





## Hello there!

We are so happy that you are joining us on an adventure into the green world of plants, where you will discover the hidden histories of Montserrat's flora and all their magical healing properties.

### **Plants have been used for centuries in Montserrat.**

It used to be common for locals to use plants for healing sick people, and for taking care of their bodies.

Nowadays, most people have forgotten about these wonderful plants, locally referred to as 'bush' and how to use them.



Here you will learn the local and scientific names of fifteen medicinal plants, where to look out for them on the island, what they look like and how they are used as effective herbal remedies.

Are you ready to learn about the hidden histories of Montserrat's magical medicinal plants? Please ask your carer to read the important safety information on the back cover of this booklet.

**Let's have some fun!**

# Milk Thistle



1

**Common name:** Milk Thistle, Prickly Poppy or Mexican Poppy

**Scientific name:** *Argemone mexicana*

**Location on the island:** Found in very dry areas

**Description:** A small plant with pale green, prickly leaves that have white veins. It bears a yellow flower during the wet season

**Herbal remedies:** The milk from this plant is placed on the skin to treat ring worms

# Gum Bark Tree



2



**Common name:** Gum Bark Tree

**Scientific name:** *Bursera simaruba*

**Location on the island:** This tree is mainly found in the wet forested areas

**Description:** The bark of the tree is scaly

**Herbal remedies:** When dried it is used for making tea for treating colds



# Cintibibi



3

**Common name:** Cintibibi

**Scientific name:** *Aloe vera*

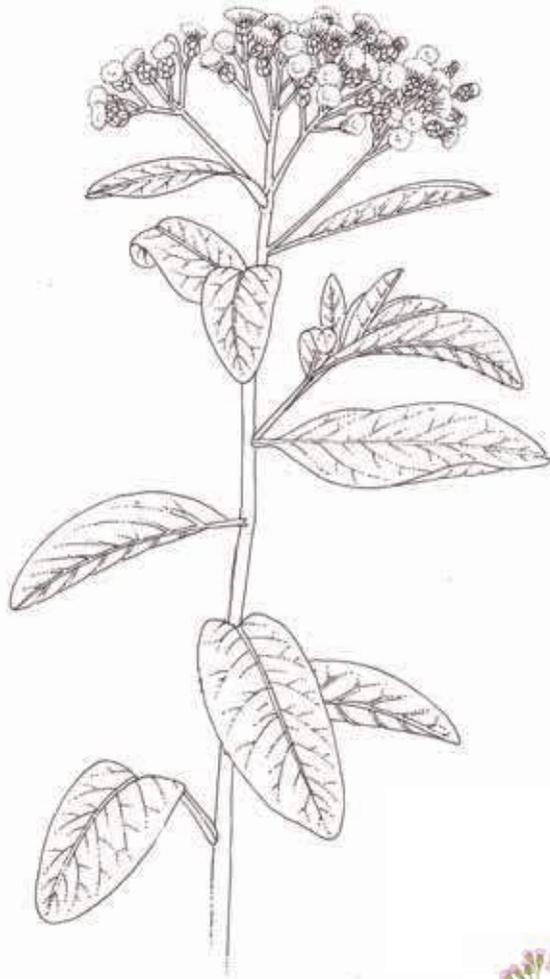
**Location on the island:** This is a succulent with sword-like fleshy leaves with sharp edges

