



Alberta Herbalists Association

Scope of Practice

1. Classification of Practitioners, Titles

A professional herbalist is trained in the philosophies, principles and practice of herbology and is able to assess the condition of a client and to consequently recommend and dispense plant remedies in a safe and effective manner. She/he maintains practitioner-client relationships within a herbal practice and is registered as a professional member by an appropriate association. A professional herbalist complies with the Code of Ethics and Code of Practice of their association.

AHA Definition: A professional herbalist is an individual trained in the practice of herbology who:

- Is trained in the therapeutic use of crude botanical materials; and
- Primarily uses traditional preparations* of crude botanical material; and
- Is qualified** and competent to take this responsibility and be held accountable for his/her recommendations.

*Traditional preparations include, but are not limited to: tinctures, teas, capsules, infusions, decoctions, syrups, plasters, poultices, oils, liniments, ointments, fomentations, salves, etc.

**Appropriate qualification is obtained through a combination of methods such as classroom training, self-study, and mentorship.

In accepting the role of professional herbalist, she/he must be educated and show continuing competence in:

- Offering preventative and therapeutic treatment to any individual requesting it; and
- The ability to conduct a comprehensive health assessment; and
- Understanding of the individual, their family and community; and
- The ability to practice disease prevention and health promotion; and
- Assessing and defining health issues; and
- Managing health issues [planning and implementation of herbal care, referrals, etc]; and
- Communicating and collaborating with other health professionals; and
- Managing a practice; and
- Understanding of herb-drug interactions and contraindications.

2. Philosophy

- 2.1.** A professional herbalist works in partnership with his/her client by fostering the concept of selfcare, while offering support and herbal expertise.

2.2. A professional herbalist considers the interconnectedness of the mind, emotions, social and environmental factors with the human body when determining the health status of the client. The optimal state is one of balance of all processes underlying a body system or function.

2.3. The philosophical approach of a professional herbalist is to seek to prevent and treat underlying causes of disease from a holistic perspective, acknowledging and embracing centuries of empirical knowledge and traditional principles of the usage of plant remedies, whilst continuing to evaluate both herbs and human disease in a modern scientific context.

3. Health Assessment

3.1. Clinical Inquiry / Consultation

A professional herbalist works in a private practice. The initial client visit involves a detailed intake of client information. Careful assessment provides a foundation for choosing treatment protocols. The case history may include:

- Personal information i.e. age, gender and contact info;
- Major presenting health issue(s) with history/development of health issue(s);
- Medications, supplements or other remedies being used;

And any additional data that applies to the assessment evaluations for their tradition, such as:

- Diet
- Lifestyle and habits
- Spirituality

Follow up consultations are scheduled to monitor progress, to make adjustments, to offer motivation, to ensure that the healing program and herbal remedies are being used properly. The professional herbalist takes responsibility for arranging and conducting the follow up consultation(s). This may be done in person or by phone.

The professional herbalist shall inquire of the client about any adverse events, or any changes made to their herbal or drug dosing.

A detailed record is kept on file for future reference.

All information obtained is kept confidential unless some other arrangement has been agreed upon in writing.

3.2. Clinical Assessments

Observation of the client begins from the first contact. During the oral interview the professional herbalist notes any observations, the manner in which the client presents, state of awareness, posture, skin color and any other indicators of the client's general state of health.

Assessments will be done in accordance to the methods of evaluations for their tradition.

The client will be asked for permission before touching. No internal examinations are performed.

4. Treatment plan

The subjective data supplied by the client is combined with the objective data collected by the professional herbalist and is evaluated in order to develop a treatment plan.

Professional herbalists utilize various means to empower an individual to achieve the highest level of health possible. She/he chooses herbal remedies and other treatments that best address the underlying cause of illness/imbalance.

4.1. Herbal Remedies

Herbal formulas are derived from parts of plants, fungi and algae that elicit a pharmacological, nutritive and energetic effect. Once dispensed, herbal formulas are self-administered by the client.

4.1.1. Materia medica

All professional herbalists are entrusted with the use of herbal formulas used within their paradigm along with the pursuit of standards of evaluation of those herbs newly introduced to their tradition. A Professional herbalist can justify their decisions with references to knowledge and theory specific to their tradition of practice.

4.1.2. Herbal preparations

Herbal remedies may be taken in various forms, according to their own traditions.

4.1.2.1. Examples of preparations for internal use include, but are not limited to:



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- Water extractions including infusions and decoctions
- Solvent extractions including tinctures, fluid extracts, glycerites and acetics
- Hydrosols and other aromatic waters
- Syrups
- Essential oils
- Resins
- Powders
- Lozenges
- Tablets
- Capsules
- Standardised extracts
- Flower essences
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4.1.2.2. Examples of preparations for external use include, but not limited to

- Powders
- Fomentations/compresses
- Poultices
- Plasters
- Creams
- Infused oils
- Ointments/salves
- Liniments
- Essential oils
- Smudging
- Baths, soaks

4.1.3. Compounding and formulation of herbal remedies

A professional herbalist may recommend a combination of herbs, or single herbs to address a client's health needs. A formulation allows for a broad therapeutic outcome, addressing several overlapping needs in a single formula. The herbs are carefully blended to create a synergistic affect, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

An individualized herbal remedy is compounded for each client based on the clinical relationship between the practitioner and that client.

A professional herbalist may also prepare in advance, batches of herbal formulas for use in the context of his/her relationship with clients.



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4.1.4. Dispensing of herbal remedies

A professional herbalist may have her/his own dispensary from which to formulate herbal remedies. The dispensary premises are kept clean and orderly.

Herbal formulas shall be prepared in accordance with the strictest standards of hygiene.

A professional herbalist may dispense remedies formulated by another practitioner for use by her/his clients.

Each remedy will be labeled with instructions for use, and may include the following:

- The name of the client
- The date of preparation
- How and when to take it
- The dosage
- The list of ingredients
- Keep out of reach of children

4.1.5. Processing of raw plant materials

The professional herbalist is trained in the making of herbal remedies by transforming raw plant, fungi and algae materials into herbal preparations.

Nutritional modification

Recognizing that plant-based healing starts with foods, the professional herbalist may make recommendations of which foods to decrease, increase, include or eliminate from the client's diet. Vitamins, minerals and other nutritional supplements may also be recommended.

4.2. Lifestyle modification

During a consultation the professional herbalist focuses on the wellness of the whole person and attention may be given to such lifestyle choices as exercise, personal habits, hygiene, environmental factors, alcohol, tobacco and drug use, and stress management.

4.3. Education

The professional herbalist may recommend reading materials and other forms of self-study for the personal growth and wellness of the client. One of the goals of the professional herbalist is to teach the client how to best manage all aspects of their health so as to overcome and prevent illness.



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5. Referrals

The professional herbalist may make referrals to other health care practitioners with different expertise when it is in the best interest of the client to further their health and wellbeing. A professional herbalist acts with full awareness of his/her abilities and limitations and knows when to refer a client onward for further treatment.

6. Not within the Scope of Practice of a Professional Herbalist

- Internal examinations;
- Specimen collection from bodily secretions;
- Blood extractions;
- Injections;
- Surgery;
- Medical diagnosis.

7. Special considerations

A professional herbalist shall not recommend herbal remedies to knowingly cause a miscarriage.

A professional herbalist requires appropriate knowledge and experience when working with pregnant and nursing mothers.

A professional herbalist shall not recommend a client to stop or alter their prescribed drug usage, without consulting their physician and pharmacist.

A professional herbalist has in place a protocol for clients to report adverse events to them, as well for the herbalist to pass this information along to their respective herbal association.