



Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*: An Ethnobotanical Perspective

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Ethnobotany Research and Applications 35:67 (2026) - <http://dx.doi.org/10.32859/era.35.67.1-14>

Manuscript received: 25/08/2026 – **Revised manuscript received:** 16/09/2026 – **Published:** 17/09/2026

Notes on Ethnobotany

Abstract

The *Tale of Peter Rabbit* has been extensively studied as a work of children's literature, but its ethnobotanical content has received little attention. Using the first commercial edition (1902), we identified plants mentioned in the text, represented in the illustrations, and present as plant-derived products. Twenty-four botanical taxa were identified and analyzed according to their botanical characteristics, horticultural context, ecological significance, and narrative function. The results show that plants are neither incidental nor purely decorative. Cultivated vegetables, fruit crops, medicinal plants, ornamentals, trees and cereals create a realistic representation of a late Victorian British kitchen garden, while contributing to the narrative and reinforcing the realism of the setting. Our study demonstrates that cultural uses of plants are an integral component of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and highlights how combining botanical and literary analysis can deepen our understanding of both literature and the cultural uses of plants. The tale may also provide an engaging resource for botanical education, encouraging children to observe and recognize plants and helping them to address plant awareness disparity.

Keywords: Beatrix Potter; children's literature and ethnobotany; plant awareness; The Tale of Peter Rabbit; Victorian horticulture.

Life and work of Beatrix Potter

Among the best-known Victorian authors of children's literature, few have succeeded in combining literary creativity with plant observation as successfully as Helen Beatrix Potter (1866-1943), known as the creator of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), and her literary work cannot be fully appreciated without recognizing the profound influence of nature on her writing.

Beatrix Potter was born on 28 July 1866 at South Kensington, London, into a wealthy upper-middle-class family, and died on 22 December 1943 at Castle Cottage, Near Sawrey, Cumbria (Lear 2007, National Trust n.d.) (Figures 1-2). Like many Victorian children of wealthy households, she was educated at home, rather than attending school, and although this system was restrictive, it gave her free time to pursue her own interests. From an early age, Potter was curious about the natural world, and family holidays in Scotland and in the English Lake District exposed her to landscapes, wildflowers, animals, and fungi,

that she observed and recorded. Throughout her life, Potter maintained an extensive collection of natural history specimens, including pressed plants, and produced numerous watercolors in her sketchbooks (Taylor 1986, Potter 1989a, Potter 1989b, Jay *et al.* 1992, Watling 2000, Hobbs 2005, Lear 2007, McDowell 2013).



Figure 1. Rupert Potter (father), Beatrix Potter and Walter Bertram Potter (brother) by Rupert Potter, albumen print, 1894 NPG P1822, ©National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 2. Beatrix Potter by Charles G.Y. King, vintage snapshot print, May 1913, NPG P1825, ©National Portrait Gallery, London.

Her greatest scientific interest was fungi (Figure 3) and during the 1890s she researched their life cycles, particularly their methods of reproduction. Potter carried out experiments that led her to formulate new hypotheses regarding spore germination and her work culminated in a paper entitled *On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae*, which was read and discussed at the Linnean Society of London on 1 April 1897, although she later withdrew it and never resubmitted a revised version (Linnean Society of London, n.d., Noble 1987, Potter 1989b, Lear 2007).

Potter's scientific interests also brought her into contact with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, one of the world's leading botanical institutions. During her visits to Kew Gardens, she developed close relationships with botanists and mycologists associated with Kew, especially with George Massee (1845-1917), who served as Principal Assistant in the Herbarium. Kew provided her with access to reference collections, taxonomic expertise, and botanical literature that greatly enriched her understanding of plants and fungi. She never held any position there, but her visits formed an important part of her scientific education (Potter 1989b, Lear 2007).

