

## SLAVE MEDICINE AND PLANT USE IN BARBADOS<sup>1</sup>

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The many thousands of Africans and their descendants in Barbados during the period of slavery suffered from a wide array of ailments and diseases. The working and living conditions of the plantation, where most Barbadian slaves lived, were hostile to slave health, and no slave settlement was exempt from health problems. Some afflictions caused great discomfort and pain; others severely debilitated and permanently maimed, or even proved fatal. Regardless of the contemporary European medical diagnoses (or misdiagnoses) of these disorders, slaves experienced symptoms and physical conditions of varying degrees of severity and incapacitation ranging from fevers, gastrointestinal disorders, headaches, dizziness, nausea, and vomiting to general lack of energy and shortness of breath. They suffered sore throats, coughs, congested nasal passages, and sometimes painful swellings in the mouth, throat, abdominal areas, and legs. Aches and pains in body joints and muscles were abundant, and backaches of varying degrees of severity were common, as were hernias or ruptures. Skin disorders included rashes, blisters, ulcerating body and leg sores, and lesions on the face, hands or legs. Skin irritations could produce intense itching, there were burns, some extremely severe, as well as body surface cuts and wounds or deep lacerations, broken limbs and bones, amputated limbs, and lameness. Small animal and insect bites occurred, there were dental problems (often involving painful toothaches), earaches, and eye problems, including failing eyesight and blindness. Many of these ailments and disorders, if they did not kill, were merely endured, and, as in all human communities, slaves often relied on the body's capacity for healing itself without medical

intervention. In other cases, however, they attempted to treat their medical problems.

A great deal of the scholarship on West Indian medical history or the medical care of Caribbean slaves has focused on European and Euro-creole medicine and the treatments that plantations provided for their slaves. In the historical sources information on European medical procedures and the organization of plantation medical treatment is vastly more plentiful than that on slave self-help. Thus an impression can be created that slaves were dependent on European medicine for most of their medical needs. Yet, such was not the case at all.

Several considerations must be kept in mind when viewing European medicine during the early periods of Barbadian history. One is that medical treatment for slaves was only extended to working slaves and children who had the potential to grow into productive labourers. It was oriented toward preserving the fitness of the labour force and its economic productivity. Plantations not only showed little interest in the lame, elderly, or otherwise incapacitated, but during the 1600s and for most of the 1700s slave masters made few allowances for slave medical care, and slaves largely relied on self-help and depended on the resources of their own communities.

Perhaps an even more important consideration when viewing European medical treatment in early Barbados is that European medicine was simply not very good and, in fact, could be very dangerous to the patient. There is every indication that European medicine was not any more efficacious in treating common ailments than the slaves' self-help practices, or even the body's own natural defences. Even in the best of circumstances the medical care slaves (and whites) received from professional European medical practitioners, whether creole or foreign, was singularly deficient when judged by modern standards. From the mid-1600s through the early 1800s, years coinciding with the West Indian slave period, the "therapeutic efficacy" of medicine in Britain, of which white medicine in Barbados was essentially an extension, "remained hopelessly hit-and-miss ... the doctor was inevitably tarred with failure and identified as the accomplice of disease and death" (Porter and Porter 1989: 74-75). Furthermore, even with improvements in plantation health care during the nineteenth century (e.g., smallpox vaccination), it is doubtful that, in and of itself, European medicine had a major impact on the health and longevity of the slave population. "In truth," writes Kenneth Kiple, a leading authority of West Indian medical history, "the slaves would probably have been better off with

their own practitioners, for white medicine in the West Indies was, to put it charitably, of low quality" (Kiple 1984: 154; cf. Higman 1984: 261; Sheridan 1985: 333-36).

The historical sources provided no direct evidence on how slaves viewed white medical practitioners, but there certainly was a great social distance between white and black, unlike the proximate relationship slaves had with their own healers. The latter shared the slaves' experiences and problems, and thus were in a better position to understand in the slaves' own cultural idiom what ailed them and what to do about such ailments. Modern rural Africans still prefer traditional healers to European-trained doctors for similar reasons. The attitude of Barbadian slaves probably also resembled the distance and uneasiness many working-class and poor Englishmen felt toward their own medical profession in earlier centuries. For slaves, this distance probably involved feelings of discomfort and alienation, even suspicion and mistrust of the white people whose healing abilities, on balance, were probably no better, or in many cases even worse, than those the slave community provided for itself.

Since European medicine often failed to treat a variety of ailments and did not necessarily show itself as superior, slaves in Barbados continued to rely on each other and on "their own practitioners" for most of the slave period. Like West Africans and early European villagers, Barbadian slaves probably shared a certain amount of general medical knowledge among themselves (although individuals may have had their own favourite cures for particular ills), and there may have been standard or conventional treatments for such common ailments as headaches, fevers, and diarrhoea. Very common ailments were easily recognized and many were probably treated by the patient himself or left to the body's own healing powers. Yet, the Barbadian slave community also contained specialists in the healing arts. These people tended to be consulted in more serious or intractable cases. "Their own practitioners" were various types of healers or medicine men and women who were skilled in the diagnosis and treatment of illness and disease. Some of these practitioners were called "Negro doctors", others were called Obeah people; still others may have been called by other, albeit unknown, terms. The term Obeah, however, had a variety of meanings over the course of the slave period and was not necessarily viewed negatively by the slaves themselves. Regardless of the term or terms employed for various slave healers, they played a central role in slave life and their practices were often misunderstood by white writers (Handler 1994).

The early healing practices of Barbadian slaves, like their beliefs concerning the origin and nature of illness had their roots in traditional West African medicine (Handler 1994). Many African-born slaves, especially the younger ones, probably lacked experience with the healing practices of their homelands, but others would have brought African techniques to the New World for treating ailments and specific procedures for the diagnosis of illness. However, all Africans were accustomed to herbal medicines, although they would not have perceived such medicines from an entirely physical perspective. Probably most early slave medicine, like those in Africa, were viewed from a spiritual perspective and within a ritualistic context. African healers often invested the collection of medicinal plants with a ritual dimension, and well into Barbados' modern era folk curing techniques frequently combined plant use with spiritual or magical practices. The late Iris Bayley (Bannochie), an authority on Barbadian plant life, wrote in the 1940s that "some plants are considered worthless unless first treated magically; they must be cut at certain periods of the moon ... some brews must be left overnight in the dew to acquire maximum efficiency" (Bayley 1949: 106). These specific practices may or may not date from the slave period. They broadly suggest, however, what probably occurred in a much more complex fashion in earlier times, when the slave population was heavily influenced by African traditions and spiritual or supernatural beliefs played a considerable role in healing practices (Handler 1994).

