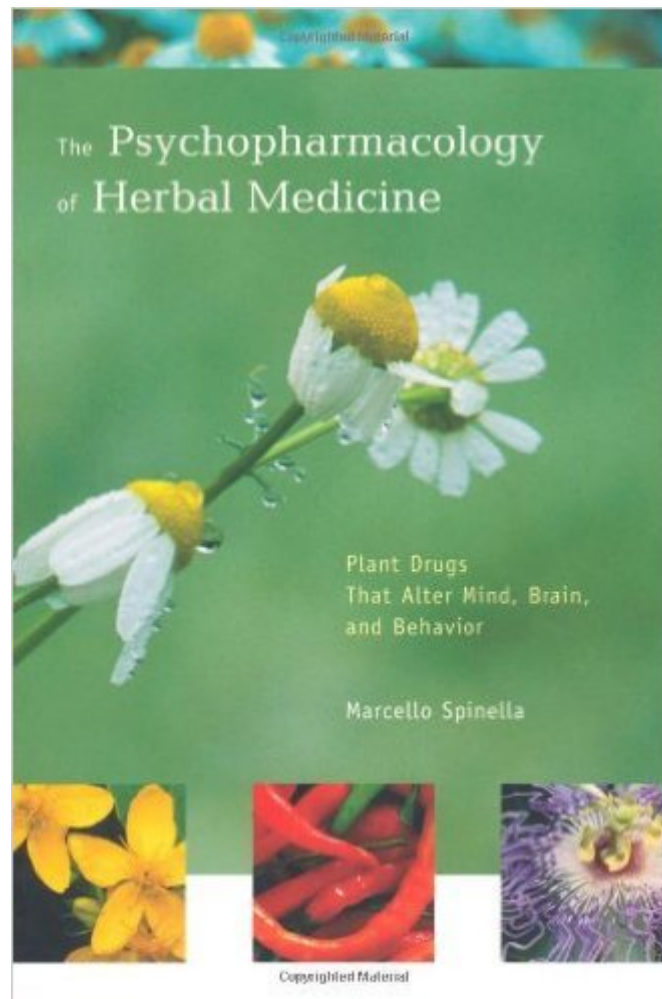


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# The Psychopharmacology Of Herbal Medicine: Plant Drugs That Alter Mind, Brain, And Behavior (MIT Press)



## Synopsis

Virtually all cultures consume drugs from psychoactive plants. Caffeine, for example, is probably the most common stimulant in the world, and many modern medicines, such as morphine and codeine, are derived from plant sources. In these cases, scientific research has revealed the composition of the plants and how they interact with the nervous system. There are also many herbal medications with reputed therapeutic value that have not yet gained acceptance into mainstream medicine, partly because there has not been enough research to support their usefulness. Instead they are regarded as "alternative medicines." This is an active research area, however, and many current studies are focusing on identifying the active components, pharmacological properties, physiological effects, and clinical efficacy of herbal medicines. This book compiles and integrates the most up-to-date information on the major psychoactive herbal medicines -- that is, herbal medicines that alter mind, brain, and behavior. It focuses particularly on the effects on various areas of cognition, including attention, learning, and memory. The book covers all major classes of psychoactive drugs, including stimulants, cognitive enhancers, sedatives and anxiolytics, psychotherapeutic herbs, analgesics and anesthetic plants, hallucinogens, and cannabis.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book is a technical, complete and academic discussion of herbs that affect the brain, including therapeutic herbs, sedatives, as well as illicit herbs (herbs used to get a "high"). The author, Marcello Spinella, emphasizes the importance of weighing all the risks and benefits of herbal medicine and discusses the latest research from scientific journals. Among the herbs reviewed here are valerian, chamomile, kava, passionflower and ginkgo. Also included is an overview of neuroscience and pharmacology. This is a very good reference book for someone serious about understanding how herbs affect the brain.

What makes this book stand out from the many hundred others out on the market is that it approaches the effects of herbs on the nervous system from a scientific, rather than pseudo- or anti-scientific, perspective. Rather than viewing herbs as being "alternative" and separate from science, Spinella scrutinizes the empirical evidence for and against the claimed effects of herbs on the brain. This book should be in every psychologist's, psychiatrist's, and physician's book shelf.

I have read this book more than once, used it for reports, casual reference, and as a topic of conversation at parties for friends who are more interested in geeking out about psychopharmacology than experiencing it firsthand. Complete with molecular models, a ton of references, discussion and beautiful organization, this book is a must-have for anyone interested in the field. Doctors would do well to pay more attention to herbal medicines like those discussed in this book.

This is a great book for a better understanding of herbal medicine, as a medicine. My favorite feature of this book is the fact that the author makes it abundantly clear that herbals can be just as potent and therefore dangerous as pharmaceuticals. Why do I like this point so much? Because it's the truth; unlike some other books that try to lead you to believe that herbals are somehow safer. This book gives the reader just the facts, good and bad about herbals, thereby allowing you the opportunity to a real and unbiased approach to alternative medicine, and help to make INFORMED decisions.

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