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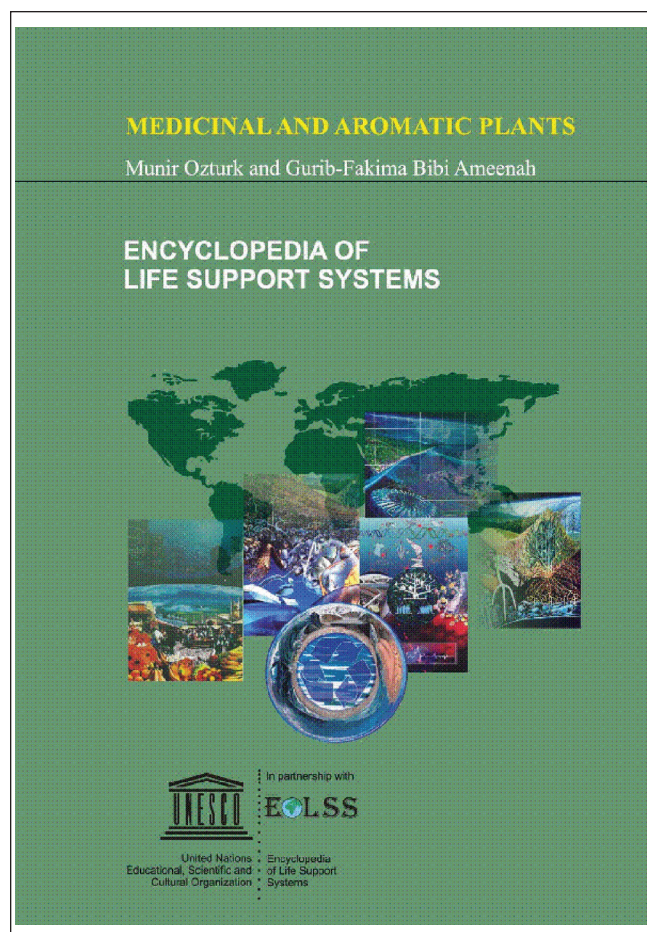
Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS)

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The Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS) (<http://www.eolss.net/>) is an integrated multidisciplinary online encyclopedia that is written and edited by leading researchers in their fields. EOLSS is a joint project in conjunction with the United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). It is aimed at promoting health, global maintainance and all aspects of sustainable development, covering diverse themes including ecological issues, bio-innovation, sustainable production and biosecurity. All volumes are invited, with thousands of contributions from leading scholars from over 100 countries worldwide, making the EOLSS possibly the largest and most ambitious data base of its kind. The encyclopedias are designed as a useful reference guide for a wide range of users, from students beginning studies of the subject matter, through to experienced researchers and policy makers.

EOLSS differs from most encyclopedias which are organised alphabetically. Instead, EOLSS is organised into various themes and emphasises the interdependence of these disciplines. EOLSS is essentially a series of 20 encyclopedias:

- Earth and atmospheric sciences.
- Mathematical sciences.
- Biological, physiological and health sciences.
- Biotechnology.
- Tropical biology and conservation.
- Land use, land cover and soil sciences.
- Social sciences and humanities.
- Physical sciences, engineering and technology resources.
- Control systems, robotics and automation.
- Chemical sciences, engineering and technology resources.
- Water sciences, engineering and technology resources.
- Energy sciences, engineering and technology resources.
- Environmental and ecological sciences, engineering and technology resources.
- Food and agricultural sciences, engineering and technology resources.
- Human resources policy, development and management.
- Natural resources policy and management.
- Development and economic sciences.
- Institutional and infrastructural resources.
- Technology, information and systems management resources.
- Area studies (regional sustainable development reviews).

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Each of these encyclopedias is comprised of a number of volumes. There are currently more than 600 volumes across the 20 encyclopedias and this number is constantly growing. Several of these encyclopedias are of particular interest to researchers in the field of pharmacognosy. The Biological, Physiological and Health Sciences Encyclopedia is especially relevant to researchers in the field of pharmacognosy and related studies. On the day I reviewed this site there were volumes available summarising current knowledge of medicinal and aromatic plants in diverse regions of the world including Arabia,^[1] Australia,^[2] Azerbaijan,^[3] the Iberian peninsula^[4] and Turkey.^[5] Further volumes of this encyclopedia summarise the use of plant based medicines in the treatment of cancer,^[6] inflammation,^[7] diabetes,^[8] coronary disease,^[9] as well as viral,^[10] neurodegenerative^[11] and parasitic^[12] diseases.

The Encyclopedia of Chemical Sciences, Engineering and Technology Resources also has many volumes relevant to pharmacognosy researchers. Indeed, a whole series of volumes of this encyclopedia is devoted to phytochemistry and pharmacognosy. Specific volumes within this series examine the ethnobotany of natural products,^[13] the occurrence and function of natural products in plants,^[14] alkaloids,^[15] terpenes,^[16] natural products from microorganisms,^[17,18] as well as the use of natural products in the treatment of malaria^[19] and cancer.^[20,21] This is by no means a complete listing of the volumes relevant to pharmacognosy research and is outlined here merely to demonstrate the scope of the EOLSS encyclopedias. It is recommended that readers examine the EOLSS encyclopedias for usefulness to their own studies.

EOLSS aims to make its resources as widely available as possible to all global populations. Access is by subscription in most cases. However, to enable persons from economically disadvantaged and developing regions to access this information, EOLSS is made available free of charge to universities in the UN list of least developed countries (there are currently 50 countries in this category - for a full listing refer to <http://www.eolss.net/>), and to disadvantaged individuals worldwide. All institutions are able to access a free trial of between 60 days and 5 months by registering the details of their institution on the EOLSS site. I encourage all researchers in pharmacognosy and related fields to trial this site for themselves to determine its usefulness to their own studies. I reviewed this site on 5th July 2011.

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