseases". The young leaves are an excellent ingredient in salads, and formerly the stalks after being soaked to rid them of their bitter taste were eaten as a vegetable. The heads were boiled

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

and eaten like Globe Artichokes. The roots were also used as a vegetable. Once established, the Milk Thistle sows itself all too freely! It is certainly the handsomest of our native Thistles and in the herb garden associates well with any of the tall-growing herbs..

Those of Scottish descent would certainly include the Thistle that is generally believed to be the Thistle of Scotland: *Onopordon acanthium*—amongst their physic herbs. This thistle is commonly known as the Cotton Thistle, for the whole plant is covered with a white, hoary down. It attains about five feet, the leaves are large, the flowers purple, and it is the stiffest and thorniest of the Thistle tribe. Gerard aptly described it as “set full of most horrible sharp prickles”. When the Thistle first became the badge of Scotland is unknown, but the first mention of it as an insignia was in the inventory of the effects of James III made after his death in 1438. The insignia of the Knights of the Order of the Thistle is a golden collar with Thistles and Rue interlaced and the motto of the order is *Nemo me impune lacessit*. Formerly the expressed oil of this Thistle was used as an astringent and as a cure for ulcers. The heads were formerly eaten as we now eat Globe Artichokes. This Thistle is commoner in England than in Scotland.

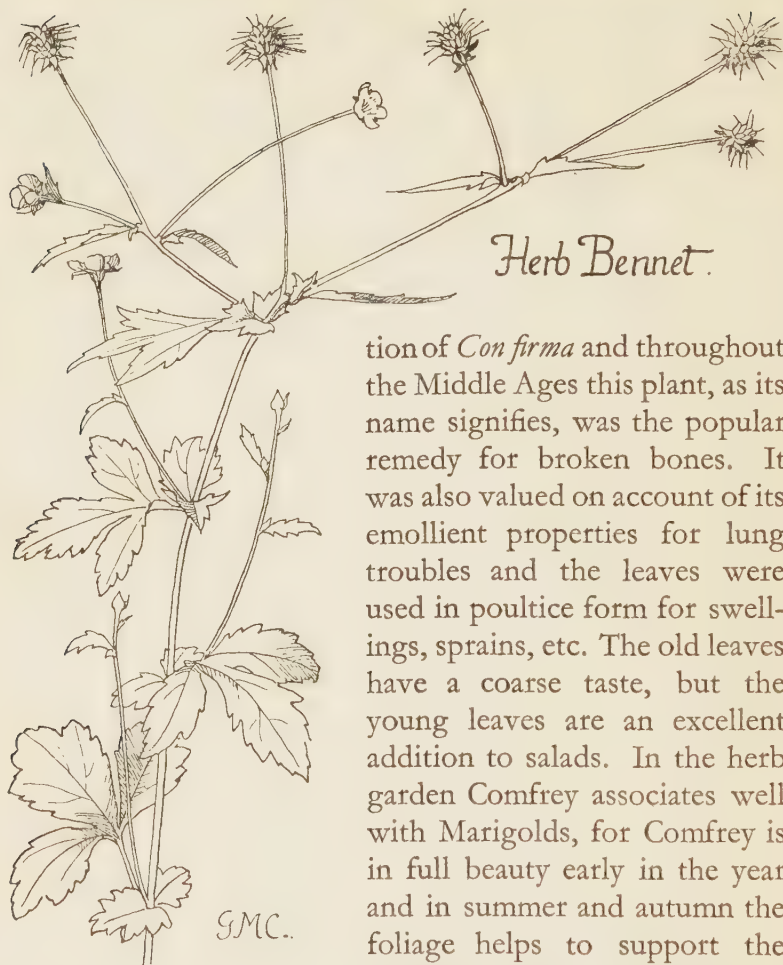
Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) is one of the most attractive of physic herbs and one of the earliest in bloom. It varies in height from eighteen inches in poor soil to nearly three feet in rich, moist soil and in the south and sheltered parts its pretty, bugle-like flowers are produced in April. The type has cream-coloured flowers but there is a variety with purplish flowers. The dwarf form is frequently in flower as early as February. The name Comfrey is a corrup-



BIRTHWORT  
(*Aristolochia clematitis*)



MILK THISTLE  
(*Carduus marianus*)



*Herb Bennet.*

tion of *Con firma* and throughout the Middle Ages this plant, as its name signifies, was the popular remedy for broken bones. It was also valued on account of its emollient properties for lung troubles and the leaves were used in poultice form for swellings, sprains, etc. The old leaves have a coarse taste, but the young leaves are an excellent addition to salads. In the herb garden Comfrey associates well with Marigolds, for Comfrey is in full beauty early in the year and in summer and autumn the foliage helps to support the Marigold stalks. Comfrey is a

perennial and is easily increased by root division in autumn. It flourishes in any soil.

Throughout western Europe Herb Bennet (*Geum urbanum*) was a "blessed herb" and regarded as of potency

## HERBS USED IN MEDICINE AND MAGIC

against evil spirits and harmful beasts. In the *Ortus Sanitatis* (1491) we read of Herb Bennet "Where the root is in the house, Satan can do nothing and flies from it, wherefore it is blessed before all other herbs and if a man carries the root about him, no venomous beast can harm him". This decorative herb, with its graceful leaves and five golden petals is not infrequently depicted in the early illuminated missals and Books of Hours. Probably because the flowers lend themselves to severe, formal treatment and possibly because the trefoil foliage was regarded as a symbol of the Holy Trinity and the five petals the five wounds of Our Lord.

Betony (*Stachys betonica*) was one of the most valued herbs in olden times. The section on this plant in the *Herbarium Apuleius* is supposed to be an abridged copy of a treatise on the virtues of Betony, written by Antonius





## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

Musa who was physician to the Emperor Augustus. In the Saxon translation Betony is described as being "good whether for a man's soul or his body". Although a common native plant it was grown in physic gardens and was chiefly valued for all diseases of the head. Betony is very decorative, and in cultivation attains over two feet.

Catmint (*Nepeta cataria*) was formerly valued by cottagers for its medicinal qualities. Catnip tea was a favourite remedy for colds. It was also regarded as a good spring tonic and for nervous headaches. Although a wild plant it was commonly grown in gardens, even in cottage gardens. The aromatic fragrance of the leaves is much liked by cats, but cottage folk always averred that cats only destroyed transplanted Catmint and not Catmint that had been sown and left untouched. Hence the old saying :—

" If you set it the cats will eat it ;  
If you sow it the cats won't know it."