Growing financial independence, resulting from her literary success, enabled Potter to pursue another lifelong passion: conservation of the English countryside. In 1905, she purchased Hill Top Farm, near Sawrey, and gradually acquired neighboring farms and woodlands. She later became an accomplished sheep breeder, particularly devoted to the traditional Herdwick breed, and promoted what we would now call conservation-oriented land management (National Trust n.d., Lear 2007).

By the time of her death, Potter had accumulated approximately 4,000 acres (over 1,600 hectares) of farmland, woodland, and open countryside. In her will, she bequeathed her estates to the National Trust, creating one of the largest gifts ever received by this organization (National Trust n.d.). Today, her legacy protects extensive areas of the Lake District that are part

of a UNESCO World Heritage Site (UNESCO n.d.) and so she should also be remembered as one of Britain's pioneering women in the conservation of landscape.



Figure 3. *Echinoderma asperum* (Pers.) Bon. In the museum catalogue this watercolour is recorded as "*Lepiota friesii*, formerly *Lepiota acutesquamosa*". Specimen found on a rubbish heap at Wray Castle, Windermere, Cumbria, 10 September 1895, watercolor & pencil on paper. The Armit: Museum, Gallery, Library, AMATL: 1958.516, bequeathed in 1943.

The Origin of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

The Tale of Peter Rabbit originated in a letter that Beatrix Potter wrote on 4 September 1893 to Noel Moore, the five-year-old son of her former governess, Annie Carter Moore. Wishing to entertain the child during his illness, Potter decided to compose a story about a family of young rabbits accompanied by a series of illustrations that were evocative of her own childhood experience of keeping rabbits and also her close observation of Victorian kitchen gardens (Linder 1971, Potter 1989b, Lear 2007).

Later, recognizing the potential of the story, Potter revised and expanded it, but it was rejected by several publishers, and so she decided to publish the book herself. On 16 December 1901, Strangeways & Sons printed 250 copies, with black-and-white illustrations produced by the Art Reproduction Company of Fetter Lane, in a small format book, chosen by Potter to fit comfortably into children's hands. A second edition of 200 copies appeared in February 1902 (Figure 4) and the book's favorable reception prompted Frederick Warne & Co. to publish a commercial edition in October 1902, with Potter's watercolor illustrations (Figure 5). The volume achieved immediate success, and the first edition of 8,000 copies was followed by a further 12,000 copies in November and 8,220 copies in December (Potter 1901, Potter 1902, Victoria and Albert Museum n.d., Taylor 1986, Lear 2007).

Our study intends to identify the use of plants in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and our primary source is the first commercial edition published by Frederick Warne & Co., in 1902. In recent editions, new illustrations have been added, some of which depict additional plants, such as potatoes and apples; however, our analysis was restricted to the first commercial edition due to copyright restrictions.

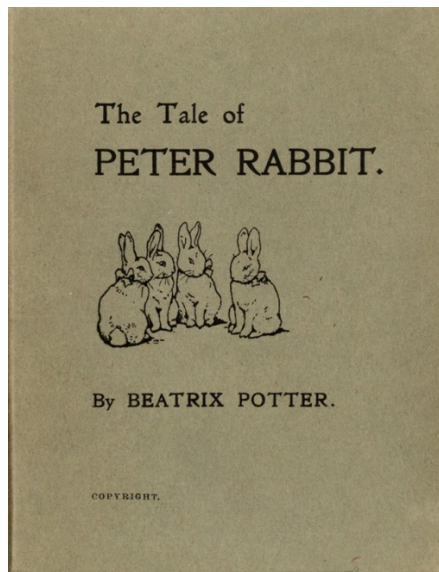


Figure 4. Private printed book of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901)
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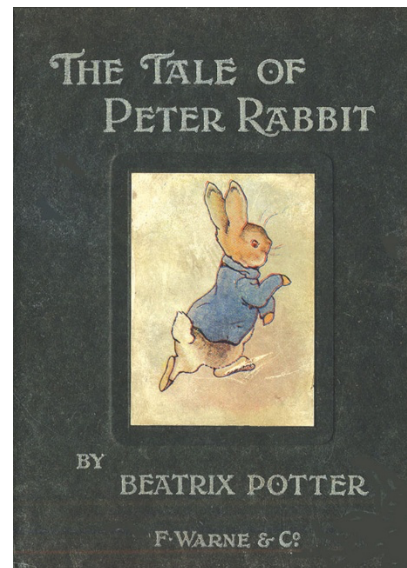


