



# National Geographic Desk Reference to Nature's Medicine

*Steven Foster, Rebecca Johnson*

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For millennia, humans have looked to nature for remedies to ailments great and small. Long before formal science enabled us to take a systematic approach to medicine, healers used plants to alleviate pain, ease the symptoms of dozens of diseases, and treat complaints of every kind. And today, countless people still use medicinal plants, whether in traditional roles or as building blocks for new research and innovative drugs.

Featuring 350 full-color photographs, botanical drawings, and maps, this accessible, fact-filled book is based on the work of renowned botanical experts and presents alphabetically arranged, beautifully illustrated entries for hundreds of plants touted for thousands of years to soothe, even heal. Each is clearly described, with full details of its physical appearance and medicinal uses; its origins and geographic distribution, how it's harvested and used in conventional and alternative medicine, a range map; and more.

With fascinating medical chronicle filled with informative sidebars on everything from ancient folklore to the latest research, readers learn how aspirin evolved from a concoction of willow bark to the familiar white pill of today, how the foxglove's flowery beauty contributes to the potent heart drug digitalis, and how many other now common treatments have deep historical and cultural roots. It's a journey that starts many centuries ago in remote places like the Amazon rain forest, where shamans practiced their powerful curative magic of plants, and leads to the high-tech pharmaceutical labs of today's scientists working to discover new plant-based drugs that can be used effectively to treat diseases major and minor alike, from cancer to the common cold.

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