



FRIENDS OF COLDINGHAM PRIORY
COLDINGHAM COMMUNITY GARDEN

THE USE OF PLANTS IN MEDICINE AND WORSHIP

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MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE PLANT KINGDOM

Within the plant Kingdom (estimated to be about 1 million species) and amongst vascular plants (some half million species of plants with Conducting Tissue) medicinal plants and herbs comprise a remarkable group sometimes referred to as utility plants (around 30,000 – 50,000 species). There are fewer species (up to 5,000) among the lower plants and fungi. Old herbals include about 6,000 species of medicinal plants, but in Europe, popular alternative medicine makes use of about 1,000 species.

Pharmacopoeias of various countries around the world include about 500 herb species and about 120 species are officially cultivated in Europe in modern medicinal practice. The number of these increases every year with more research and better understanding of active medicinal ingredients. The medicinal properties of plants have been known to peoples since ancient times. Early humans suffered much from diseases despite being more closely associated with food plants than we are today. From the variety of plants available they discovered individual medicinal and toxic properties and began to experiment with their use. Early knowledge was passed on by oral tradition and later by written record and people sought relief and help from early healers and magicians. As knowledge of medicinal plants grew, methods of extraction of medicines improved, and so the relief to those afflicted. Today's Pharmaceutical industries depend on these primary sources of biochemistry (the study of the components of plants) pharmacology and toxicology (the study of the biological effects, toxicity and therapeutic potential) and, most importantly phytotherapy, the practical use of plant products as medicinal preparations.

The earliest records of therapeutic use of medicinal plants date back to 4000BC from Civilisations in Asia, North Africa, Central and South America and the Far East. The first herbal was made in China in about 2700BC and physicians were active in ancient Egypt, Greece, Rome and Italy. In Europe, Christian monasteries grew medicinal plants and communities of monks in the larger religious houses were renowned for their knowledge by the time of the Middle Ages. Information was recorded in celebrated herbals.

With new technologies and isolation procedures medicinal plants are now used much more efficiently, especially in the extraction of active ingredients in their pure form. Some therapeutic substances still cannot be produced chemically or their chemical synthesis is much more expensive than isolating them from plants.

HERBALISTS AND OLD HERBS

1. ANCIENT HERBALISTS AND ELIZABETHAN AUTHORS

- *Theophrastos Eresios* (370 – 285 BC, successor to Aristotle at the School of Athens c. 322BC) The earliest known European author of botany, writing c. 314BC. Printed in Europe as early as 1483, translated into several languages.
- *Hippocrates*, the father of Western medicine, listed 400 useful species of culinary and medical use.
- *Pliny* (23 – 79AD) author of *Naturalis Historia Libri XXXVII*, translated into French. Killed whilst observing the catastrophic eruption of Vesuvius.
- *Discorides* (writings c. 77-78AD, of Cilicia, Asia Minor) His *Materia Medica* is the most valuable source of botany of the ancient herbalists describing some 600 species. This work was painstakingly copied and spread throughout Christendom remaining in daily use for 1,500 years
- *Galen* (131 – 200AD) Imperial Physician, Rome. Author of several distinguished medical books held in high reputation down to the Middle Ages.
- *Parcelus*. Made popular the *Doctrine of Signatures* in early 1600's – the belief that the colour or shape of a plant (or its parts) indicated its use in the cure of ailments and relationship to the complaint.
- *Culpeper*. Developed the belief that heavenly bodies had an influence on plants set out in *The Complete Herbal & The Judgement of Diseases*. His best known works are *The Complete Herbal* and *English Physician*. He lived and worked in London. d. 1654
- *John Gerard* (1545 – 1611, of London) is best known for his *The Herball or General Historie of Plants*, first published in 1597 and in its 2nd Edition by Thomas Johnson in 1636
- *John Parkinson* (1567 – 1629) was a King's Herbalist and a director of the Royal Gardens at Hampton Court. Known for *Paradisus Terrestis* (1629) and *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640).

N.B. the language of Elizabethan herbalists is remarkable, amounting to poetic prose, of much historical interest. The ancient Greek and Roman herbalists are frequently quoted with translation of Greek and Latin in Elizabethan English of delightful reading.