Figure 5. Cover of the first commercial edition of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

We recorded plants explicitly mentioned in the text, plants depicted in the illustrations, and plant-derived products. Proposed scientific identifications (Plants of the World Online) were based on the text description, visual interpretation of the illustrations, and historical use of plants in the context of late Victorian British horticulture.

Each botanical identification was linked to a degree of certainty (high, moderate, or low) according to the evidence, both in the text and in the illustrations. High certainty was attributed to taxa explicitly named in the text or unambiguously represented in the illustrations, whereas lower certainty reflected identifications based primarily on non-diagnostic illustrations, historical probability, or indirect evidence.

Plants in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

Besides the plant taxa explicitly mentioned in the text or in the illustrations, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* also evokes plants through a series of indirect references such as *fields*, *lane*, *garden*, *wood*, as in “you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden”. Although these references place the narrative within an easily recognizable rural and plant-dominated environment, no individual plant species is named.

The plant taxa identified in the text and illustrations are presented below, together with their common name, proposed scientific name, plant family, degree of certainty, excerpts from the tale and, if needed, some notes.

1. Fir

Name in the tale “a very big fir-tree”

Proposed identification *Abies* spp. (Figures 6-7)

Family Pinaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “They lived with their Mother in a sand-bank, underneath the root of a very big fir-tree” [Peter and his family live in a burrow beneath the roots of a “very big fir-tree”]. Later in the tale, Peter arrives home after running from Mr. McGregor's garden “Peter never stopped running or looked behind him till he got home to the big fir-tree”.

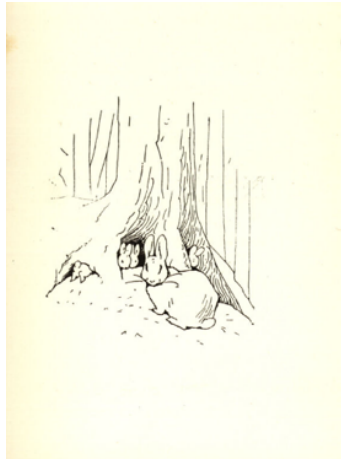


Figure 6. Peter and his family live in a burrow beneath the roots of a “very big fir-tree”. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Beatrix Potter, Private Edition 1901). ©Iowa University Libraries <https://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/node/559493>



Figure 7. Peter and his family live in a burrow beneath the roots of a “very big fir-tree”. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

2. Blackberry

Name in the tale blackberries

Proposed identification *Rubus fruticosus* L. (Figures 8-9)

Family Rosaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, who were good little bunnies, went down the lane to gather blackberries” and they later eat them at supper “Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail had bread and milk and blackberries for supper”

Notes Gathering blackberries is permitted in contrast with Peter’s consumption of cultivated vegetables from Mr. McGregor’s garden.



Figure 8. Peter Rabbit’s sisters (Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail) gathering blackberries. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 9. Peter Rabbit’s sisters eating bread, milk and blackberries. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

3. Lettuce

Name in the tale lettuces

Scientific name *Lactuca sativa* L.

Family Asteraceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “First he ate some lettuces and some French beans” [from Mr. McGregor’s garden]

Notes As the first crop eaten by Peter, lettuce may emphasize the immediacy of temptation.

4. French bean

Name in the tale French beans

Scientific name *Phaseolus vulgaris* L.

Family Fabaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “First he ate some lettuces and some French beans” [from Mr. McGregor’s garden]. Later in the tale, Peter sees a mouse carrying beans in its mouth “*carrying peas and beans to her family in the wood*”

Notes The term “French bean” distinguishes this species from the broad bean (*Vicia faba* L.) which had been cultivated in Europe since Antiquity (Zohary *et al.* 2012).

