



# Plantes médicinales de Mauritanie. Remèdes traditionnels et guérisseurs du Sahara au fleuve Sénégal- a book review

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## Book Review

**Plantes médicinales de Mauritanie. Remèdes traditionnels et guérisseurs du Sahara au fleuve Sénégal-** Michel Thouzery, Abdellahi Ould Mohamed Vall. Edition : Association Plantes et nomades, Paris2011. 287pp. Price: € 32 .-, ISBN 9 782746-633643, French

**Plantes médicinales de Mauritanie. Remèdes traditionnels et guérisseurs du Sahara au fleuve Sénégal** “Medicinal Plants of Mauritania: Traditional Remedies and Healers from the Sahara to the Senegal River” delves into the medicinal plant practices of local communities and traditional healers, meticulously documenting their methods. It also explores how these plants might enhance contemporary health care systems, based on fifteen years of field research. By looking at the ecological, pharmacological, and ethnobotanical aspects of these practices, this method effectively combines old knowledge with modern scientific knowledge. Furthermore, it highlights the challenges of maintaining plant resources amid increasing desertification.

The work consists of two distinct parts. The opening segment provides a context for traditional Mauritanian medicine by exploring its historical background, the role of traditional healers, and the possibilities for enhancing phytotherapy. The second section presents a comprehensive analysis of 88 medicinal plants, encompassing their taxonomy, traditional use, chemical compositions, and therapeutic uses. The book, enhanced by graphics and watercolor paintings produced on location, merges scientific precision with artistic merit.

The first part establishes the historical and cultural context that facilitated the development of traditional Mauritanian medicine. In desert regions with scarce plant resources, local communities have skillfully utilized the flora at hand to meet their medical needs. The authors explore the evolution of these practices, emphasizing their oral transmission within communities and the influence of Arab and African traditions on this body of knowledge.

Traditional practitioners play a crucial role in rural areas where modern medical infrastructure is limited. Their techniques rely on meticulous observation and the utilization of plants. They provide extensive insights into these topics, frequently discussing the spiritual and ritual dimensions of healing as well.

The potential for advancing phytotherapy represents another key focus area. The authors suggest implementing practical measures, including the establishment of medicinal gardens and the training of healthcare professionals, to advance the use of traditional remedies. It is crucial to scientifically validate these practices to ensure their safety and effectiveness, as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). Ecological challenges, including the scarcity of plants due to desertification, are tackled, highlighting the importance of sustainable practices to protect botanical heritage.

The second part, which serves as the practical core of the book, provides an in-depth analysis of 88 medicinal plants utilized in Mauritania. Researchers, healthcare professionals, and enthusiasts alike will find a comprehensive fact sheet accompanying each plant.

The fact sheets start with the scientific and common names of the plants, aiding in identification in local languages like Arabic and French. The authors proceed to describe the ecology and geographical distribution of each species, highlighting their habitats, such as dunes, oases, and riparian zones, as well as their presence across the country. There is a lot of information about traditional uses, like what illnesses they helped (like infections, digestive problems, and pain), what parts of the plant were used (like leaves, roots, and bark), and how they were prepared (infusions, poultices). Some plants are highlighted for their nutritional value, underscoring their importance in the diet.

This section presents a remarkable chemical analysis of the plants. We know what active compounds like alkaloids, flavonoids, and tannins are and how they help with healing. This combines what people have known for a long time with what science has proven. The conversation encompasses toxicological aspects, emphasizing possible hazards and offering recommendations for safe application.

Every fact sheet features an illustration be it a drawing or a watercolor made on-site—that improves scientific precision while incorporating an artistic element. The plants are arranged either alphabetically or taxonomically, and the presence of an index enhances the ease of navigating this extensive collection of information.

Each fact sheet includes an illustration—whether a drawing or a watercolor created on-site—that enhances scientific accuracy while adding an artistic touch. The plants are organized in alphabetical or taxonomical order, and the inclusion of an index facilitates the navigation of this vast collection of information. The book *Medicinal Plants of Mauritania: Traditional Remedies and Healers from the Sahara to the Senegal River* represents this through as it incorporates ethnobotany, pharmacology, and ecology. This blend of traditional knowledge and scientific data makes it a vital resource for healthcare professionals, researchers, and policymakers dedicated to phytotherapy.

The practical nature of the book stands out as one of its key strengths. The comprehensive plant fact sheets, enhanced with illustrations, act as a valuable field guide for practitioners and educators in Mauritania. Moreover, the conversation surrounding the incorporation of phytotherapy into contemporary healthcare systems presents practical and actionable suggestions.

The authors' focus on conservation challenges is also praiseworthy. By emphasizing the dangers faced by medicinal plants, including desertification and overexploitation, they promote sustainable resource management that is crucial for long-term preservation.

This book makes a noteworthy contribution to the fields of ethnobotany and phytotherapy in West Africa. Thouzery and Ould Mohamed Vall write a piece that combines scientific accuracy with cultural appreciation. They do this by writing down a lot of traditional knowledge and suggesting ways for it to grow. Even though the book covers a lot of ground, it could have done with more on the sociopolitical aspects, such as community rights related to traditional knowledge and the economic effects of phytotherapy.

The book primarily targets ethnobotany and healthcare professionals, but its clear style and visual elements make it accessible to a broader audience. For those committed to traditional medicine, phytotherapy, or the preservation of ancestral knowledge in a changing world, this resource is indispensable.