2. SOME LATER AUTHORS

- *Joseph Miller* - *Botanicum Officinale (Compendious Herbal)* 1722.
- *John Hill M.D.* – *A General Natural History (Animals Vegetable and Minerals)* 1751, and *British Herbal (History of Plants and Trees native to Britain Cultivated for use or raised for Beauty)* (1756).

- *William Salmon M.D. – The English Herbal or History of Plants* (1710)
- *Benjamin Barton F.L.S. & Thomas Castle M.D., F.L.S. – The Medicinal Plants of Great Britain* (2 Vols) (1845).

MEDICINE MAGIC AND MYTH

1.0 EARLY CHRISTIAN TIMES

1.1 Since the early ancient Greek and Egyptians, extensive knowledge of the healing and protective properties of plants, both medicinal and magic, accumulated. How widespread this knowledge was is difficult to determine, and to what extent it was held in the hands of a powerful educated elite such as the magicians and philosophers described by Pliny. The Romans brought to Britain a relatively highly developed knowledge of medicine and hygiene, and their extensive pharmacopoeia included native plants that were probably collected locally. By the end of the empire, Roman knowledge and influences had spread throughout France and Germany to the extent that Northern Europe had become the centre of knowledge.

1.2 IN EUROPE

The French King Charlemagne, in his '*Capitulare de Villis*', written in about 800, stipulated the plants and estate style, which should be established throughout his empire. This initially gave an agricultural and horticultural unity, tempered by climate, to estates and monasteries throughout much of the land today now covered by France, Germany, Switzerland, The Low Countries, Northern Italy and Austria. Major influences had also originated in the Near East from the 7th Arab invasion of Persia. The Arabs absorbed rather than destroyed much of this civilisation and brought many influences of it to Europe by the route of invasion through southern Spain. They translated Greek and other pharmaceutical texts into Arabic and Latin so that European medical practitioners of the period, training in the new medical schools, were introduced to not only long lists of medical plants but also the dissemination of knowledge and ideas spread by scholars travelling between medical schools, botanic gardens and monasteries.

1.3 IN BRITAIN.

In Britain, between the collapse of Roman power in the 5th and the emergence of the Universities in the mid 12th, Monasteries were the only centres of higher education and learning, centres where the learning of Classical antiquity was kept alive. Before 1150 literature and scholarship were dominated by the work of Benedictine monks. These scholar-monks specialised in the writing of history, Bede

of Jarrow being one of the three greatest historians of the Middle Ages. The monastic libraries, in addition to religious texts, would have included books on music, history, prose and poetry of ancient Rome. Knowledge of Greek was unusual, but monks would read Latin authors such as Horace, Virgil and Ovid.

The ascendancy of Christianity over Paganism took place over several centuries with marked geographical and regional differences. In some parts of Britain Christianity became the dominant religion in just one generation, whilst in remoter Northern Scotland old beliefs survived until the end of the C7th. The earliest hospitals were attached to the new monastic foundations as refuges for old and disabled people and for travelling pilgrims, rather than places to treat the sick. Each monastery had an infirmary where treatment was available with herbal remedies made from plants cultivated in the physic garden.

There was a strong tradition of medical knowledge and plant lore in many monasteries, and many Abbots had studied medicine at famous medical schools in France and Italy. Monastic doctors could make large sums of money for their foundations from fees, in spite of such mercenary behaviour being not encouraged by Church Councils. In the later Middle Ages as the power of the monasteries declined, the influence of monks in medical practice became less common and leading doctors tended to be university trained laymen.

The healing properties of plants were frequently associated with particular Saints, beliefs that survived to the end of the C19th. In spite of ruthless suppression, beliefs in old Pagan magic persisted and survived in many instances, sometimes absorbed and adopted with new interpretations into mainstream Christian worship and belief. Two parallel traditions were active in the Dark Ages. On the one hand were monastic and medieval university trained physicians (all male), mainly town and city based serving those members of the population of wealth and means. On the other was self-treatment and the folk-lore healers (mostly female) of the ordinary and poorer people of rural areas, often using the same plant remedies, with great distrust of each other. Religious persecution and witch hunting, lead to persecution and death of thousands of folk healers, and suppression of the status of herbal medicine. It was not until, in Scotland, the advent of Balfour and Sibbald in the C17th, both Edinburgh trained medical doctors with education in some of Europe's finest universities, that interest in plants for healing was revived. In 1670 they established a Physic garden near Holyrood, which ultimately grew over two thousand plants. This became the forerunner of Edinburgh's Royal Botanic Garden, used by generations of Scottish medical students to learn botany and herbal medicine until well into the C20th.