5. Radish

Name in the tale radishes

Scientific name *Raphanus sativus* L. (Figure 10)

Family Brassicaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “and then he ate some radishes” [when Peter was in Mr. McGregor’s garden]

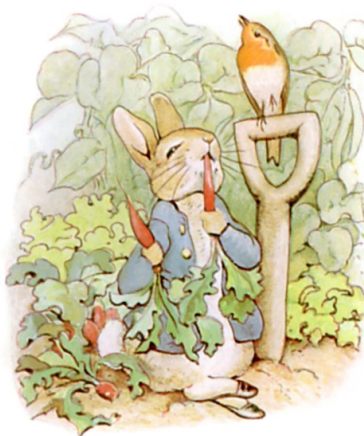


Figure 10. Peter Rabbit eating radishes. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

6. Parsley

Name in the tale parsley

Scientific name *Petroselinum crispum* (Mill.) Fuss

Family Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “And then, feeling rather sick, he went to look for some parsley” [from Mr. McGregor’s garden]

Notes The use of parsley by Peter reflects an old belief that parsley could settle the stomach after excessive eating.

7. Cucumber

Name in the tale cucumber, in “a cucumber frame”

Scientific name *Cucumis sativus* L. (Figure 11)

Family Cucurbitaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “But round the end of a cucumber frame, whom should he meet but Mr. McGregor!” [Peter first encounters Mr. McGregor]

8. Cabbage

Name in the tale young cabbages; cabbages

Scientific name *Brassica oleracea* L. (Figures 11-12-13)

Family Brassicaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “Mr. McGregor was on his hands and knees planting out young cabbages” [when he first sees Peter] and “He [Peter] lost one of his shoes among the cabbages”



Figure 11. Mr. McGregor planting young cabbages. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 12. Peter's lost shoe among the cabbages. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 13. In the background, Mr. McGregor is hoeing the onion bed, while in the foreground there appears to be a brassica crop, possibly cabbage. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

9. Potato

Name in the tale potatoes

Scientific name *Solanum tuberosum* L.

Family Solanaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “and the other shoe amongst the potatoes” [Peter loses his second shoe among the potatoes]. Although absent from the original 1902 edition analyzed here, potatoes are depicted in an illustration included in recent editions.

10. Gooseberry

Name in the tale gooseberry, in “a gooseberry net”

Scientific name *Ribes uva-crispa* L. (Figures 14-15)

Family Grossulariaceae

Degree of certainty High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “he had not unfortunately run into a gooseberry net” [Peter becomes trapped in a net placed over gooseberry bushes]

Notes Nets were commonly placed over fruiting shrubs to prevent birds from taking the crop.

11. Pea**Name in the tale** peas; pea**Scientific name** *Pisum sativum* L.**Family** Fabaceae**Degree of certainty** High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “An old mouse was running in and out over the stone door-step, carrying peas and beans to her family in the wood” [Peter saw an old mouse when he was fleeing from Mr. McGregor] and “she had such a large pea in her mouth that she could not answer” [one large pea prevents the old mouse from answering Peter]



Figure 14. Peter trapped in a gooseberry net. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 15. Peter trapped in a gooseberry net. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

12. Onion**Name in the tale** onions**Scientific name** *Allium cepa* L. (Figure 13)**Family** Amaryllidaceae**Degree of certainty** High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “The first thing he saw was Mr. McGregor hoeing onions” [Near the end of Peter’s escape, Mr. McGregor is hoeing onions]

13. Black-currant**Name in the tale** black-currant bushes**Scientific name** *Ribes nigrum* L.**Family** Grossulariaceae**Degree of certainty** High

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “along a straight walk behind some black-currant bushes” [Peter runs along a path behind black-currant bushes as he approaches the gate to leave Mr. McGregor’s garden]

14. Chamomile**Name in the tale** chamomile tea [chamomile tea]**Preferred identification** *Chamaemelum nobile* (L.) All. (Figures 16-17)**Family** Asteraceae**Degree of certainty** Moderate

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “I am sorry to say that Peter was not very well during the evening. His mother put him to bed, and made some chamomile [chamomile] tea” [When Peter becomes unwell, his mother prepares chamomile tea] and “One table-spoonful to be taken at bed-time” [she then administers it medicinally]

Notes In a British context, *Chamaemelum nobile* (L.) All. is the most likely identification, as this was the species listed as “Chamomile Flowers” in the Victorian British Pharmacopoeia (General Medical Council 1885).