Both African and European migrants to Barbados were predisposed to experiment with and exploit the natural environment for medicinal purposes. Natural remedies are used worldwide in traditional systems of medicine and were central to healing in pre-modern times. Considered "folk medicine" in modern society, natural remedies still form an essential element in the primary health care of many people throughout the world.

Over time, a variety of locally prepared medicines came to be widely employed by all racial groups in Barbados. With few exceptions (e.g., the manjack found in the Scotland District), the pharmacopoeia that developed during the slave period was composed of plant medicines. Herbal lore, the knowledge of plants and roots, played a substantial role in the curing traditions of both African and European migrants. In Barbados, as in other Caribbean areas, African and creole slaves and whites of all social classes (including professional medical practitioners) regularly applied a herbal pharmacopoeia to a number of illnesses and ailments.<sup>2</sup>



Writing of his experiences in 1647-1650, Richard Ligon was the earliest writer to describe the practical applications of Barbados' plants. He records their use in, for example, the manufacture of sugar pots, fencing and hedges, houses and furniture, and as a food seasoning; occasionally, however, he mentions medicinal applications. He shared with many people in the Old World an enthusiasm for the aloe. In Barbados, it was mixed and boiled "with some other ingredients ... [and] is the best medicine in the world for a burn or a scald". The kernels of the "physick-nut" were eaten as a "vomit and purge" (he took five of these and they gave him "twelve vomits, and above twenty stools, which was too great an evacuation in a hot countrey"), and the fruit of the "cassia fistula" tree was also employed as a "purgative, and a great cooler of the veins" (Ligon 1657: 67, 68-69, 98-99; cf. Oldmixon 1741; 2:107-108).<sup>3</sup> Noting the abundance of trees in Barbados, "as I had never seen before", Ligon (1657:79) also suggests that some had properties that were "no doubt medicinable in their natures ... but we want skilful men to find out their vertues". Ligon's discussion, it can be inferred, largely, if not entirely, applied to white settlers. There is every reason to believe, however, that black slaves, most of whom would have been African-born during Ligon's residence, were also using the island's flora in their own healing practices.

From an early period European travellers or settlers in the West Indies customarily sent home specimens of Caribbean plants, often with notes on their actual or potential medical applications. For such reasons, a great deal is known about early European efforts in the West Indies to collect plants with medicinal potential. Consistent with this practice, in the early 1700s Thomas Walduck, a British military officer stationed in Barbados, sent a friend in London his compilation of plants "with as many of their names and virtues as I could learne. Their uses I have gott from our physicians (shall I call them), nurses, old women, and Negroes" (Walduck 1710-1712). The compilation or "book" Walduck refers to has not been located, and his accompanying letter provides no specific information on the "names and virtues" of the plants. He clearly indicates, however, that a local pharmacopoeia existed in Barbados that was not confined to one racial group alone. By the first few decades of the eighteenth century, if not earlier, this pharmacopoeia was firmly established, in the sense that various local plants (both wild and cultivated and of Old World and New World origins) were regularly employed for medicinal purposes.

It took time, however, for this herbal pharmacopoeia to develop. Through trial and error, experimentation, and accidental discovery,

both Africans and Europeans found remedies with therapeutic value for common ailments. Details are lacking on most of these plants, but an overview of arrowroot is instructive in this regard. Arrowroot, a minor cash crop in Barbados until modern times, is a relatively hardy plant which originated in tropical South America, and was transported to the West Indies by pre-Colombian Amerindians (Handler 1965, 1971). Englishmen observed the plant's use among the Carib in neighbouring islands, and in 1688 it was brought to Barbados. The Carib primarily employed the plant in poultices for sores and wounds, including those caused by poison arrows. In 1673, Peter Colleton, a prominent Barbados planter, sent a friend in London "a pot of tarara root". In an accompanying letter, Colleton (1673) describes how Europeans used the plant as an antidote for arrow poison and against other sores and infections, as they had observed its uses among the island Carib. However, by the time Colleton wrote, Barbadians had also discovered that "the sediment of the juice dried and powdered is a most forcible diaphoretick"; "among the people" of Barbados, he wrote, "it hath an extremely high reputation, but our doctors who think it not for their profit that any should have the power of healing but themselves are infidels". Over time, other uses for arrowroot were found in Barbados (and other West Indian islands), and the plant became more widely accepted. The crushed root was applied externally, as a poultice, in treating yaws, inflammations caused by scorpion and spider bites, and other types of sores or skin ulcers; and its juice was taken internally for dysentery. During the eighteenth century, arrowroot starch was exploited as a food, often as a substitute for other starches. Later it came to be largely used when easily digestible foods were required, and it was included in the diets of the sick, particularly sufferers from dysentery, diarrhoea and other gastrointestinal disorders, and for the elderly and infants. These uses ultimately stimulated a consumer market in Britain, and several British West Indian territories, including Barbados, exported to this market. By the end of the eighteenth century, and probably earlier, slaves were producing for this export market on the small plots allotted them by plantations; arrowroot was one of their several cash crops. Although direct evidence is limited, it can be assumed that slave producers used the plant in their own households, and their use was similar, if not identical, to that of whites.

Despite the abundant general evidence that plants figured prominently in the early Barbadian pharmacopoeia, it is impossible to give a detailed account of the herbal remedies specifically employed by slaves, and how their plant pharmacopoeia changed

through time. The early historical sources usually present only limited information on how plants were used, and these sources are frequently ambiguous or silent in identifying plant use by racial group. It is mostly impossible to determine which plants or herbal remedies were largely or entirely associated with one group, and which ones were shared. Some plants may have been used only, or largely, by whites, while others may have been used by both slaves and whites, or, perhaps, only or largely by slaves. In quite a few cases both slaves and whites probably used the same plants for similar purposes, and this may have increasingly occurred as the island's creole culture and folk healing tradition became more firmly established. Although slave self-help involved treatment for a variety of diseases and ailments, the sources only vaguely indicate specific treatments or medication for a few. Some treatments may have been used only for a particular illness, while others may have been applied to a range of symptoms and ailments: the sources simply do not provide enough information.

