

Living Earth School of Herbalism: Herbal Materia Medica

Recommended Reference Books

The following reference books are highly recommended for the reading assignments for this course, or for research purposes. Students who enroll in this course will need to have access to at least two, preferably three or more of these references. Some of these (as indicated) are available free online.

Bartram's Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine. Thomas Bartram. Marlowe & Company, New York. 1998.

This is an excellent general reference book. Unlike Chevallier (see below), it actually is organized like an encyclopedia. It has entries on many herbs, properties and conditions. As a reference book the only limitation is that Bartram is a British herbalist doesn't include as many North American herbs as I would like.

(The) Earthwise Herbal. Matthew Wood. North Atlantic, Berkeley, California. 2008/2009.

This is a pair of companion volumes, the first on European and the second on North American herbs. Matthew Wood is an experienced and insightful herbalist. These are excellent materia medica reference books and cover a large number of herbs. The two limitations are that the books are poorly formatted and it is a bit difficult finding the herb you are looking for, and secondly that the author chose to include some herbs that he is not familiar with and the amount and depth of information on each herb is inconsistent.

(The) Eclectic Materia Medica. Harvey Wickes Felter. 1922.

This is an amazing reference book from the Eclectic medical tradition, a group of medical doctors who practiced primarily using plant-based medicines in the 19th century. Although it is relatively old, the information is still very relevant today and for many herbs at a level of detail greater than what you will find in most books. All of the herbal entries are available online at Henriette's Herbal Homepage: <http://www.henriettesherbal.com/eclectic/felter/index.html>.

(The) Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine. Andrew Chevallier. Dorling Kindersley, London. 1996.

This is one of the many new books on herbs that, in format, the various publishers have made into clones of Penelope Ody's "Complete Medicinal Herbal." Her book almost certainly influenced the Illustrated version of Hoffmann's book, as well. Unfortunately, although Ody is the innovator here, Chevallier's book contains better information on a larger number of herbs. It is the best book in the genre. Another edition of this book is called 'The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants.'

(The) Energetics of Western Herbs, Second Edition (2 Volumes). Peter Holmes. Snow Lotus, Boulder, Colorado. 2007.

Based on his own clinical research, the author explores the properties of Western herbs from a Chinese theoretical perspective. Although the task ideally requires the collective effort of a number of herbalists, it is a very good starting point for further research. In spite of the TCM twist, I highly recommend this book as it contains a tremendous amount of excellent information that is useful to Western herbalists as well. It also covers more North American herbs than any other volume.

(A) Modern Herbal. M. Grieve. Dover, New York. 1931.

Not very modern anymore, nevertheless this book includes information on a large number of herbs. It contains well documented traditional information of European origin drawn primarily from the better British herbals of ages past such as Gerard and Culpepper, as well as some of the even older Greek, Roman and Arabic herbals. It is also available online at:
<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/comindx.html>.

(The) New Age Herbalist. Richard Mabey. Macmillan, New York. 1988.

One of the two best general books on herbalism that I am aware of. Although philosophically a bit more rationalistic than Hoffman, this one does have the advantage of being more up to date in some ways. It also contains considerably more information (which can be a bit overloading for beginners, but great for the intermediate).

(The) New Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses. Deni Bown. Dorling Kindersley, London. 1996.

This book probably has information on more herbs than any other herbal. It's great for referencing information on herbs that aren't covered in other books. The medicinal information on each plant is brief, but good, drawing from both recent and traditional sources. It is also an excellent book for information on growing herbs.

(The) New Holistic Herbal. David Hoffmann. Element, Dorset, England. 1995.

This one still gets my vote as the best herb book overall. It was the first herbal published that was organized according to organ systems. It contains just enough information that can be easily assimilated. Philosophically, it is still probably the most holistically oriented herbal. Older editions may be used for this course.