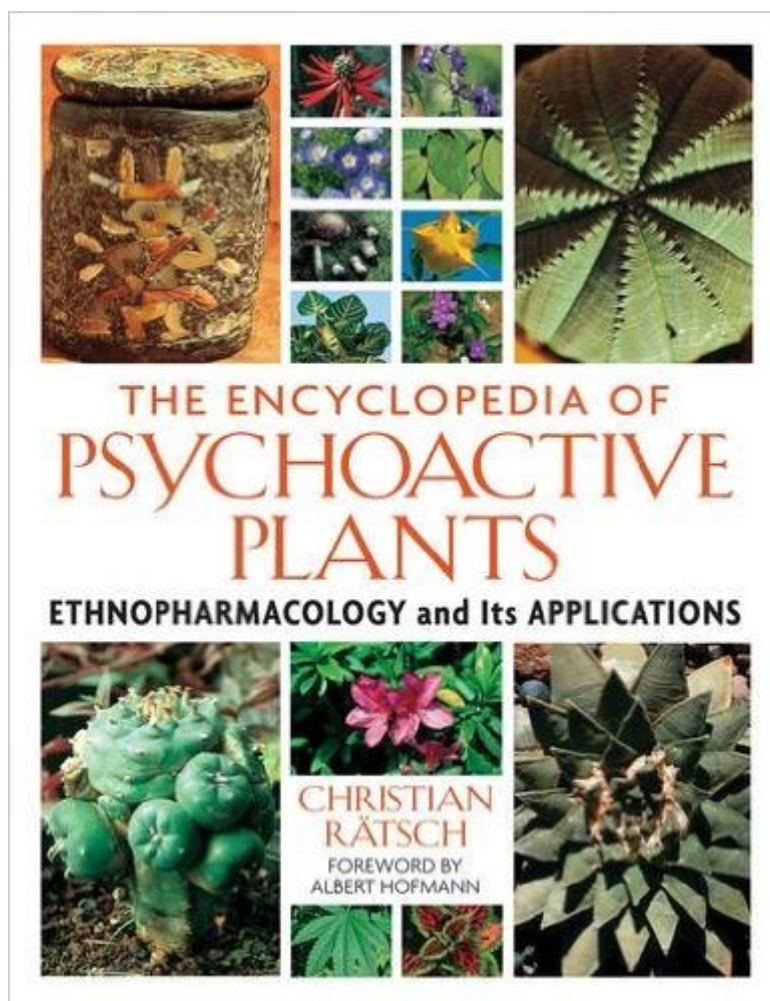


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# The Encyclopedia Of Psychoactive Plants: Ethnopharmacology And Its Applications



## Synopsis

The most comprehensive guide to the botany, history, distribution, and cultivation of all known psychoactive plants • Examines 414 psychoactive plants and related substances • Explores how using psychoactive plants in a culturally sanctioned context can produce important insights into the nature of reality • Contains 797 color photographs and 645 black-and-white illustrations

In the traditions of every culture, plants have been highly valued for their nourishing, healing, and transformative properties. The most powerful plants--those known to transport the human mind into other dimensions of consciousness--have traditionally been regarded as sacred. In *The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants* Christian Rätsch details the botany, history, distribution, cultivation, and preparation and dosage of more than 400 psychoactive plants. He discusses their ritual and medicinal usage, cultural artifacts made from these plants, and works of art that either represent or have been inspired by them. The author begins with 168 of the most well-known psychoactives--such as cannabis, datura, and papaver--then presents 133 lesser known substances as well as additional plants known as "legal highs," plants known only from mythological contexts and literature, and plant products that include substances such as ayahuasca, incense, and soma. The text is lavishly illustrated with 797 color photographs--many of which are from the author's extensive fieldwork around the world--showing the people, ceremonies, and art related to the ritual use of the world's sacred psychoactives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At over 7 pounds, this book is packed with information! The first 700 pages of it are individual profiles of a wide range of psychoactive plants and fungi--including info on their active constituents, history, usage, and cultivation. The remainder of the book is broken into two sections, one describing major classes of chemicals, and the other focused on plant mixtures and legendary compounds like soma. This is primarily a reference work, but it's more entertaining and comprehensive than Ott's *Pharmactheon*. It's only major flaw is failing as an effective identification guide. All of the images are small, about 2" x 2" and relegated to the margins. While peppered with Ratsch's own photos which are unavailable elsewhere, there are few botanical illustrations other than some of the commonly seen historical woodcuts. Ratsch chooses to give us a comprehensive view of the information available rather than leaning towards practical application. Plants like monkshood and *Datura* are mentioned as dangerous only in passing. Dosage guidelines in general are rather vague. *Heimia salicifolia* and puffball mushrooms are included based on their rumored effectiveness--along with research that contradicts it. He typically presents all the evidence and leaves it up to the reader to make their own educated decisions. Ratsch does a superb job collating all the data currently available from various sources and adds to it his own research and insights. And unlike most other books on entheogens, he also covers stimulant and sedative plants and even some of the less psychoactive herbals. In spite of its lack of illustrations, if you buy one reference on psychoactive plants this is the book you'll want.