Whites in Barbados, who themselves laid great emphasis on the curative powers of plants, were quite aware that slaves possessed a herbal pharmacopoeia, although they appear to have been largely unaware of its ritualistic or spiritual dimensions. "The Negroes", reported the English doctor Richard Towne in the 1720s, "are great pretenders to the knowledge of specific virtues in simples", and they used "several kinds of plants" to treat what was (perhaps incorrectly) diagnosed as leprosy. However, Towne (1726: 189-92) "could never observe the least beneficial effect produced by them", and does not identify these plants. In attempting to treat leprosy (which affected both blacks and whites), Barbadian slaves may have been modifying West African methods. For example, in Sierra Leone during the early 1800s herbal medicines were used to treat leprosy, and in the Gold Coast herbal substances were believed to cure leprosy "if attended to early" although the disease was generally "considered incurable"; similarly, a herbal concoction mixed with lime juice was used in the Gold Coast for yaws, and lime juice mixed with other ingredients was applied to yaws in Sierra Leone (Maier 1979: 67, 77; Bowdich 1824: 373; Winterbottom 1803: 56, 157). In Barbados, the English physician William Hillary (1759: 341) observed how "the Negroes have by long observation and experience" discovered a way of "curing" yaws "with the caustic juices of certain escarotic plants externally applied, and giving the juice or decoctions of others internally". The unidentified "escarotic" plants presumably would have helped dry up body sores (even though Hillary may have misdiagnosed yaws in some or most cases). Slaves kept this

treatment, according to Hillary, "as a secret from the white people, but preserve [it] among themselves by tradition"; they also "sometimes perform notable cures" with yaws as well as with "some other diseases", he wrote, but he neither identifies the diseases nor the plants.<sup>4</sup>

Herbal medicines were also suggested by William Dickson, a resident of Barbados for a number of years during the late eighteenth century (1789: 335-36). He provided several illustrations of how slaves purportedly harmed themselves in order to avoid work: the patient of a white doctor "removed his dressings, and applied some irritating vegetable to an ulcerated toe"; another patient was discovered "scraping the edges of his sores with an old knife, and about to apply some stuff of his own". Rather than attempting to harm themselves, however, these slaves actually may have been applying their own medications to common ailments. Similarly, Dickson could not believe reports that "some Negroes inoculate themselves for leprosy": "Great must be the laziness of that slave, and horrid, indeed, must be the tyranny under which he groans, which could force him to induce a disease, the most pitiable, perhaps, which afflicts the human species". Yet, the slaves may have been, in fact, following the West African practice of inoculation against leprosy or yaws. These two diseases were often confused with each other by early medical practitioners and planters in Barbados and elsewhere (Handler et al. nd).

Slaves occasionally consumed the "small red trubba" or dwarf egg plant "in their soups"; when boiled, it had "a bitterish taste" and was considered "useful to alleviate any colicky disorder of the stomach" (Hughes 1750: 148; see Appendix for botanical identifications). In 1790, Walter Pollard, a white Barbadian, recommended an unidentified "herbal medicine for treating skin disorders and venereal disease". The medicine was clearly alien to Pollard and, in his words, it "has done wonders and like many great discoveries originated from Negroes, who perhaps had it imported from Africa" (quoted in Watson 1979: 122).<sup>5</sup> The medicine may have come from Africa where traditional medications for venereal disease existed (e.g., Bosman 1704: 224; Bowdich 1824: 371, 376; Winterbottom 1803: 32-37), or it may have been developed by slaves in the New World. Jamaican slaves, according to Hans Sloane (1707: *liv*), treated the "clap" with a medication prepared by grinding the roots of the "fingrigo" and lime-tree, and then stirring these ground roots into lime-juice "till it be pretty thick, and so make the patient take it evening and morning for some time". By the mid- to late-eighteenth century Jamaican slaves



were also treating the "last stages of a gonorrhoea" with the roots of wild ginger and "other herbs" (Ellis 1772), but a medication similar to the one Sloane observed may have existed in Barbados, given the early links between Barbadian and Jamaican slaves and the fact that the "fingrigo" is native to Barbados.<sup>6</sup>

Barbadian slaves also applied poultices to surface wounds or skin ulcerations, they coated their skins with lime juice to prevent the sap of the manchineel tree "from corroding or ulcerating their skins", and they used the "milky juice" of the "balsam fruit" to cure chigger wounds (Hughes 1750: 15, 124, 144; Poole 1753: 237, 277; Hillary 1759: 341). A decoction made from the root of the "bread and cheese" or "sucking bottle" vine, "mixed and boiled with lime-juice and the rust of iron, by way of plaister, cures the body-yaws", according to Hughes (1750: 139). To whatever degree yaws was misdiagnosed and confused with other ailments, such as leprosy or syphilis (Handler et al. nd), yaws was considered widespread among slaves and rarely affected Europeans. It is perhaps suggestive, as noted above, that a similar preparation involving a lime juice mixture was also used to treat yaws in the Gold Coast (Maier 1979: 77). Although Hughes does not specify who employed the "bread and cheese" decoction, it could have been slaves and may have been one of the "escarotic plants" referred to by Hillary.

In general, the historical sources refer to many more medicinal plants, but as indicated above, they are ambiguous with respect to racial group and plant use. A good illustration of this ambiguity is found in Griffith Hughes' monumental *The Natural History of Barbados* (1750). This work provides more details (though not necessarily correct botanical ones) on Barbados plant life than any other seventeenth or eighteenth century source. During the 1730s and 1740s, when Hughes lived in Barbados, quite a few plants were employed in a pharmacopoeia that addressed a variety of common ailments. (A number of these plants were still used medicinally in modern times; see Appendix.) Prominent in this pharmacopoeia were plants used for cataplasms or poultices to treat surface wounds and cuts, burns, and skin ulcers or lesions (i.e., vulneraries). For example, in the late eighteenth century the visiting English botanist, Alexander Anderson, learned that in Barbados a poultice of the "soldier's bush" was used for "inflammations and swellings" (Howard 1992). Many years earlier Hughes reported that this plant was an ingredient in "most kinds of healing salves". Also, the "juice" of the "soap-berry bush or fire-burn leaf" was highly regarded for healing "fire-burns, scalds, or such-like sores", a decoction or ointment made from the sap of

"French guava" was useful for skin "eruptions", and the root of the "poison wyth", pounded into a cataplasm, was "often used to ripen boils and tumours" (Hughes 1750: 149, 161, 202, 244). In fact, from at least the late seventeenth century, the "poyson wyth" was found "good to heale sores" (Reed 1690).<sup>7</sup> The fruit of the "pengwyn" seems to have been beneficial in "fevers, provided it be used very moderately" (Hughes 1750: 232). "Paw paw" tree leaves were also considered "extremely useful in fevers, if apply'd to the naked skin", while the juice of the green "paw paw" helped "in removing ringworms and such like disorders of the skin", and an infusion of the leaves of the "wild honey" or the sap of the "French guava" was said to cure scabies (Poole 1753: 213, 231-32, 237).<sup>8</sup> In the early 1800s, Waller (1820:12) learned that plantains were used "for various purposes, including dressing blisters and ulcers", and a century earlier Walduck (1714) reported that the "acid juice" of the plantain or banana tree "is very good in inflammations of the eyes and in fevers".

