

REFERENCE CITED

Waley, Arthur. 1946. *Chinese Poems*. George Allen and Unwin Publishers, London.

Medicinal Plants of the World. An Illustrated Scientific Guide to Important Medicinal Plants and Their Uses. Ben-Erik Van Wyk and Michael Wink. 2004. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. Pp. 480 + photos, figures, appendices, index. \$39.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-88192-602-7.

This book is a good reference for anyone interested in medicinal plants, especially those plants which are commercially or historically important in Europe. Van Wyk and Wink's book differs from other similar texts in that it is more of an economic botany book than just another "herb" book. The medicinal plants examined are used as herbs and botanicals, vitamins and minerals, functional foods, homeopathic products, and other nutraceuticals. The authors include both largely unprocessed whole herbs and those which are sources for medically important chemical extracts. The book's title, *Medicinal Plants of the World*, is not completely accurate, but the subtitle, *An Illustrated Scientific Guide to Important Medicinal Plants and Their Uses*, is very apt. One of the greatest strengths of the book is that it does include all of the plants from the German Commission E monographs, the ESCOP monographs of the European Community, and the medicinal plants monograph series of the World Health Organization. In addition, the regulatory status of each plant is coded (e.g., Commission E, WHO) to let the reader quickly know where to look for more detailed information.

The book includes an introductory section, detailed entries of 320 medicinal plant species, a chapter on health disorders and medicinal plants, and an overview of secondary metabolites of plants. Appendices include a very comprehensive and user-friendly "Quick guide to commercialised medicinal plants" that includes more than 900 species, a glossary, a list of references for further reading, and an excellent general index. For ease of use, the plants are alphabetically arranged by genus.

The introductory sections do a good job of capturing the "world" focus. They begin with an explanation of "rational herb use in antiquity" (p. 8), and continue with respectful, concise, and informative summary descriptions of the major herbal healing systems. This is one of the few books of its kind to give separate attention to traditional medicine from Africa, North Africa and the Middle East; Central and South America; and Australia and Southeast Asia. Short descriptions also cover more recent systems of healing and their origins, including aromatherapy, homeopathy, anthroposophical remedies and Bach flower remedies.

The content of the main section (pp. 27-350) has a distinctly European focus, but that is probably due to the authors' desire to include all of the plants regulated in Europe. The entries are packed with information. For 320 species, there are as many as four color photographs; a short description; and entries on origin, parts used, therapeutic category, uses and properties, preparation and dosage, active ingredients, pharmacological effects, warnings, notes, and regulatory status. The Latin name with authority, family, and common names in English, several European languages, and occasionally Chinese, Sanskrit, and other languages are giv-

en at the bottom of each entry. A more cosmopolitan selection of medicinal plants is included in an easy-to-use table format in the back of the book. For each plant, the tables include species, family, and common names; plant origin; plant parts used; active ingredients; medical system of origin; and the main medicinal or other economic uses of the plant.

The pharmacognosy-minded will enjoy the "Overview of Secondary Metabolites and Their Effects," written by Michael Wink. Wink is director of the Institute for Pharmaceutical Biology and is Professor of Pharmaceutical Biology at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and he writes this section in a clear and approachable manner.

Van Wyk's influence is seen in the sheer attractiveness of the book. Van Wyk has written several guides to medicinal plants in South Africa (van Wyk 1997, 2000; van Wyk et al. 2003) and is known for producing lovely, user-friendly books. *Poisonous Plants of South Africa* (van Wyk et al. 2003) was one of three titles singled out for honorable mention by the jury of the 2003 Noma Award for Publishing in Africa. The photographs in this book, mostly taken by the authors, are truly beautiful and useful. I particularly like the way the authors illustrate not only the aerial portions of the plant (with fruit and inflorescence) but also the commercial product (dried *Lycium chinense* fruit, *Nelumbo nucifera* or sacred lotus rhizomes and dried leaves, sandalwood, and the gum of *Acacia karroo* or cape gum.)

The overall organization of the book is very good, with high quality paper and printing, clear and easy text, and good editing. I was very pleased by the quality of the index and glossary. Overall, the book is very user-friendly, concise, and informative. *Medicinal Plants of the World* is a quick, authoritative reference on medicinal plants, and I definitely recommend it to anyone who needs a reference on economically important plants or herbal medicine.

Karol Chandler-Ezell,
Epidemiology and Prevention Research Group
Department of Psychiatry
Washington University School of Medicine
St. Louis, MO 63108

REFERENCES CITED

- Van Wyk, B., F. Van Heerden, and B. Van Oodsthoorn. 2002. *Poisonous Plants of South Africa*. Briza Publications, Pretoria, South Africa.
 Van Wyk, B. 1997. *Medicinal Plants of South Africa*. Briza Publications, Pretoria, South Africa.
 ———. 2000. *People's Plants: A Guide to Useful Plants of Southern Africa*. Briza Publications, Pretoria, South Africa.

Dangerous Harvest: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes. Michael K. Steinberg, Joseph J. Hobbs, and Kent Matheson (eds). 2004. Oxford University Press, New York. Pp. viii + 326, maps, illustrations, index. \$74.00 (cloth) ISBN 0-19-514319-1; \$29.95 (paper) ISBN 0-19-514320-5.

This collection assembles a wide-ranging series of papers on the production of