**Description:** Wild dry areas and house yards

**Herbal remedies:** The succulent fleshy leaves are useful for placing on sunburns, cuts, and insect bites



# Cattle Tongue



4

**Common name:** Cattle Tongue or Congo Tobacco

**Scientific name:** *Pluchea carolinensis*

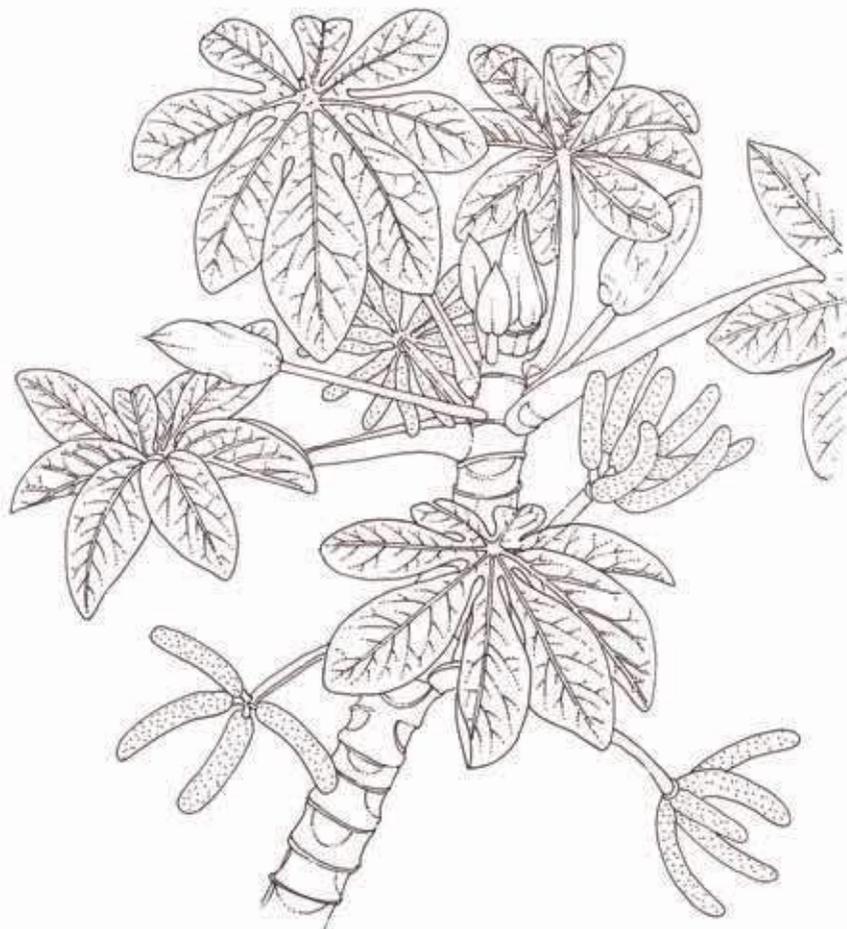
**Location on the island:** This plant is grown in moist and semi moist areas

**Description:** It has ashy green leaves with bumps or nodules on them and bears bluish-purple flowers

**Herbal remedies:** Used for making tea to treat colds, flu and hoarseness



# Trumpet Bush



5

**Common name:** Trumpet Bush

**Scientific name:** *Cecropia peltate*

**Location on the island:** This tree grows in the forests of Montserrat

**Description:** The leaves are green on one side and white on the other side. The white underside is shown during times of bad weather