The closely allied "Ground Ivy" (*Nepeta glechoma*) was also used as a tonic. An infusion of the leaves is pleasantly aromatic. The plant has various popular names—Gill by the Ground, Catsfoot, Ale Hoof, and May Maid.

Creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) is a plant I associate with the cottage gardens of my Victorian childhood. Everyone grew this humble, cheery, little plant, and it had many popular names—Herb Twopence, Twopenny Grass, Wandering Jenny, Meadow Runagates, String of Sovereigns, and Moneywort. The almost round leaves set in pairs on the creeping stems are certainly suggestive of coins, but String of Sovereigns probably refers to the profusion

## HERBS USED IN MEDICINE AND MAGIC

of vivid golden flowers. It was valued as a wound herb and was used in making poultices for sores. It is an ideal plant for a damp, sunless part and in flower is charmingly decorative. It can be increased by division at any time except in mid-winter. It flourishes anywhere even in town gardens.

Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*) once grown in every cottage garden, is charmingly old-fashioned. It has three popular names—Soldiers and Sailors, Cowslips of Jerusalem, and Joseph and Mary. “Soldiers and Sailors” refers to the fact that the flowers are pink when they open and fade blue. The use of the leaves for chest complaints was probable due to their appearance and founded on the doctrine of signatures. Formerly, *Pulmonaria officinalis* was commonly grown in gardens, chiefly for the sake of its pretty flowers, produced so early in the season, but the showier hybrids have almost supplanted the type. Lungwort is a perennial. It can easily be raised from seed, but is usually increased by division. It does best in part shade, especially on poor, sandy soils. The Lungworts usually flower during that bitter spell in late March or early April which country folk call “Blackthorn winter”. Just when we are all longing for sunshine and warmth and a few days of comparative warmth delude us into believing that summer is well on the way, “Blackthorn winter” sets in. The winds are icy and the cold intense, usually for about a fortnight and this spell of weather invariably coincides with the flowering of the Blackthorn.

Camomile (*Anthemis nobilis*) is a very ancient inhabitant of the herb garden and to this day cottagers in this country make Camomile tea for digestive disturbances and it is a

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

favourite French tisane. It was an old belief that it was the best of all "plant doctors", i.e. that if any plant were sickly it would revive if Camomile were planted near it. Formerly Camomile lawns and paths and even turfed seats made of Camomile were features in most gardens. William Lawson, in his *New Orchard and Garden* (1618) says "In all your Gardens and Orchards bankes and seats of Camomile, Penny-royall, Daisies, and Violets are seemely and comfortable." "Breathful Camomile," as Spenser termed it, was very popular for paths because the scent when trodden on is pleasantly aromatic and "the more it is trodden on the better it grows". It is more than likely that Drake played his game of bowls on the eve of the Armada on a Camomile lawn, for this plant makes a very smooth lawn. In nearly all seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gardening books directions are given for the treatment of Camomile lawns. In the "October" part of his *Kalendarium Hortense*, Evelyn says, "It will now be good to Beat, Roll and Mow carpet walks and Camomile for now the ground is supple and it will even all inequalities." Up to the middle of the nineteenth century Camomile lawns and paths were commonly made, for before then the difficulty of getting good grass seed was considerable. I wonder how many of the people who attend the royal garden parties at Buckingham Palace realize that big stretches of one of the lawns are planted with Camomile? A Camomile lawn or path is very easy to make. Either in spring or autumn the plants should be put in four inches apart and rolled immediately. The Camomile should be rolled from the first and mown exactly like grass when the plants are well established. It must also be kept well weeded. I feel sure that if we



COMFREY  
(*Symphytum officinale*)

CAMOMILE  
(*Anthemis nobilis*)

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have a spell of hot, dry summers Camomile lawns and paths will once more become fashionable, for in the driest summer and in the poorest soil Camomile remains emerald green. Camomile is one of the few herbs after which a London street is named. There is a Camomile Street near Liverpool Street Station and appropriately enough there is a herbalist's shop in the street.

Birthwort (*Aristolochia clematitis*), now one of our rarest wild plants, is fantastic looking with its long slender stems, heart-shaped leaves, and tubular yellow flowers. As its popular name implies it was used medicinally. My original plant, given me from the 800-year-old garden of Carrow Abbey, has seeded itself freely. It is one of the most attractive unusual plants to grow in part shade.

Woodruff (*Asperula odorata*) one of our daintiest woodland flowers, was a valued herb for wounds and cuts in medieval and Tudor times and as such grown in physic gardens. For its sweet scent when dried, a scent suggestive of new-mown hay, it was laid amongst linen and Gerard states that this herb "being made up into garlands or bundles and hanged up in houses in the heat of summer doth very well attemper the aire, coole and make fresh the place to the delight and comfort of such as are therein". Fresh Woodruff leaves are scentless but holding them in a closed hand brings out the scent. Tusser lists Woodruff amongst "Herbs to still in Summer", and in connection with this herb he appends the note "for sweet waters and cakes". Turner, in his *Herbal*, says the plant is called Woodruff or Woodrowe because "its leaves represent rowells of spurres". An old country rhyme children used to chant gives the spelling of the name thus:—

"Double U, double O, double DE,  
RO double U, double FE."



## HERBS USED IN MEDICINE AND MAGIC

Woodruff can be raised from seed sown as soon as ripe in a shady part, or by division of the roots after flowering. The plants should be set a foot apart. Woodruff makes a pretty edging in a herb garden associated with other shade lovers, such as Lungwort.

Periwinkle (*Vinca major*) described by Chaucer as "rich of hue", has always been regarded as a herb endowed with mysterious power. It is one of our oldest garden plants, well known in Saxon times and called by them Ivy of the Ground. The plant had various popular names and one of these—"Sorcerer's Violet"—indicates that it was a herb used by those who practised magic arts. Yet Periwinkle was also believed to be potent against the powers of evil and was used in the making of love philtres. In



## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

the *Boke of Secretes of Albertus Magnus*, the writer states "Perwynke when it is beate unto poudre with worms of ye earth wrapped about it and with an herbe called houslyke it induceth love between man and wyfe if it be used in their meales". Periwinkle leaves were used medicinally to make a healing ointment; Periwinkle tea was a popular remedy for sore throats and the freshly gathered flowers made into a syrup were used as a mild laxative.

Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) has a surprising number of popular names, most of them referring to the flannel-like texture of the leaves, the markedly upright growth of the flowering stem, or the torch-like appearance of the plant in bloom. To cite but a few—Our Lady's Flannel, Velvet Plant, Old Man's Flannel, Jacob's Staff, Peter's Staff, Beggar's Stalk, Torches, Hag's Taper, Candlewick Plant. From time immemorial Mullein tea made from the leaves has been a popular remedy for all chest ailments. The flowers were used to dye hair yellow. Parkinson in his *Theatrum Botanicum*, states that the flowers "boyled in lye dyeth the haire of the head yellow and maketh them faire and smooth". The dried leaves were commonly used as a substitute for tobacco. Mullein is a biennial of the easiest culture, but does best in light soil.

Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) has always been esteemed for its medicinal properties. All-heal and Setwall are two of its popular names. Gerard says "It hath been had and is to this day among poore people of our northern parts in such veneration that no brothe, pottage or physicall meates are worth anything if Setwall were not at an end, wherefore some woman poet or other hath made these verses":—

"They that would have their heale  
Must put Setwall in their Keale."

## HERBS USED IN MEDICINE AND MAGIC

The leaves were used to make an ointment for wounds; the roots were regarded as a remedy for the Plague and from very ancient times Valerian was regarded as a specific for nervous complaints. The dried roots of Valerian have a strong and rather unpleasant odour, but this odour was much appreciated in past centuries and Turner states in his *Herbal* that the roots were laid amongst clothes to perfume them. The herb is still official in the British Pharmacopœia and though most of our supplies are imported, Valerian is to some extent grown commercially in this country, notably in Derbyshire, where the "Valerie Growers" have for generations carried on its cultivation. Valerian is a

pretty herb but a rampant grower, and on good soil attains quite four feet. Red Valerian (*Kentranthus ruber*) a far more decorative plant, is not used medicinally.



*Dictamnus*  
*Fraxinella.*

False  
Dittany.

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

Bastard Dittany (*Fraxinella alba*), commonly known as Burning Bush, deserves a place amongst medicinal herbs. In flower it is one of the most attractive, old-fashioned plants and yet rarely grown in modern gardens. For long the virtues of the true Dittany of Crete (*Origanum dictamnus*) were ascribed to Bastard Dittany. It owes its popular name, "Burning Bush," to the fact that it emits an inflammable gas, and if a burning match is held under the flowers there is a small flash of light. There is a large bed of this plant in the garden of St. John's College, Oxford. *Dictamnus fraxinella* is a perennial and easily raised from seed sown in boxes of sandy soil in a cold frame in April. It does not take kindly to propagation by division of roots. It does best in light soil and full sun.

*Santolina chamaecyparissus*, popularly known as Lavender Cotton or French Lavender, is one of the most decorative of medicinal herbs. Formerly the dried sprays were laid amongst clothes to keep away moths. The popular names are very poor, for the plant is not in the least suggestive of Lavender, excepting in its colour. Small bushes of *Santolina* are ineffective, but bushes quite five feet across look delightful at an entrance to the herb garden or some equally conspicuous points. We have a bush of this herb quite six feet across and three feet high and with its untidy corymbs of yellow flowers flung carelessly in all directions it is very beautiful. It might be some plant from a coral garden fathoms deep, turned to grey stone, and the small flowers are like glints of sunlight on a grey sea.





*Santolina chamaecyparissus*





## CHAPTER XII

### THE MAKING OF A HERB GARDEN AND SOME RECIPES

“Who would look dangerously up at Planets that might safely loke down at Plants?”—JOHN GERARD, *The Herball*, 1597.

The chief considerations in making a herb garden are soil and aspect. Nearly all the herbs mentioned in this book require a light, warm soil and full sun. The most decorative herbs are the Lavenders, tall-growing herbs, such as Angelica, Succory, Lovage, Fennel, Woad, Elecampane, Aconite, Sweet Cicely, Anchusa, and Orach, and herbs with vivid colours, such as the Bergamots and Marigolds. To make an effective Herb Garden, the general design should, I think, be laid out chiefly with the evergreen or nearly evergreen herbs. In Plan I, designed for a garden ninety feet long and sixty feet wide, the whole is encircled with a hedge of unclipped Sweet Briars, lovely throughout the summer with their twelve and fourteen feet long, graceful stems and deliciously scented foliage, in June with flowers and throughout autumn and winter with red berries. Between this outer enclosure and the broad belt of Lavender (either *L. spica* or *L. vera*) are the stately herbs, none of which are evergreen. This bed is ten feet wide and the Lavender will occupy about five feet of it. Unless planted two and a half feet back from the edge, vigorous Lavenders, such as the Grappenhall variety will grow almost across the path, ruining the Camomile walk and leaving no room to walk. The remaining five feet behind the Lavenders is sufficient space for the Sweet Briars and the tall-growing herbs, though there will not be enough room for more than a few of each of the stateliest herbs.

