

Contraception with Plants



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Birgit Seyr combines her knowledge as a trained chemist with many years of interest in plants and their effects. This short book describes species that have been employed for contraception from ancient times to the present day, by men and/or women.

The author had two different intentions: making traditional knowledge about plants available again and fighting patents and monopolies of plants and their uses. In doing so, she does not unconditionally support the use of plants for contraception or abortions. Her goal in providing this information is protecting pregnant women against the unknown effects of a number of species.

After an overview of past birth-control methods, portraits of ten different plants provide examples and detailed information concerning their appearance, origins, habitats, applications, preparations, effects and much more. Studies done on their reliability as contraceptives are also described, to the extent that they have been performed.

I find the extensive bibliography and references to ancient source materials and ethnobotanic reports on indigenous cultures particularly interesting. On the other hand, I do not agree with the dust-jacket text, which seems to offer a plant-based alternative to conventional methods of contraception. The fact that some of the information concerning recommended dosage and application is quite vague involves a high risk of unplanned pregnancy.

We thank the author for generously donating her book to our library.

Birgit Seyr: Mit Pflanzen verhüten - Über die Wiederentdeckung einer alten Tradition der selbstbestimmten Geburtenregelung (Contraception with Plants: On the Rediscovery of an Old Tradition of Self-determined Birth Control), 2010, ISBN: 978-3-200-01732-0

Monika Zacher, June 2010