

AHG Registered Herbalist (RH) Applicant Criteria

Revised: August 2026

The following criteria outline the educational, clinical, and professional standards for applicants seeking the **Registered Herbalist (RH)** credential. Meeting these standards ensures that RH members have completed rigorous training in therapeutic herbalism and have demonstrated clinical competence, ethical integrity, and ongoing professional development.



All RH applicants must meet these criteria before applying.

AHG Policy Regarding the Use of AI in Registered Herbalist Applications

AHG's policy distinguishes between AI-generated and AI-assisted work. AI-generated content is text or media created in whole or in part by AI. AI-assisted content is created by the applicant, with AI assistance used solely for tasks such as editing and grammar. AI-generated answers or materials are not permitted in the application. We screen all applications for AI-generated content and will reject any application that contains it.

Using content from outside sources, including books, articles, websites, or generative AI, and presenting it as your own in the Registered Herbalist application, whether paraphrased or copied, constitutes an ethics violation and may result in the application's rejection.

Clinical Herbalism Education

Applicants must document at least **800 hours of education in clinical herbalism and the use of herbal therapeutics and related topics.**

Eligible education includes formal coursework (in person or online), independent study, or a combination of both.

Qualifying study areas include therapeutic herbalism, medicine-making or practical pharmacy, apothecary management, formulation, materia medica, and an in-depth study of one or more herbal traditions. Coursework may also include anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, and practice management.

Applicants may devote no more than 40 of the 800 hours to botany studies, including formal botany coursework, field studies, or plant walks.

Excluded Areas

The following are **not** eligible for clinical herbalism education hours: gardening, permaculture, general plant sciences, massage, bodywork, aromatherapy, flower-essence therapy, gemmotherapy, homeopathy, Reiki, craniosacral therapy, acupressure, kinesiology, astrology, chakra or crystal healing, and iridology. Structured independent study may fulfill a significant portion of the educational requirement (see **Independent Study** section below).

Required Core Competencies for Applicants

Materia Medica

Applicants must demonstrate advanced proficiency in the therapeutic use of **at least 150 medicinal herbs**, including knowledge of actions, energetics, indications, dosing, contraindications, side effects, and herb-drug interactions.

Herbal protocols should primarily rely on custom formulas. Limited use of commercial herbal products is permitted only with a detailed rationale. Practitioners outside the US, or those whose licenses restrict them to commercial products, must submit documentation of these restrictions as part of their application.

In the application, applicants must demonstrate detailed knowledge of **five specific herbs** from three herbal categories: Western Herbalism, Ayurvedic Herbalism, or Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Differential Assessment

Applicants must demonstrate the ability to develop and apply a clear differential assessment method. Please review our [Differential Assessment Guidelines](#) for details. All herbal protocols and recommendations for both the sample cases we provide and those from your practice must align with the differential assessment method used.

Basic Sciences

Applicants must have completed coursework in basic anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, and botany. You can meet this requirement through formal academic study, online coursework, or prior professional medical education.

Current licensure in an approved healthcare profession may satisfy our anatomy, physiology, and pathophysiology requirements. Applicants in these professions may need additional coursework in botany and herbal pharmacology to meet our basic science requirements.

Examples of recognized credentials exempt from additional study in the areas listed above (except botany and herbal pharmacology) include: Nurse Practitioner (NP), Physician Assistant (PA), Registered Nurse (RN), Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), Medical Doctor (MD), Chiropractor (DC), Osteopath (DO), Licensed Naturopathic Physician (ND), Licensed Acupuncturist (L.Ac.), Doctor of Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine (DACM), Doctor of Acupuncture and East Asian Medicine (DAEAM), Medical Herbalist (NIMH), Registered or Medical Herbalist (IRH, IAMMH), Registered Herbalist (Canada), and Western Herbal Medicine Practitioner / Naturopathic Physician (ARONAH, NHAA)

AHG does not accept credentials issued by non-exam credentialing organizations. A **non-exam credentialing organization** is any entity that awards professional recognitions, certifications, or validations based on a review of a candidate's education, training, and experience rather than on a formal test or exam.

Clinical Practice Requirements

Applicants must have completed clinical experience consulting with at least **80 individual clients over five years and have served** as the primary practitioner responsible for developing protocols that include herbal recommendations.

Most of the 80 cases should involve **complex presentations requiring ongoing care, not just acute or minor issues**, and include a full intake plus two follow-up consultations. Retail-setting consultations qualify *only* if they include all components described here.

Each case must include a comprehensive health history, a differential assessment, custom herbal protocols, and follow-up visits with reassessment and protocol adjustments as needed.

Please review our [Differential Assessment Guidelines](#).

Supervised Clinical Experience

Supervised clinical experience may count toward up to **30 of the 80 required cases**. Applicants may achieve this through supervision or case review with an experienced clinical herbalist, ideally an AHG Registered Herbalist, though this is not required. Mentors with extensive clinical experience are also acceptable.

Acceptable supervised experience includes those conducted as part of a clinical training program, mentorship, and structured case review clinical roundtables.

Protocols may include adjunctive therapies, but the primary **therapeutic focus must be botanical medicine**.

Independent Study

Independent study includes structured learning through books, peer-reviewed articles, lectures, webinars, conferences, and other educational media focused on botanical medicine.

Applicants may submit up to **600 hours** of documented independent study toward the 800-hour education requirement.

Applicants whose training is primarily through independent study must also complete at least **200 hours of clinical training, mentorship, or clinical supervision under the supervision of** an AHG Registered Herbalist or a comparably qualified herbal practitioner.

See the [Independent Study Guidelines](#) for details on tracking and documenting independent study and clinical experience.

Scope of Practice and Professional Referral Network

Applicants must provide clients with a written scope-of-practice statement outlining their professional limitations, confidentiality policies, ethical standards, and information about how

clients can report ethical concerns to the American Herbalists Guild. Applicants must upload a copy of their scope-of-practice document as part of the application process.

Applicants must maintain a referral network of licensed medical practitioners to whom they can refer cases outside their scope of practice. Referral networks should be limited to physicians, nurse practitioners, naturopathic doctors, acupuncturists, and other licensed healthcare professionals.

Ethics

Applicants must fully adhere to the **AHG Registered Herbalist Code of Ethics**. This includes a Scope of Practice statement that explains how clients can report potential ethical violations to the AHG Ethics Committee. Applicants must report all prior or pending ethical concerns, including explanations and resolution status, when completing the RH application.

Letters of Recommendation

Part 2 of the application requires two letters of recommendation. At least one must be from a qualified, experienced clinical herbalist who is familiar with your clinical work, and one must be from your primary clinical herbalism instructor. If a letter from your primary instructor is not possible, you will need to provide an explanation and an alternative professional reference.

Do not include letters of recommendation from friends, practitioners other than clinical herbalists, or colleagues who have the same or less clinical experience than you do.

Requests for letters of recommendation are submitted automatically through our online application platform as part of the application process and are not sent to applicants.

Continuing Education

Applicants are expected to pursue ongoing professional development in clinical herbalism and related fields. Although formal CEU requirements are not currently in place, applicants should document all continuing education in anticipation of future requirements.

For guidance, applicants should review the **AHG Education Guidelines, Mentorship Resources, and the AHG RH Code of Ethics** before applying.