

Healthy Herbs: Your Everyday Guide to Medicinal Herbs and Their Use by Linda Woolven, M.H., C.A.C., and Ted Snider. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Limited; 2007. Paperback; 245 pages. ISBN-13: 978-155041-329-8. \$17.95.

If your bookshelves are like mine—overcrowded—then you are probably careful about which books you allow to stake claim. *Healthy Herbs: Your Everyday Guide to Medicinal Herbs and Their Use* may seem to lack the necessary prestige with its unpretentious title and presentation, but it's actually worth the small space it will take up. A handy reference tool, the book provides a snapshot of the eclectic form of herbalism that has developed over the past 4 decades, and it casts a deservedly complimentary glow, from a variety of angles, on the healing quality of herbs.

Healthy Herbs builds from an egalitarian base by blending research conclusions with the impressions of contemporary herb teachers and writers, including the authors' own experiences. The text includes a large assortment of plants, "...more than one hundred of the most important herbs on the market today." As they say of their book, "It combines the east and the west, the north and the south, the old and the new." Most importantly, fulfilling its mission as an "everyday guide," the book is readable and accessible in its language, size, and price.

Healthy Herbs is a distilled herbal compendium, organized alphabetically by common names. The reader is immersed in the world of using herbs for health with a few introductory pages dedicated to the basic foundations of herbal preparations. There's a short, basic section on the "how-tos" and "wherefores" of making infusions, decoctions, pills, and extracts, including a table that lists 10 herb properties and their therapeutic actions. For example, in this table a demulcent is listed as something that soothes "damaged, irritated or inflamed tissue," while an astringent "has a contracting or tightening effect on tissue and stops the loss of body fluids like hemorrhages and other secretions."

The paragraph on standardization lets the reader know that some scientists prefer standardization while some herbalists prefer to use the herb in its natural state. The authors explain that they use both standardized and non-standardized products and, in the compendium, address dosing

for both categories. Recommendations for gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*, Apiaceae), for example, include 6 grams a day of dried gotu kola leaves in pill form or an extract that has been standardized to 40% asiaticoside, 29-30% madecassic acid, and 1-2% madecassoside with a recommended dose of 60-120 mg a day. Dosage recommendations are also included for tinctures, extracts, and tea. Readers will find it refreshing to have clear dosages recommended, though the authors acknowledge that there are difficulties in discussing dosages due to changing information on contraindications and drug interactions.

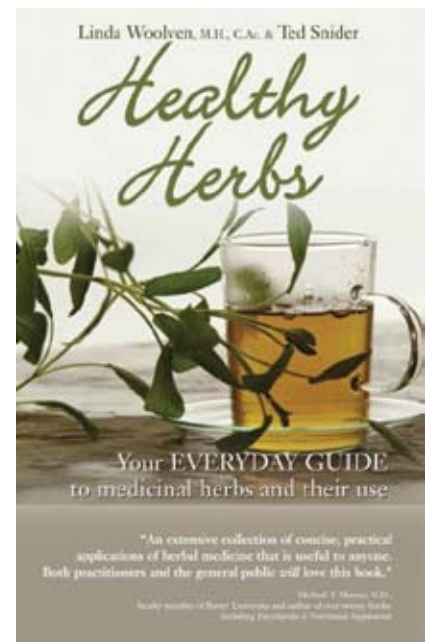
Authors Linda Woolven and Ted Snider make a clear case for the usefulness and overall safety of herbs and challenge research when they deem it suspect. Their willingness to express a cool-headed, let-the-literature-speak-for-itself manner is something that really endeared me to this book. In fact, I wish their frank interpretations regarding the herb-versus-pharmaceutical contests that have been mounted over the past decade were more prevalent in the book.

For example, St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*, Clusiaceae), a stalwart of herbalists worldwide, is well championed. By walking the reader through the last decade-and-a-half of the boxing matches between St. John's wort and the expanding categories of new anti-depressive pharmaceuticals, you just may get the sense that some of these matches were rigged. The authors characterize one of the most damning reports with a certain degree of logic: "The reports stated simply that St. John's wort doesn't work. But this study (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2002) compared the herb to, not only a placebo, but also to the antidepressant drug Zoloft, also found that the drug didn't work. Zoloft was included in the study because we know it works. Therefore, if the drug didn't work it's because the study didn't work. So, according to Jerry Cott, who was actually involved in the study's design, it's not St. John's wort that didn't work, it's the study that didn't work."

The notorious licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*, Fabaceae) also gets its fair due in the book. The authors dutifully review the warnings of a potential for an increase in blood pressure with the use of licorice but they also explore some of the contradictions and confusing literature citations.

The gist of the conversation reflects the evidence that the whole herb should not be pigeon-holed with highly concentrated extracts. Clearly rooting for the effectiveness of the rhizome, Woolven admits to successfully using licorice, "to heal her own ulcer. It not only healed the ulcer quickly, but it also began to reduce the pain almost immediately."

These acknowledgments of direct experiences, both of the authors as well as other well-known herbalists, add interest and useful, down-to-earth information. Though not footnoted, the book does an admirable job of crediting some sources of material right in the text. Much emphasis is put on information gathered from a wide assortment of periodicals. These journals, also represented in the text with the abbreviations of their titles and year of publication, are followed by a 7-page section that



references the full name of each journal. There's also a suggested reading list that includes popular titles from current and past decades.

