



HEALING
WITH
FLOWERS

The Power of
Floral Medicine

ANNE McINTYRE

Healing with Flowers



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Please note:

The information in this book is compiled from a blend of historical and modern sources, from folklore and personal experience. It is not intended to replace the professional advice and care of a qualified herbal or medical practitioner. Do not attempt to self-diagnose or self-prescribe for serious long-term problems without first consulting a qualified professional. Heed the cautions given, and if already taking prescribed medicines or if you are pregnant, seek professional advice before using herbal remedies.

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Introduction

*The rose that with your earthly eyes you see
Has flowered in god from all eternity
– Angelus Silesius (1624–1677)*

Exuberant red peonies, sweet-smelling primroses, exotic lilies, cheerful calendulas, delicate anemones and wonderfully perfumed roses – just some of the flowers that we all know and cannot help but love. All over the world such flowers are part of human life, marking every important occasion, every change and ritual from the cradle to the grave. Today, as thousands of years ago, flowers are able to express what we often cannot find the words to say. As Wordsworth so aptly wrote, inspired by flowers as many a poet before and after him, *"To me the meanest flower that blows can give, thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."*

Flowers are given to express joy at the birth of a child and they adorn all ceremonies in every religion. They are exchanged between men and women as tokens of love, they are presented on birthdays and given to family and friends, hosts and honoured guests as gestures of appreciation. It is hard to imagine visiting a sad or unwell relative or friend without bearing flowers to lift their spirits and speed them to health or picture a wedding without flowers woven into bridal crowns and bouquets to enhance the beauty and romance of the occasion. Flowers grace our tables at celebratory meals and banquets, they brighten the house through every season and warm the heart, even on cold winter days when the rest of nature apparently sleeps. Flowers in garlands and wreaths at funerals comfort the bereaved and pay respect to the departed. They give universal pleasure, inspiring us to grow them to delight us in our gardens, pots and window-boxes. Similarly, they have inspired artists and poets through the ages. Our soft furnishings, cosmetics, soaps and perfumes invariably incorporate floral motifs or flowers, as do many of our medicines, for since the beginning of time we have used flowering plants to heal our ills.

Clearly there exists a deep bond between flowers and humankind and yet we may be unaware how they came to play such an important part in our lives. We appreciate their aesthetic beauty, their perfect form and often heavenly smell, but may not know the history and significance of the flowers we see around us today which dates back to antiquity. Flowers have featured in the beliefs, art and medicine of our ancestors for thousands of years. All over the world flowers have been part of myth and legend, worship and religion. They have become symbols of a whole range of human and spiritual experience, including love and remembrance, purity and fidelity, fertility and abundance, joy and sorrow, death and rebirth, mortality and immortality. They are an integral part of our everyday existence and it would be hard to imagine life without them!

This book is about the healing power of flowers that permeates every dimension of our lives. It tells the story of the mythological and historical origins of flowers in healing and

medicine and is a reminder of the significance, even magnitude, of flowers that is still with us today as it was thousands of years ago. Since earliest times, when people lived so much closer to nature than we do now, flowers have been endowed with magical, supernatural or divine properties, and often with natures and temperaments much like our own. Just as human life was imbued with the divine spirit, so too flowers were seen to possess an in-dwelling spirit or soul which determined each flower's shape and form, its way of growth, its taste and smell and its purpose in the world in relation to human life.

In the ancient wisdom traditions of the world, healing plants have long been seen as manifestations of the conscious intelligence of the universe. The 'life force,' 'qi' or 'prana' of each plant is understood to be a dynamic manifestation of the divine or consciousness and every plant has its own subtle intelligence or unique wisdom, its life force and attributes which give it 'energetic' qualities as well as its array of medically active constituents and its potential ability to heal.

Herbs and flowers from all over the globe can impart their wisdom or intelligence to us and help us to balance energetic disruptions that create imbalances and health problems in mind and body. They have the power to reconnect or realign us with the conscious intelligence of nature that we a part of and in this way bring about healing. They are an extraordinary gift. Whether we live in town or country, we can benefit from the incredible healing ability of the flowers around us and use them to care for ourselves and others.

In these pages you will read about myths and legends that tell meaningful stories about flowers, the historical and folkloric importance of flowers in healing and other aspects of life, and the symbolism and language of each flower as you go through the repertory of healing flowers. You will also read about how each of the 64 flowers described here can be used in healing and the different modes of preparation used; as a herbal maceration of the flower, a distilled oil of the flower, a potentised homeopathic remedy from the flower and as a flower essence. As each flower is described you will hopefully find a thread that runs through the stories and myths about that flower, its historical and folkloric use, the details of its modern medicinal use as a herbal remedy relating to its biochemical constituents and its use in aromatherapy, homoeopathy and as a flower essence. This thread portrays each flower as having its own particular energy and vibration, its unique healing attributes, almost with its own personality as a healer. The healing power of each flower exists in whichever way it is used and I hope that this book will convey to you that it is the story of the flower itself which binds its use in healing together and that as you spend time getting to know each flowering plant, you will gain a deeper understanding of its unique character that can be of help to you as you journey through life.

*What a desolate place would be a world without a flower!
It would be a face without a smile, a feast without a welcome.
Are not flowers the stars of the earth, and are not our stars the
flowers of the heaven*

– Clara Lucas Balfour (1808–1878)

*They are autographs of angels, penned
In Nature's green-leaved book, in blended tints,
Borrowed from rainbows and the sunset skies,
And written everywhere—on plain and hill,
In lonely dells, 'mid crowded haunts of men;
On the broad prairies, where no eye save God's
May read their silent, sacred mysteries. Thank God for flowers!
They gladden human hearts; Seraphic breathings part their fragrant lips
With whisperings of Heaven.
— Albert Laighton (1829–1887)*







The Power of Floral Medicine

Anne McIntyre's revised and expanded edition of her previous work *The Complete Floral Healer* tells the story of the mythological, historical and current uses of flowers in healing and medicine and reminds us that their significance is as powerful today as it was in ancient times.

Their healing power permeates all aspects of our lives, helping us mark every event and ceremony from birth to death and bringing us joy and solace throughout the years. They have inspired poets, authors and artists and come to symbolise the whole range of human experience.

Beautifully illustrated with vibrant colour photographs, the book covers instead sixty-four flowers from around the world. Each flower chapter reveals the plant's historical and folkloric importance, details the medicinal use of each flower as a herbal remedy and explores its use in aromatherapy, homeopathy and as a flower essence.

A deeper understanding of the unique character of each flower – its story, personality and energy – is woven through this book and is a key resource for anyone curious about flowers, as well as gardeners and herbalists alike.

Healing with Flowers aims to deepen our connection with the beauty and complexity of nature, helping us to strengthen our relationship to the environment around us – on which our future survival ultimately depends.

Anne McIntyre is a Fellow of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists, a Member of the Ayurvedic Professionals Association, and a Member of the College of Practitioners of Phytotherapy. She has been practising herbal medicine and Ayurveda for forty years and lives and works in Gloucestershire. She gives evening talks and runs regular courses in herbal medicine and Ayurveda for both practitioners and lay people.

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