THE MONASTIC TRADITION

1.0 THE ARRANGEMENT OF GARDENS

Within monasteries of the major religious orders in Britain there were gardens for privacy, study and contemplation, for recreation and refreshment, for the production of food, medicines and ornamentation and as a burial place for the dead. A hermit-style monastic tradition was established within two centuries of Christianity itself but it was St. Benedict who initiated the self-sufficient and corporate monastic style of life based on his *rule* which was perfected during the 7th. Emphasis was on warm hospitality for travellers at all levels of society and respect for the sick. This shaped the elements of the monastic garden: the Infirmary and the orchard cemetery, the Guesthouse and the Cellarer's garden to feed the residents and the visitors. The contribution of monasteries to horticulture was enormous in developing an understanding of techniques such as soil improvement, land reclamation and drainage. Coldingham's Benedictine settlement was tied to its Durham mother house and although one of the smaller monastic foundations, it was at the forefront of farm, water, woodland and estate management with an educated and progressive regime, probably some 100 years ahead of its neighbours (*see authors account of the History of the Col Mill*)

1.1 THE INFIRMARY GARDEN

The Infirmary was basically a sanatorium administrator, employing gardeners, directing a physician (in Coldingham's case from the mother house Durham) and administering apothecary prescriptions in addition to his own palliative remedies. Apart from the care of patients, the infirmary was a rest home for retired monks with incurable diseases in old age and a place of convalescence for monks who were bled about six times a year to relieve the stress of tedium. The garden would therefore need to grow the medicinal plants needed for ordinary medicine and for the treatment of patients, *in extremis*, who might require narcotics in addition to prayer. For the regular intake of monks to be bled, ingredients were required for post-bloodletting drinks (Saltwater, Parsley and Sage) and poultices to suppress inflammation (a mixture of groundsel, leeks, chickweed, mint, mugwort, monks patience and parsley). Most importantly, the garden had to provide nourishing food, refreshment of the senses in pleasant surroundings and a place to exercise, and space permitting, a herbarium. To cater for the colony of lepers at Northfield (*see NOTE*), at a safe distance away from the Priory boundary at Applin Cross, we know of the additional responsibility of David, Keeper of Lepers, and the burden on the foundation of administering to victims of plague.

NOTE: I looked up some of my old references to cast more light on the Northfield Leper Colony. It seems its exact site is not known now. From repeated inferences very likely it was beyond Northfields Cow Loan (a medieval name) to the north or east of the so-call 'Roman Camp'; possibly on part of the sheltered plateau behind Bell Hill, where there was a water source. From there would have been a clear view of the Kirk Hill of St Abbs Head, a source of early spiritual hope, particularly in the days of the oratory and pilgrimages to St. Ebbe's shrine.

1.2 THE CELLARERS GARDEN

Several acres were required for supplying a monastery with vegetables and herbs. Utilitarian plants were required such as hay for latrines and the refectory floor and rushes, mints and meadow sweet for strewing. Such a garden was not only for monks but also for the numerous lay workers who needed to be fed in addition to visitors and also to provide for the poor. Within its precincts would be fruit trees planted in orchard pasture.

1.3 THE PARADISE OR CEMETERY ORCHARD

The cemetery was another garden intended to refresh the senses of the living, symbolising Paradise. Taken from the early Persians, the concept of an orchard setting appears in the Christian world as early as the C9th. Cemeteries were under the care of the Sacrist who may have incorporated further plants necessary for religious festivals. Paradises were also provided for contemplation, an opportunity of some small relief from the burden and tedium of a monk's discipline and daily order of life.

