

The Healing Forest: Medicinal and Toxic Plants of the Northwest Amazonia.

Richard Evans Schultes and Robert F. Raffauf. Forward by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Portland, Oregon: Dioscorides Press, 1990. Pp. 484. \$59.95 + \$3.00 postage and handling.

This is an impressive and valuable volume which promises to be the standard reference work on its subject for many years to come. The book covers the medicinal, hallucinogenic, and poisonous plants of eastern Ecuador, northeastern Peru, southeastern Colombia, northwestern Brazil, and the southern tip of Venezuela. It contains taxonomic, ethnobotanical, and pharmacological information on 1516 species used by native peoples of the area. Many plants are represented by photographs or line drawings. The book is extremely authoritative and well-referenced.

The book does have a few minor limitations. No descriptions of the plants are given, only references to the original technical diagnoses. These are often scanty and sometimes difficult to obtain. Perhaps references to more recent taxonomic monographs would have been more useful. An index to the innumerable native names given in the work would also have been helpful. The discussions of uses and pharmacological properties is very uneven, but this reflects our present state of knowledge.

This book will be extremely useful to pharmacologists seeking new sources of pharmaceuticals. The sheer magnitude of the work, covering one small corner of the tropics, and its explicit acknowledgment of its own incompleteness, should help those seeking to publicize the importance of preventing the destruction of the world's rainforests.

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