A number of plants were boiled into teas or decoctions and taken internally for diarrhoea and dysentery, constipation, or as diuretics to induce urination;<sup>9</sup> others, for example the "physic nut tree", were used as "purges" to reduce the "swelling in dropsical disorders" (Hughes 1750: 114-15; cf. Ligon 1657: 67).<sup>10</sup> Berries from the "lignum vitae" made a "medicinal drink of great use in dropsies", and the leaves of the "palma Christi", otherwise known as the "Negro-oil tree", were made into a decoction that was applied externally and was found beneficial in treating a "bad swelling of any part" (Poole 1753: 230, 233). The pigeon pea, a common food for all racial groups, was considered a preventative against diarrhoea and dysentery because of its "binding quality", and ginger teas were drunk, especially when people were cold or damp (Hughes 1750: 199-200, 233). The aloe's medicinal properties were appreciated from an early date, not only for burns or cuts, but also "in purges, and justly esteemed of great service in many cases". Slaves gathered the plant for their owners, and in later years they grew it on their own as a cash crop (Hughes 1750: 145; Ligon 1657: 98-99; Oldmixon 1741; 2: 115).

Plants were also made into decoctions to treat scurvy and stomach pains, and the crushed petals of the "flower fence or Spanish carnation", when "steeped in breast milk", was a "gentle anodyne", or pain alleviator (Hughes 1750: 173, 219, 225). A decoction made from the "fit-weed" was viewed as "very efficacious to cure fits so often incident to young children", while the "nemnem" or "tooth-ache tree", introduced to Barbados about fifteen years before Hughes wrote, was viewed more skeptically

as a toothache remedy (Hughes 1750: 200, 229-30). Teas or decoctions from the leaves of the "white sage" and the "black sage" were used as sudorifics to encourage perspiration, the widely growing "milk-weed" was an ingredient in "diet-drinks to cleanse the blood", and the "maiden hair", boiled and mixed with sugar, was applied for lung or chest ailments (Hughes 1750: 155, 160, 163, 237). "Consumptive and other coughs" were treated with the "crabs-eyes" or crab eye vine (Poole 1753: 269-70).

Other plant decoctions were used as a "gargle" for sore throats and mouths, to help women with menstrual problems,<sup>11</sup> and a decoction from the leaves of "loggerhead weed", though potentially "very dangerous" because of its "great narcotic and stupifying qualities", helped to remove and destroy worms in children (Hughes 1750: 230). From at least the early eighteenth century, sap from the buds and leaves of the "arbor de reys", more commonly known as the "bearded fig tree" or "wild fig tree", eased "any inflammation caused by the poyson of any other tree as the mancinel [*sic*], poyson tree, or others" (Walduck 1710-1712; also, Hughes 1750: 175). An "excellent antidote against poison" was made from the roots of the "bloodworth" (Hughes 1750: 170), while the juice from the "white wood tree" was similarly used (Poole 1753: 237). Juice squeezed from the arrowroot plant and mixed with water was taken internally as a "preservative against any poison of an hot nature" (Hughes 1750: 221).

"A soverign remedy in most disorders of the eyes" was prepared by boiling the inner bark of the "yellow hercules tree" root,<sup>12</sup> while "nightshade" and "red-wood" leaves, when tied to the temples, were believed effective in treating headaches. Sap from the stalk of the "dove weed" was considered "good to destroy warts", and a "cataplasm" made from the "newly extracted juice" of the "poison tree", when applied to the feet, was found effective in killing chiggers (Hughes 1750: 143, 144, 147, 164, 211), a native American tropical flea which greatly troubled Barbadians until well into modern times.

Many plants were boiled into decoctions sometimes called teas (e.g., Hughes 1750: *passim*), but the historical sources do not specify if the term "bush tea" was used during the slave period. "Bush tea", as it has been called in Barbados for many years, is a general term for "watery infusions of various plants", applied externally to a rash, swelling, or pain, or taken internally for various ailments (Bayley 1949: 103). Referring to the 1930s and 1940s, Iris Bayley reported that over 150 species of plants were used in Barbadian bush teas. "Although the real art of 'boiling' bush teas is nearly extinct", she wrote, many were still brewed

according to traditional recipes, others according to the whim of a particular brewer; some teas were used to cure specific ills, others were considered panaceas for a wide range of ailments (Bayley 1949: 103-104). Bayley's description (1949: 108-109) of bush tea preparation can serve as a general guide to the procedures followed during the slave period:

...various parts of the plant are utilized, but sometimes the whole plant, together with the soil attached to its roots, is put into the mixture. A varying number of leaves, seeds, stems, or roots are boiled for a longer or shorter period, thus producing an extract of uncertain potency... Sometimes one plant is mistakenly used in place of another. Weather conditions, soil compositions and the method of preparation all combine to make the bush tea extracts extremely variable in strength... Dried bushes are supposed to be more efficacious than freshly-picked ones.

Although it cannot be established with certainty if all the plants Bayley mentions were used during the slave period, many probably were. However, some plants found in modern Barbadian bush teas were used for different ailments in earlier years, reflecting changes in the island's folk medicinal system. As a rough indication of these changes, as shown in the Appendix, of the approximately 60 plants for which there is evidence for pre-1834 use,<sup>13</sup> a little more than half were still being used in modern times, although not necessarily for the same ailments as in earlier periods. Bush teas, of course, are still found in Barbados, although to a much lesser degree than during the period in which Bayley wrote and certainly much less than during the slave period.

To conclude, we re-emphasize that the foundations for Barbados' folk healing tradition were established during the period of slavery, and that African medical traditions played a crucial role in contributing to this foundation. What was formed during the slave period, in turn, greatly influenced the island's folk-healing tradition in post-emancipation times. Folk medicine was an essential feature in the lives of most Barbadians for a great deal of the post-emancipation period and well into modern times. Even with the advent of modern medicine, a significant percentage of the Barbadian working class lacked access to professional physicians and provided most of its own medical care by utilizing the herbal medicines and treatments that earlier generations had discovered.



