

[Phytolacca, American Nightshade] Dr. William James Almon

Date: Circa 1735.

Contributors

Contributor Role

Compiler

Contributor Name

Dr. William James Almon

Publication Format

Manuscript

Type

Agriculture

Medicine

Ingredients

phytolacca

American nightshade

phytolacca Americana

Virginian poke

porke physic

Mexican phytolacca

nightshade

Places

America

Virginia

New England

Maryland

Mexico

Halifax

Nova Scotia

Chelsea

London

England

Source: Manuscript Notebook of Dr. William James Almon

Institution: Nova Scotia Archives | **Source Origin:** Almon Family Fonds | **Reference:** MG 1 / Microfilm Reel 10,045

Description

A description of American and Mexican nightshade, including the latter's usefulness as a purgative, pp. 22-23. Though largely identical to an entry of the same title that appears under "Ph" in *The Gardener's Dictionary* Vol. 2 (London, 1735) the Almon text also includes details that do not appear in the abridged publication; it is thus more likely transcribed from the original folio by Philip Miller. Identifying Miller in the later version as "Gardener to the Worshipful Company of Apothecaries, at their Botanick-Garden, in Chelsea," the *Dictionary's* subtitle points also to "Methods of Cultivating and Improving" the "Physick Garden" as well as those of "Kitchen, Fruit and Flower."

Transcription

Phytolacca

Phytolacca, American Nightshade.

The characters are; -

The Flowers consists of several leaves, which are placed in a circular order, and expand in form of a Rose; out of whose centre rises the Pointal, which afterward becomes a soft Fruit, or almost globular berry full of seeds, placed orbicularly: to which should be added. That the Flowers and Fruit are Produced on a branch like Currans. _

1. The Species are Phytolacca Americana, American Nightshade, with large Fruit, Commonly call'd Virginian Poke or [Porke](#) Physic. -

2. Mexican Phytolacca whose Berries grow close to the Stalk. -

The first of these plants is very common in Virginia, New England, and Maryland, where the Inhabitants take a spoon-ful or two of the Juice of the Root as a Familiar Purge.

The Berries thereof are full of a purple Juice which gives a fine Tincture to paper, from whence it hath the Name: this will not

abide long but fades in short time therefore if there could be a Method found to fix the Colour: it might be of considerable Use, for it is one of the most beautiful purple Dyes yet known. --

It may be propagated by sowing the seeds in the spring upon a bed of light rich earth; and when the plants come up, they should be transplanted into the borders of large Gardens, allowing them space for to grow; for they must not be planted too near other plants, least they overbear and destroy them; for they grow to be very large especially if the soil be good. ~

Annotations

Porke

Appears also in The Gardener's Dictionary, likely in error. "Poke" seems intended here.

Phytolacca, American Nightshade recipe from Early Modern Maritime Recipes:

<https://emmr.lib.unb.ca/recipes/250>