This is an unprecedentedly massive reference work centering on visionary plants. It's an order of magnitude larger than previous comprehensive entheogen reference works such as the *High Times Encyclopedia of Recreational Drugs*, Hofmann's *Plants of the Gods*, Ott's *Pharmactheon*, and Stafford's *Psychedelics Encyclopedia*.

This review will be short and to the point. There is no greater single book on psychoactive plants than this book. Ratsch has done an amazing job. His book is mind-bogglingly thorough and exhaustive. It beats "*Pharmactheon*" (Ott), "*Plants of the Gods*" (Ratch, Hofmann and Schultes) or any other book I have ever seen that attempts to be a complete source of information of psychoactive plants. I have been waiting for a book like this for years. I don't think this book could possibly be out-done for decades. At best, we can only hope to see books that would be something like supplementary information in comparison to this book. If you want all of the information on psychoactive plants that you can possibly get in one book, this is the one and it is definitely worth the admittedly huge price tag. I would not be surprised if this book will be sold for many hundreds of

dollars if and when it is sold out. Let's hope it is reprinted for a long, long time.

Have you ever tried looking for info on natural drugs on the internet? It is nearly impossible to find information on a rarely touched topic. Sites like erowid and wikipedia attempt to touch the topic, but they rely mostly on user feedback which can often be very questionable, sometimes flat out urban legend. The number of pictures in the book is astonishing, probably 2 per page for 900 pages. One plant can include family, forms and subspecies, synonyms, folk names, history, topographical distribution of the plant, cultivation, appearance, sometimes preparation and dosage, ritual use, artifacts, medicinal use, constituents/alkaloids responsible for effects, effects of the alkaloids, commercial forms and regulations, and references to related literature in addition to a small picture or two, and a picture of alkaloid molecular structure. It covers everything to devoting 17 pages to peyote, 6 pages to coffee, 4 pages to camphor (found in lip protectant and vicks vapor rub), to 2 pages on the blue lotus flower. One thing missing is lethal doses of these things, even with peyote which has an officially established lethal dose of mescaline that is lab researched. So if you plan on using this book as a complete personal reference guide for personal use or cultivation, you will need additional material. It focuses more on culture, history, natural habitat, and traditional ritual uses.. which I think is what makes the book so good. It is like an art book. Each plant a painting. Well put together, well researched, and well thought out, with a truly massive amount of information.

I am a Certified Master Herbalist always seeking information in my field. To earn my degree and satisfy my personal quest for knowledge I've read over 100 books concerning the modern and historical use of herbs. This book is pure gold, not only for its pharmaceutical information, but for the historical and spiritual knowledge/wisdom it imparts. This is a book for any herbalist seeking to understand the history of their craft. **READ THIS BOOK!!!!**

I feel so thankful to have ownership of any material concerning herbs so my first inclination is to give "The Encyclopedia of Psychoactive Plants: Ethnopharmacology and Its Applications" a 5-star rating (just out of gratitude for the information's accessibility). At the same time, the manual should have been written much more tightly. It also desperately needs to be better organized. Don't let the bulky size of this manual fool you. While so very many different herbs are listed - way too many of them do not adequately satisfy the claims of the title (as many herbs listed are not at all psychoactive -- but are much more appropriate for making a relaxing cup of tea). Regarding the manual's organization: Instead of arranging the writing, after the header of each individual herb, the content

merely jumps around from one willy-nilly topic to another and back again. There is no obvious order to make finding information easy . Also - the directions for dosage, when given, are not always clear or concise, if given at all. I also longed for better/more detailed photographs while reading this manual - so I used the Internet as an image subsidy-type resource. Positives? I loved it when Ratsch included Shamanic uses (listing what tribe used the herb being studied and what was the plant's history, etc.). There are many other good things about this book -- but if you're on a budget, I'd spend my money on something that more specifically targets your interests -- as this seemed like a more generalized herb manual, over all.

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