2.0 THE MONASTIC RECORD OF PLANTS

2.1 The Cistercian order left its mark primarily on agriculture and the Augustinians specialised in healing the sick, but the early order of the Benedictines were skilled in garden cultivation. Modern research has now provided early plants of Monasteries and their gardens especially from work done by architectural and garden historian John Harvey (1981). One of the earliest plans is of St. Gall, Switzerland, c 816-20. This gives lists of Physic and Vegetable garden plants and orchard trees. Friar Daniel lists 252 species growing in his London Stepney garden in C14th and physician Henry the Poet lists the top 96 medicinal plants of the time. The Gardener list of 1350 gives a compilation from a variety of sources including native medicinal herbs, culinary plants, aesthetically appealing plants, hedging and woodland trees and shrubs and orchard and nut trees, gleaned from medieval gardens and country customs. The most complete and celebrated Fromond List, compiled about 1525 probably for a royal household, gives a record for the end of the Middle Ages.

2.2 Of British medieval monastic medicine, the earliest known herbal is the Saxon *Leech Book of Bald* written early in the C10th. By the C12th learning in Scotland developed greatly under Queen Margaret and King David 1. David 1 was a great church reformer, founding Melrose Abbey in 1136 (Cistercian, mother house at

Rievaulx), Jedburgh in 1138 (Augustinian) and the promoter of the foundation of Drybrough Abbey in 1150 by Hugh de Moreville (Premonstratensian). Records exist for at least 150 medieval hospitals attached to religious houses in Scotland, and recent archaeological studies at Jedburgh and Soutra have revealed the use of many medicinal plants both native and imported. The C15th or C16th Gaelic medicinal manuscript, *The Regimen-Sanitas* (Rule of Health) includes many anecdotes and folk beliefs and quotes many ancient medical authorities. In the best monastic tradition, it emphasises the importance of a healthy lifestyle, moderation in eating and drinking and the taking of plenty of exercise.

NOTE: Most plants in early cultivation do not normally indefinitely persist and survive domestically or in the wild. Of local interest is a colony of Artemisia or Wormwood, *Artemisia absinthium* on a rock outcrop at nearly Coldingham Law, which could conceivably date back to medicinal introductions by the Friars of Coldingham Priory From: *A short Flora of Berwickshire* 2014 – M.E. Braithwaite – BSBI

3 TREATMENT OF LEPROSY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

3.1 The outbreaks of contagious diseases, leprosy, smallpox and pestilential fevers were constant and severe all through the Middle Ages, and sufferers were not allowed to enter towns or cities or be engaged in the selling of food or drink. This rule applied particularly to leprosy, prevalent for several centuries. The number of leper hospitals in England and Scotland were said to have exceeded 200 (in France, over 2,000).

It is likely other diseases, particularly plagues, were confused with leprosy of which there were 2 strains – the prevalent Levant type, certainly brought back to England (and France) by returning Crusaders from the Holy Lands, and the cold climate strain endemic of Northern Europe, particularly Germany.

The treatment of lepers in England under the monastic medicine of hospital rule may have been humane to the point of danger: one of the ways of aspiring to sainthood was to personally tend and administer to sufferers needs. The stages of progression of the disease as it consumed the body were recognised: lighter sufferers and the incurable (obviously a most undesirable mixing) were congregated in organised colonies set at a safe distance of isolation away from the charitable providers of food, alms and sufferance.

The principle herbs used in the treatment of leprosy were garlic, burdock, red dock and goose grass. Garlic was so much used as a cure that lepers acquired the name of pilgarlics because they were made to peel the garlic for their own consumption.

3.2 FOR LEPROSY

- 1 “Get the roots of the red dock, the roots of the elecampane, honeysuckle leaves, wild hyacinth, broom sprigs, bugle, violet heath, shield fern and avens; pound them well together in a mortar with unsalted butter, boiling them well, removing from the fire and straining through new linen; add thereto a portion of flour of brimstone and verdigris. Anoint the diseased part frequently with the ointment, and by God’s help it will cure it.”
- 2 “Take the leaves from burdock, pound them well with a little wine and strain. Take three spoonful’s night and morning and noon, and let a decoction of burdock be your only drink. The part should be fomented with decoction also as hot as you can bear and anoint after with an unguent made of wine, olive oil and honey. Proven.”