## Notes

- 1 Some of the data for this paper were collected over the years while Handler collected information for his study of Barbados slave life (*From Africans to Creoles: The Social and Cultural Life of Barbados Slaves, 1627-1834*; under contract to Harvard University Press). This research has been supported through grants and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, the American Philosophical Society, the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, the John Carter Brown Library, and the Social Science Research Council. A faculty research grant from the Office of Research and Development at Southern Illinois University facilitated the additional research required to complete this paper. Professor Donald Ugent, Department of Plant Biology at Southern Illinois University, assisted in our early efforts to identify some of the most problematic plants listed in the Appendix. Professor Richard A. Howard of Harvard University was of immeasurable help in later checking our earlier identifications; he not only corrected some of our errors, but also identified most other plants that could not be initially identified.
- 2 It bears stressing that in discussing plant medicines, we make no judgement about their properties and their medical effectiveness.
- 3 A popular seventeenth century English medical treatise also highly recommended both aloes and the "physick-nut" or "Barbadoes nut" for a variety of disorders; similar, if not identical, uses may have existed in Barbados itself. "Barbadoes nuts" were found useful as a "purge" and in treating jaundice, "the green sickness in virgins", "obstruction of the womb in elder women", "rheumatism", and the "dry bellyache". "Gourds and squashes", grown in Barbados and other tropical areas, were recommended in the treatment of "dry bellyache" (Salmon 1693: 854, 873, 940-41). "Dry bellyache", an extremely painful condition that could result in death, was a form of lead poisoning that afflicted both whites and blacks (Handler et al. 1986).
- 4 Inoculation of children was a traditional treatment for yaws in some West African areas. This method was also reported for Jamaica during the slave period, and probably also existed in other Caribbean areas, including Barbados. Another African method for treating crab yaws was reported for Jamaica and Grenada and also probably existed in other islands. In this method, the patient's feet were placed in a hot bath medicated with an herbal decoction. The use of warm or hot herbal baths was a common therapy in traditional West African cultures, and this practice is perhaps related to the "bush bath", a folk treatment still found in Barbados.
- 5 As his source, Watson cites: Walter Pollard to Lord Hardwicke, November 22, 1790 (Pollard Letters, Hardwicke Collection, Additional mss. 35656, fols. 121-122, British Library). In July 1991, Handler consulted this letter in the British Library, but he found no reference

- to venereal disease or the comment quoted by Watson. Watson appears to have given an erroneous citation.
- 6 Sloane's "fingrigo" is *Zanthoxylum spinifex*, also sometimes identified as *Fagara spinifex* (R. Howard, pers. comm.). "A decoction of the pounded leaves", wrote Hughes (1750: 197), "answers the end of English savine". Although not specified by Hughes, this "end" might have included medicines for several problems. In eighteenth century England, according to a standard source on herbal remedies (first published in the seventeenth century but revised and expanded over a number of later editions), the savine was "a powerful provoker of the catamenia causing abortion, and expelling the birth"; it was considered effective for destroying worms in children and curing their "scabby heads", was a "very fine opener of obstructions of any kind, whence in compositions for the jaundices, dropsy, scurvy, rheumatism, etc.", and "is a very potent scourer and cleanser of old sordid stinking ulcers" (Culpepper 1815: 318-19). This native Barbadian plant, which is sometimes called "finger-go", is used in modern times in bush teas for infants, as an appetite stimulant, and for infections; sometimes it is also fed to livestock (Watts 1966: 26, 78; Ramsay 1979: 75; Morton 1981: 385; Gooding 1942: 4). Maycock (1830: 428, 439) also refers to the "saven tree or bastard iron wood" as *Zanthoxylum pterota*, the "fingrigo or savine tree" as *Zanthoxylum tragodes*, and the "fingrigo or cockspur" as *Pisonia aculeata*. Another native Barbadian species, *Pisonia aculeata*, is known as "fingrigo" (Maycock 1830: 428; Morton 1981: 195), and although this is probably not the species referred to by Sloane, it is perhaps of some interest that a decoction of the root is used in Cuba to cure gonorrhoea (Morton 1981: 195). Visiting Barbados in the late eighteenth century Alexander Anderson learned that the "blueweed" was given in a decoction "as an effectual remedy for venereal complaints", but no racial group is mentioned (Howard 1992).
- 7 Other plants used in the treatment of external wounds, skin afflictions, or burns included the "balsam or sea-side sage", "cats blood shrub", "physic nut tree", "dove weed", "dialthea", "Christmas bush", "Spanish needle", "rock balsam", "fire burn bush", "Antegoa balsam", "holly hock", and "wild basil" (Hughes 1750: 114-15, 160, 163-64, 172, 173, 205, 208, 214, 219, 221, 244). However, Henry Fraser et al. (1990: 158) describe the "scrunchineel" (*Opuntia cochenillifera*) indicating its use as a poultice to "alleviate pain", in bush teas for a "general cleansing of the body", and as a hair shampoo. They say that Hughes mentions this plant, but we could not find any reference to this name in Hughes or Maycock. The plant Fraser et al. identify is the cochineel; although Hughes describes the "cocheneel shrub", he does not mention medicinal applications (1750: 135; cf. Maycock 1830: 424).
- 8 Obtaining his information from an "old negress", Gooding (1940: 172) reported on the paw paw which, when green, was used to treat colds. Also, the seeds of the ripe fruit were eaten fresh or dried to treat roundworms in children, and the green fruit was boiled into a

tea for reducing high blood pressure. In 1992, several elderly persons in Chalky Mountain reported to Handler that the paw paw was good for high blood pressure. The green fruit is first peeled, its seeds removed, and then it is cooked; sliced and eaten (sometimes with rice), it was said to bring "down the pressure quick". Another informant reported that when he was a child and had a sore or infected leg, the paw paw leaf (not the fruit) was "ground up fine", applied as a poultice, and the leg "got better".