By using the book's thorough index, it's possible to look up both conditions and individual herbs by common name or Latin binomial, which adds to its usefulness as a reliable reference book. For example, under the term "colds" in the index, there are 21 herbs listed by their common names, beginning with andrographis (*Andrographis paniculata*, Acanthaceae) and ending with

yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*, Asteraceae).

However, there is a lean streak to this book that is at once admirable but at the same time may leave some feeling somewhat unsatisfied. For instance, two graphic symbols are used throughout the book: (1) an apothecary's mortar and pestle, and (2) a cross within a box. These graphic symbols are paired with information about dosage and safety, respectively. Unfortunately, definitions for these symbols are not provided in the book, so some readers may wonder about their meaning. There is also a lack of botanical family names as well as limited information about the authors, Woolven and Snider. This is regrettable since their personal experiences with the herbs help to distinguish the book. A broader view of their expertise would lend not only interest but also credibility.

Overall, I believe *Healthy Herbs* is a good reference book. While recognizing the modern analytical perspective, the book liberally acknowledges the ancient healing magic that our green world so generously provides to all, believers or not.

—Cascade Anderson Geller
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Textbook of Natural Medicine, 3rd edition, by Joseph Pizzorno and Michael Murray, eds. St. Louis, MO: Churchill Livingstone Elsevier; 2006. Hardcover; 2210 pages. ISBN-13: 978-0-443-07300-7. \$239.00.

Joseph E. Pizzorno, ND, and Michael T. Murray, ND, have done it again. As with their other publications, these two natural medicine pioneers have created a compendium of information like no other. I consider this, the third edition of the *Textbook of Natural Medicine*, the definitive textbook on the topic. Contributions from 89 authors went into creating this two-volume set, which is divided into 6 sections containing more than 10,000 citations. Topics are organized into a logical progression of information, starting with a thorough discussion of the philosophy of natural medicine in Section 1, and every section is clinically relevant. Sections include the following: Section 2: Supplementary Diagnostic Procedures; Section 3: Therapeutic Modalities; Section 4: Syndromes and Special Topics; Section 5: Pharmacology of Natural Medicines; and Section 6: Specific

Health Problems.

Anyone interested in natural medicine needs to purchase this book. For plant medicines alone, the textbook contains more than 50 monographs of plants and their extracts. Each monograph and topic in the book is organized logically and the information is presented thoroughly. For example, the discussion of *Ginkgo biloba* (Ginkgoaceae) provides detailed descriptions of this plant extract's pharmacokinetic properties, its effects on nerve cells and platelets, and a thorough review of the evidence for ginkgo leaf extract's usefulness in treating several ailments: decreased mental performance, Alzheimer's disease, tinnitus, macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, sexual dysfunction, depression, premenstrual syndrome, allergies, and more. Additionally, as with all plant monographs, the ginkgo monograph lists relevant dosages and potential toxicities. Other botanical monographs include onion (*Allium cepa*, Liliaceae), garlic (*A. sativum*), gotu kola (*Centella asiatica*, Apiaceae), sweet wormwood (*Artemisia annua*, Asteraceae) and wormwood (*A. absinthium*), Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*, Taxaceae), and saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*, Arecaceae).

One new feature offered by the third edition that I particularly appreciate is an online version. Along with each copy of the book purchased comes an access code that allows users to register online to view an e-edition of the book. The e-edition allows a search for words or phrases within the entire book or within any of the 216 chapters. For example, a search for ginkgo in the entire book returned 155 matches, along with descriptions of the sections and

chapters in which ginkgo appears. A search for "Cancer" returned 913 matches. The searches can be saved and one can create online notes about specific book content as well as bookmarks of favorite chapters. One can access the book anywhere he/she has Internet access, and the e-edition also allows the download of the entire book to a portal digital assistant.

When Drs. Pizzorno and Murray set out to create the first edition more than 15 years ago, their goals were to describe the scientific bases of natural medicine and provide a reference guide for clinicians, students, and educators. The scientific research has continued to evolve during that time, and this latest update is an incredible compilation of this information. No bookshelf should be without it.

—John Neustadt, ND

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Handbook of Herbs and Spices,
Volume 3 by K. V. Peter, ed. Cambridge,
England: Woodhead Publishing Limited;
2006. Hardcover; 537 pages. ISBN-13:
978-1-84569-017-5. \$285.00.

This is the final volume of a 3-volume reference tailored for manufacturers and processors who use herbs and spices in their products. In addition to the introduction, the third volume is divided into 3 parts comprised of 31 chapters. The first part, entitled "Improving the Safety of Herbs and Spices," is divided into 6 chapters that review ways to improve safety of products. These include detecting and controlling mycotoxins, pesticides, and other harmful residues; using methods to remove contaminants from plant materials; and improving packaging and storage to increase shelf-life. The section also includes a chapter on Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Point (HACCP) and Quality Assurance (QA) to ensure safety of products sold globally.

The second part, entitled "Herbs & Spices as Functional Ingredients & Flavorings," is made up of 5 chapters, 2 of which give an overview of health benefits and chemistry of active principles in herbs and spices. The remaining 3 chapters elaborate on the prevention of chronic ailments such as cancer and cardiovascular and gastroin-