Figure 16. Mrs. Rabbit prepares chamomile tea. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 17. Mrs. Rabbit serves chamomile tea to Peter. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

Plant-derived foods in the text

15. Bread wheat

Products in the tale brown bread; loaf; bread

Proposed identification mainly *Triticum aestivum* L.

Family Poaceae (Gramineae)

Degree of certainty High as the most likely source but not explicitly stated.

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “She bought a loaf of brown bread” [Mrs. Rabbit buys a loaf of brown bread] and “Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-tail had bread and milk and blackberries for supper” [Peter’s sisters later eat bread at supper]

16. Dried grape or “currant”

Product in the tale currant buns

Preferred identification *Vitis vinifera* L.

Family Vitaceae

Degree of certainty High in culinary context

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns” [Mrs. Rabbit buys five currant buns]

Notes In British baking, a currant normally means a small, dried grape, traditionally the Corinth or Zante currant, and not the fresh fruit of any *Ribes* shrub.

Plants in the illustrations only

17. Willow basket

Illustrated in basket carried by Mrs. Rabbit and her daughters

Proposed identification probably *Salix* spp. (Figures 18-19)

Family Salicaceae

Degree of certainty Moderate

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* “Now, my dears” said old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, “you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don’t go into Mr. McGregor’s garden” [Mrs. Rabbit said this while giving the daughters a basket probably woven from willow rods] and “Then old Mrs. Rabbit took a basket and her umbrella, and went through the wood to the bakers” [she took with her a basket probably woven from willow rods]

Notes Traditional British baskets were commonly woven from willow rods obtained from several species of *Salix*, particularly from osier willows (*Salix viminalis* L.), but other plant species could also be used.

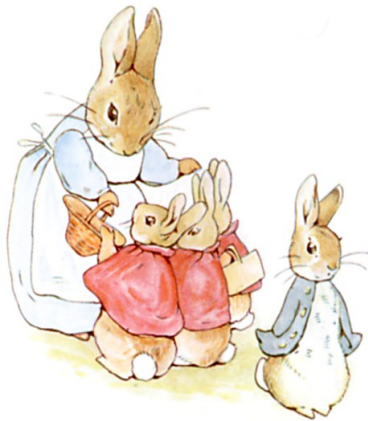


Figure 18. Mrs. Rabbit hands baskets to her daughters. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 19. Mrs. Rabbit goes to the bakery with a basket. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

18. White water-lily

Illustrated in the garden pond

Proposed identification *Nymphaea alba* L. (Figure 20)

Family Nymphaeaceae

Degree of certainty Moderate

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* The text introduces the setting simply as “Presently, he came to a pond where Mr. McGregor filled his water-cans”

19. Bulrush (Reedmace)

Illustrated at the edge of the garden pond

Proposed identification *Typha* spp. (Figure 20)

Family Typhaceae

Degree of certainty Moderate

20. Potted pelargonium

Illustrated in one of the pots overturned by Peter

Proposed identification *Pelargonium × hortorum* L.H.Bailey or a related garden pelargonium (Figure 21)

Family Geraniaceae

Degree of certainty Moderate

Excerpt from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* The text states: “Peter, who jumped out of a window, upsetting three plants”



Figure 20. The cat looking at the fish in the pond, with water lilies and probably reedmace (bulrushes) in the foreground. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 21. Peter overturning flowerpots containing pelargoniums. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

21. Nasturtium

Illustrated beside the garden pond

Scientific name *Tropaeolum majus* L. (Figure 22)

