

Preface

*I salute the light within your eyes where the whole
Universe dwells. For when you are at that center
within you, and I am [in] that place within me, we
shall be one.*

—CRAZY HORSE, OGLALA LAKOTA SIOUX

Here it is, eight years since the first edition of this book, and as always, or as often as my family and friends allow, I am afield roaming, escaping the brick and glass pillars of man, getting lost among the trees, striding along whitewater streams and marking footfalls in the mountainous home of peregrines, putting the finishing touches on a yearlong search for medicinal plants—those quiet and emotionless creations that hold the secrets to life. Like a good farmer who mends the earth to bear fruit, I have enriched this herbal bible in your hands with more resources to make your privileged life long and useful. And yet, you may not find in these pages perhaps the greatest secret to a long happy life: Be grateful my friend! Be grateful for the moments you spend walking in the footsteps of your ancestors—those first humans who discovered medicine from the personal experiences of touch and taste.

Does everything have a beginning? For me, this field of research I so love certainly did. In 1985, after making science and educational films for ten years, my government grants evaporated and I found myself in an unemployment line fidgeting with my keys. A \$99 check was the reward for surviving another weeklong job search. I took the money, rented a broadcast video camera, left home for ten weeks, and began an odyssey: filming edible and medicinal wild plants. I plodded through forests, forded streams, climbed mountains, and mucked through swamps, grabbing short clips of useful wildflowers (and they are all useful). When it was over, I had a film, still had my family, and had accrued a great deal of debt. Debt to my wife, Jill, and daughter, Rebecca; debt to Dr. Jim Duke, who coauthored my first video; and debt to Steven Foster, whose kind reviews encouraged the Boy Scouts of America and Outdoor Life Book Club to distribute the program. With the proceeds from sales, I built a production studio, and now—fourteen videos and seven books later—I continue to discover the surprising benefits of our native flora.

Although the dampness has dried behind my ears, the echoes of experts still reverberate. These echoes remind me that all medicinal plant compendiums are collaborations with those who went before. So I thank them all: Native Americans, American pioneers, and the thousands of herbalists prior and the thousands after. Discovering and sharing their knowledge is what this book is about, so I wisely submit their wisdom with a few fresh ideas of my own.



American lotus, Mississippi River near Dubuque, Iowa.

The production of this book was made possible with the help of Dave Legere, who kept the train from derailing; Ellen Urban, who nurtured the engine along with patience and sound advice; and Melissa Evarts, who gave it all a place to go. Thank you to the American Botanical Council, which provided a push to put me over the hill, and thanks to Candace Corson, MD, whose insight and wisdom made this a more useful and more accurate guide. And most of all, I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked and played on this wonderful green, white, and blue planet, to have raised a family, and to have realized the need that we all can do more. This is my small contribution.

Take Charge of Your Health

This book is a field guide, not a prescription for medicinal plants. Medicinal plants should only be used with the guidance and oversight of a professional, holistic health-care practitioner. Pregnant and lactating women should never use wild plants as therapy without professional supervision. Keep in mind that each human being is unique and that each person's reaction to chemicals from wild plants varies: What is my food may be your poison. Take personal responsibility for your health, get advice from experts, feed your intellect, and step lively and wisely through life.

Safety and Efficacy Documents

Throughout this field guide I document proven efficacy and safety with this reference shorthand: (CE), (CM) (GRIN) and (WHO).

(CE) refers to Commission E, Germany's official government agency specifically focused on herbs. Available from www.herbalgram.org.

(CM) is documentation and research gleaned from Canada Natural Health Product Monographs—250 PDF files on medicinal herbs and other natural health products available free of charge online at <http://webprod.hc-sc.gc.ca/nhp/nd-bdipsn/monosReq.do?lang=eng>.

(GRIN) refers to the United States Agriculture Research Service and Dr. Jim Duke's database where medicinal plants are catalogued for chemical constituents and ethnobotanical uses at <http://www.ars-grin.gov/duke/>.

(WHO) refers to the World Health Organization collection of scientific and documented medicinal herbs online at <http://apps.who.int/medicinedocs/en/d/Js2200e/>.

This wealth of information supports the traditional and modern uses of the medicinal plants covered in this field guide.