

Preface

Since the publication of the first edition of *Medicinal Plants of the World: Chemical Constituents, Traditional and Modern Medicinal Uses* in 1999, there has been a significant growth in the amount of new data on the herbs covered in this volume. The references used to compile this new edition have more than doubled.

As a biologist with the US Food and Drug Administration I have been involved in toxicological research. On one occasion, while investigating herbal products sold in the United States as foods or food supplements, I realized that there was an abundance of information on plants that are commonly used as food and medicine. However, the material available was not compiled to optimally serve my interest. Most such books addressed the subject as folklore, and their information was not prepared as an educational resource on plant materials that are used as foods and food supplements by the general public. As a result, to obtain a fair knowledge of any specific plant, information from several books and journal articles had to be put together. It is this experience that guided me to compile *Medicinal Plants of the World*. The feedback I have received from readers of the first edition has inspired me to update the information on this important collection of plants.

No current text describes the traditional medicinal uses, the chemical constituents, the pharmacological activities, and the clinical trials of those plants that are commonly used around the world as medicine. The objectives that guided the writing of this book were to create a reference for research scientists, phytochemists, toxicologists, physicians, pharmacists, and other health care providers; to integrate traditional and modern pharmacopoeias in order to develop a more efficient medicine; to build confidence and self-reliance in the use of medicinal plants; to revive an awareness of the importance of plants as sources of medicine; and to encourage their utilization and conservation.

Around the world, and even within countries, different names are used for the same plant, and different plants may be referred to by the same name. In an effort to familiarize readers with the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature system, the code's Latin binomial is used for each plant. The common names, together with the countries with which they are associated, are also listed. Color illustrations of the plants are provided to assist in their identification by those who are not familiar with the botanical name or any of the common names. For the non-botanist, the chapter on nomenclature and descriptive terminology, the botanical description, and the origin and distribution of each plant will be useful in the practical identification of the plants.

Since medical doctors are often reluctant to prescribe medicinal plants without supporting scientific data, the sections on pharmacological activities and clinical trials, as well as those on chemical constituents, constitute most useful references. These sections will also be of value to scientists with an interest in drug development. The section on traditional medicinal uses, listed by countries, will provide support and build confidence and self-reliance in the traditional uses of medicinal plants. Throughout, the book pre-

sents vital information that will find much use by students, practitioners, or researchers interested or engaged in the development, evaluation, or use of herbal medicines. The text presumes that the reader has had little to no experience or knowledge of medicinal plants. A bibliography of approximately 3000 references is presented for readers interested in more detailed information. It represents a diversity of disciplines that reflect the complexity of the field and the variety of interests in medicinal plants.

It is my hope that readers will find in *Medicinal Plants of the World* a wealth of practical ideas and theoretical information that will expose new information and little-known facts, as well as the significant applications of plants in medicine, thereby helping us become healthier people, better students, teachers, farmers, clinicians, researchers, and entrepreneurs.

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