- 9 E.g., the "mistletoe", or "bird's turd", or "iron vine" or "sweetheart", "forest bark, or bastard locust", "spirit weed", "pops", "broom weed", and "dog's grass" (Hughes 1750: 156, 161, 171, 206, 213, 214, 224, 241).
- 10 Other purges included the "holly hock" and "briny roots" (Hughes 1750: 208, 225).
- 11 The "hopweed", "many-roots", "wild purslain", "flower fence or Spanish carnation", and "vervain" (Hughes 1750: 149, 169, 201, 211, 225, 243).
- 12 In the 1940s, Bayley (1949: 106) reported that "the flowers of the creeping jasmine are steeped in water overnight prior to being used to wash eye sores"; this practice may date to the slave period. She identifies the creeping jasmine as *Jasminum officinale*, but Richard Howard (pers. comm.) identifies it as *Jasminum fluminense*.
- 13 Undoubtedly more than these 60 were used during the pre-1834 period; these plants, however, are the only ones for which we could find documentary evidence.

## Appendix

## Pre-1834 Medicinal Plants in Barbados

PRE-1834 COMMON NAME <sup>1</sup>	PRE-1834 MEDICINAL USE	PLANT SPECIES <sup>2</sup>	MODERN COMMON NAME	MODERN MEDICINAL USE <sup>3</sup>
Aloe (13, 14, 15)	burns (14), purgatives (13)	<i>Aloe vera</i> (11), synonym <i>Aloe barbadensis</i> (15, 24) <sup>4</sup>	Aloe (1, 6, 24)	burns (5), vulnerary (4, 5, 6, 10), pain and swelling (10, 20), purgative (1, 6, 10), high blood pressure (20), tea for colds (10), worms in children (3)
Antegoa or Antigua balsam (13, 15)	vulnerary, styptic, "inward bruises" (13)	<i>Justicia pectoralis</i> (7, 11, 15)	Garden balsam (3, 6), Carpenter grass (6)	flu (19), coughs (6), cold (6), tea (1, 3, 19)
Arrowroot (13, 15), Tarara root (2)	poison antidote (2, 13), vulnerary (2), diaphoretic (2), yaws (2, 9), dysentery (2, 9), fevers (9)	<i>Maranta arundinacea</i> (11, 15)	Arrowroot (9, 25)	tea for diarrhoea (10), teething aid (10)
Balsam or Seaside sage (13, 15)	fresh wounds (13)	<i>Croton flavens</i> (11), synonym <i>Croton balsamifer</i> (7, 15)	Seaside sage (6), Rock balsam (6)	colds, coughs (6)
Balsam fruit (15, 18)	chigger wounds (18)	<i>Clusia plukenetii</i> (11)	Rock balsam (7)	
Bastard locust or forest bark (13, 15)	restringent (13)	[?] <i>Coccoloba swartzii</i> (11) <sup>5</sup>	Barka locust (7, 24), Bastard locust (7, 24), red-wood (7), Red grape (7)	
Bearded fig tree (13, 15), Arbor de reys or Wild fig tree (22)	poison antidote (13, 22)	<i>Ficus citrifolia</i> (7, 24)	Bearded fig tree (5)	manchineel antidote (5)
Black sage (13, 15)	sudorific (13)	<i>Cordia curassavica</i> (7, 24)	Black sage (7)	



PRE-1834 COMMON NAME <sup>1</sup>	PRE-1834 MEDICINAL USE	PLANT SPECIES <sup>2</sup>	MODERN COMMON NAME	MODERN MEDICINAL USE <sup>3</sup>
Bloodworth (13, 15)	poison antidote (13)	<i>Zephyranthes puertoricensis</i> (11)	Bloodworth (24)	
Blueweed (12)	"venereal complaints" (12)	<i>Chamaesyce prostrata</i> (12)		
Bread and cheese or Sucking bottle vine (13, 15)	yaws (13)	<i>Paullinia cururu</i> (11, 15)		
Briny roots (13)	purgative, scurvy, deobstruent (13)	<i>Chiococca alba</i> (16, 24)	Tim tom bush (5, 6, 24), Snowberry (5,7,24)	purgative, abortifacient (6), aphrodisiac (5)
Broomweed, white (13, 15)	diuretic (13)	<i>Scoparia dulcis</i> (11)	Broomweed (6, 7), Whitehead (6, 7), Wormwood (6, 7)	vulnerary, skin eruptions, "heat in the body" (6)
<i>Cassia fistula</i> (13, 14, 15, 17)	purgative (13, 14), "cooler of the veins" (14)	<i>Cassia fistula</i> (8, 15, 24)		
Cat's blood shrub (13)	vulnerary (13)	<i>Rivina humilis</i> (11, 16)		
Christmas bush (13, 15)	vulnerary, detergent (13)	<i>Eupatorium odoratum</i> (7, 15, 24)	Christmas bush (3, 5, 6, 19)	vulnerary (6), tea for infants (3,6,19), colds or coughs (3, 4, 5, 6)
Crab eye vine (13, 15, 18)	"consumptive and other coughs" (18)	<i>Abrus precatorius</i> (1, 7, 15)	Crab eye vine (3, 6)	tea (3)
Dialthea (13, 15)	vulnerary (13)	<i>Waltheria indica</i> (11, 16)	Buffcoat (3, 7)	tea for infants, dietary supplement (3, 20)
Dog's grass (13, 15)	emetic, urination difficulties (13)	<i>Eragrostis ciliaris</i> (8, 24) *		
Dove weed (13, 15)	vulnerary, destroy warts (13)	<i>Chamaesyce prostrata</i> , <i>C. serpens</i> (11)		
Fingrigo or Savine tree (13, 15)	same uses as "English savine" (13) [ see text, note 6]	<i>Zanthoxylum spinifex</i> (11)	Fingrigo (6), Finger-go (19) Fingle-me-go (5)	tea for infants (19), appetite stimulant (6), infections(16), aphrodisiac (5)

