Plant Biographies range from a paragraph to several pages in length. For each plant, the genus, then give selected species. Synonyms are listed, then the common name is chosen and put in bold capital. The plant is very briefly described: "SAFFRON is a bulbous perennial. Native to Asia Minor and southern Europe, it has orange-like, blue, or white flowers with pistarding, orange-red "stamen-like spikes." Although dozens of common names are given in the biography, one is chosen and then used throughout the biography (false, saffron). It is not clear how the chosen common names were selected. Some are British—endearments for cattails (Cattail is), because there is no easy answer in choosing common names, but it will help users around the world if the plant explains her reasoning.

Following the brief description is a list of common names, which may include several English. This section often ends with "in flower language it is said in symphony ..." Next the entry explains the species with "Saffron's twisted bulbous stalk." Common name "Saffron" comes from the Arabic word for yellow. Generally historically arranged discussion of the plant's usefulness, full of interesting facts about its botanical relationships, including family quotes. Often information on commercial uses, current sources, and medicinal uses in several cultures are included. Also included for saffron is that "it is the birthday of the pea family (above, saffron). It is not clear how the bibliography includes 791 entries, almost entirely books, the journals included are: The Herbal Review and Penicillium Batyey, and the websites are: The Plant List, Tropical and Multilingual Multiscript Plant Name Database. The publication date is 2013 but there are no references after 2010, except the websites. The majority of the references were published 1970-1994 (49, 61%), only 3.9% (15) since 2000. However, the list of the Van der Plaats and Pimentel (1973) is in the bibliography but not the Plant List (North America 1995-9). Also not in the bibliography or the entries are references to German Commissions on herbal medicine or the Physical Therapist's Reference for Herbal Medicine, sources that I use to check information on medicinal plants. The truth is that I do not know whether I can trust the information presented. Old is not necessarily inaccurate, but the lack of information is worrisome. Without citations within the entries and 741 references, the source of the information cannot be readily identified.

This is an amazing piece of work, compiling an enormous array of popular facts about important plants. There are wonderful pieces of information included and the entries often give a good review of the plants role in human history. Moreover, old references and no internal citations, the quality of particular facts is impossible to evaluate. Plant biographies is described as the first edition of an ongoing project, so perhaps these problems will be remedied in future editions.

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