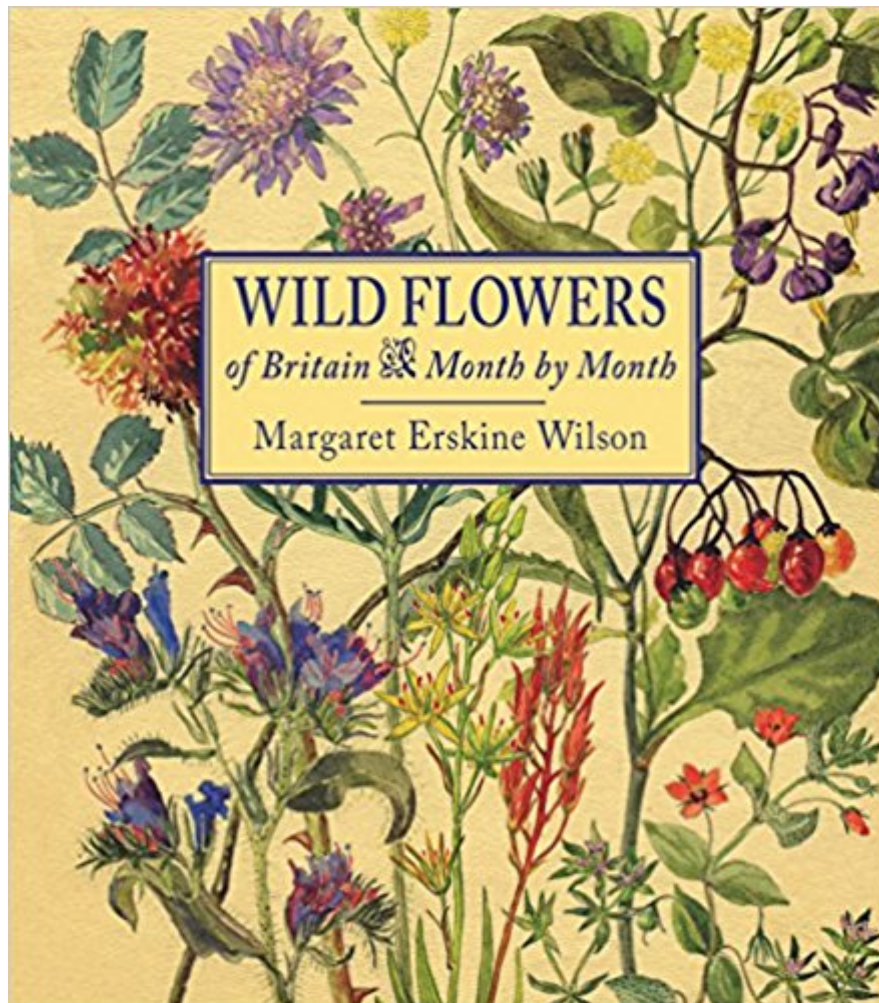




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Wild Flowers Of Britain: Month By Month



Synopsis

Margaret Erskine Wilson, late President of Kendal Natural History Society, was a keen amateur botanist and water-colourist. In 1999, she donated to the Society 150 sheets of water-colour paintings representing a thousand British and Irish plants in flower and in fruit, painted in situ over many years and in various places. At the time she donated the paintings to Kendal Natural History Society, she wrote: Begun in 1943/4 for a friend who said, "I might learn the names of flowers if you drew them for me, in the months they're in flower!" The result is this beautiful, previously unpublished book of all her accurate and informative illustrations, painted over a period of 45 years. Over a thousand British and Irish flowers are represented in this book and it still today serves Margaret Erskine Wilson's original purpose "it is an easy way to learn the names of our delicate and beautiful wild flowers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Margaret Erskine Wilson was born in 1915, and won a scholarship to Girton College Cambridge to study modern languages. She then studied Textile Design at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, until the war broke out in 1939. She found her vocation as a teacher in Somerset and in 1954 moved to work at Kendal Girls High School, ending her career as Head of Modern Languages there. An enthusiastic member of Kendal Natural History Society, and its President in 2007, she exhibited her paintings at the Royal Horticultural Society's Botanical Art Show in London, and won silver medals on at least two occasions. During the school summer holidays Margaret travelled widely and her paintings from that time include flowers from Afghanistan, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus

and Crete. She visited her brother in New York State, USA, and painted flowers she found there. She enjoyed summer walking in the Swiss, Italian and French Alps, and delighted in the alpine flowers. She died in 2009 and donated many of her paintings of wild flowers to the Kendal Natural History Society.

Editor's note Margaret Wilson's paintings of flowers and fruit throughout the year, comprise over 1000 specimens and were compiled over a period of 45 years. Not only did the style of her paintings develop but the content of her pencilled notes on the back of each painting changed considerably. Names of the area or places where the specimens were painted are given on almost all the paintings, though in more detail on later ones. She also made cross references to the months of fruiting (where a flower is illustrated) and flowering (where the fruit is shown) throughout the project. Apart from this, the backs of early paintings give little information except occasional mention of interesting alternative English names. This reflects Margaret's original purpose – to assist her friend in learning to recognise wild flowers – but after she had repossessed the calendar (as she called the project) the notes became more detailed and often included the scientific names and notes on habitat. Individual paintings are not dated but clearly the small number of winter and autumn months were done in the early days whereas Margaret went on adding more pages for the spring and summer months and left some unfinished when ill health eventually brought an end to her painting. These unfinished sheets, extracts from which adorn the front and end pages of this book, show that the paintings were not planned as whole pictures but built up plant by plant, each painted in situ, and yet resulting in such pleasing compositions. In preparing the collection of paintings into book form, I transcribed Margaret's notes, but also listed the English names as shown on the paintings, adding words in brackets where she gave only part of the full English name e.g. (Marsh) Arrow Grass. Where she used an unusual English name (sometimes a direct translation of the latin), I have added a footnote giving a more recognised name. I have also listed the scientific names, as far as possible, in their current form. Numbered footnotes are mine; those indicated by an asterix are Margaret's. I acknowledge the tremendous assistance given by Fiona Holman in checking the identities of the specimens illustrated and preparing the lists of scientific names. Judith M. S. Robinson Kendal Natural History Society 2016

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