PRE-1834 COMMON NAME <sup>1</sup>	PRE-1834 MEDICINAL USE	PLANT SPECIES <sup>2</sup>	MODERN COMMON NAME	MODERN MEDICINAL USE <sup>3</sup>
Fire burn bush (13, 15) <sup>7</sup>	burns (13)	<i>Gouania lupuloides</i> (5, 11)	Chawstick (5, 6), Cho bush (6)	bush tea (6), aphrodisiac (5, 6), gonorrhoea (5, 6), dentrifice (5, 6), gargle (6)
Fit weed (13, 15)	"fits in children" (13)	<i>Eryngium foetidum</i> (5, 11, 15)	Fit weed (19)	tea for infants (19), chest colds in children (6), bowel inflammation (6)
Flower fence or Spanish carnation (13, 15)	anodyne, "bring down the catamenia" (13)	<i>Caesalpinia pulcherrima</i> (11, 24)	Barbados pride, flower fence (5, 6, 19)	tea for infants (19), purgative (5)
French guava (13, 18)	skin eruptions (13), scabies (18)	<i>Cassia occidentalis</i> (11, 24)		
Gully root (12, 15)	Decoction "given for obstructions" (12)	<i>Petiveria alliacea</i> (12, 15)	Gully root (1, 5, 19)	abortifacient (1), tea for infants (19), aphrodisiac (5)
Holly hock (13, 15)	purge and ulcers (13)	<i>Argemone mexicana</i> (7, 11, 15)	Holly hock (3), Yellow hock (7), Mexican poppy (7) Yellow hawk (19)	warts (6), tea (19)
Hopweed (13, 15)	gargle for sore mouth (13)	<i>Salvia occidentalis</i> (11, 15, 16)	Hopweed (16), Hopbush (3)	tea (3)
Iron vine or Sweetheart (13, 15)	diarrhoea, dysentery (13)	<i>Desmodium</i> spp. (7, 11, 15, 16)	Sweethearts (7), Ironweed (6)	diuretic, spinal trouble (6)
Lignum vitae (13, 15, 18)	dropsies (18), "diet drinks", and "to purify the blood" (13)	<i>Guaiacum officinale</i> (1, 11, 15, 24)	Lignum vitae (1, 5, 6, 10)	arthritis, rheumatism (4, 10), abortifacient (1,3,5), tea (3)
Loggerhead weed (13, 15)	worms in children (13)	<i>Spigelia anthelmia</i> (7,11, 15)		
Maiden hair fern (13, 15)	pectoral (13)	<i>Adiantum</i> spp. (7, 11, 24)	Maiden hair fern (7, 24)	

PRE-1834 COMMON NAME <sup>1</sup>	PRE-1834 MEDICINAL USE	PLANT SPECIES <sup>2</sup>	MODERN COMMON NAME	MODERN MEDICINAL USE <sup>3</sup>
Many-roots (13, 15)	sore throat (13)	<i>Ruellia tuberosa</i> (7, 15)	Minnie roots (6, 7, 10), Monkey gun (6), Duppy gun (10)	colds, coughs (6, 10), intestinal inflammation (6, 10), blood disorders, cystitis, enteritis (10)
Milk weed (13, 15)	"cleanse the blood" (13)	<i>Chamaesyce</i> sp. (11), synonym <i>Euphorbia</i> sp. (7, 15)	Milk weed (6, 24)	tuberculosis (6)
Mistletoe (13, 15) or Bird's turd (13)	"fluxes" and "lasks" (13)	<i>Phoradendron trinervium</i> (11)		
Nemnem or Tpothache tree (13, 15)	toothaches (13)	<i>Acacia macracantha</i> (11), [?] <i>Acacia horrida</i> (15)		
Nightshade (13, 15)	headaches (13)	<i>Datura stramonium</i> (7, 11, 15)	Nightshade (7, 24)	
Palma christi (13, 18), Negro-oil bush (13, 15)	swelling (18)	<i>Ricinus communis</i> (7, 15, 24)	Castor oil (7, 20, 24)	fever (20)
Paw paw (15, 18)	ringworm and other skin disorders, fevers (18)	<i>Carica papaya</i> (15, 24)	Paw paw (3, 6, 10)	roundworms, digestive aid (6), high blood pressure (3, 6), abortifacient, colds, (6, 10), dyspepsia, skin ulcers (10)
Pengwyn (13, 15)	fevers (13)	<i>Bromelia pinguin</i> , <i>Bromelia karatas</i> (7, 11, 15)	Pinguin (5), Pingwing (5)	
Physick nut (13, 14, 15, 17, 21), Barbadoes nut (21)	purgative (13, 14), reduce swelling of dropsical disorders, fresh wounds (13)	<i>Jatropha curcas</i> (11, 15, 24)	Physick nut (6, 10, 25)	purgative (1, 25), burns (6), painful joints (6), tea for children (6), boils (6, 10), leprosy (10)

PRE-1834 COMMON NAME <sup>1</sup>	PRE-1834 MEDICINAL USE	PLANT SPECIES <sup>2</sup>	MODERN COMMON NAME	MODERN MEDICINAL USE <sup>3</sup>
Pigeon pea (13, 15)	diarrhoea, dysentery (13)	<i>Cajanus cajan</i> (7, 24)	Pigeon pea (7, 24)	
Plantain (15, 22a, 23)	eye inflammations, fevers (22a), blisters, skin ulcers (23)	<i>Musa paradisiaca</i> (15, 24)	Plantain (24)	
Poison tree (13)	chiggers (13)	<i>Sapium hippomane</i> (7, 24)	Poison tree (5, 6, 7, 24)	
Poison wyth (13)	ripen boils and tumors (13), heal sores (26)	<i>Cissus verticillata</i> (11), synonym <i>Cissus sicyoides</i> (7, 15, 24)	Poison wythe (24), Scratch wythe (1, 7)	ripen boils (6) chronic ulcers (1)
Pops (13, 15)	diuretic (13)	<i>Physalis angulata</i> (11, 15)	Pops (7)	
Red trubba, small (13)	"colicky disorder of the stomach" (13)	<i>Solanum torvum</i> (11)		
Red wood (13, 15)	headaches (13)	<i>Coccoloba swartzii</i> (7, 24)	Barka locust (7, 24), Bastard locus (7, 24), Red-wood (7), Red grape (7)	
Rock balsam (13, 15)	vulnerary (13)	<i>Peperomia magnoliifolia</i> (7, 11)	Rock balsam (3, 7, 19, 24)	tea for infants (19), coughs, colds (3, 16)
Soap-berry bush (13, 15) or Fire-burn leaf (13) *	burns and sores (13)	<i>Sapindus saponaria</i> (5, 11, 15, 24)	Soapberry (5, 24)	
Soldier's bush (12, 13)	vulnerary (13), inflammations and swellings (12)	<i>Tournefortia volubilis</i> (7, 11)	Soldier bush (6), Chigger nut (6, 24)	sores, burns (6)
Spanish needle (13, 15)	vulnerary (13)	<i>Bidens pilosa</i> (10, 11)	Spanish needle (10), Duppy needle (7), Needle grass (10)	diuretic tea (3)
Spirit weed (13, 15)	diuretic (13)	<i>Aegiphila martinicensis</i> (7, 11, 15, 24)	Spirit weed (7, 24)	



