



## Dry fruits and plants at “Arta Rustica” Craft Complex

*Anna was a young woman filled with excitement and anticipation. She had just received important news that she was eager to share with her beloved. News that led her on a journey of discovery about the rich cultural heritage of Moldovan traditional fine crafts and priceless artifacts.*

### Woven memories with Dry fruits & plants

*Looking at the patterns from the carpets Anna could not stop thinking about the power of nature.*

#### The Power of Nature and Herbal Remedies

The relationship between humans and plants has been a long and intimate one, dating back to the earliest times of human civilization. As early humans began to settle down and form communities, they also started to notice the properties of different plants around them and how they could be used to alleviate ailments and improve their health. Over time, the knowledge of how to use plants for medicinal purposes was passed down from generation to generation, forming the basis for what would later become the science of botany and herbal medicine.

In the case of Moldova, this rich history of plant use and knowledge continued to thrive, especially at the turn of the 20th century, when drying plums became a major source of economic and trade development. With its fertile soil and favorable climate, Moldova quickly became one of the leading exporters of prunes, a fruit known for its many health benefits.

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Whether as sources of food, medicine, or raw materials, plants and fruits have been an indispensable part of human history and will likely continue to be so for centuries to come.

One of the keepers of nature secrets was Anna's grandma. She was a true wizard of nature, and her knowledge of plants was beyond that of any ordinary mortal. To Anna, her grandmother was like a good witch who used the gifts of nature to heal the people around her. She would watch in awe as her grandmother brewed potions using the plants she collected on her walks. The process of collecting the plants was often shrouded in mystery, sometimes starting in the early morning hours when the dew still clung to the leaves, or after the sun had set. Anna felt like she was experiencing magic with her grandmother every time she saw her mix her remedies. The final results of these potions were always nothing short of miraculous.

Anna's grandma told her once that nature was a constant companion to those who lived close to the land. It was a source of solace, inspiration, and resourcefulness that was woven into the fabric of their daily lives. For many communities, the traditional art of rug making served as a means of preserving their cultural heritage and beliefs, and each woven strand was a symbol of their connection to the natural world. By examining these textured tapestries, we are given a glimpse into a time when the rhythms of nature were inextricably linked to the rhythm of life. Traditional Bessarabian carpets are a reminder that, although our world may have changed, the beauty and power of nature remain an enduring source of comfort and inspiration. Traditional rugs stand out due to their extensive use of plant motifs, which hold significant cultural and spiritual meanings for the Moldovan people. Remembering a carpet weaved by her grandma, Anna noted that the plants were depicted as being larger than the people in the carpet, which highlighted the importance of nature and its relationship to humankind.

The plants were not only depicted on the carpets, they were also used for drying. During the summer times Anna used to stay at her grandmother's house, and that was actually the time when the threads for future textiles were colored.

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Anna was fascinated by the way her grandmother used dried plants not only for medicine but also for other purposes. The wool for weaving traditional carpets was dyed using the same plants she used for her remedies. The brilliant hues of red, green, blue and yellow came from the roots, leaves and flowers of the plants that surrounded them. During the spring holiday season, Anna's grandmother would also use the same plant dyes to color the Easter eggs.

She often wondered how many other hidden talents and secrets her grandmother held, but it was too late to wonder.

### **\*Natural dyes of the earth**

The textiles used in the production of Moldovan carpets were woven from raw materials that were locally sourced, often gathered from their own households. The plants used for dyeing were collected from the fields, the mown hay and weeds from the garden such as wormwood, nettle, and furrow. The herbs were dried in the shade and then steeped in water in enameled dishes, with a ratio of 1 to 10. The vessel was heated, and the fibers to be dyed were immersed and boiled, while being stirred constantly. After rinsing, the fibers were dried on a fence.

The process of coloring the textile used in carpets, kilims, and embroideries was done through this procedure. Different colors were obtained from various plants. For instance, a dark brown color was obtained from the green rind of oak, a yellow-brown hue was created from corn silk, and black was derived from the green walnut shell. The ancestors discovered that the concentration of the dye depended on the time of year and the time of day the plants were collected.

The ancestral traditions and the use of natural dyes in some processes resulted in harmonious combinations of pastel colors that became a distinctive feature of Moldovan carpets.

“Don't forget about the spirit”, heard Anna while thinking about the fact that plants were present in all aspects of life, at that moment the aroma of the basil was sent by Anna.

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## Basil is a Physical and Spiritual Booster

Grandma was always saying to Anna that basil plays a central role in the beliefs and customs of the people in this region, and it remains an important symbol of cultural identity to this day. Whether it was being used to adorn their homes, to mark the changing seasons, or to celebrate important life events, basil was always present in the lives of these people, helping to bring meaning and purpose to their everyday experiences.

*Her grandmother's voice echoed in her mind, singing the timeless melody: "Basil at birth, basil at death. Flower of sadness, flower of luck. God, how does our whole life fit between two little basil leaves".*

The scent of dried basil leaves lingered heavily in the air, a reminder of the sacred tradition of using basil threads in the creation of holy water used for the most important life events - baptism, wedding, and funeral.

Basil is a plant that has a rich cultural and historical significance in the Carpatho-Danubian region. It is closely tied to the cultivation of the land and has deep roots in the ancient cult of fertility and prosperity. In many traditional societies, basil was seen as a sacred and lucky plant, and it was used in a variety of ways to mark important events and milestones. It was a common practice to decorate carpets and textiles with basil motifs, and it was also used in family and calendar customs, as well as in rituals related to the life cycle.

Anna, like any girl, loved flowers, but she never took into consideration the Basil, maybe only the one she used to put in some salads.... but then again, that was another type of basil.

The name "basil" comes from the Latin "basilius", and the Greek βασιλικόν φυτόν (basilikón phutón), meaning "royal/kingly plant"

Basil has religious significance in the Greek Orthodox Church, where it is used to sprinkle holy water. The Bulgarian, Serbian, Macedonian, Romanian and Moldavian Orthodox Church use basil to prepare holy water and pots of basil

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are often placed below church altars. The popularity of the plant made it enter the practice in the Republic of Moldova. In this sense, Christian folk tradition has given basil a certain symbolism.

So, basil is considered a religious flower, "nothing can be done without it", it is a precious flower: it goes to church, to the funeral, to weddings, to baptisms, to sanctify water - it is good everywhere. He is present at all calendar holidays, but also at the most important moments in human life (from birth to death).

*“Basil at birth, basil at death. Flower of sadness, flower of luck.  
God, how does our whole life fit between these two strands!*

*Vasile Romanciuc's Poem "Basil" expresses how your life is full of luck since you were born, until the end. How basil is the one that holds our enormous life, in just two small strands (this sentence expresses how a flimsy thing can do great things).*

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