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1. From various sources seen between 2009 and 2014 in the preparation of the authors *Historical Account of Northfield Barony and Coldingham Shore (St. Abbs Village) C18th to C20th*; both quoted and unquoted.
2. *The Magic of Herbs; A modern Book of Secrets*. Mrs C.F. Leyer, (1st Edition) Jonathan Cape 1926.

NOTES ON FRUIT TREE TYPES

1. *Prunus avium*, Gean or wild cherry. An attractive native tree, medium-sized to large with small and shiny reddish purple fruits, tasting bitter or sweet with age. From the species are derived most of the cultivated sweet cherries. Cultivated since early times, fruit stalks were boiled and used medicinally.
2. *Malus*, flowereing crabs. Small to medium sized trees, easily grown. *Malus sylvestris* is the Common Crab apple, a parent of the orchard apple, *Malus domestica*. The fruits are small and sharp in flavour most suitable for using in preserves i.e. crab apple jelly and jams. *Malus* 'John Downie' is said to be the best fruiting crab, bright orange red with a refreshing flavour. Raised in 1875, it has however, no culinary historical tradition. *Malus tschonoskii*, also in the collection, has yellowish-green fruits with reddish purple tints with attractive autumn foliage colour. Introduced from Japan in 1897 it is used as an excellent urban street tree for public planting in confined spaces, again, with no historic culinary tradition.
3. *Morus nigra*, black mulberry. A small very long lived architectural tree from W. Asia with dark, almost black-red fruits of distinctive taste. Said to have been grown in England since the early C16th. The fruits may be eaten fresh or cooked to make jelly and wine. Mulberry needs a warm sheltered site, and wall shelter in cold districts. The roots are brittle and care is needed in planting. The specimen provided here was supplied root bag grown and clearly deserves a better site. There are both Old and New Testament Biblical references, in Luke to the sycamine tree, The Purple Mulberry. It also has medicinal uses as a nutritive and laxative.
4. *Cydonia oblonga*. Quince. Native of N. Iran and Turkestan, this makes an attractive specimen tree for lawns preferring a warm sheltered position. Quince has large soft pink dog rose type flowers and beautiful golden fruit, which cannot be eaten raw, but is excellent for jelly and flavouring apple pies. 'Vranja' is the most popular fruiting selection. Quince has long medical use in dysentery and externally as a soothing lotion. Culpeper recommends the fruit juice as a preservative against the force of deadly poisons. (*The Complete Herbal 1653*)
5. *Mesphilus germanica*, Medlar. From S.E. Europe and Central Asia of equal merit as mulberry as an architectural specimen feature. Related to *Crataegus* (Hawthorn) and long cultivated in England, naturalised in the S.E. Midlands. Cultivars such as 'Nottingham' are selected for their fruits and have fewer thorns and larger attractive leaves. The fruit resembles a large russet rose hip and is eaten when

'bletted'. It has a pleasant caramel flavour, excellent when eaten with wine, port and cheese. It is now most likely to be seen in old gardens associated with cathedrals, abbeys and other ancient foundations. One of the former quartet of trees planted in the corners of herb gardens and orchards with quince, mulberry and walnut.