Family Tropaeolaceae

Degree of certainty Moderate

22. Turnip

Illustrated among the vegetables being prepared by Mrs. Rabbit

Scientific name: *Brassica rapa* L. subsp. *rapa* (Figure 23)

Family Brassicaceae

Degree of certainty High



Figure 22. Peter standing near the pond, with nasturtiums in the background. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 23. Mrs. Rabbit prepares a meal with turnips. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

23. Celery

Illustrated among the vegetables being prepared by Mrs. Rabbit

Scientific name *Apium graveolens* L. (Figure 23)

Family Apiaceae

Degree of certainty Moderate

24. Common ivy

Illustrated on a wall beside Peter's escape route

Scientific name *Hedera helix* L. (Figure 24)

Family Araliaceae

Degree of certainty Low to Moderate



Figure 24. Peter beside a wall with ivy. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 25. Peter hiding inside a watering can. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

Potter's illustrations also depict artefacts made from plant materials whose precise botanical origin cannot be determined, including a wooden door (Figure 24), a besom broom, hoe and rake handles (Figure 25), a wooden gate (Figure 26) or a sieve rim (Figure 27). These objects illustrate the pervasive role of plants as raw materials in everyday Victorian rural life, extending plants' use beyond cultivation and consumption into a broader world of horticultural technology. Additionally, one of Peter Rabbit's sisters was named 'Cotton-tail', which primarily evokes species of the *Gossypium* L. genus.



Figure 26. Peter squeezing under a gate. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.



Figure 27. Mr. McGregor came up with a sieve, which he intended to pop upon the top of Peter. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne & Co., London, 1902). Public domain, Project Gutenberg.

The complete list of botanical entities considered in this study is presented in Table 1.

Our study demonstrates that the botanical content of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* extends beyond the occasional mention of plants because their cultural uses play a fundamental role in the narrative. A total of 24 cultivated and wild plants, including plant-derived products, were identified to genus or species level. To our knowledge, this is the first study to systematically identify all the plants represented in a Beatrix Potter tale. Some of the plants were mentioned in the text only, while others appeared exclusively in the illustrations, and some were represented in both. The predominance of cultivated edible plants, together with the relatively small number of ornamental and wild species, reflected the composition of a typical late Victorian kitchen garden (Elliott 1986, Brickell 2016).

Plants create a coherent horticultural environment that provides a realistic setting while also contributing to the progression of the narrative. They provide Peter's temptation, guide his movements through Mr. McGregor's garden, create obstacles during his escape and so contribute directly to the development of the plot. Potter's illustrations complement the text by introducing additional plants, reinforcing the ecological and horticultural coherence of the environment.

Our study illustrates how revisiting Victorian children's literature can reveal cultural uses of plants that may have been overlooked when analyses focused primarily on the literary context. Applying similar analyses to other tales written by Beatrix Potter, or to other authors, may provide further insights into the cultural uses of plants, contributing to a deeper understanding of the relationship between plants and literature. By combining botanical identification with literary and historical analysis, our study shows how Beatrix Potter's accurate observations of British plants and horticultural practices were incorporated into her children's tales, enriching both the narrative and the botanical realism.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit may also be a valuable resource for introducing botanical concepts to children. The close presence of plants in both text and illustrations offers opportunities to develop skills of observation, recognition and identification of plants, while introducing concepts related to plant diversity, morphology, cultivation and cultural uses. Children may be encouraged to distinguish vegetables, fruit crops, trees, ornamental and wild plants, compare Potter's illustrations with living specimens and explore how plants are cultivated and used.

Such activities may help address what has traditionally been termed "plant blindness", and more recently discussed as "plant awareness disparity" (Parsley 2020): the tendency for people to notice and value plants less readily than animals. By encouraging children to observe, name and distinguish the plants that are part of Peter Rabbit's world, the story may increase

awareness of plant diversity and of the ecological and cultural importance of plants. Potter's combination of storytelling and detailed observation of nature can therefore provide a link between children's literature and botanical education.

