

MEDICINAL PLANTS IN TRADITIONAL GARDENS: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE OCCIDENTAL CENTRAL VALLEY OF COSTA RICA

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Among all of the countries in the world, Costa Rica is known as one of the richest countries in biodiversity. One such aspect of this biodiversity is the abundance of medicinal plants: about 500 species exist in this country. Their presence in society dates back to the indigenous people, and currently, their use is worldwide and growing. Little to none has been investigated relating to the medicinal plants grown in traditional gardens of Piedades Norte de San Ramón, Costa Rica, which are relatively small gardens located near the home that contain a variety of types of plants which serve the needs of the household. Through a process of interviews, the study examined the floral composition of these traditional gardens as well as the cultural practices that people used to maintain their gardens. The interviews also helped gather information about the preparations and uses of medicinal plants found in these gardens. Most traditional farm owners were middle to late-aged women who learned how to garden from older generations. Tradition seemed to play a significant role in determining what types of practices people held as well as how they used their medicinal plants, whether it be familial tradition or societal tradition.