



American Naturopathic Association

The oldest and original Naturopathic organization since 1919

1930 18th St. NW, Ste B2, #2461, Washington DC 20009 USA

□ POSITION PAPER □

PHYTOTHERAPY

Phytotherapy is the traditional name for the category of naturopathic practice regarding oral and topical use of herbal remedies. Naturopathy has made use of herbs almost since its inception in Germany, with Freidrich Bilz adding plant medicines to the Nature Cure regimen of diet, water applications, exercise, and massage in 1892. In America, Thomas Deschauer, ND authored several books on botanical medicines for the profession during the 1940s, including *A Complete Course in Herbalism* (1940) and *Illustrated Phytotherapy* (1942). A. W. Kuts-Chereaux, ND wrote what would become a standard textbook in naturopathic schools in 1953, *Naturae Medicina*. When the naturopathic profession was declining by the late 1950s, John Christopher, ND was the most visible exponent of botanical or herbal medicine and kept interest alive.

There is also the history of the medical doctors of the American Reformed School of Medicine, commonly known as the “Eclectics”. This school of medicine primarily used botanical medicines and had a well-developed method of analyzing which ones a particular case needed. Their schools were driven out and some of the doctors gravitated to Naturopathy. By the time the last Eclectic medical school closed in 1960, their methods of applying phytotherapy had been absorbed by naturopathic doctors.

Since this has been historically an intrinsic part of naturopathic practice, the American Naturopathic Association endorses its use by our doctors, with the caveat that one must be diligent in checking interactions and monitor dosing strictly, since botanical medicines have a chemical action (unlike homeopathic medicines). Good training is necessary, but continued training is best. ANA doctors should try to read up on a different herb every month, and thus gradually accumulate a broad knowledge of plant medicines, instead of relying on a few favorites in practice.