NOTES ON TREES AND SHRUBS

1. *Rowan, Mountain Ash.* A tree of magic properties, more potent than any other against evil or bad luck. Its wood was incorporated into nearly every object that might need protection, particularly the house and basic possessions. For the traditional cottage chimney crossbeam for cooking is the 'rantree', the rowan often used. Garlands wreaths and wands were used as protection against witchcraft. The bark made a poultice for adder bites, a decoction of berries for whooping cough. The berries also made a cider-like fermented drink as well as rowan jelly (SH)
2. *Beech.* Not native to Scotland, but long introduced, planted and naturalised. The mast was fed to pigs and dried and ground as a coffee substitute. Young leaves can be used in salads and made into wine and liqueur. The nuts are a source of oil, which can be made into margarine. (FB)
3. *Hazel.* Hazel was sacred in Celtic times to the sea god Manannan. Unnecessary cutting lead to death. The nuts were a staple of prehistoric peoples, an emblem of concentrated wisdom, sweet, compact and sustaining sought by Druids to gain prophetic powers. Equal to Rowan in Scottish druidic rites over oak. Sacred to witches, two nuts equally joined together called St. John's nut, a good omen, could be thrown at witches to repel. Nuts used in divination rites. Hazel is associated with Thor, God of Fire, as its wood makes fire by friction. Wands, sticks and rods offered protection against evil and were used in dowsing for minerals, coal, metals & water. The wood provided many utilitarian uses for tools, baskets, hurdles, wattles and construction of small dwellings. (SH)
4. *Hawthorn.* Once considered so sacred that any use of the tree was considered a violation. Planted in circles of worship groves in pre-Christian times and on graves of important people. The "Holy Innocents" of early Christian worship. It is still considered to bring ill luck if the flowers are brought inside for ornament and decoration. The dried berries make a cardiac tonic (SH) (P)
5. *Greater Periwinkle. (Vinca)* Not known in Scotland, but the 'Saint Candida's Eyes' of Dorset. Medicinal preparations reduce high blood pressure and stem internal and external bleeding. (P)

- The original garden plant list here specifies Bugle (Ajuga), an important vulnerary herb and blood coagulant, taken internally as a bitter astringent. (P)
- 6&7 Dogwood (Cornus). Not known in ceremony or worship, but in medieval times the 'dag' wood (Not dog) had practical uses as skewers for meat at the table (FB)
- 10 Yew. The legacy of Druids, planted in graveyards as the evergreen symbol of immortality and to protect and purify the dead. The fastigate Irish Yew of later churchyards was found in the wild in Fermanagh in the 1760's (FB)
- 12&18 Willow: The garden has two representative willows – Salix vitellina, used for weaving, binding and tying, but of later date, a variant of the white willow, S.alba of old English water meadows. Salix pentandra, bay willow, is a Scots native, with weaving uses. The leaves make a tea. The bark and leaves of white willow can be prepared as a tonic astringent for rheumatic complaints, dysentery, fever and ophthalmic disturbance with meadowsweet (not represented here) it yields the 'Salicin' of aspirin. The Sallow willows were sacred trees of Druidic divination (SH) (P)
- 19 Holly Represented by a horticultural variety in the garden. A magical plant hated by witches and repellent to fairies, therefore protective against evil with a sympathetic magic owing to its prickly nature. As an evergreen, it had supernatural ability to withstand the onslaught of winter and was the male partner to female ivy. Used as wreaths by the Romans and burnt to stave off plague. The leaves and berries have febrifuge and cathartic properties, used to relieve fever and rheumatism. Associated with the pagan Christian Roman Feast of Saturnalia and adopted into mainstream Christianity (SH) (FB)
- 21 Box As a sombre evergreen, box has a long association in country custom with grave decoration and funerals. An extract is used as a blood purifier (FB)
- 23 Portugal laurel Not introduced into Britain until 1648 and therefore of doubtful status here. Noteworthy as a first class nectar and pollen source for bees. The common or cherry, laurel was introduced in 1576 and has calmative medicinal properties, noted in Gerard in 1597. (P)
- 24 Blackthorn Long associated with the dark forces and in rites of black witches but with counter beliefs of defensive powers against evil. A shrub with many practical uses; sloes make sloe gin and wine, the former a remedy for diarrhoea. Preparations from the bark reduce fever and yield red-brown to orange dye, the fruits, pink to grey-blue pigments. Blackthorn walking sticks are prized (SH) (FB)

FOOTNOTE:

- 17 *Hamamelis 'Pallida'* out of place here as an exotic (the species *chinensis* not before late C19th). The Eastern North American sp *virginiana*, long used by native American tribes, yields the commercial witch hazel valuable for treatment of piles and haemorrhoids. (P)

Classical note

The Ilex of Roman times is *Quercus ilex* or Holm Oak.

Bay laurel, *laurus nobilis* was used as wreaths to crown poets and hero's (19, 22)

REFERENCES

(SH) *The Scots Herbal*

(FB) *Flora Britannica*

(P) *Potter*

1 – 24 Numbered as Shrub Area Plan CPCG – 2

NOTES ON ORCHARD WILDFLOWER AREA.

