



Anne McIntyre

The Definitive Guide to
the Principles and Practices
of Herbal Medicine

The Complete
**HERBAL
TUTOR**

Revised & Expanded Edition

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and Practices of Herbal Medicine

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Introduction

Herbs are the most extraordinary plants. Their incredible ability to heal on all levels of our being never ceases to amaze and inspire me. Through my years in practice as a herbalist I have been asked many times how I came to be in this profession. The story actually begins in my childhood.

Herbal Roots

I have loved herbs ever since I was a child. I was intrigued by their delicious scents, all so unique, and their beautiful shapes and forms. Brought up in the country, I loved being surrounded by natural beauty, to the point that I have never been able to live in a town or city. My mother gave me a piece of her garden when I was little so I could grow my own herbs and flowers. This was my favourite occupation.

Studies in Herbalism

In my early twenties, while living in a cottage on a small island off the east coast of England, growing my own food and harvesting as much from the wild as I could, I began to learn about the wild herbs that were growing around me. I realised that the earth provides all the raw ingredients for our health and well being and that herbs have the ability to keep us balanced in body, mind, emotions and spirit, if we can only understand the potential of their gifts to us to its fullest extent. After travelling in many parts of the world, looking for meaning in existence that would guide me to finding the right direction in

my life, I resolved to find a place to study herbal medicine. After four years of study I became a member of the National Institute of Medical



At work in my herb garden.

Herbalists, a professional body of herbalists that has existed since 1864.

Once in practice I continued to study, constantly searching for more pointers towards understanding the human organism and the keys to health and harmony, so that I could better serve my patients as well as my family and myself. Over the next few years I studied homoeopathy, aromatherapy, therapeutic massage and counselling. Finally I found Ayurveda, the system that resonated with me more than any other to date. Ayurveda is a body of knowledge and wisdom from India that incorporates a complex system of medicine, as well as guidelines for a way of living that aims, not only for freedom from suffering in mind and body, but for enlightenment itself. Today, I continue to study both herbal medicine and Ayurveda, and to incorporate the wisdom of all I learn into my practice and my writing.

A Holistic Approach

The writing of *The Complete Herbal Tutor* is motivated by the growing interest in using herbal medicine, in a practical and informed way, amongst healthcare practitioners and lay people alike. There is a great need for contemporary information encompassing a holistic view that acknowledges the intimate connection of mind and body, and promoting health and health education, rather than solely addressing illnesses and how to treat symptoms arising from them. This book provides a practical, easy reference guide to the 150 most commonly used herbs in the modern practice of Western herbal medicine and their uses, and, by this measure, it highlights the great contribution herbs can make to modern medical care.

Throughout, I have endeavoured to emphasise how herbs are used most effectively when they are

prescribed after the taking of a full case history, with the intention of aiding innate homeostatic mechanisms, while addressing the underlying problems that give rise to health problems including diet and lifestyle.

Treatment Advice

While describing the herbal treatment of over 100 common ailments, *The Complete Herbal Tutor* is not intended to replace medical care which may require the greater knowledge and expertise of



My dispensary.

the professional medical herbalist or mainstream healthcare practitioner. The format of the *Ailments* section in the book follows a system approach, including the main systems affected by common illness, and the health problems covered in the text are those that I have commonly encountered in my practice of nearly forty years as a professional herbalist, and that I consider to be most applicable to treatment using herbs.

Our Herbal Heritage

A conventional medical view might take some exception to aspects of Western herbal philosophy and approach to treatment which may follow some rather unorthodox lines. There may not be much scientific justification for the use of “alterative” or cleansing herbs to clear the body of toxins, or cooling herbs to clear “accumulated heat”. The use of these, however, is integral to the philosophies of ancient and respected systems of medicine, such as the Chinese, Tibetan and Ayurvedic, that have survived almost intact for at least 5000 years, and still provide frameworks for the healthcare of millions of people today. I think we can greatly benefit from the great wisdom and insight of these systems, which provide a background and context for understanding how herbs are used, and for this reason I have included a chapter on Global Herbal Traditions.

Practical Guidance

The hedgerows, our gardens and the shelves of health food shops and pharmacies alike are lined with dazzling arrays of herbs which can be overwhelming to many who feel they lack the necessary knowledge to choose those appropriate to their needs with confidence. The media presentation of herbs has shifted from extolling the virtue of herbs and their “miraculous cures”,

declaring that everything natural had to be safe and free from the side effects of modern drugs, to the opposite view, which perhaps makes more exciting reading, alarming the public that herbs have potential side effects and may even be dangerous. Without sufficient real evidence it is easy for lay persons and professionals alike to be susceptible to such hype, but with more information it is possible to have a more realistic understanding. I hope that this book will serve those using herbs for themselves, their friends and family, or their patients, and who wish to learn more about the safe and effective use of herbal medicines in order to navigate themselves through questions regarding dosage, interactions and contraindications, so that they can use herbs with the confidence they deserve.



Plants and herbs profiled in Nicholas Culpeper's *Complete Herbal* (1652) are still in use today.

