

National Geographic Guide to Medicinal Herbs: The World's Most Effective Healing Plants

By Tieraona Low Dog M.D., Rebecca L. Johnson, Steven Foster, David Kiefer M.D.

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"Because I have long worked to make accurate information on botanical remedies available to consumers as well as to doctors, pharmacists, and allied health professionals, I am delighted to see the appearance of the National Geographic *Guide to Medicinal Herbs*. This excellent guide is the work of a team of highly qualified botanical and medical experts, including two of my colleagues from the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine. It offers reliable, up-to-date, practical information about 72 of the most important medicinal herbs." --Andrew Weil, M.D., from the Foreword

There is a world of health and healing all around you--in your spice rack, your backyard, and on the shelves of health food and grocery stores. This informative guide is a reference you will keep at the ready, connecting 72 of the world's most common and useful medicinal herbs with the body systems they help and heal.

Eight chapters focus on body systems:
1. Mental Health & the Nervous System
2. Respiratory System
3. Heart & Circulation
4. Digestive System
5. Joints, Muscles & Skin
6. Urinary & Male Health
7. Female Health
8. Wellness & Perception

Each chapter begins with an overview of how plants can bring health to that part of the body, with stories about traditional herbal remedies from around the world and current scientific findings on herbal remedies for specific illnesses. Then each chapter highlights nine plants, combining botanical and medical information--therapeutic uses, effectiveness, preparations, cautions, and advice, including a round-up of current science about the active ingredients in the plant. Every chapter includes a photo gallery showing how one of its herbs is cultivated and processed commercially--the story behind the contents of that bottle you buy

in the store. Special features include "Over the Kitchen Counter"--quick and easy ways to use herbs in your everyday life, and time lines for every herb, showing how today's use of herbal remedies collects wisdom from the centuries and around the world. A functional appendix includes an illustrated index to all the plants in the book, an ailment-by-ailment therapeutic index, a glossary, and an index.

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Editorial Review

Review
"The perfect union of botanical and medical expertise. This guide is so authoritative, its aim is to educate not only consumers, but doctors, pharmacists and other health professionals as well." ***–Book Page***

About the Author
TIERAONA LOW DOG, M.D., is an internationally recognized expert in the fields of integrative medicine, dietary supplements, herbal medicine and women's health. Dr. Low Dog has been an invited speaker to more than 550 scientific conferences, has published 45 peer-reviewed articles, written 22 chapters for medical textbooks, and published five books including National Geographic's *Life is Your Best Medicine* and *Healthy at Home*. She is a frequent guest on the *Dr. Oz* show and NPR's *The People's Pharmacy*. She currently serves as the Fellowship Director for the Academy of Integrative Health and Medicine where she leads the nation's first inter-professional graduate level training program in integrative medicine. She is the author of National Geographic's *Fortify Your Life*, *Healthy at Home* and *Life Is Your Best Medicine*.

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St. John's Wort *(*Hypericum perforatum*)*

The sunny yellow flowers of St. John's wort (SJW) harbor a strange secret. Bruise the delicate petals and they seem to bleed. The blood-red liquid is an oil released from tiny, dark-colored glands scattered along the petal margins. In ancient times, a plant that "bled" was assumed to possess great powers.

During the rise of Christianity, the herb came to be associated with John the Baptist (wort is the Old English word for plant). It was said to bloom on the saint's birthday, June 24, and to bleed on August 29, the anniversary of his beheading. The earliest use of the name may date to the sixth century, when the Irish missionary St. Columba carried the herb with him into northern Scotland. The genus name, Hypericum, is from the Greek, meaning "over a picture or icon"—a reference to the custom of draping the herb over religious images to strengthen their powers in banishing demons. For many centuries, St. John's wort was a symbol of protection against evil, but also a prized medicinal herb, with the power to heal the body and ease the troubled mind.

Ancient Greek and Roman physicians used St. John's wort to dress battle wounds, as well as treat burns, bruises, and inflammations. Hundreds of years later, as battles raged in the Holy Land, the crusaders treated their wounds with St. John's wort in much the same way. Throughout the Middle Ages, heart conditions, jaundice, dysentery, bleeding, urinary troubles, and nervous depression were all treated with the herb. Also popular at this time, and for centuries afterward, was hypericum oil, a preparation made from the flowers and rubbed into the skin to heal bruises and wounds. By the late 17th century, St. John's wort had been incorporated into American herbal medicine, prescribed externally for wounds and sores and internally for nervous anxiety and depression.

After falling into disuse early in the last century, St. John's wort has seen a remarkable revival in the past few decades. It is currently the most widely used herb in modern herbal medicine for treating mild to moderate depression. St. John's wort is also used to relieve anxiety, ner- vous exhaustion, seasonal affective disorder, premenstrual syndrome, and to help heal minor wounds and skin irritations.

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