**Herbal remedies:** Green leaves reduce fevers, and the dried leaves are used to make tea for colds



# Dr Dyett



Poisonous

6

**Common name:** Dr Dyett or Madagascar Perwinkle

**Scientific name:** *Catharanthus roseus*

**Location on the island:** Found along roadsides and in gardens on the island

**Description:** This is a very pretty flowering plant; it bears white, pink, purple or red flowers

**Herbal remedies:** The entire plant is useful for making tea to relieve colds, flu and diabetes



# Blue Vervain



7

**Common name:** Blue Vervain or Vervine

**Scientific name:** *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*

**Location:** It can be found throughout Montserrat, especially in moist areas

**Description:** This weed has very tiny blue flowers on a slender stalk

**Herbal remedies:** The leaves are useful for making tea to reduce inflammation



# Davis Root



8

**Common name:** Davis Root

**Scientific name:** *Chiococca alba*

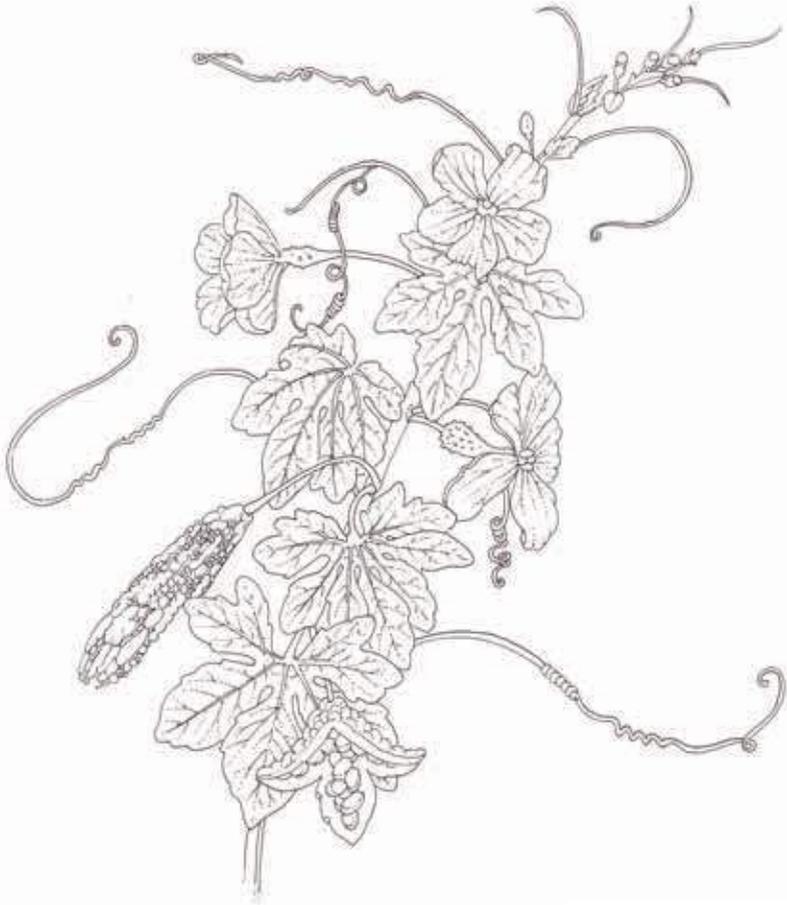
**Location:** It is found in the moist forest areas of the Centre Hills and Soufriere Hills

**Description:** This plant has a winding stem that bears tiny white flowers

**Herbal remedies:** The roots are soaked in water or boiled for relief from prostate problems



# Pung Coolie



**Common name:** Pung Coolie  
or Pom Coolie, Maiden Apple or Lizard Food

**Scientific name:** *Momordica charantia*

**Location:** This plant can be found growing on walls and fences around the island

**Description:** It grows as a vine and has small light-yellow flowers and yellow/orange fruits, which open to reveal bright red seeds

**Herbal remedies:** The leaves make tea for stomach problems



# Prickly Pear Cactus



10

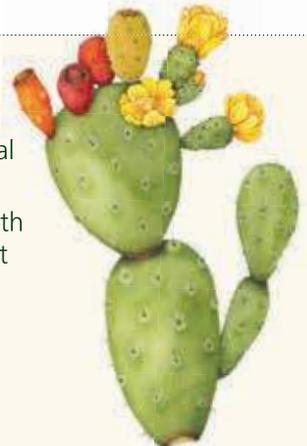
**Common name:** Pricky Pear Cactus

**Scientific name:** *Opuntia ficus indica*

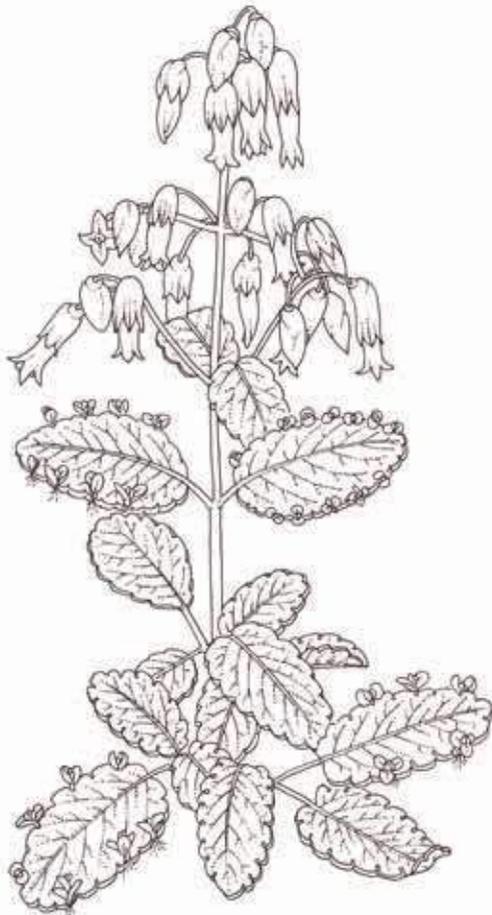
**Location:** Originally found in dry areas, but now in local gardens for decoration

