

Major Herbs of Ayurveda

Elizabeth M. Williamson, Elsevier Science, Churchill Livingstone, China, 2002, 70 plant monographs and color plates, 361 pp., Price £39.99 (hard cover), ISBN: 0-443-07203-5

Ayurveda is a holistic form of medicine traditionally used in India, the human organism is considered to be a microcosm, within the external cosmos. It is the result of a well-documented health-care philosophy and the oral tradition passed down from generation to generation since 5000 years. Treatment includes not only herbal medication but also breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, massage and fasting. The present book is focused on the herbal part. This kind of medicine like many others used traditionally, have a scientific rationale for their effects, the book is intended to show these and bring them to a wider audience.

There is a short introduction to the Ayurvedic system itself, it is very illustrative for beginners in this kind of medicine, the basic concepts are explained and further reading is recommended if you want to go deeper on the topic. The main part of the book consists of 70 selected monographs of plants used in Ayurveda, in each one, the English, Hindi and Sanskrit names are provided, followed by a short description of the historical and modern use. Then the biology of the plant is explained giving the habitat and the botanical description. The ethnobiological use is described in various paragraphs (parts used, traditional and modern use, and even the ethnoveterinary use). The major chemical

compounds are briefly described according to the chemical class. Medicinal and pharmacological activities are described, providing information on the scientific investigations of each activity. There is also a safety profile and dosage, finally Ayurvedic properties are given, further reading is recommended as well as the literature for each monograph.

I can recommend this book to every one interested in the Ayurvedic system as well as readers who are seeking information on a specific plant. Because each of the 70 monographs is carefully done providing scientific basis of the actions of the plants, it is invaluable for researchers, students, manufactures and readers who wants accurate information of each plant. The book was compiled by The Dabur Research Foundation and Dabur Ayurveda Limited, and edited by E.M. Williamson.

A. Andrade-Cetto
*School of Science, National Autonomous
University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico, D.F., Mexico*
Present address: Apartado Postal 70-359
Coyoacan 04511, México, D.F., Mexico
E-mail addresses: aac@hp.fciencias.unam.mx
aacetto@uni-bonn.de (A. Andrade-Cetto)
URL: <http://etnof2.fciencias.unam.mx/aac.html>

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