

Johnson, T.: **Herbage. 3rd Ed.** – Blue Pacific Marketing, Santa Cruz 2003. CD-ROM. USD 70.00.

Because the production of secondary metabolites depends on general photosynthetic activity of the plant, photosynthesis of medicinal plants is often studied. Reading papers in this field I am not always sure that their authors got enough information on the studied plant species. At present they can be easily helped, especially if they work with plants used also in American medicine. The amount of information that can be obtained by using the reviewed CD-ROM is fantastic, but certainly not complete.

As written in the added leaflet, “The Herbage CD-ROM is web-browser based, compatible with any Windows or Mackintosh computer”. Its use is very simple: insert the ROM into CD driver, click on the folder “herbage 3” and on the “index” icon. It works with the Google browser.

The database contains over 28 000 concise monographs of medicinal plant species grown and used in different parts of the world. Monographs are linked to hundreds of thousands of articles and many perfect plant images *via* www. Sources for this index include three largest U.S. Government ethnobotany databases, the U.S. National Park Service NPFlora plant inventory lists, and 18 leading works on the subject, all written in English.

Which kind of information can the user get? In the index he will find alphabetically arranged searching sectors. First, he can get information on actions of medicinal plants. For example, for a young scientist the plant of an anti-aphrodisiac action may be interesting—it is *Salix nigra* (supplemented are also common names BLACK WILLOW, WILLOW). Next possibility for search is the associated body area. Thus for “voice” the only recommended species is *Dendrobium moniliforme*. Search is possible also using common names of plants (do you know that rabbit-foot clover is *Trifolium arvense*? This species is common also in the Czech Republic). One can also search plants that contain a given active substance: *e.g.* juglandin is found only in *Juglans cinerea* (the tree is sometimes grown also in parks of the Czech Republic). The further entry “Family” shows how many and which species belong to individual families. Thus for *Casuarinaceae* only one species is mentioned, *Casuarina equisetifolia*. Using the entry H, the user gets information concerning thousands of individual plant species. For each of them, the respective family, range, action, use for treating, and indigenous use are given. The user finds the related articles, many very fine colour photographs, infor-

mation on seeds, horticulture, recipes, preparation, wholesale, products, and eventually oil. Another possible entry is Latin names.

One can search plants also according to their healing or other medicinal action (this part is the largest one). As concerns “range”, I found under the item “Czech Republic” only ten species: *Allium cepa*, *Cnicus benedictus*, *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, *E. peplus*, *Psilocybe bohemica*, *P. serbica*, *Senecio nemorensis*, *Urtica dioica*, *U. urens*, and *Viola odorata*. As concerns the two fungi from the genus *Psilocybe*, I am not sure they grow in our Republic (the species common here is *P. coprophila*). Also *Cnicus benedictus* is rare in our country. But contrary to the above-mentioned information, many medicinal plant species grow in Bohemia and Moravia, and books dealing with our medicinal plants are fairly thick. Of course, they are mostly written in Czech or German. This example shows that the information on medicinal plants of Central Europe (and may be whole Europe) is not satisfactory in this CD-ROM. This contrasts with the well-treated American flora. Another basic entries are “use” and “used to treat”. From this point of view the reader finds, for example, nine plants species used in healing AIDS.

As an old man I always wonder how wide, broad, and deep knowledge can be obtained by using a single CD-ROM. As concerns this CD-ROM, I admire the work of the person who prepared this multipurpose CD-ROM. He (I hope) is Tim Johnson (born 1966) from California. He is BA in Creative Writing, Master of Urban Planning who also plays music and sings about “Rum and Coca Cola”. Unfortunately, I did not succeed in opening his photograph.

For further editions of this praiseworthy ROM I recommend the author two basic improvements. First, look more deeply into European flora and include the many medicinal plants growing in all parts of Europe. Secondly, add the authors of Latin plant names, eventually include their Latin synonyma. These addenda will certainly help those who will use this information source.

I am sure that many botanists, healers, medicine and veterinary doctors, and specialists in pharmacy and pharmaceutical industry will appreciate this CD-ROM, even if the information is not complete and a final reminder, the web address of the producer is: www.bluepacificmarketing.com.

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