

WHO REGIONAL PUBLICATIONS • WESTERN PACIFIC SERIES NO. 21



World Health Organization  
Regional Office for the Western Pacific

Medicinal Plants  
in the  
Republic of Korea



WHO Regional Publications  
Western Pacific Series No. 21

# MEDICINAL PLANTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Information on  
150 commonly used  
medicinal plants

Compiled by  
Natural Products Research Institute  
Seoul National University



World Health Organization  
Regional Office for the Western Pacific

MANILA

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15 SEP 1998

**ISBN 92 9061 120 0**  
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# Preface

For thousands of years, mankind has survived without the knowledge of modern medicine. This can be partly attributed to the simple yet highly effective forms of traditional medicine. Like many people, the Koreans have developed unique ways to combat numerous ailments. Before the arrival of modern medicine, plants with therapeutic properties were used by the Korean people as the only available medicine. Plants were also widely used to protect against disease and to promote health. Knowledge of medicinal plants is a part of the Korean national heritage. To facilitate the use of medicinal plants in ancient Korea, small booklets entitled *Hwang Yak* (local or countryside medicines) were prepared to introduce locally available and commonly used medicinal plants.

These traditions are now being challenged. Increasingly effective modern medicines, which can be mass-produced, offer an alternative to the time-honoured traditional system of medicine. However, herbal medicine will not just disappear. Many people in the Republic of Korea regard medicinal plants as a more effective means of prevention and treatment for selected diseases than modern medicine. Medicinal plants still play a very important role in Korean society, and will continue to do so for many years to come. Moreover, medicinal plants in the Republic of Korea have recently attracted international interest. One example is Korean ginseng which has become a well-known medicinal plant worldwide.

The World Health Organization recognizes that medicinal plants have

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