PRE-1834 COMMON NAME <sup>1</sup>	PRE-1834 MEDICINAL USE	PLANT SPECIES <sup>2</sup>	MODERN COMMON NAME	MODERN MEDICINAL USE <sup>3</sup>
Vervain (13)	deobstruent, aids menstrual flow (13)	<i>Stachytarpheta jamaicensis</i> (7, 11)	Vervain (6, 7)	tea for fever and ague (6), dropsical conditions in children (6), diuretic (6), vulnerary (6), tea (6)
White sage (13, 15)	sudorific, pectoral tea (13)	<i>Lanatana involucrata</i> (7, 15, 24)	White sage (7, 24)	
White wood tree (15, 18)	poison antidote (18)	<i>Tabebuia pallida</i> (7, 24), <i>Tabebuia heterophylla</i> (27)	Whitewood (7, 24), White cedar (7)	manchineel antidote (5)
Wild basil (13, 15)	vulnerary (13)	<i>Ocimum campechianum</i> (11), synonym <i>Ocimum micranthum</i> (7, 11)	Wild basil (7, 10), Annual weed (10), Duppy basil (1, 3, 7, 10), Duppy parsley (19), Monkey basil (19), Mosquito bush (1, 6)	tea (3, 19), chest colds and pulmonary complaints (1), ward off mosquitos (1, 5)
Wild honey tree (15, 18)	scabies (18)	<i>Casearia decandra</i> (24)*		
Wild purslain, white (13, 15) <sup>10</sup>	sore throat (13)	<i>Portulaca oleracea</i> (7) <i>Blutaparon vermicularis</i> (11)	Wild purslain (6, 7, 24), Pussley (5, 6, 7)	swelling and bruises (6)
Yellow hercules tree (13, 15)	eye disorders (13)	<i>Zanthoxylum monophyllum</i> (11)		

## Notes to Appendix

1 Numbers in parenthesis refer to the following sources:

- (1) Bayley (1949)
- (2) Colleton (1673)
- (3) Chalky Mount informants (Handler fieldnotes, 1961-62, 1980s, 1992)
- (4) Forde (1978)
- (5) Fraser et al. (1990)

- (6) Gooding (1940, 1942)
- (7) Gooding (1974)
- (8) Grisebach (1864)
- (9) Handler (1971)
- (10) Honychurch (1986)
- (11) Howard, Richard A. (pers. comm. 1992, 1993)
- (12) Howard (1992)
- (13) Hughes (1750)
- (14) Ligon (1657)
- (15) Maycock (1830)
- (16) Morton (1981)
- (17) Oldmixon (1741)
- (18) Poole (1753)
- (19) Ramsay (1979)
- (20) Reader (1976)
- (21) Salmon (1693)
- (22) Walduck (1710-1712)
- (22a) Walduck (1714)
- (23) Waller (1820)
- (24) Watts (1966)
- (25) Watts (1987)
- (26) Reed (1690)
- (27) Carrington, C. M. Sean (pers. comm. 1993)

- 2 The common names given in early primary sources were correlated with modern taxonomies by consulting Hughes (1750) and Maycock (1830). Using the botanical taxonomy of his day, Maycock identifies plants described by Hughes. Moving from Maycock's identifications to modern taxonomy presented, for the most part, little difficulty since modern sources often list outdated synonyms and many species names have not changed since Maycock's time. Watts (1966) also identifies common names given in early sources with modern scientific terminology. Richard A. Howard offered his considerable expertise to earlier drafts of this Appendix, and C. M. Sean Carrington provided useful comments on the final draft. Uncertain identifications are preceded by a bracketed question mark [?].
- 3 Where no modern medicinal use is given, information is lacking on modern use in Barbados. This absence, of course, does not necessarily mean that the plant is no longer used.

A number of these plants are medicinally used in other West Indian areas; for example, *Croton balsamifer*, *Cassia fistula*, *Rivina humilis*, *Eupatorium odoratum*, *Abrus precatorius*, *Waltheria indica*, *Cassia occidentalis*, *Argemone mexicana*, *Salvia occidentalis*, *Spigelia anthelmia*, *Adiantum spp.*, *Phoradendron trinervium*, *Datura stramonium*, *Cissus sicyoides* (Ayensu 1981: passim). Some species are also used medicinally in West Africa; for example, *Abrus precatorius*, *Waltheria indica*, *Ernygium foetidum*, *Argemone mexicana*, *Carica papaya*, *Jatropha curcas*, *Physalis spp.*, *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* (Ayensu 1978: passim; Gooding 1940; 7:172, 8:33; Dalziel 1937: 428).

- 4 *Aloe barbadensis* was acceptable for this plant years ago, but modern botanists use *Aloe vera* (Howard, pers. comm., 1992; cf. Maycock 1830; Watts 1966).
- 5 Although Maycock (1830: 16; cf. Grisebach 1864) identifies this plant as *Clethra tinifolia*, Howard (pers. comm., 1992) observes that Hughes' description of the forest bark tree "is not specific for identification", although the bastard locust in Hughes "might refer to adventitious shoots of *Coccoloba swartzii*".  
In a number of cases Hughes and other sources identify the same plant by different common names; for example, "bastard locust or forest bark" and "redwood", "blueweed", and "doveweed", "soap-berry bush or fire-burn leaf" and "fire-burn bush". In some cases, this dual identification has probably resulted from the author having observed the same plant at different stages of development; this seems to have been the case with "bastard locust or forest bark" and "redwood". In other cases, such as "blueweed" and "doveweed" (where the two common names are given by different authors) the plants were known by more than one common name.
- 6 Hughes' description is not specific, but his plant "is certainly not *Eragrostis ciliaris*" (Howard pers. comm. 1992).
- 7 Hughes distinguishes the "fire-burn bush" on the one hand, from the "fire-burn leaf" on the other; he also refers to the latter as the "soap-berry bush" (1750: 149, 172). Hughes' nomenclature has confused our efforts to botanically identify these plants.
- 8 See note 7. According to Carrington (pers. comm., 1993), the Soap-berry bush "is not *Sapindus saponaria* which is a tree, the Soapberry Tree ... [the Soap-berry bush] is *Gouania lupuloides* listed previously as Fire Burn Bush".
- 9 Leonard Plukenet's 1691 description "is *Casearia decandra* but that is not the plant described in Hughes which remains unrecognized" (Howard pers. comm.).
- 10 Although this is identified as one plant by Hughes (1750) and Maycock (1830), Carrington (pers. comm., 1993) indicates that it should be, in fact, two different plants: "Wild Purslain or Pussley is *Portulaca oleracea* while White Purslain is *Blutaparon vermicularis*".

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