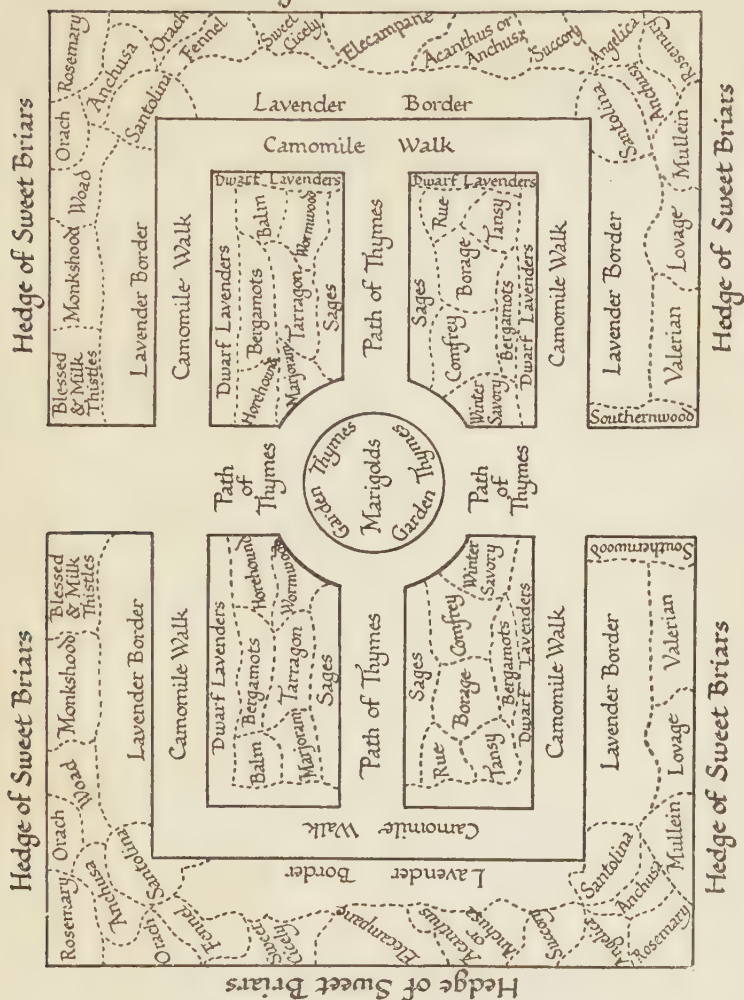
## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

The four inner beds are also outlined with evergreen herbs—the Dwarf Lavenders on the outer borders, Sages on four of the inner borders, Winter Savory and Horehound the other four. Within, the centres of these beds are filled with “herbs of middle growth”, to quote Lawson’s phrase, In the centre is a circular bed ten feet across, Pot Marigolds in the centre, surrounded with a three feet wide belt of Garden Thymes. It will be noted that all the outlines are laid out in evergreen, fragrant herbs so that at all seasons the garden is pleasant to behold and to smell.

Naturally, this plan will have to be modified according to climate and soil. In many parts the Rosemary I have marked at the four corners will not flourish in the open. In this case it will be advisable to fill the corners with *Anchusa italica* and to interplant the *Anchusa* with the slender Orach. When the *Anchusa*’s flowering period is over, the plants are untidy, but the tall, blood-red stems of the Orach, especially in seed, will be decorative in late summer and autumn. Until the *Santolina* has made bushes four and five feet across, the space behind might be given to any of the minor herbs. I have purposely not marked spaces for the less decorative herbs, such as Anise, Coriander, Dill, Cumin, and so forth, as room can be found for them in odd spaces. Again, until the Lavenders have attained maturity, the spaces behind and in front of them might be given to colourful herbs, such as the Bergamots, Clary, Herb Bennet, Bastard Dittany, etc.

Where there is sufficient space the further entrance might lead to a garden devoted to the old Roses. As most of

# Hedge of Sweet Briars



PLAN I

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

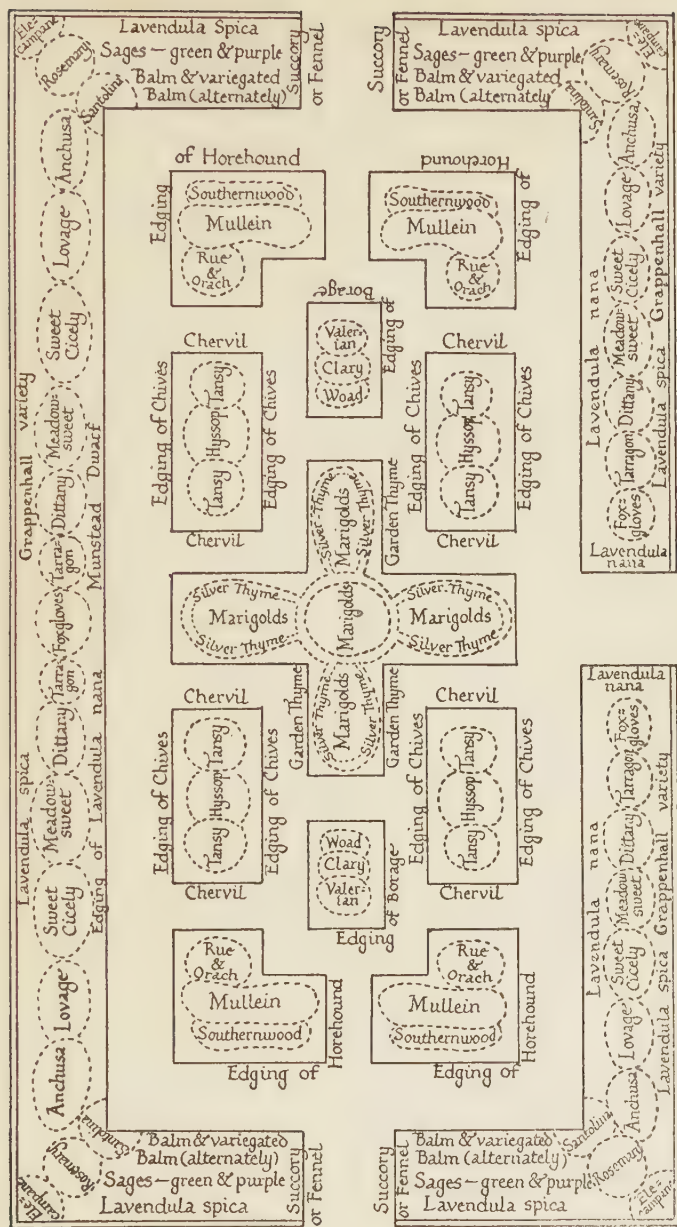
these are vigorous growers they do not take kindly to formal beds. They might be grown in a broad bed encircling the garden and the centre could be filled with Carnations. The old Roses flower only in June and the Carnations would carry on the interest of the garden till they were cut by frosts. Other flowers used as herbs, such as Madonna Lilies, Primroses, Honesty, Winter Cherry, etc., could also be grown in this garden.

Plan II is of a herb garden I had the pleasure of planning for Mr. Appleton, of Birmingham, and it is reproduced with his kind permission.

