

## BOOK REVIEW

JJ PURSELL. ILLUSTRATIONS BY JORDAN KAY. 2026. **Medicine from the trees: Herbal remedies from the forest for whole-body health and wellness.** (ISBN 978-0-8478-7611-2, hardcover). Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 49 West 27th St., New York, New York, 10001, U.S.A. (**Orders:** rizzoliusa.com). \$34.95 US, hardcover; 232 pp., color photographs, 8" × 9".

**From the Publisher**

These recipes (including teas, tinctures, bath soaks, syrups, salves, and even cookies) will teach readers how to manage day-to-day physical complaints such as immune system health, colds, and stress. Did you know that you can pickle the seeds of American ash trees as a beneficial gut microbiome supplement and source of nutrition? That a morning tea made from banyan tree bark will balance blood sugar levels all day? That a tincture of beech leaves improves circulation? That a delicious ketchup made from hawthorn is good for the heart? That steamy spruce baths are effective for treating lower back pain as well as colds? Pursell reveals all these surprisingly simple and easy uses for medicinal preparations from the trees that surround us all, and many more.

Interwoven with the recipes are the author's own powerful memories and experiences with each tree species and lovely commissioned "modern botanical" illustrations, giving the entire collection a personal feel and beauty that makes it a perfect gift for anyone interested in herbal and alternative remedies.

**About the Author**

Dr. JJ Pursell is a board-certified naturopathic physician and licensed acupuncturist and has worked with medicinal herbs for more than 20 years. She is the former owner of both Brooklyn's The Herb Shoppe and Fettle, a Portland, Oregon-based apothecary.

The plant world is a giant chemical factory constantly churning out thousands of chemicals. Many of these chemicals are renowned medicinals, but many are also renowned poisons. The first plant I looked up in Pursell's book was white willow and sure enough, white willow is there. White willow produces one of the old drugs, aspirin (salicylic acid) still in use today but from synthetic sources. Pursell says, "The Sumerians, an ancient civilization of Mesopotamia, recorded the use of salicylates more than 3,000 years ago." Pursell tells the history and medicinal stories of 34 tree species from Acacia to Wild Cherry. This is a small number considering there are many more tree species in the world. How many tree species are there in world? Scientist from the UK's Botanic Gardens Conservation International compiled the first comprehensive list of all the world's tree species and estimated that there are 60,065 species of trees globally ([https://tools.bgci.org/global\\_tree\\_search.php](https://tools.bgci.org/global_tree_search.php)). And these tree species are making their own chemicals, some of which are surely medicinal.

One of my favorite tree species is the chocolate tree (*Theobroma cacao*) and it is not one of the 34 discussed in *Medicine from the Trees*. The author had to draw the line somewhere. If you are into natural medicine and herbal healing traditions, you will love *Medicine from the Trees* by JJ Pursell.

—Barney Lipscomb,

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