Medicinal Plants of the World. Ben-Erik van Wyk and Michael Wink. 2004. Timber Press, Inc., The Haseltine Building, 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, OR 97204-3527. 480 pages, color photographs. \$39.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-88192-602-7.

With the herbal industry's ever-increasing success, more and more medicinal plant reference books have also appeared, primarily with the greater public as their target audience. With *Medicinal Plants of the World*, Ben-Erik van Wyk and Michael Wink, a botanist and pharmaceutical biologist, respectively, present a valuable addition not only to medicinal plant references as a whole, but to the relatively few references compiled with medical professionals in mind.

Beginning with a good basic overview of herbal medicine and various herbal traditions, it features 320 of the world's medicinal plants. Each entry is illustrated with color photographs, well organized with information on origin, uses, preparation and dose, active ingredients, and pharmacological effects, as well as the plant's status in health care around the world, i.e., the German Commission E, and U.S. and U.K. pharmacopoeias, and/or traditional medicine. It is easy to read, making it also easily accessible to those with little or no medical or botanical background. In addition to these entries, it contains a quick reference table of more than 900 medicinal plants

from around the world, with their active constituents and uses.

One of the most interesting additions, and one of the elements that sets this reference apart from the many out there, are two sections directed towards medical practitioners. The first, Health Disorders and Medicinal Plants, gives the description of many common health conditions, aim of treatment in allopathic medicine and which medicinal plants and their phytochemicals may be utilized to similarly achieve these aims. The second, Overview of Secondary Metabolites and their Effects, provides a summary of secondary compounds, such as alkaloids, their chemical signature, and plants in which they are found.

Since it is written with medical professionals in mind, the authors present information on medicinal plants as substitution, with the perceived assumption that medicinal plants can be utilized in the same manner as allopathic treatments based on phytochemicals and their known actions. In doing so, the authors overlook much of the intricate therapeutics that accompany the use of medicinal plants in many herbal traditions around the world. While many medicinal plants can and are used in this manner, many times they prove far more effective, and in some cases only effective, when traditional therapeutics are considered. In medical systems where allopathic and herbal medicine are highly integrated with great success, such as in Asia and Germany, medical practitioners employ medicinal plants along with these therapeutics and not purely as a substitution for allopathic pharmaceuticals and other treatments [see R.F. Weiss, (2001) *Weiss's Herbal Medicine*]. Since *Medicinal Plants of the World* is one of the few references compiled with medical practitioners in mind, it would be stronger if it had included these considerations as well. Regardless, it is a beautiful, highly informative and excellent addition to references on medicinal plants and particularly appealing to those interested in ethnopharmacology and ethnobotany.

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