Listed in approximate order of dominance and impact in the garden.

1. *Nettle* One of Western Europe's (and Scotland's) most useful plants of the past. Culinary and practical uses include Nettle soup (on the Celtic fringe eaten with oatmeal in broth) tea, a substitute for rennet in cheese making, hair tonic, fibres from stems and leaves to weave cloth from Bronze Age to C18th, as fine as linen, strong and durable until replaced by flax. Flowers, seeds and leaves make botanic beer and medicinally a diuretic and astringent tonic for eczema & treatment of wounds. Nettle is known by several Biblical references (SH) (P)
2. *Cleavers* There are frequent references in old herbals to physic and country people's use of this plant noted by Culpeper as a rampant choking weed (as here in the garden) boiled as a healthy spring tonic, and used as a snakebite cure. Gerard recommends a potage to encourage slimness and it possesses laxative and diuretic properties. It yields a red dye. (P)
3. *Hogweed* Useful fodder for pigs and cattle (SH)
4. *Knapweed* (Black) An important medicinal herb said to equal Gentian as a tonic. Culpeper recommends it as an 'admirable remedy for a sore throat, swelling of the uvula and jaw and all green wounds' (P)
5. Hedge woundwort (Allheal) An antiseptic and antispasmodic with a wide range of healing properties, particularly praised by Gerard. Its applications extended to relief of gout, cramp, pains in the joints, sickness and vertigo (P)
6. *Ox-eye Daisy/Marguerite* An antispasmodic and diuretic tonic, similar to Chamomile for nervous excitability, coughs, asthma, earache, toothache and neuralgia. Also used as a lotion for wounds and ulcers. (P)
7. *Cow Parsley* Arguably the most important spring landscape flower in Britain. This umbellifer and its close relative (including hemlock) should be approached with caution, as some are very toxic and were connected with the devil. Hemlock was often grown in medieval monastic hospitals to stupefy and dull pain prior to and during surgery (SH) (FB)
8. *Meadow Cranesbill* In spite of its attractive appearance it does not seem to have entered much in folklore or social life. The distinctive seed-cases are shaped like a birds bill. (FB)

9. Ribwort Plantain One of the Anglo-Saxon nine sacred herbs and an early headache cure. The ancient writers Dioscorides and Pliny give the plantains a long list of medicinal uses including inflammation, pustules, bleedings, mad dog bites, tumours, ulcers, asthma and periodic fevers. As with dock, leaves give relief from nettle stings. (P)
10. Self-heal (Prunella) An old medicinal herb used in Europe, and a popular wound-herb of country use for the throat and internal bleeding, sores, skin and headaches. It is recommended internally and externally (P) (FB)
11. Chicory The ground root, the well-known substitute for coffee in cultivation at least by the early C16th as 'Succory'. Medicinally, used as a tonic, diuretic and laxative effective in jaundice, liver, gout and rheumatics (P) (FB)
12. Ground Elder Introduced to Britain, possibly by the Romans, as a pot herb and medicine against gout, but its use declined. By the time of Gerard, known as a rampant invasive. Recommended by Culpeper for its virtues (FB) (P)
13. Achillea (Yarrow) Regarded as a powerful herb early in Anglo-Saxon times. Used in divination rituals and as a charm against bad luck and illness and for staunching wounds. Its counter, or paradox, as often found in magic – based herbalism, was that when pressed to the nose, it caused sneezing and nosebleeds. One of the world's oldest medicinal plants, named after the Greek warrior Achilles, given as a tonic stimulant for colds and fever. (P) (FB)
14. White Dead Nettle known collectively with the other 'dead' nettles as 'Archangel', a vernacular name due to non-stinging virtues. There were many old country games of pursuit and tease between boys and girls (FB)
15. Small Scabious – similar to Field Scabious, the name derived from Scabiosa herba the herb given in accordance with the Doctrine of Signatures for scabies because of its rough stalks. In addition to skin disorders it was given internally for lung and respiratory complaints and for side stitch. The related Devils Bit scabious was used in old remedies given in wine against plague, fever, poison and injury. (FB)

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- (SH) The Scots Herbal
 (FB) Flora Britannica
 (P) Potter

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