**Description:** A succulent plant with flat leaves/pads with fine thorns. It bears a yellow flower and a bright fruit at the edge

**Herbal remedies:** The leaves are used for shampoo to treat dandruff. The vitamin-rich flesh is good to eat cooked. The flowers also produce a red dye used as colouring in cakes and jams



# Leaf of Life



**Common name:** Leaf of Life

**Scientific name:** *Bryophillum pinetum*

**Location:** This popular plant is grown throughout the island

**Description:** This is a thick leaf succulent. Leaves have frilly edges. It bears pretty bell-shaped flowers on a stalk

**Herbal remedies:** The leaves are warmed and placed on cuts to draw out infection. Leaves are also used to make tea to treat colds



# Rainfall Bush



12

**Common name:** Rainfall Bush or Glory Cedar

**Scientific name:** *Gliricidia sepium*

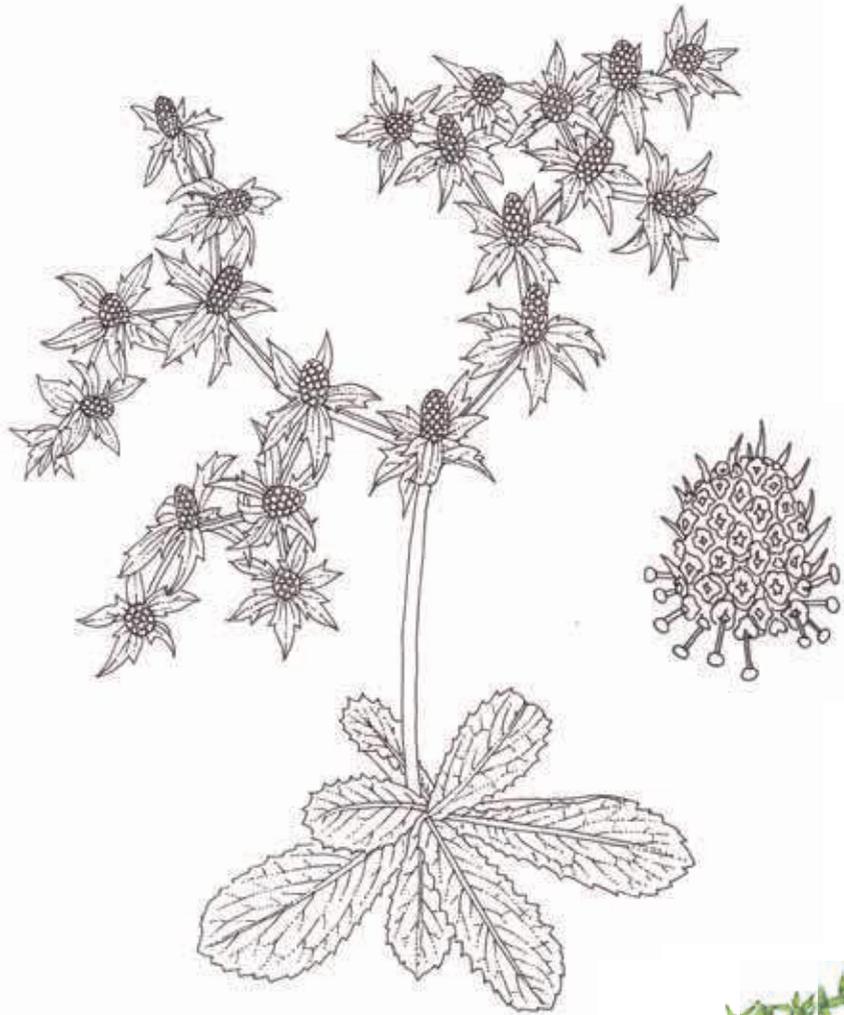
**Location:** This plant is grown throughout Montserrat

