

Plant-lore Archive: towards a folk flora

The Plant-lore Archive project has developed from a survey of 'unlucky' plants, conducted by the Folklore Society in the early 1980s. It contains almost 6,600 items from approximately 1620 contributors, press cuttings, photographs and off-prints. An early contributor, in 1983, was Annie Mary Pell, and information has been collected while attending Kath and Richard Pryce's annual botanical recording week at Glynhir.

Material in the Archive was used in its compiler's *Dictionary of Plant-lore* (1995) and work is now progressing on a

Folk Flora

. While the

Dictionary

attempted to provide a broad survey of the folklore and traditional uses of wild and cultivated plants throughout the British Isles, the

Flora

will try to provide information of where and when various beliefs, local plant-names and practices were, or are, known. It is hoped that it will provide information on the distribution of British and Irish plant-lore throughout the rest of the world. As with the

Dictionary

, the

Flora

will place emphasis on what people remember, do and know today. This means that all records, even if they are of things which 'everyone knows', are important.

When people are asked if they know any folk remedies they tend to instantly reply no. They go to pharmacists, and don't resort to superstition and witchcraft. But if you ask 'What do you do if you get stung by a nettle?' They invariably reply 'Look for a dock leaf, of course'. It's assumed that such a widespread belief is unworthy of record, but there are different rhymes and rituals associated with the dock leaf cure in different parts of the British Isles. Even more interestingly, one would expect such a wide spread and well known cure to be also known throughout the rest of Europe, but it is not. It appears that people in most of Europe either know of no treatment for nettle stings, or treat them with urine, cow dung, or more rarely a variety of herbs, including spotted deadnettle (*Lamium maculatum*).

Further information about the Archive and the *Flora* can be found on the website, www.plant-lore.com, and

need-less-to say further memories and records would be greatly appreciated, please send them

APPEAL FOR YOUR RECOLLECTIONS ON PLANT FOLKLORE

Written by Richard Pryce - Last Updated Friday, 28 March 2014 14:06

to roy@plant-lore.com [ro](mailto:roy@plant-lore.com)
, or Roy Vickery, 9 Terrapin Court, Terrapin Road, London, SW17 8QW.