The ethnobotanical diversity represented in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* could also provide the basis for the creation of educational gardens inspired by the story. Such gardens could allow children to move from observing plants in the text and illustrations to seeing them as living organisms and encourage direct observation (morphology, growth, seasonality, scents and uses). Activities could include: locating and identifying plants mentioned in the story; comparing living specimens with Beatrix Potter's illustrations; and observing changes throughout the seasons. By connecting narrative, illustration and direct experience with living plants, a Peter Rabbit-inspired garden could provide an engaging setting for botanical education and help address plant awareness disparity among children.

More than a century after its publication, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* remains not only a classic of children's literature but also a valuable record of the cultural uses of plants and horticultural practices in Victorian Britain, while offering opportunities to introduce new generations to the diversity, uses and cultural significance of plants.

Table 1. Botanical taxa in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, with their proposed names and occurrence.

No.	English name	Scientific name	Occurrence in the tale
1	fir	<i>Abies</i> spp.	Text and illustrations
2	blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> L.	Text and illustrations
3	lettuce	<i>Lactuca sativa</i> L.	Text only
4	French bean	<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> L.	Text only
5	radish	<i>Raphanus sativus</i> L.	Text and illustrations
6	parsley	<i>Petroselinum crispum</i> (Mill.) Fuss	Text only
7	cucumber	<i>Cucumis sativus</i> L.	Text only
8	cabbage	<i>Brassica oleracea</i> L.	Text and illustrations
9	potato	<i>Solanum tuberosum</i> L.	Text ^{*1}
10	gooseberry	<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i> L.	Text and illustrations
11	pea	<i>Pisum sativum</i> L.	Text only
12	onion	<i>Allium cepa</i> L.	Text and illustrations ^{*2}
13	black-currant	<i>Ribes nigrum</i> L.	Text only
14	chamomile	<i>Chamaemelum nobile</i> (L.) All	Text and illustrations ^{*3}
15	wheat (bread)	<i>Triticum aestivum</i> L.	Text only
16	dried grape (currant)	<i>Vitis vinifera</i> L.	Text only
17	willow	<i>Salix</i> spp.	Illustrations only ^{*4}
18	white water-lily	<i>Nymphaea alba</i> L.	Illustrations only
19	bulrush (reedmace)	<i>Typha</i> spp.	Illustrations only
20	pelargonium	<i>Pelargonium</i> × <i>hortorum</i> L.H.Bailey	Illustrations only
21	nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i> L.	Illustrations only
22	turnip	<i>Brassica rapa</i> L. subsp. <i>rapa</i>	Illustrations only
23	celery	<i>Apium graveolens</i> L.	Illustrations only
24	ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i> L.	Illustrations only

^{*1}illustration appears in recent editions; ^{*2}onions are not directly visible (Mr. McGregor is shown hoeing onions); ^{*3}only a teacup and tea preparation are shown; ^{*4}basket

Declarations

List of abbreviations: Not applicable.

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Not applicable.

Consent for publication: Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials: Not applicable.

Competing interests: The authors have no conflict of interest.

Funding: No specific funding was received. The study was conducted within the institutional framework of UNESCO Chair in Ethnobotany, Botanical Museum of Beja Polytechnic University, Institute of Contemporary History, University of Évora, IN2PAST - Associate Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Heritage, Arts, Sustainability and Territory, and Beja Polytechnic University.

Authors' contributions: All authors contributed to the manuscript.

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Acknowledgements

The authors express their gratitude to the National Portrait Gallery (London), Project Gutenberg, Iowa University Libraries, and The Armit: Museum, Gallery, Library. The authors dedicate this study to the memory of Maria Águeda Conceição Andrade (1924–2011), an admirer of Beatrix Potter's tales throughout her life, and to Guilherme Samuel do Espírito Santo Fernandes e Mendonça de Carvalho and João de Sousa Costa Marques, whose childhood imagination was shaped by Potter's timeless stories.

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