



Applying for Professional Membership in the American Herbalists Guild: Criteria and Application Process

The American Herbalists Guild, an association of herbal practitioners, offers the option of peer-reviewed professional membership to practicing herbalists who have successfully met the criteria described below. Applicants should demonstrate capability in several areas regarded as essential for clinical proficiency, and submit an AHG Professional Membership Application, along with additional materials described below. This information is reviewed by the Admissions Committee, and if approved, professional membership is granted with all benefits and privileges. Potential applicants should read this document thoroughly to become familiar with the application process.

The Application Process

AHG acknowledges and celebrates the amazing diversity of herbalists and the herbal community. For this reason, we offer two ways to apply for professional membership.

1) The Standard Application Process: Most applicants are required to follow this process for documenting their training and experience. Standard AHG Applications are accepted three times per year on the 15th of March, July, and November. Applications are then prescreened by the AHG Executive Director for a period of 30 days. During this time more information may be requested prior to sending the files to the Admissions Committee for evaluation. Once the files have been sent to the Admissions Committee the process can take up to 90 more days. As a resource, the AHG Executive Director is available to discuss and review the application process with you personally by phone appointment or via email.

2) The Expedited Professional Process: This process is available to herbalists and health professionals who have met a standard of training in botanical medicine equivalent to or greater than that required for professional membership in the AHG, including but not limited to:

- ◆ Members of the National Institutes for Medical Herbalists (MNIMH).
- ◆ Anyone certified in Chinese herbal medicine by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM).
- ◆ Herbalists certified or licensed as herbalists in other countries such as Ireland, Israel, New Zealand and Australia.
- ◆ Graduates of four-year naturopathic programs who have specialized in botanical medicine. Note that this specialization must be clearly demonstrated.

Expedited Application Instructions

Applicants that qualify for the Expedited Process should submit the following items in lieu of the Standard Application:

- ◆ A letter of intent that states why the applicant is interested in professional membership and provides detailed information about their qualifications.
- ◆ A current curriculum vitae or resume.
- ◆ A detailed list of all botanical medicine classes, workshops, seminars, clinics, apprenticeships or internships attended or completed.
- ◆ Proof of certification or licensure (or equivalent).
- ◆ Two case histories drawn from the applicant's clinical practice that clearly demonstrate the use of botanical therapies. Each case should be no longer than three pages typed.
- ◆ A letter of recommendation from an instructor that provided the applicant's primary botanical training.

This material is sent **electronically** to the AHG Executive Director via the AHG office at office@americanherbalistsguild.com along with a non-refundable admissions processing fee of \$75.00 for AHG members or \$125.00 for non-members. Arrangements to pay this fee can be made by contacting the AHG office.

If not accepted under the expedited process, the applicant is still eligible to submit the full professional membership application. If you are unsure whether you are eligible for the expedited process, call the AHG office and we will help you sort out which application process is most appropriate for you.

Standard Application Criteria

The standard admissions process is based upon a point system. Each of the criteria is awarded a grade or points based upon assessment by the admissions committee. A low score in one area may be offset by a high score in another area which can bring up the overall score. The following criteria are guidelines, not requirements, for professional membership.

1. Training/Clinical Experience:

Applicants should have approximately two years of comprehensive academic training in botanical medicine, through formal education, independent study or a combination of both.

In addition, two years of clinical experience obtained through independent practice, formal mentorship, supervised clinical training as part of an academic program, or a combination thereof, totaling approximately 400 hours are advised.

- ◆ A clinical hour is defined as an actual hour spent with a client. The

initial intake/consult and research can be counted as 2 hours and follow-up visits count as one hour. Round-table discussion of cases, investigation or reading related to cases, case histories discussed in class, time with mentor, and any education that support the cases can be counted as one hour.

- ◆ Activities where you are not the primary practitioner can only count for a maximum of 100 of your 400 hours. Examples of activities that can be used to document the 100 hours can include roundtable discussions of a case, a formula for a class case history, or a teacher instructing a group of students on a specific case.
- ◆ To qualify, clinical experience must include seeing approximately 80 individual clients during a two year period. Each application will be assessed individually for regional or socio-economic considerations which might affect total clinical numbers.

Clinical work must encompass more than just casual consultations with family and friends, and must include full client history intake, assessment, and follow-up care. Working in a health food store in the herb department, even if you are dispensing herbal information on a regular basis, does not count as clinical work unless it includes full intake, evaluation, and formal follow-up. It is also understood that while treating common colds and other simple problems is part of herbal care, it is expected that those applying for professional membership will have more broad and comprehensive experience than this. It is important that you can demonstrate your clinical work through carefully kept client records.

Because it can be difficult to gain clinical training in herbal medicine, the AHG has established a formal mentorship program. Whether or not you decide to take advantage of this program to gain clinical training, the AHG Mentorship Handbook provides a valuable framework for documenting your clinical experience, client interactions, and suggests a wealth of ways to obtain clinical experience.

