

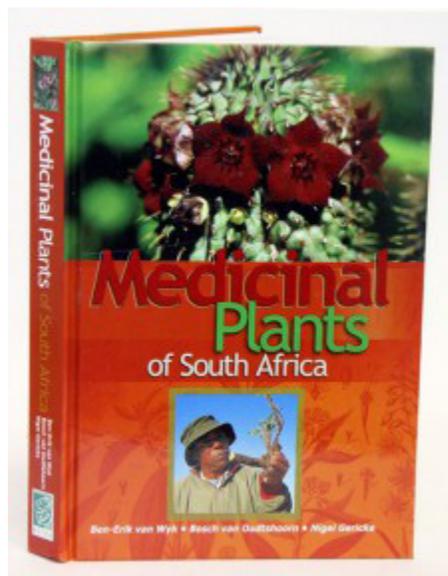
BOOK REVIEW

BOOK REVIEW

I.E. Cock^{ab*}

^aBiomolecular and Physical Sciences, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, 170 Kessels Rd, Nathan, Brisbane, Queensland 4111, Australia

^bEnvironmental Futures Centre, Nathan Campus, Griffith University, 170 Kessels Rd, Nathan, Brisbane, Queensland 4111, Australia



MEDICINAL PLANTS OF SOUTH AFRICA 2nd edition; 2009.

Ben-Erik van Wyk, Bosch van Oudtshoorn, Nigel Gericke.
Briza Publications, Pretoria, South Africa.

In 2012 and early 2013, I undertook a sabbatical project in Johannesburg, South Africa, examining the therapeutic properties of several traditional medicinal plants. At the outset of this project, I was fortunate to meet Professor Ben-Erik van Wyk, one of the authors of this extremely useful volume. As I am not from the Southern African region, my knowledge of the local flora was limited and my discussions with Professor van Wyk provided me with a wealth of information and helped solidify several research project ideas in my mind and guide my selection of species to study.

*Correspondence

Tel.: +61 7 37357637,

fax: +61 7 37355282

E-mail address: editor@phcogcommn.org, I.Cock@griffith.edu.au

Like the co-author Professor van Wyk himself, the book “Medicinal Plants of South Africa” is an invaluable resource for anyone with an interest in the medicinal plants of this biodiverse region. The book contains detailed descriptions of 150 medicinal plants (with further discussions of closely related species). Individual sections provide a brief overview of the botany, plant part used, medicinal uses, preparation and dosages, active components (where known) and pharmacological effects of the featured species. Each section includes a botanical distribution map as well as chemical structures of the main components and the known (or suspected) bioactive compounds. The authors also include the common names used by the main ethnic groupings that utilise these medicinal plants, allowing for cross-referencing with other ethnobotanical literature. Furthermore, this edition has been updated, including the latest research into each species discussed.

Great care has been taken in the presentation of this book. This is photographic guide, containing more than 500 high resolution photographs of the featured plants, individual plant parts and where relevant, commercial medicinal products, allowing the reader to become acquainted with the morphology of the featured plant species. With its mixture of visual appeal and interesting discussion, this book should appeal to a wide audience including researchers and educators in the fields of botany, complementary and alternative medicine, ethnobotany, natural products research and phytochemistry. The writing style is readily understandable, so would also appeal to interested lay persons. From my point of view as a research scientist, the book highlights plants with known medicinal potential and will aid in directing South African medicinal plant research into the future. It proved to be an invaluable resource for my studies whilst in South Africa, and continues to be useful in my continued studies into South African plants.