

COVER IMPRESSIONS

About our cover artist

Citrus vulgaris Risso (1883) ■ Walther Müller

Citrus trees were first depicted in paintings on the walls of the Egyptian Temple of Karnak. In ancient times, citrus fruit had not yet evolved as a food staple; the fragrant blossoms and fruit were used as indoor air fresheners. The Chinese were the first to cultivate citrus trees, around 1,000 B.C. Citrus fruits include the orange, lemon, lime, grapefruit, tangerine, kumquat, citron, and pummelo. Of all these fruits, the orange is considered to be the most important. There are 2 kinds of oranges, the sweet orange from southern China, and the bitter orange, which originated in northwest India. Both types of oranges were brought to America by Spanish and Portuguese explorers in the 1500s.

Widely cultivated in the tropics and subtropics, the bitter orange is also known as the Seville orange or the sour orange. Its scientific name is *Citrus aurantium* (formerly *Citrus vulgaris* Risso). Although it resembles the sweet orange (*Citrus sinensis*), the bitter orange's rind is much thicker and rougher. A major portion of the world's crop of this fruit is sold to England, Scotland, and South Africa for the production of marmalade. The bitter orange's oil is used in baking, cosmetic, and aromatherapy products, as well as a flavoring agent in alcoholic and soft drinks. Of course, the sweet orange is valued throughout the world for its delicious fruit and juice.

Oranges and the other citrus fruits have many health benefits—some of them are better known than others. According to the Informed Farmers website (informedfarmers.com), "In the United States, citrus is suggested as part of a healthy diet because of its high vitamin C content and its lycopene and flavonoids, which are known to reduce prostate and breast cancer risk, reduce viral effects and inflammation, and improve capillary activity and cholesterol levels." The site also mentions that citrus species are significant in traditional Pacific Island medicine. In Samoa, a leaf infusion made from the sweet orange is used to relieve mouth sores in infants, and in Tahiti, citrus leaves are utilized for internal ailments as well as fractures.

Citrus vulgaris Risso is one of nearly 300 color plates in Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen* (Köhler's *Medicinal Plants*), which includes plants of medicinal interest from several European countries. The publication's exquisite botanical prints depict a wide variety of subject matter including trees, ferns, lichen, and herbaceous plants. Each illustration has accompanying text that describes the plant's characteristics and cultivation requirements. Published as a set of 4 volumes from 1883 to 1898, Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen* was produced by the pub-



"...the finest and most useful series of illustrations of medicinal plants."

lishing house of Franz Eugen Köhler and edited by Gustav Pabst, a German botanist. It was awarded a gold medal in August 1883 at the first International Pharmaceutical Exhibition in Vienna, Austria. In *Great Flower Books 1700-1900*, authors Sacheverell Sitwell and Wilfrid Blunt described Köhler's *Medizinal-Pflanzen* as follows: "From the botanical standpoint, [it is] the finest and most useful series of illustrations of medicinal plants." Walther Müller drew the botanical images, which were rendered for print via chromolithography by E. Gunther. (Chromolithography is a method for making multicolored prints—it stemmed from lithography, the process of drawing a picture on a stone or zinc plate, which is then inked and passed through a printing press with a sheet of paper to transfer the image

to the paper.) Unfortunately, not much is known about Müller, except that he was a prolific artist who illustrated many of the German botanical publications of the late 19th century. He often worked in conjunction with another German artist, Carl Friedrich Schmidt. Little did they know that botanical prints would eventually become popular as wall décor in homes around the world.

In 2002, Purdue University horticulture professor Jules Janick discussed the history of horticulture in a series of lectures. Lectures 23 and 24 were titled "Herbals: The Connection Between Horticulture and Medicine." He opened with: "The prehistoric discovery that certain plants cause harm and others have curative powers is the origin of the healing professions and its practitioners (priest, physician, and apothecary), as well as professions devoted to plants (botany and horticulture). The description of plants and their properties and virtues (termed *herbals* in the 16th century) became an invaluable resource for the physician and apothecary." Janick went on to say that "the medicinal use of herbs continue[s] as an alternate form of medicine and remain[s] popular in various forms to the present day despite the questionable efficacy of many popular herbs The fact that most drugs were originally plant-based has encouraged a new look [at] the medicinal properties of plants."

Sheila Macho
Cover Editor

COVER CREDIT

Walther Müller, *Citrus vulgaris* Risso, chromolithograph. Gera, Germany. Copyright © 1883. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

SOURCES

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