2. Materia Medica: A working knowledge of at least 150 plants. This should include an understanding of their traditional and historical uses, therapeutic actions, dosing, forms of administration, contraindications, possible herb-drug interactions, and basic phytochemical therapeutics.

3. Therapeutics: A theoretical foundation for developing herbal treatment protocols, including a demonstrated ability to conduct a comprehensive case intake and assessment upon which to build the protocol.

4. Practice Management and Ethics: Clear understanding of personal limitations and their scope of practice, the ability to consult with other health professionals and make referrals as needed.

5. Basic Sciences: Relevant and practical understanding of human anatomy, physiology and pathophysiology, and basic plant chemistry. This may be obtained through independent or formal education.

6. Continuing Education: A demonstrated commitment to ongoing botanical medicine education.

Standard Application Instructions:

The AHG Application for Professional Membership can be downloaded from the AHG Website. The four-part application includes sections for Professional Information, Material Medica, Clinical Protocols, and Case Histories. More specific instructions can be found on the application itself. The AHG Executive Director functions as the liaison to the Admissions Committee and is available by appointment to offer detailed support along the way.

Materials to be submitted with AHG Application for Professional Membership:

- 1) Admissions Processing Fee:** A non-refundable fee of \$75.00 for AHG members or \$125.00 for non-members must be submitted prior to consideration. Arrangements to pay this fee can be made by contacting the AHG office.

- 2) A curriculum vitae or resume.** This document should contain the following information:
 - ◆ **Education:** A list of all herbal education programs you have attended, completion dates and the names of your primary instructors.
 - ◆ **Clinical Experience:** Documentation for 400 hours of clinical experience. Indicate the number of hours of clinical experience gained from independent practice, formal mentorship or supervised clinical training. Include the names of all instructors and mentors who can verify your clinical training. If your clinical experience was the result of independent practice, be prepared to supply additional documentation if requested.
 - ◆ **Diploma, License and Certification Documents:** List all and attach legible photocopies of relevant professional training documents.
 - ◆ **Professional Affiliations:** Any professional organizations, societies or associations you belong to.
 - ◆ **Publications:** All published works that demonstrate your knowledge or experience with herbs, herbalism or clinical practice.
 - ◆ **Teaching Experience:** All classes and lectures presented on the topic of herbs, herbalism or clinical practice.
 - ◆ **Career Experience:** All professional work experience in the field of herbalism.

- 3) Three Letters of Recommendation.** Acceptable sources of these letters are: AHG Professional members; other qualified clinical herbalists; clinical training mentors or instructors; other licensed health professional with acceptable herbal qualifications. Letters from clients, family, other students and friends are not acceptable. Optimally, these letters should be from health care professionals familiar with your training and work, and preferably practitioners skilled in herbal medicine. At least one letter should come from a primary instructor. If not possible, please include a note explaining why you are unable to get a letter from your primary instructor.

Please note: Each of your references should also complete the **RECOMMENDATION FOR PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP FORM** and mail this form along with letter of recommendation directly to the AHG office. Additional copies of this form are available for download on the AHG website.

- 4) Three Case Histories.** The case histories should be taken from your clinical experience or training. Please be aware that the admissions committee is looking for case histories that show skill and excellence in the use of complex herbal protocols with extensive follow-ups. While the committee recognizes that diet/nutrition and lifestyle changes are foundational and other therapies are also useful (flower essences, homeopathy, nutritional supplements, bodywork, etc), each case history must focus on the herbal strategy and must demonstrate that the herbalist understands the effective use of case appropriate herbs, explaining why these herbs were chosen.

Each case history must demonstrate the system of differential assessment that is used in clinical practice. This system may be based on an established tradition such as a western biomedical model, Chinese, or Ayurvedic model, or a traditional model (i.e. Cherokee medicine) as long one demonstrates that they are thoroughly knowledgeable about and consistent in applying this system. Common assessment measures include (but may not, and are not limited to) tongue and pulse diagnosis, observations about a person's vitality, clearness of eyes, general demeanor, health of the skin or hair, and quality of the voice or their manner of speech, including clearness of thinking, and energetics (ex: hot, cold, damp, dry, excess, deficient, asthenic, sthenic). This process is often called "differential assessment," where the clinician brings together all of these observations, answers to personal health questions, including, most importantly, a clear idea about their present symptoms, and makes a preliminary assessment, based on the individual that they are working with.

Case histories should be in the form of a concise, comprehensive summary that includes assessments, recommendations, detailed treatments protocols, and outcomes.

Case intake forms should not be submitted. Names and personal information of the client should be deleted from the materials submitted. To see a template for formatting case histories, please refer to the AHG Mentorship Handbook, available as free download from the AHG website.

Please do not send any additional materials. Include only the materials requested above. Copies of books or articles, diplomas or certificates from any program not related to the study of herbal medicine, or any materials not listed here, will not be included when your application is submitted to the Admissions Committee, nor will they be returned to you.

Please feel free to contact the AHG Office for additional support or information.

AHG Office Contact Information:

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