BOOK REVIEW

Medicinal Wild Plants of the Prairie: An Ethnobotanical Guide. Kelly Kindscher. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas (2501 W. 15th, Lawrence, KS 66049-3904), 1992. Pp. xi, 340. 105 maps, 43 line drawings by William S. Whitney. $25.00 (clothbound) ISBN 0-7006-0526-6. $9.95 (paperbound) ISBN 0-7006-0527-4.

Kelly Kindscher's new book, a companion to his 1987 book on wild edible plants of the North American plains (Kindscher 1987), presents 43 monographs on important medicinal species. Each monograph averages five pages and features a full-page line drawing of the plant, a small distribution map, and the following sections: Common Names, Indian Names, Scientific Names (including explanation of the name and common synonyms), Description, Habitat, Parts Used, Indian Use, Anglo Folk Use, Medical History, Scientific Research, and Culti-

vation. In general, the descriptions (of a single paragraph) together with the illustrations are adequate for identification purposes. Accounts of Indian and Anglo folk use are fairly comprehensive, as are the notes on medical history. Information on cultivation is rather sketchy in most cases, but is at times based on the author's personal experience in Kansas. A six-page glossary will aid the amateur with botanical and (at times quaint) medical terminology, and all sections make reference to a bibliography (replete with full journal and article titles, plus page numbers) of 259 sources, which covers the major publications on North American medical ethnobotany. The book ends with a useful index of 26 pages.

After the first section of monographs of the most important "Medicinal Wild Plants of the Prairie," there follows a section of "Other Medicinal Prairie Plants," 60 in all. This sections consists of mini-monographs which average about a page each, and include a distribution map, but no plant illustration. In every case the scientific and popular name of the plant is given, followed by the name of its family and its popular name. A brief description is followed by a paragraph or two detailing ethnobotanical use. Data on medical history, phytochemistry, and/or cultivation round out each mini-monograph.

The book is handsomely designed and well printed on acid-free paper, although the paperback edition ought to be smythe-sewn as is the hardcover edition. A reference book like this will presumably be opened often, not just read once, and the few cents smythe-sewing adds to the cost of producing each book is more than justifiable. As it is, I would recommend the $25.00 hardcover over the $9.95 paperback for reasons of durability.

I recommend this book heartily to all ethnobiologists interested in ethnomedicine. Phytochemists will find the book useful, but by no means complete and up-to-date with regard to chemical information on these plants. Physicians and others attracted to herbal medicine will find much of interest here, but would do well to heed the frontispiece disclaimer which advises that "this book provides only limited information" on medicinal use and "contains descriptions, not prescriptions." Information on the use of some of these plants or their relatives as inebriants seems to have been ignored or glossed over. For example, Cree use of *Acorus calamus* L. as a stimulant and entheogen ("hallucinogen") is not mentioned (there is a reference to constituent *beta*-asarone as "a mild hallucinogen," although this benzene derivative is not found in North American strains used as inebriants). Traditional uses of *Artemisia ludoviciana* Nutt. suggestive of psychoactivity are not covered, nor is much attention paid to the psychoactive compound thujone found in *A. absinthium* L. and likely present in North American species of the genus. Likewise, the psychotropic aspect of *Lobelia inflata* L. is not emphasized. Similarly, the Hopi "hallucinogen" *Mirabilis multiflora* (Torr.) Gray is not mentioned in the section on *M. nyctaginea* (Michx.) MacM. References to the use of these plants as inebriants can be found in a recent survey of North American medicinal plants (Moerman 1986). Finally, the author neglects to mention the fact that *Desmanthus illinoensis* (Michx.) MacM. and *Lespedeza capitata* Michx. contain the entheogenic drug *N,N,*-dimethyltryptamine (DMT). Since DMT is

illegal, so, technically, are these plants (along with some 300 other species now known to contain scheduled drugs), which might influence the reader considering growing these species in a home garden. But these are minor points, and in no way detract from a useful and valuable book, which will be a significant additon to any ethnobiologist's library.

LITERATURE CITED

KINDSCHER, KELLY. 1987. Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie: An Ethnobotanical Guide. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

MOERMAN, DANIEL E. 1986. Medicinal Plants of Native America. Research Reports in Ethnobotany, Contribution 2; Technical Reports No. 19. Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

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