



Herbal actions - the language of herbalists

If you've ever read any herbal books you will often come across a wide range of unusual terms that on the most part are incomprehensible. These are usually herbal actions, a term that means "describing what a herb does".

Herbalists and healers were using these words from the time that the first herbals were written. It is quite likely that they were incomprehensible on purpose as they wanted to be kept in a job!

Herbal actions have changed very little over the years, there are some words that have changed to the more scientific form, but on the whole the herbal actions came first, and modern medicine adapted them as they split from traditional medicine in the 1500s.

For example, the word anti-inflammatory is now a very common medical term.

Herbal actions are really important to understand, they are the key to accessing the knowledge from herbals and herbalists, but they are also the key to understand how to use medicinal plants.

For example, instead of trying to learn what each medicinal plant can be used to treat and trying to remember which plant can be used to treat an insect bite, if you go to the level of herbal actions, you know you need an anti-inflammatory and analgesic (pain relieving) action, you may know 20 plants that have those actions and so you have a much wider range to choose from.