I have just been planning a herb path in a garden where there is no room for a separate garden of herbs. The path leads through the centre of the kitchen garden and runs the whole length of it. At one end fortunately it is in the part shade afforded by some apple trees, so we are putting here the shade-loving herbs—Lovage, Angelica, Sweet Cicely, Bergamots, etc., and leading on to the sun-loving Lavenders, Sages, Clary, Succory, Elecampane, Fennel, Anchusa, Woad, Orach, Rue, Savory, Balm, Wormwood, Horehound, Tansy, Holy and Milk Thistles, and so forth. At the further and more important entrance I have suggested clumps of Santolina at either side. For this is a much longer lived shrub than Lavender and when the bushes are six feet across it will make a good decorative beginning to the "Path of Herbs", balancing the tall-growing herbs at the other end.

If you are fortunate enough to own an old sundial, this is a delightful ornament for a herb garden. But not a new sundial! Incidentally, the most unusual sundial I know is one made by a smuggler in the eighteenth century.





Plan for a Herb Garden with the stately herbs in the outer beds, bordered on either side with Lavenders; the herbs of middle growth in the inner beds & in the centre a Knot garden of Marigolds and Garden Thymes. + + +

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

He owned a house twenty miles inland from King's Lynn, and the sundial is still where he placed it. It fascinated me when I was doing some planning in the garden. The sundial is very large, almost as large as Sir Christopher Wren's dial at All Soul's College, Oxford, and all round the dial the smuggler placed the names of the places where he traded. Where the shade falls marks the hour of noon at that place. Reading anti-sunwise, the names are as follows, and I give them in their original spelling : Bantam, Suirat, Diu, Bagdat, Constantinople, Rome, Anisterdam, Lisbon, Teneril, Corvo, Cape Raz, Barmudas. I particularly like Cape " Raz " for Cape Race. This smuggler, James Denton by name, was a man of means, for he owned 20,000 acres of land and in spite of his calling he was a friend of George IV. The King frequently stayed with him on his visits to Newmarket and there is still the stump of the flagstaff from which the Royal Standard was flown when the King was in residence. It is fixed in the wall of the huge barn where Denton had cock-fights. About half a mile from the house, which was centuries old even in his day, was a little house in the wood and this also belonged to him. Two walks through the woods are still called " The King's Walk " and " The Ladies' Walk ". The old house is still known by the smuggler name—Denton. I find myself again wandering off into the fascinating by-paths of history !

Herbs and herb gardens have become a considerable cult during the last twenty years or so. In America a Herb Society has been founded—the Herb Society of America—and to those interested in herbs or about to make a herb garden I commend their admirable journal,

## THE MAKING OF A HERB GARDEN

*The Herbalist*.<sup>1</sup> From America also I receive the most charming of herb catalogues, that issued by the Cottage Herb Garden, Mount St. Albans, Washington, where the herbs are sold on behalf of the garden of Washington Cathedral. A delightful little catalogue with its woodcut of a cottage, diminutive garden and bee-hives, and its lists of fragrant herbs.

One of the chief difficulties in making a herb garden is to decide what shall and shall not be included. Many of our most beautiful garden flowers were formerly used in medicine, cosmetics, and so forth. But though it is justifiable to include these plants, they are apt to detract from the character of the herb garden. It would be dull, however, if all herb gardens were on the same lines, and many people may like to include some of the garden plants associated with the old recipes.

For about twenty years I have made a hobby of collecting flower recipes, not only from old books but from country-women in out-of-the-way parts, from manuscript still-room books, and so forth, with the result that I have now a fairly representative collection. In one case I had the loan of a still-room book to which succeeding generations have added recipes since 1790. There is a good deal of historic interest in a collection such as this. For instance, I do not think it is generally known that one of Henry VIII's hobbies was the concocting of herbal recipes. These royal recipes have never been published, but they are preserved in the Sloane collection in the British Museum together with those devised by Dr. Butts (the King's

<sup>1</sup> This journal is obtainable from the Herb Society of America, Horticultural Hall, 300 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

favourite physician) and two other physicians. Dr. Butts figures in Shakespeare's *King Henry the Eighth*. In nearly all the recipes the name of the palace where the King devised his recipes is given. Then again we find in *The Queen's Closet Opened* (1662) that King Edward VI's special perfume was made with "right red Rose-water", and that it was so sweet when boiled that "the house smelt as though it were full of Roses". In Queen Elizabeth's favourite perfume, the recipe for which is given in *A Queens Delight* (1664) Sweet Marjoram figured conspicuously. Then there are the recipes associated with such famous names as Sir Hugh Platt, Sir Kenelm Digby, and John Evelyn.

Apart from their historical interest, most old recipes make delightful reading in these hurried days. Modern recipes for instance, give time required to the minute. Not so in those leisurely days when time was frequently and pleasantly measured in recipes thus: "About an Ave Maria while," or "whiles you can say the Miserere Psalm very slowly". But if I ramble on about the characteristics of these old recipes I shall never stop!

Amongst spring flowers those most commonly used were Violets, Primroses, Cowslips, and Elder flowers. Both Violet and Primrose leaves were a common ingredient in mixed salads, and Primrose ointment was formerly made in every household. This ointment, so highly valued by cottagers for chapped hands and sores, is still made in out-of-the-way parts where Primroses are plentiful. To every pound of Primrose petals allow half a pound of fresh lard (salted lard is useless) and simmer together till the quantity is reduced to half. Strain and pour into jars and cover as for jam.





A Path of Herbs





## THE MAKING OF A HERB GARDEN

Young Violet leaves were not only used in salads, but also dipped in batter, fried, and served with orange juice. A dainty and very delicious vegetarian dish! This dish was a popular one in the seventeenth century, and no less an authority than John Evelyn describes it as "one of the most agreeable of all the herbaceous dishes". Violet vinegar is made by filling a jar half full of Violets (but not too tightly packed) and then filling up with boiling-hot, white wine vinegar. Even in early Victorian days Violet tablets were made in most houses of any size. The flowers are steeped in the juice of three large lemons for two hours, then strained, and the juice with a pint of water and a pound of sugar boiled to candy height. When almost cold cut into squares. Violet syrup is made by steeping 2 lb. of Violet flowers in five pints of water for 24 hours. Then strain and add sugar at the rate of a pound of sugar to each pint of liquid, and boil to the consistency of syrup. Violet milk was used by the fastidious for their complexions. It was made by steeping a large handful of Violet flowers in milk.