**Description:** This sturdy tree is used as a fencing pole. It bears lots of pink flowers

**Herbal remedies:** The leaves are used to make tea for treating flu and bronchitis



# Ramgoat Bush



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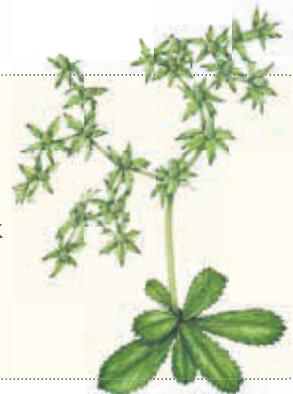
**Common name:** Ramgoat Bush or Chadon Beni

**Scientific name:** *Eryngium foetidum*

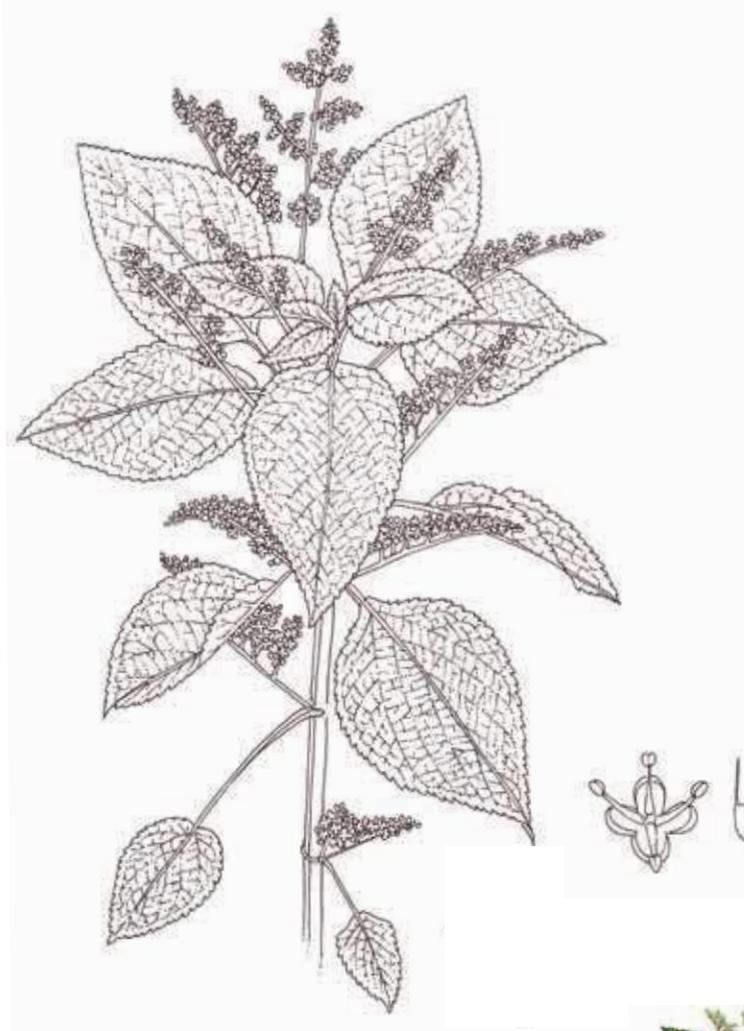
**Location:** It grows in the moist areas of Montserrat

**Description:** This weed has flat leaves and a prickly stalk

**Herbal remedies:** It is used for making tea that helps with curing stomach worms and vomiting and is also used for seasoning meats



