



How to Become an Herbalist

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An **herbalist** is a person who studies herbal medicine, the healing properties of plants, as it is practiced in traditional China and Western cultures. In written records, the study of herbs dates back over 5,000 years to the Sumerians, amongst the earliest civilizations of the world. Traditional practices of herbalism remain in modern societies, China (Chinese herbology) for instance. With all the ills besetting us today, people are seeking a kinder, gentler way to heal, which is why there is a movement towards alternative methods of treating diseases and conditions. One of the most popular approaches is herbalism. Should you become a professional herbalist, it will be an amazing career - and one that's growing all the time.

Steps

1 Culture an interest in herbalism. It is not impossible to begin training in herbal studies without prerequisites, but a basic understanding of herbs and other botanical systems will allow a helping hand through your future. If you are still in high school, pay attention to your biology classes. Likewise, an interest in other aspects of science and a love of the outdoor environment are wise paths to travel before engaging in this career path.

2 Obtain recognized training as an herbalist. A career in herbalism can be pursued formally or informally, depending on the way in which you intend to practice herbalism.

- If you're pursuing recognition as a *folk herbalist* within a limited or informal group of people (such as an indigenous group), find out what the standards are as set by the group and fulfill them.
- If you wish to become a *professional herbalist* with broadly recognized credentials, there are many courses and diplomas offered around the world by leading universities and other educational facilities that you are able to choose from and work towards. No matter which path you choose, verify beforehand that the coursework can be applied towards certification by a **peer-reviewed** organization such as:
 - The Natural Healing College ^[1] Master Herbalist & Holistic Health Practitioner
 - The American Herbalists Guild, Registered Herbalist (RH) designation^[2]
 - The National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine, Diplomate in Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM)" or "Diplomate in Chinese Herbology (NCCAOM)" designation
 - National Institute of Medical Herbalists (UK)
- You can also practice herbalism as a *naturopathic physician* by passing a series of rigorous exams and fulfilling academic and clinical requirements similar to those of a medical doctor (versus a traditional naturopath, who has no widely recognized standards to meet).

3 Choose your location wisely. You might be tempted to stay in the town or city where you were trained as a herbalist, but competition there is likely to be fierce.

4 Consider entering a partnership. You can practice alone or with other herbalists or healers. Income potential is higher if you practice alone, but so are costs. Starting a private practice can cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and it may be up to three years before you turn a profit, whereas in a joint partnership you get support from your colleagues, increased referrals (if you work in a clinic), and shared overhead, health insurance, malpractice insurance, and other costs.

5 Take precautions. What will happen if a patient sues you? Consider professional liability insurance (malpractice insurance). Also make sure you have general liability insurance that covers such things as slips and falls. If you work from home, consider zoning regulations in your neighborhood.

Study the relevant knowledge areas of knowledge that distinguish a professional herbalist.

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- *The foundation of the herbal theory; the first uses of plants for medicinal purposes through anthropological history.* Evidence from 60,000 years ago suggests Neanderthals used medicinal plants. More recently, written records from 5,000 years ago describe the well-established use of plants such as thyme and caraway as natural medicine. Today, traditional Chinese herbology still occurs from the times of the dynasties.
- *Specific remedies for different conditions; herbal therapeutics; the use of food and herbs in health and healing.* There are many scientific orders, classes and families to understand and master. A typical herbalist prescribes specific herbs in tincture, fluid extract, capsule or tea form and may suggest dietary changes, exercises and other therapies to help the healing process. We can also inadvertently treat our body with herbs. The ingredient caffeine that gives us a mild lift which is familiarized with the cola/coke soft drink , for instance, is from the herbal motif of alkaloids. On the other hand, different types of alkaloids such as datura can lead to severe intoxication and eventually death. Remember, constructing a career in herbalism requires a concise background of biological origins.
- *Providing essential principles of herbs including diet and energy; teaching the principles of disease and diagnosis within multiple frameworks of medical systems; teaching herbal preparation, therapeutics and formula.* Herbalism is all about how to use herbs for yourself and for everyone's good, and is a lifelong process. Herbs are a natural way to treat illnesses, and most taken for treatment will pass harmlessly through the system if needed for our body. We can't say the same for prescription drugs which are stored in the liver and other organs, and eventually our bodies stop responding to certain drugs that may have been lifesavers if used for emergency treatment only. The uses and effects of herbs in medicinal practice are important principals. Signatures play a main part in determining the characteristics in herbs, and these can be color, root structure, fissures in the bark of certain trees and vines which are considered good herbs to use to remedy the blood system. Sometimes, just the name alone can indicate particular herbs, such as heartsease , eyebright, cancer root and throat root. Principals of herbs are a major source of the spiritual qualities of herbs and what defines a medicine.

Community Q&A

Where can I find an online program about becoming an herbalist?

Zora Degrandpre, N.D. Try searching under "Herbalist Schools" or "Getting Certified in Herbalism." Make certain that the school is recognized. Read the step in this article about getting a list of certifying organizations. Contact current and former students to get a better idea about the program.

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Chat with this expert

Are there any herbal recipes that would help control arthritis?

Zora Degrandpre, N.D. Yes. Look for anti-inflammatory herbs as well as herbs that support joint health. Make sure that whatever herbal formulas you use are made by companies that follow Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and are certified for purity of the ingredients.

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Chat with this expert

What are some good ways to start learning about herbs?

wikiHow Contributor Start by looking more closely at the wild plants growing in your area. Get an identification guide and start identifying them - then you can find out about their properties. You'll probably be surprised how many medicinal plants are on your doorstep, and you didn't realise.

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Can kids study herbal medicine?

wikiHow Contributor Of course! The younger, the better. They have board games for families that help children learn about herbs.

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On **How to Get a Resale Number**, a reader asks:

If you just want to sell items online, do you need a resales license?

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How do I pronounce, "Das Hanchen schmeckt ein bisschen ausgetrocknet"?

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On **How to Identify Symptoms of Clogged Arteries**, a reader asks:

Most doctors do not connect the whole body connection when diagnosing any problem of the body. Asking the question gets ignored. What to do then?

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Tips

- Investigate any school/university before enrolling. Research and even visit once or twice to roam the grounds to get to grips with the environment you will be studying. To gain a first hand look into herbs it is best to enroll in a specific educational program of herbal studies which has access to a plethora of botanical enlightenment. These could be herb gardens, greenhouses and native forest which are readily accessible to use for an effective and realistic understanding of the scientific aspects of herbalism.

Sources and Citations

- [Wikipedia Herbalism](#)
- [Institute of Natural Healing Diploma: Become a Herbalist](#)
- [Institute of Natural Healing Medical Herbalist Courses](#)

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