



At the Intersection of Magic and Medicine: Herbal Medicine in Celtic Fairylore and Witchcraft



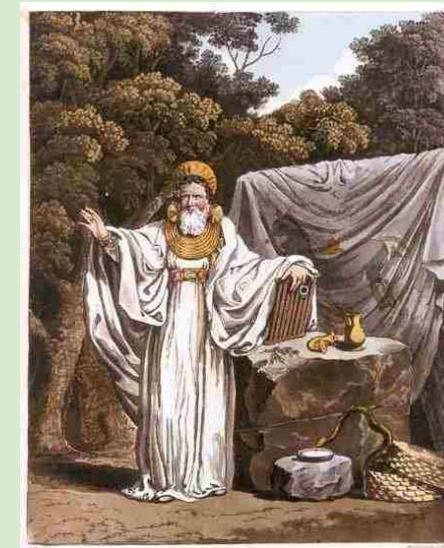
Fairies and Plants

Fairies are important tools of folklore. Their tales help us to impart knowledge and entertainment, but also act as tools to help explain the inexplicable. Across the globe, fairies have been associated with plants and the natural world. There are many plants named for their association with fairies across the Celtic region (such as “fairy bells” and “fairy flax”). Fairies are also heavily associated with healing plants; they are often tasked with teaching humans the uses of plants like in the Welsh tale “The Myddfai Physicians”.



Origins of Herbalism and Witchcraft

Across the Celtic region, today and in the past, plant medicine has been a primary form of health care. The roots of Celtic herbalism originate with the druids. Some sources state that the druids were in connection with all elements of the natural world which also included association with fairies. druids were also looked to for their knowledge in the healing arts. As Christianity became a colonizing force and druid culture was forced to fade and go underground, druid’s culture was adapted into the culture and practices of witches. Witches were often healers in their communities and employed typical folk and herbal remedies. As magical and folk beliefs became more entwined, both were subject to prosecution.



Influence of Fairylore on Witchcraft



Much like the preceding druids many witches or suspected witches claimed that they were in communion with the fairies. Often persecuted witches were condemned due to their association with the “unseen” or “otherworld”, often suspected of communicating with Satan. In many witches “trials” during the 1500’s onward, suspected witches often admitted to learning their magical and healing expertise from the fairies.

Importance of Herbal Medicine

Despite modernization and prosecution, folk herbal remedies still have their place in the medicine cabinets of people across the Celtic region. These ways of healing have often been more accessible, well known, and culturally relevant to the communities they serve. Herbal remedies are historically significant due to their association with both druids and witches. Herbal medicine is entwined heavily with folk practices through local practice and folklore such as in fairylore