# Stinging Nettle



14

**Common name:** Stinging Nettle or Zouti

**Scientific name:** *Laportea aestuans*

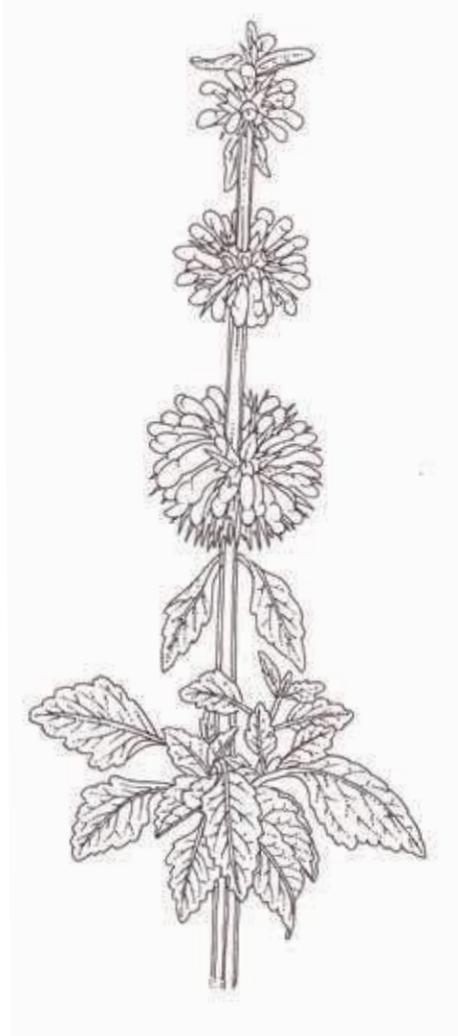
**Location:** This plant can be found in moist areas

**Description:** The leaves are serrated and sting on contact with skin

**Herbal remedies:** It is used for making tea to treat high blood pressure



# Lord Lavington



15

**Common name:** Lord Lavington or Christmas Chandelier

**Scientific name:** *Leonotis nepetifolia*

**Location:** It can be found across the island

**Description:** This plant bears a stall with a ball shaped structure bearing red or orange flowers

**Herbal remedies:** The boiled leaves are added to bathwater to soothe prickly heat





# Plants wordsearch



17

**Can you find 15 medicinal plants that grow on Montserrat?  
They can be forwards or backwards, up or down.**

- |               |                     |               |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| BLUE VERVAIN  | GUMBARK TREE        | PUNG COOLIE   |
| CATTLE TONGUE | LEAF OF LIFE        | RAINFALL BUSH |
| CINTIBIBI     | LORD LAVINGTON      | RAMGOAT BUSH  |
| DAVIS ROOT    | MEXICAN POPPY       | TRUMPET BUSH  |
| DR DYETT      | PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS | ZOUTI         |

**Disclaimer:** The information provided is for educational purposes only. It is for the benefit of the general public. It is not intended to take the place of either the written law or regulations. Some parts of plants could be toxic, might induce side effects, or might have interactions with certain drugs. Anyone intending to use them or their products must first consult with a physician or another qualified healthcare professional. UKCEH (and UKCEH's employees, students, agents or appointees) and the Hidden Histories project partners have no responsibility whatsoever towards the user for any decision, action or omission made in relation to the information contained. Those species are invasive non-natives in some parts of the world. This booklet is not designed to review the ecological traits of the plants, but the cultural uses. Information on these cultural uses has been gathered from oral histories.

**About the Hidden Histories Medicinal Plant Project:** Montserrat's flora has developed over centuries, mainly due to natural dispersion and the movement of people from one place to the next. As a result, scientists (geographers, botanists and archaeologists) have attempted to provide an insight into the origins of some plants and their uses, for centuries. Some plants (or 'bush' as they are called by the local population), although considered to be invasive, have played an important role in the healing and cultural practices of the people of Montserrat, for generations. However, reliable sources of information about this aspect of Montserrat's cultural history are dwindling, as the elders age. To push these memories forward two or even three generations, the Montserrat National Trust, in collaboration with project partners (UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Leeds Museums and Galleries, Meise Botanic Garden, and the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum) and the local Hidden Histories Committee have designed a project to gather information about fifteen common plant species that are used locally for medicinal purposes. The research was carried out by five young cadets, who were recruited by the Montserrat National Trust. The youngsters were provided with training on how to interview elders, and how to record their responses both digitally and in note form. They worked collaboratively with the local Hidden Histories Committee to contribute to the creation of this Activity Booklet.

This work is supported by grant reference AH/W008998/1 within the Hidden Histories programme of the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). Designed by Field Studies Council. Photograph of Milk Thistle is © Joshua Ekrut (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0). All colour illustrations are © Lizzie Harper 2022.



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