

HERBARIUM OF PSEUDO-APULEIUS Abbey of Bury St Edmunds, 11th/12th century

Apuleius was a writer from the second century CE, born in modern day Algeria, who lived under Roman rule and wrote Latin works of literature, science, and philosophy.

However, the *Herbarium* was not in fact written by Apuleius but 200 years later. It was commonly attributed to Apuleius but we don't know who actually wrote it. This was not unusual. Writers could make their work look more important by attributing it to well-respected figures from earlier ages. This is why we call the author 'pseudo-Apuleius'.

The work was influential and was copied in many manuscripts in the early medieval period across Europe.

You can see an online version of the manuscript at [Digital Bodleian](#).

The Bodleian's copy is a late 11th or early 12th century manuscript and was probably made at the abbey in Bury St Edmunds in England. Monks were the scholars and scientists of their day, and medicine was a combination of revered classical sources and religious belief.

The manuscript is a herbal, a book of plant remedies, written in Latin. Each chapter describes a plant, where it grows, its medical uses, and how it should be prepared. The book also identifies some poisonous plants.

Someone has helpfully added names of plants in Old English. In the picture above of blackberry, at the top of the page has been written in English, 'that is brimbel' - what we would now call "bramble".



Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 130, f.26r

Questions

1. **Why did the author include pictures of the plants, and why does each picture include the roots?**
2. Look at pages 75 and 76 (folio 36) of the digitized manuscript. **Why are pictures of snakes included here?**
3. **Why would you have asked a monk for a medical remedy at this time?**
4. **Why was the text written in Latin and why did someone add plant names in English?**

FURTHER READING

You can find out more about medieval remedies in this article from the BBC [Bitesize website](#).