Elder flower cream is valuable for sunburn, and of all the old-fashioned creams and lotions it is, I fancy, the one most commonly made, for even in these days Elder flowers are plentiful in most country parts. I used to make the cream every year, and several of the friends to whom I gave the little pots of it told me they found it wonderful for chilblains as well as sunburn. The process is very simple, but takes a long time and frequent attention. Two pounds of the best fresh lard and 2 lb. of Elder flowers make a considerable quantity of cream, but it is one of the creams that are difficult to make in small quantities.

## HERBS AND HERB GARDENING

The lard is melted in a large bowl, standing over and partly in a saucepan of boiling water, and when melted the Elder flowers are added and stirred every half hour with a wooden spoon. The water in the pan has to be replenished at intervals during the day, and after about seven hours of this gentle simmering the fat is strained clear of the flowers and put into little jars. In my experience this cream keeps good for two years. Elder vinegar is made in exactly the same way as Violet vinegar.

The most dainty confection made from spring flowers that I know is Cowslip cream. Fit to serve before a fairy queen. First thicken some cream with whites of eggs beaten to a froth, then add a little Cowslip syrup and serve in glasses, garnishing the cream with candied Cowslips. Cowslip syrup is made by pouring a quart of boiling water on  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of fresh Cowslip flowers, and then, when cold, add a pound of sugar for every pint of water, and boil to a syrup. The simplest way of candying Cowslips is to dip them in a solution of gum arabic, dust them with the finest sifted sugar, and dry them, hanging on a string near the fire. It takes three days to dry them, and then they should be stored in airtight tins in layers.

Lilies of the Valley were distilled and the water used for flavouring. In the *Country Lady's Director* (1732) the writer states that this spirit "is drunk as a Dram in Norway". Mayflower syrup was a popular cordial. It was made by using equal quantities of the flowers and white sugar, filling a deep jam pot first with a layer of sugar, then a layer of the flowers alternately till the jar was full. Two tablespoons of distilled water were added, a cover put on and the jar placed in a large pan of boiling water for

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five hours. Then the syrup was strained and when cold, bottled. Any flower syrup can be made in this way. As early as Anglo-Saxon times the old-fashioned red Peony, beloved through the centuries by cottagers, was apparently grown even in the humblest gardens, for we know that in those remote times beads made from the roots were valued as charms to ward off evil, just as much as they were in the late nineteenth century. A decoction made of the seeds was regarded as a sovereign remedy against nightmare. Gerard refers to this use of them in his Herbal. Madonna Lilies have been cultivated for medicinal purposes in these islands for centuries. The petals of the flowers were used for wounds. This Lily is figured in an eleventh-century Saxon herbal. Goat's Rue (*Galega officinalis*) now a common border plant, was used in past times as a cure for the plague. According to Culpeper "a bath made of it is very refreshing to wash the feet of persons tired with over-walking". Goat's Rue is probably so called on account of its disagreeable smell. It has a very bitter taste.

The Opium Poppy (*Papaver somniferum*) has for several centuries been valued as a decorative garden plant, and though opium is only obtainable from poppies grown in the East, the Opium Poppy has been long used medicinally in western Europe. The plant is grown commercially to some extent in these islands, the capsules being harvested when they are turning brown. In the herb garden it is a good plan to plant the Opium Poppy and Valerian near each other, as the Poppies come into flower when the Valerian is over.

Parkinson, who so frequently gives us the names bestowed by women on flowers, says in regard to the Opium Poppy

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“Our English Gentlewomen in some places call it by a by-name, Jone silver pinne”. Plants in seed certainly look like great pins and the bloom on the stalks and seed capsules gives them a silvery look.

If Roses be included in the herb garden they should be the old Roses. I have not in Plan I allotted any room to them, because I think that where there is enough space it is pleasanter to have a separate garden devoted to the old Roses. Opposite the Sweet Briar and Lavender entrance there might be a similar exit leading to the Old Rose garden, which should be laid out on the simplest lines.<sup>1</sup>

Bowls of fragrant pot-pourri are always a delight, especially in winter, when the sight and fragrance of them is a continual happy reminder of summer and sunny days in the garden.

In most households there are treasured recipes for the making of pot-pourri, but a method a friend and I tried two years ago was so successful that I will describe it in detail. It is simple, it costs nothing beyond the flowers and scented leaves used, and the petals, etc., instead of being shrivelled, come out almost their original size. Consequently, instead of using a vast quantity of flowers and leaves, a small amount is sufficient.

The method is based on one at least three hundred years old for drying Roses whole, and how much older I do not know, but I have never read of it in a modern book, and easy as it is, I had never seen it done before. It is described in that dainty little volume, *Delights for Ladies*, one of the most diminutive books of garden interest, and written by

<sup>1</sup> In *The Scented Garden* I wrote a lengthy chapter on the Old Roses and at the end of the book quoted many recipes, including pot-pourri recipes.



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Sir Hugh Platt, one of Queen Elizabeth's courtiers. Every page in this tiny book—now extremely rare—is surrounded with a design of the Rose of England, the Lily of France, and the Queen's initials—E.R.

And now for Sir Hugh Platt's method. Following his instructions we gathered the flowers—Roses, Carnations, Marigolds, etc., on a dry day, then we took shallow boxes (boxes in which notepaper is sold are admirable for the purpose) and put first a layer of sand, previously thoroughly dried. On this we laid the flowers, flat, and poured on to them more sand, taking care to keep the flowers open as much as possible and in their natural shape. Sir Hugh Platt directs placing the shallow boxes in "some warme sunny place", but we placed them in the hot airing-cup-board, leaving the door slightly ajar. Of course the lids were not put on the boxes, for this would keep in the moisture. Then we forgot all about our experiment! About a fortnight later we remembered and hurried off to see the conditions of our dried flowers.

The result exceeded our expectations. For the dark red Rose petals we had gathered, instead of being shrivelled as in ordinary pot-pourri, were their proper shape and faded to a purplish red; the Clove Carnations were still whole and the petals a lovely petunia colour; the Marigolds also whole and a brownish orange. A bowl full of these dried flowers is a charming and fragrant reminder of summer and far more attractive in appearance than most pot-pourris. Naturally the scent is not so strong as those in which various spices and gums are included. Personally, I prefer the faint, sweet fragrance of pot-pourri made only with flowers and leaves, such as sweet-scented Geranium leaves, to

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pot-pourris containing quantities of essential oils and so forth.

