



2020 Eagle Hill Natural History Science Seminars . . .  
. . . on the coast of eastern Maine

# FIELD BOTANY AND MEDICINAL PLANTS OF THE MAINE COAST

Steven Foster

June 14 – 20, 2020

In any given temperate flora, upwards of 25 percent of vascular plants can be documented as medicinal plants at least in a historical context, and a high percentage of those plants have a rational scientific basis for their traditional medicinal use. Of 122 compounds used in prescription drugs derived from 94 plant species, 80% had an ethnomedical or traditional use point of discovery. Maine has a flora of about 2,100 species of vascular plants (compare that to 940± bird species for North America, north of Mexico). About a third of the Maine flora is represented by non-native species. Theoretically, upwards of 500 or more species could be included in the total number of medicinal plants in Maine. Medicinal plant research by its very nature is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. It includes natural history pursuits such as taxonomy, biogeography, ethnobotany, classic field systematics along with a broad range of laboratory and medical specialties. Whether a member of an uncontacted Amazonian indigenous group or a patient undergoing leading-edge chemotherapy treatments, medicinal plants touch our daily lives in surprising ways.



## about the instructor

Medicinal plant specialist, author, and photographer **Steven Foster** ([sfoster@stevenfoster.com](mailto:sfoster@stevenfoster.com)) has explored medicinal plants on six continents in a career spanning over four decades. He started his career at the Herb Department of the Sabbathday Lake Shaker Community in 1974 at age 17, America's oldest herb business dating to 1799. As a medical botany specialist and photographer, Steven is the senior author of three Peterson Field Guides (most recently the 2014 3rd edition of *A Peterson Field Guide to Medicinal Plants and Herbs Eastern North America* (co-authored with the late emeritus Eagle Hill presenter, Jim Duke). He is also senior author (with Rebecca Johnson) of National Geographic's *Desk Reference to Nature's Medicine*, a 2007 New York Public Library "Best of Reference" along with fourteen other books. A Maine native, he now lives in the Ozarks in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, heeding Jim Duke's advice, "Go south young man." He serves on the Board of Trustees of the American Botanical Council (Austin, Texas) and on the Honorary Advisory Board, of the Lloyd Library and Museum (Cincinnati, Ohio). See Steven's website at: [www.stevenfoster.com](http://www.stevenfoster.com)