

*The Domestic Herbal: Plants for the Home in the Seventeenth Century.*  
Margaret Willes.

Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2020. vii + 224 pp. £25.

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Willes has authored many books, including several on gardens and country estates; these are now joined by this elegant volume on creamy stock, illustrated on every other page. Each of its half-dozen chapters focuses on a different use of plants in early modern homes: as food and drink, in healthcare and cosmetics, for clothing and fragrance. After a brief overview of the changing place of plants and gardens in the period, Willes presents subsequent chapters as steps on a house tour, including some rooms emergent in early modernity, like a separate kitchen, as well as older, now unfamiliar settings, like stillrooms, brewhouses, and long galleries. The book necessarily ranges out of doors as well, to sites of botanical cultivation and commerce, from grocery and apothecary shops to London coffee houses and New World plantations—which reminds us that the domestic should never be imagined as merely private, when the home was and remains the hub of so much economic, intellectual, and social activity.

Willes assembles her account from a selection of recent scholarship (on cooking, medicine, gardening, cosmetics, and country houses) and a host of primary texts, both canonical and obscure, in manuscript and print: little-known recipe books, more familiar diaries, standard herbal encyclopedias, and off-radar ephemera like Sarah Jinner's almanacs. The author also deploys a familiarity with heritage properties perhaps derived from her tenure as publisher for the National Trust; descriptions of specific houses, farms, and gardens (surviving or reconstructed) let material evidence dovetail with the textual record.

Familiar anecdotes about the introduction to England of potatoes and tobacco are paired with more off-beat factoids, such as the alleged dislike of mice for mint. A core sample of the volume's contents might be taken from the topics indexed for a single letter—although the index is perhaps too succinct, since a random search showed surprising exclusions: why is snail water not listed when the recipe is quoted in full? Under the letter *B*, we find Bacon, Sir Francis; Barbados; bay; bayberry; Beale, John; bees; berries; betony; Bettisfield, Flintshire; Birkett, Elizabeth; bog myrtle; Boorde, Dr Andrew; borage; botanic gardens; Bullein, William. Beyond the expected handful of plant species and gardening topics, Barbados signals Willes's attention to the importance of novel imports from abroad, while Bettisfield is evidence of her turn to more local sites. Her consideration of a few canonical figures (Bacon, Beale, Boorde) is enriched by a turn to the less familiar Birkett, whose 1699 commonplace book is among a handful of female-authored texts foregrounded in her analysis of women's involvement with plants in the home. *The Domestic Herbal's* flickering focus on female experience, though neither flagged in the title nor forced in the text, correlates well with the centering of early modern women's work in the home.

This brief study is bisected and bulked up by a central insert, consisting of an alphabetical array of fifty plants used by seventeenth-century housewives. The text in this section gathers period claims (charming, intriguing, factual, specious) about the featured species. The accompanying illustrations lack identifying captions, so their sources must be disentangled from the credits at the end of the book—an unfortunate consequence of a design that privileges beauty over utility. In both this section, and throughout the book, some claims would become more useful with sharper focus, firmer sourcing, and stronger framing; the latter might clarify, for instance, the value in reading the early modern instructions for growing and processing plants that are occasionally quoted without comment. Rhetorically, the style is less thesis-driven than descriptive and anecdotal, so logic cannot easily drive one paragraph into the next; instead, the author seems inspired by the often-eclectic manuscript miscellanies she consults. The conversational prose will be entirely accessible to generalist readers, making this a book for gardeners as much as gardening historians.

This highly ornamental cabinet of horticultural, gastronomical, and medicinal curiosities intersects not only with the history of gardens and herbalism but also with architectural history, cooking history, and studies of early modern women's (and men's) experience, education, and material culture. The inescapable place of plants in every aspect of seventeenth-century daily life and culture is an undeniable takeaway, and the light touch involved in highlighting and integrating such a diversity of topics and sources should please a great variety of readers.

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*The Age of Intoxication: Origins of the Global Drug Trade.* Benjamin Breen. The Early Modern Americas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. 280 pp. \$34.95.

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A book with the title *The Age of Intoxication* is bound to elicit curiosity, both about the intoxicating agents themselves, and the particular moment in time when their cultural and geographic reach was such as to identify an age. On neither front does Breen disappoint. His deeply researched and compellingly argued study of the early modern emergence of a global trade in a wide range of commodities able to alter the physical and mental states of their consumers is hard to put down. In it we find everything from the excavated journals of European bio-prospectors wandering—often lost—through the tropics, to court verdicts against marginalized healers and apothecary vendors in metropolises such as Lisbon and London; from the fetishized practices of Indigenous shaman on multiple continents, to the reckless self-experimentation of the budding scientists of the Royal Society; and from the wrecked lives of those who became slaves to their