

PREFACE

HERBS have been used to promote and safeguard health, relieve pain and discomfort, heal diseases and wounds and refresh the mind. Herbal medicine is the rightful medicine since the herbs possess many healing properties without side effects. The herbs are raised from seeds, which are more or less soft and succulent and do not develop woody persistent tissue. These groups of plants are interesting because they provide medicine, perfume, cosmetics and food. They are not demanding in their requirements. Many herbs can be grown in a limited space with less care. In the wild, these herbs interact with other plants, often of different species, and other organisms to create a balanced community. India is recognised as a country rich in all aspects of biodiversity and ecosystem. There is a rich heritage of diverse culture and population, vast diversity in physical features and climatic types. The country is a great emporium and treasure house of medicinal plant wealth. The majority of tribal populations and ethnic groups in India solely depend on the variety of plant species to cure their diseases and disorders and also to bring solace and comfort. The tribals possess adequate knowledge about availability and utility of these herbs in their locality. Much of the knowledge of the tribal is not yet accessible. However, the ancient knowledge and practice of herbal use is disappearing day by day. The traditional information must be collected, screened and evaluated scientifically to prepare modern herbal medicines. The Indian system of herbal medicine and its plant drugs attracted attention worldwide, since vast knowledge exists in this country. Considerable changes have taken place in medicinal systems all over the world. Herbal medicines are preferred over synthetic drugs and antibiotics. Herbs are the sacred medicine with great power, which no pharmacist can excel or even imitate fully. There is a growing need for information on medicinal herbs and flowers, their chemical constituents, biological activity, aroma and fragrance, characteristics, cultivation, extraction of active ingredients and uses for safeguarding health and healing diseases and discomfort.

This book, *Medicinal Herbs and Flowers*, is organised in six chapters. Chapter I is an introductory one, dealing with the history, isolation and characterisation of active principles, transformation of medicinal systems, medicinal plants widely known for their curative effects of

certain diseases, endangered medicinal plants, need for commercial cultivation of medicinal plants, Indian scenario, medicinal plant trade and industry, export of medicinal plants and phyto-chemicals. Chapter 2 provides information on genera and species of medicinal importance, description, cultivation, extraction and uses. Chapter 3 covers the various aspects of medicinal flowers. Chapter 4 describes the medicinal herbs. Chapter 5 furnishes information on herbs used in Ayurvedic medicine. Chapter 6 summarises the medicinal herbs, their parts used, active ingredients, etc. There are two annexures through which information is given on (i) important antibiotics from plant sources, and (ii) glossary of pharmacological and medicinal terms. References for further reading are also provided in this book.

The information provided will allow one to use the vast untapped potential of medicinal herbs and flowers. Although, we have made an effort to make the publication as complete as possible, the users of this book may find some omissions; hence, we will welcome suggestions for inclusion in the next publication. This publication is based on numerous published materials and reports gleaned from many libraries, personal communications and discussions with scientists of various disciplines, which we gratefully acknowledge. A few photographs received from Dr. K. Rajamani, Head, HRS, TNAU, Yercaud, for this book are thankfully acknowledged. We thank Mr. Akshay Jain of Aavishkar Publishers, Distributors for taking keen interest and care in making the publication as attractive as possible.

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