



The Cabaret of Plants: Forty Thousand Years of Plant Life and the Human Imagination

Richard Mabey

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"Highly entertaining...Without being sentimental about it, Mr. Mabey gets us to look at life from the plants' point of view. His science is sound, he's witty, and his language is engaging." ?Constance Casey, *New York Times*

The Cabaret of Plants is a masterful, globe-trotting exploration of the relationship between humans and the kingdom of plants by the renowned naturalist Richard Mabey.

A rich, sweeping, and wonderfully readable work of botanical history, *The Cabaret of Plants* explores dozens of plant species that for millennia have challenged our imaginations, awoken our wonder, and upturned our ideas about history, science, beauty, and belief. Going back to the beginnings of human history, Mabey shows how flowers, trees, and plants have been central to human experience not just as sources of food and medicine but as objects of worship, actors in creation myths, and symbols of war and peace, life and death.

Writing in a celebrated style that the *Economist* calls "delightful and casually learned," Mabey takes readers from the Himalayas to Madagascar to the Amazon to our own backyards. He ranges through the work of writers, artists, and scientists such as da Vinci, Keats, Darwin, and van Gogh and across nearly 40,000 years of human history: Ice Age images of plant life in ancient cave art and the earliest representations of the Garden of Eden; Newton's apple and gravity, Priestley's sprig of mint and photosynthesis, and Wordsworth's daffodils; the history of cultivated plants such as maize, ginseng, and cotton; and the ways the sturdy oak became the symbol of British nationhood and the giant sequoia came to epitomize the spirit of America.

Complemented by dozens of full-color illustrations, *The Cabaret of Plants* is the magnum opus of a great naturalist and an extraordinary exploration of the deeply intertwined history of humans and the natural world.

35 color illustrations

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