

## ***After the First Full Moon in April: A Sourcebook of Herbal Medicine from a California Indian Elder***

Josephine Peters and Beverly Ortiz  
Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010  
220 pages, 152 figures/photographs \$30.00 (paperback)

### **Reviewed by Frank K. Lake**

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Josephine “Jo” Grant Peters was an Native American herbalist of mixed tribal ancestry (Karuk/Shasta/Abenaki) who was raised and lived in Northwestern California along the Salmon, Klamath, and Trinity rivers. She was a woman with an exceptional knowledge of native and non-native plants, and of the many cultural traditions for management, harvesting, preparation, and uses associated with them. In addition to her plant knowledge, Jo was an artist, educator, and compassionate matriarch to her family and tribal community. Her life (1923–2011) experiences and work with plants spanned a time of modernization and change for tribal communities along the Klamath and Trinity rivers. Because of these changes, her knowledge, use, and preparations of plants reflected both historical and modern practices and applications. Beverly R. Ortiz, an ethnographic consultant, came to know about and work with Josephine on *After the First Full Moon* at the request of family, tribal, and community members and in partnership with the California Indian Basketweavers Association and U.S. Forest Service, Six Rivers National Forest. The book’s content reflects the partnership and work of Bev Ortiz as the ethnographer, Jo as the consultant, and

the contributions of many tribal and other community members. The thoroughly recorded, documented, photographed, and integrated work carried out by Bev Ortiz captures the essence of Josephine’s and other contributors’ use of and relationship with plants. This book embodies more than just the ethnobotanical and medicinal uses of plants—it also covers the life story and relationships of the people who worked with or were treated and healed by Josephine.

The book’s content and organization are primarily centered around Josephine’s life and relationship with plants. It provides a wealth of information regarding tribal gathering practices, preparation methods, and a multitude of applications for various ailments or sicknesses. Photographs of people, places, and plants provide reference and context for the book’s content. Additionally, the book includes traditional stories, tribal beliefs, ethics for harvesting, and descriptions of Karuk cultural uses of plants for medicinal, subsistence, and ceremonial purposes. The book’s sections and chapters are organized so that the reader can learn about and appreciate Josephine’s history and life, the plants she used, and the many ways that plants play an important role in tribal life.

The beginning of the book includes a preface and introductory chapter that give the reader a good overview of the book’s content, intent, and utility by detailing Josephine’s life, family history, and tribal cultural issues, as well as Beverly’s role in helping with the book. A chapter on gathering ethics provides a valuable context for the tribal community’s and Josephine’s individual philosophy about the harvesting and use of plants. This topic sets the foundation for the reader’s understanding of how, why, and where plants are gathered for medicinal, subsistence, and ceremonial

uses, and of accompanying issues to consider when doing so. Subsequent chapters detail plant gathering and preparation practices, drying and storing, and the types of medicinal applications used for various ailments or sicknesses. Beverly's detailed descriptions of Josephine's knowledge and experiences with plants provide a deep insight into the importance of plants in everyday life, as well as their having a fundamental role in Indian culture and traditions. Discussions of categories of medicinal plants used as blood purifiers, cleansers, gargles, inhalants, hair rinses, soaks, washes, poultices, pastes, salves, and cough syrups provide a wide range of applications and contexts for healing. Additional information is included on those plants or parts of plants used for food and their various preparation methods. The main part of the book is the chapter entitled "The Plants," in which over 170 different species of native and non-native, wild and cultivated, plants are featured. The Latin or scientific, Karuk (if available), and common name of each plant is given; information on the parts utilized, their uses, dosage, and additional background on use and preparation is then provided. A few of the common names given by Josephine for some plants do not always reflect wider usage or the Latin name, as a result of not having proper field or

specimen identifications. However, many featured plants have accompanying photographs which visually aid the reader. The book ends with a section that includes many valuable references and a good, detailed index of plants, medical conditions, and subjects. These features make the book a very useful and quick guide to "find what you are looking for."

*After the First Full Moon in April* embodies a rich cultural legacy of an extraordinary Indian elder woman's plant knowledge and experiences. Beverly Ortiz's efforts and care to include many details pertaining to Josephine's relationship with plants and people make this book uniquely different from other ethnobotanical guides. The book continues to enrich and provide readers with a source of appreciation and respect for plants and tribal ethnobotanical traditions. It is now widely used and is kept on the coffee tables or kitchen counter tops in many tribal and other community members' homes along the Klamath, Salmon, and Trinity rivers from Yreka to Somes Bar to Hoopa, and in the surrounding Northwestern California region. It is also used by a number of universities and other organizations as a text. Hardcopy versions are hard to find, reprints may be limited, and many people buy several copies for future use or gifts, so be sure to get your own copy today.