Pot-pourri made as described above cannot be left in open bowls indefinitely in a damp atmosphere, for the dried petals would absorb the moisture and decay. In a room where there are hot pipes any shelf or table near the heat is ideal. Failing this, it is as well to keep the bowl fairly near the fire.

A common mistake in making pot-pourri is to gather too many flowers at a time, for then they cannot be dried easily. It is better to gather small quantities, say once a week, and then store them as they are dried. Flowers and leaves should be gathered not merely on a dry day, but when there has been no rain for at least two days. Further, they must be gathered when the dew has quite dried off them. In a great many recipes the instruction is given to dry the petals in the sun, but I find that the best pot-pourri is made by drying in a very warm room in the shade. Full sunlight seems to destroy all but the strongest scents.

In regard to the drying, most people spread the petals, etc., on a table, but the essence of good drying is that it should be done as quickly as possible. The best way is to spread the petals on large sieves and then the air circulates both above and below and drying is done twice as quickly. In the case of Lavender or other very small flowers, place a sheet of tissue paper over the sieves to prevent the flowers falling through.

Philadelphus flowers are not often included in pot-pourris, but the dried flowers smell deliciously and have not the heavy scent of the fresh petals. Owing to their rather

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thick texture, they take considerably longer to dry than most flowers. In one household I know, dried *Philadelphus* flowers are laid between the sheets in the linen cupboard and impart to them a faint, sweet fragrance. *Gardenias* and *Orange blossom* need as careful drying as *Philadelphus* flowers. By this method I have described above small flowers and buds such as rosebuds dry perfectly. Rosebuds just showing the colour of the petals always look attractive. It is best to dry very small rosebuds such as those of *Sweet Briar*. *Rosemary* flowers when dried have almost the same aromatic fragrance as the fresh flowers and *Rosemary seed* dried has a very strong scent. The seeds should be dried in the same way as *Lavender* flowers. *Orange peel* cut in strips and stuck with *Cloves* and dried was an ingredient commonly used in Victorian times, but not so frequently now.

Rose petal jam is a delicious confection and the following is a good recipe. It is essential to use red, fragrant *Roses*. To fifty fully opened *Roses* allow two pints of water, preferably clean rain-water or distilled water and 3 lb. of the best preserving sugar. Boil the sugar and water till it candies a little. Add the juice of a small *Lemon* and the *Rose petals*. Stir well and bring to the boil. Put in a pat of butter to clear the scum and then simmer for quite an hour. It is necessary to stir very frequently, every five minutes or so, or the colour will be brown instead of red. Pour into pots and cover when cold.

*Carnation* syrup is so delicate in taste and fragrance that diminutive pots of it, together with that equally delectable confection—*Rose petal jam*—doubtless adorned *Titania's* store cupboard. In all *Carnation* recipes the best flowers

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to use are the richly scented, deep red Clove Carnations, not necessarily the Old Clove for the modern Perpetual Border Carnations are quite as richly scented.

There are various recipes for Carnation syrup, some of them unnecessarily laborious, but the following, which dates from the eighteenth century, is the best I know. Take three pounds of the flowers and cut off the white heels from the petals for the white heels taste bitter. Pour five pints of boiling water on the petals and leave twelve hours. Strain off the liquor and allow two pounds of sugar to every pint. Leave for 24 hours and then boil to a syrup.

Carnation vinegar is made by steeping a handful of richly scented Carnation petals in half a pint of the best white vinegar. The flavour is greatly improved if the bottle containing the vinegar and petals is stood in a very hot sun for a few days. Strain off the petals before storing. This vinegar keeps a year.

Pickled Carnation petals is a much appreciated sauce for lamb—a pleasant alternative to Mint sauce and more attractive in appearance. Prepare the required quantity of red Carnation petals by cutting off the white heels. Cover them with boiling white vinegar to which Cinnamon, Mace, and sugar has been added. When cold, bottle. When required for use the petals are minced small and made into a sauce with the vinegar and sugar. Another and simpler method is to fill a crock with first a layer of sugar, then a layer of the petals prepared as above; then more sugar and more petals till the pot is nearly full. Fill up with cold white vinegar to cover the top layer and cover so that the pot is airtight. Pickled Carnation petals keep good a year.

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The following method of candying Carnation petals requires no cooking, but it is necessary to have skilful fingers! Beat up the white of an egg to a stiff froth. Then with a tiny new paintbrush paint each petal both sides with the white of egg, leaving not a particle of the surface exposed. Spread carefully on a dish and powder with the best castor sugar. Turn over and dust the other side. Dry in a warm room and preferably in the sun (the flavour of those dried in the sun is far better). Store on sheets of stiff paper in airtight tins.

The lovely white-flowered Jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*) in many ways the most delightful of all the Jasmines, has been grown in these islands from time immemorial, possibly before even Roman days. It was indisputably one of the first Eastern shrubs to be introduced. Its botanic name—*Jasminum officinale*—indicates that it was the Jasmine used by the chemists and distillers.

Jasmine water is one of the pleasantest of all the “sweet waters” and very refreshing. It is very simple indeed to make, for it requires no cooking at all. Put about two large handfuls of Jasmine flowers into a large crock and pour on them a quart of cold water and add quarter of a pound of sugar. Leave for about an hour and then pour the water into another jug and then back again. Do this for a little time till the water both smells and tastes of Jasmine. It is pleasantest when ice-cold. This is the way Jasmine water for washing the hands was made for the members of the royal household in Charles II’s reign and the recipe is given by Giles Rose, who was one of the master cooks to the King.

In Victorian days, when Olive oil was commonly used



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for softening the skin, it was sometimes scented with Jasmine. It is easy to make this deliciously scented oil, and the recipe may be found in various early Victorian cookery and domestic economy books. Dip fine cotton wool in olive oil and place it at the bottom of a glass jar. Then put a layer of Jasmine flowers, then another layer of cotton wool dipped in oil, then a layer of flowers, and so on to the top of the jar. Cover and leave for a few days or a week and if possible leave the jar in hot sunlight. Then strain off the oil, pressing the cotton wool and flowers till as much oil as possible is obtained, and bottle it. In the seventeenth century Jasmine oil was not made with cotton wool, but simply by filling a jar half-full of the flowers and filling up with oil. In those leisurely days the jar was left for three weeks in the sun, then the flowers were removed and fresh flowers put in, in order to make the oil even more fragrant of the flowers.

