

Book Reviews

A Field Guide to Western Medicinal Plants and Herbs. S. Foster and C. Hobbs. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, MA. 2002. xvi + 442. 11.5 × 18 cm. \$22.00. ISBN 0-395-83807-X.

This is yet another of the very useful Peterson Field Guides series that is packed with information about the medicinal plants of the Western United States. The preface provides an excellent background of the exploration of the Western flora, beginning in the late 1700s, when British, French, and Spanish ships were sent to explore this part of the New World for plants that could be used in Europe. These lands are rich in vascular plants, many of which were used by the indigenous cultures that inhabited North America. The authors, two well-known authorities in the field of useful plants, discuss 500 species that the traveler might commonly encounter in the Western region. The book is organized to expedite identification, using simple keys and sorting the sections by flower color or habit—shrubs, trees, ferns, vines, etc. Each section begins with the common name(s), followed by the Latin name, plant family, and the part that is used. Plant descriptions, distribution, traditional utilization, related species, and beautiful color

photos, most of which were taken by the authors, comprise most of the sectional treatments. In addition, when a warning is needed—such as a plant that causes dermatitis, or when taken internally can be toxic—it is included. The book is appropriately referenced and indexed and contains a glossary, along with a life list—a field checklist where dates of flowering or fruiting are to be noted by the user. Well researched and written, with excellent and useful illustrations, *A Field Guide to Western Medicinal Plants and Herbs* is a pleasure to read. This book belongs on the shelf of any professional interested in natural products research and medicinal plants and, of equal importance, has a well-deserved place in any naturalist's backpack during a journey out West. I hope the authors will continue their most useful collaboration.

Michael J. Balick

*Institute of Economic Botany
The New York Botanical Garden
Bronx, New York 10458-5126*

NP0207318

10.1021/np0207318