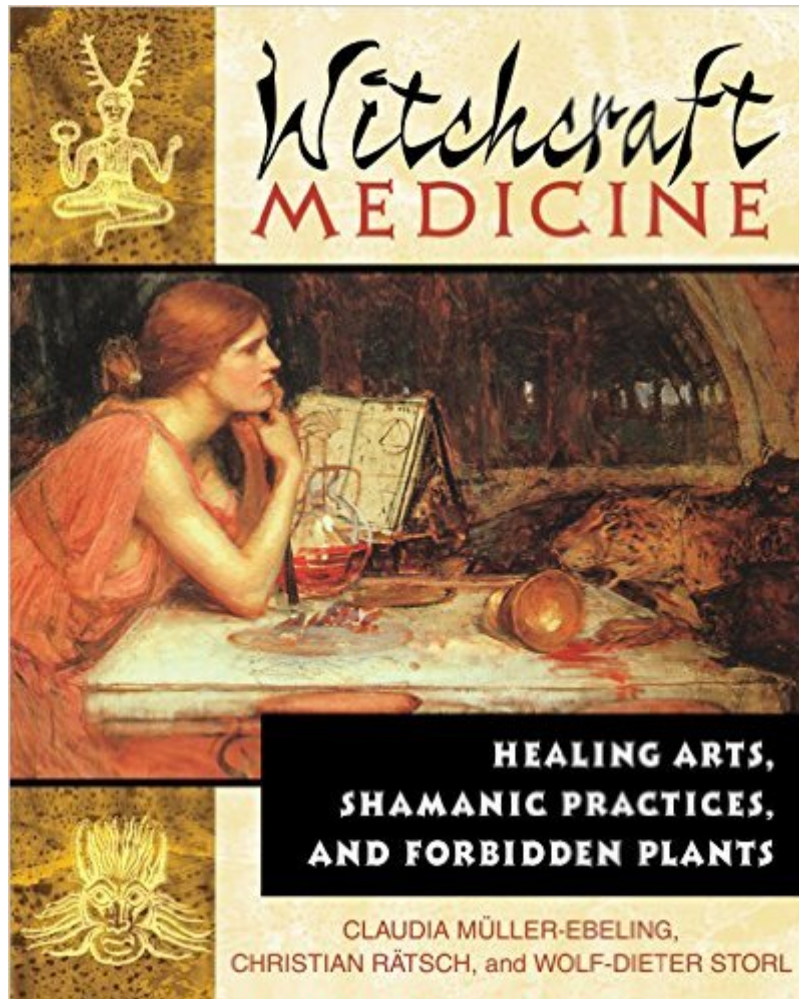


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# Witchcraft Medicine: Healing Arts, Shamanic Practices, And Forbidden Plants



## Synopsis

An in-depth investigation of traditional European folk medicine and the healing arts of witches • Explores the outlawed "alternative" medicine of witches suppressed by the state and the Church and how these plants can be used today • Reveals that female shamanic medicine can be found in cultures all over the world • Illustrated with color and black-and-white art reproductions dating back to the 16th century Witch medicine is wild medicine. It does more than make one healthy, it creates lust and knowledge, ecstasy and mythological insight. In *Witchcraft Medicine* the authors take the reader on a journey that examines the women who mix the potions and become the healers; the legacy of Hecate; the demonization of nature's healing powers and sensuousness; the sorceress as shaman; and the plants associated with witches and devils. They explore important seasonal festivals and the plants associated with them, such as wolf's claw and calendula as herbs of the solstice and alder as an herb of the time of the dead--Samhain or Halloween. They also look at the history of forbidden medicine from the Inquisition to current drug laws, with an eye toward how the sacred plants of our forebears can be used once again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When I picked up this book, I thought it looked very good. I don't think however, I was quite prepared to be as impressed as I was with the work. It is not just a work about herbs and Witchcraft and their history, but a treasure trove of world cultural traditions and the folk healing modalities. As a professional herbalist, I was really very happy to see the amount of research and documentation

that went into this book. It really delves into the European shamanic traditions and healing arts and folk religions attached to them. This is something, which is sadly quite lacking in a lot of literature that is about "shamanism". So much of it is a hodge podged mess of European and Native American practices and lots of urban legend. Not so with this book. You get a clear idea where the lines of the histories of Witchcraft and folk medicine practices got blurred and blown far out of proportion by way of legend and outright lies. And you also get an in depth look at how many of these plants were used. The authors pull no punches, poisons, hallucinogens and abortifacients can be found listed in this book. I think this is the first time in many years that I have seen an herbal book which dared to list them, let alone discuss them. I also learned about some plants that I had no knowledge of before and I am always up for that! This, I believe is how Witches in the past truly practiced, and how many still practice to this day throughout the world. The focus however is on European Witches and Western herbalism. *Witchcraft Medicine* is clearly a scholarly work, but it is not so much that the subject is at all dry and uninteresting to read. It was for me quite the contrary. I couldn't put it down! There is no religious-centric slant to it at all.

*Witchcraft Medicine: Healing Arts, Shamanic Practices, and Forbidden Plants* by Claudia Muller-Ebeling, Christian Ratsch, and Wolf-Dieter Storl Christian Ratsch, PhD, the well-known ethnopharmacologist from Germany and his partner Claudia Muller-Ebeling, PhD, have come through again. This is a fantastic book on the history, botany and prohibition of witchcraft and shamanism throughout Europe. The book provides an excellent breakdown of both herbal and entheogenic plants used throughout Europe in medieval and ancient times. From Hawthorn to Holly, Elder to Elm, Belladonna to Mandrake, Amanita to Psilocybe, this book provides a well rounded foundation for understanding the healing plants as well as the psychotropic plants and their usage, symbology and worship and prohibition. The first part of the book written by Wolf-Dieter Storl is good reading, however it lacks the references and solid foundation that Ratsch and Muller-Ebeling provide in their sections, providing the reader with maybe a 1/3 of the amount of reference material as the other two authors. This left me wanting more proof for some of his proposals. Another problem with the book is that the authors should have collaborated together on the book as a whole instead of writing their own separate sections. Their own sections cause a little unnecessary repetition throughout the book and because of this, in some places, as one reviewer mentioned, information seems contradictory.

In doing research for my medicinal garden, I found this book in my local library. I wasn't sure what to

expect with a picture of the painting "The Sorceress" by John William Waterhouse on the cover and a provocative title. I was pleasantly surprised. *Witchcraft Medicine* provides a well researched breakdown of both herbal and entheogenic plants used throughout Western Europe in medieval and ancient times. Originally published in German as *Hexenmedizin: Die Wiederdokumentation einer verbotenen Heilkunst--schamanische Traditionen in Europa*, the text covers the history and folk uses of both hallucinogenic herbs and healing herbs. The book has three distinct sections, each authored by different individuals. Wolf-Dieter Storl is a cultural anthropologist and ethnobotanist. Christian Rätsch and Claudia Müller-Ebeling are German ethnopharmacologists. The first part of the book written by Wolf-Dieter Storl is interesting reading; however it lacks the references and solid research that Rätsch and Müller-Ebeling provide in their sections. This left me wanting more supporting arguments for some of his statements. His research tended to consist primarily of anecdotal stories of his field research. Rätsch and Ebeling provide extensive source references in their chapters. The span of historical information ranges from the history of the Inquisition and its impact on witchcraft and shamanism in Europe to 20th century use of Absinthe and Coca leaves. There are numerous tables with correspondences of herbs and plants to specific god forms in Greek and Norse pantheons as well as plant lists associated with the gardens of Hecate, Medea, Artemis and Circe.

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