In nearly every house jars of Honesty and Winter Cherry are used for indoor decoration during the winter, but I wonder how many who adorn their rooms with them think of the interesting medicinal and magical associations of these plants, both of which have been cultivated in our gardens for centuries—in fact for so long that the date of introduction of both is unknown.

Honesty, so called, presumably, from the semi-transparent nature of the inner part of its seed vessels, was formerly regarded as one of the magical herbs, a herb of the moon, and as such was associated by Chaucer in his *Canon Yeoman's Tale* with Valerian and Agrimony :—

“ And herbes coude I tell eke many on  
As egremaine, valerian, and lunarie,  
And other swiche, if that me list to tarie

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Our lampes brening bothe night and day,  
To bring about our craft if that we may,  
Our fournies eke of calcination  
And of waters albification."

Few garden plants have so many popular names. Gerard cites the following : Penny Flower, Money Flower, Silver Plate, Pricksong Wort, and White Satin. In France also it has popular names : Herbe aux lunettes, Monnaie du pape, Satin blanc, and Medaille. *Lunaria biennis*, to give it its botanical name, is one of the most accommodating plants, for it flourishes either in sun or shade and on the poorest soils.

Winter Cherry, has still older associations. Its botanical name is merely a latinized form of its Arabian name, *alkekengi*, and by the ancient Arabian physicians it was highly valued for its medicinal virtues. It is the *Physalis* of Dioscorides, being so named either on account of its bladder-shaped calyces or because the seeds were used to cure diseases of the bladder. *Physalis alkekengi* is a native of most parts of southern Europe and China, and the berries are eaten in quantities by the peasants. In the early years of the last century it was frequently served as a fruit in both Spain and Switzerland. Nowadays the Winter Cherry is purely a garden plant, but in Elizabethan times it had apparently almost naturalized itself, for Gerard states that "the redde winter cherrie groweth upon old broken walls about the borders of fields and in most gardens where some conserve it for the beautie of the berries and others for the great and woorthy vertues thereof". But a plant with such attractive colourful seed pods would have been amongst the first to be exterminated as a wild plant, with the spread of towns.

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*Physalis Franchetii* and *P. Bunyardii* have larger calyces and attain a greater height than *P. alkekengi*, and are consequently more suited for indoor decoration. *P. Franchetii*, a native of Japan, has calyces of the most gorgeous coral red, touched with orange, and *P. Bunyardii* is said to be a hybrid between *P. alkekengi* and *P. Franchetii*. *P. peruviana edulis*, the "Cape Gooseberry", is not hardy in this country, and from it is made that delicious confection, Cape Gooseberry jam.

Both *P. Franchetii* and *P. Bunyardii* produce their pods in abundance. Plants are easily obtainable, and it is essential to give them a well-drained, sandy soil and full sun. They can be planted either in autumn or spring. They are easily increased by division. Or plants can be raised from seed, sowing in boxes of sandy soil in a cool greenhouse in April, or in a cold frame in May. Plant out as soon as large enough to handle, and in autumn they can be transferred to their flowering positions. The seedlings must never be left to get crowded and this applies equally to established plants.

*Physalis* spreads rapidly, and if not lifted and divided the plants will be short-stalked and the calyces small.

Branches of well-grown specimens are so gorgeous in seed that the plants are worth the little trouble they require. Most people put *Physalis* and *Honesty* together, but I like a mixture of both of these, with *Statice* of all kinds. In fact, with *Everlastings* as with other garden flowers, I think the greater the mixture, the more delightful the effect. The old Dutch masters who painted flowers knew what they were about in painting bowls of flowers containing hardly two of the same flower. A continual delight to the eye.

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Christmas Roses (*Helleborus niger*) were formerly planted near the house because it was believed that no evil spirit would enter a dwelling near which these plants were grown. In out-of-the-way parts cottagers maintain this custom. It is small wonder that these exquisite flowers were such favourites, not merely for their beauty, but the longevity of the plants. They are amongst the longest lived perennials, clumps over thirty years old being not uncommon. I know several over fifty years old and one that is well over a hundred years old.

This is the story of this centenarian. A lady who lived in Lancashire, when she married in 1829, took her favourite clump of Christmas Roses with her to her new home in Warwickshire. She cherished it all her life, and at her death in 1881, bequeathed it to her daughter. She in her turn valued it so much for its associations that when she went to France in 1889 to live, she took the plant with her. On her return in 1901 she brought it back with her and after her death it passed into the possession of one of her nieces, who still has it.

But though a herb garden may be enriched with these and many other flowers, the garden should, I think, be primarily a green garden. Colour predominates in the modern flower garden. Colour, and yet more colour is the demand even in mid-winter. Colour is not lacking in the herb garden, notably in late summer, when the scarlet, mauve, and pink Bergamots are in their bravery, the Lavender hedges crowned with a mist of blue flowers, the Marigolds a sea of gold, the flower spikes of Clary mauve and pink, the Succory starred with flowers whose colour rivals that of a summer sky, the stately Elecampane bearing

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aloft its tasselled yellow flowers, the tall Apple-mint a picture of soft pinks and greys. But at most seasons of the year the herb garden should be a pleasaunce where we can enjoy the beauty of green. Green varying even on the same plant, such as Rosemary and Horehound, from pale grey to the deepest sea-green; green fretted and adorned with colours ranging from the gold and silver of the Thymes to the ruby and amethyst of the Variegated Sage and some of the Bergamots. The herb garden should be a green poem, set forth in foliage varying in texture from the softness of Mullein to the rugged harshness of Clary, and in form from the stately leaves of Bear's Breech to the feathery beauty of Fennel and the fern-like charm of Sweet Cicely. Even in mid-winter there are the evergreen herbs and we may still enjoy the varying beauty of greens. It was chiefly with evergreen herbs that in Tudor and Stuart times they made their pleasant green gardens and Enoch's Walks. We have, alas! ceased to make Enoch's Walks, but in our herb gardens let us enjoy the loveliness of green, the most restful and satisfying of all colours.



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