**Applying for Registered Herbalist Membership in the**

**American Herbalists Guild: Criteria and Application Process**

The American Herbalists Guild, an association of herbal practitioners, offers practicing herbalists the opportunity to apply for peer-reviewed membership as a Registered Herbalist. This membership is indicated by using “Registered Herbalist (American Herbalist Guild)” or “RH (AHG)” after your name.

To apply, you must demonstrate capability in several areas regarded as essential for clinical proficiency and submit an AHG Membership Application along with additional materials described below. Your information is reviewed by the Admissions Committee, and if approved, Registered Herbalist membership is granted with all benefits and privileges.

This document outlines the application process in detail. After reading this information you have questions or need help navigating the application process, contact the AHG Admissions Coordinator.

**The Registered Herbalist Application Process**

There are two options for applying for Registered Herbalist membership.

**1) The Standard RH Application:** Most applicants will use this process when applying for RH membership. The application assesses your education, clinical training, knowledge of materia medica and more. Standard Applications are reviewed three times each year. Deadlines for applications are March 15, July 15 and November 15. Applications are prescreened by the Admissions Coordinator and, if needed, more information may be requested before being sent to the Admissions Committee for review and scoring. This process takes approximately 2 months from the application deadline to complete.

**2) The Expedited RH Application:** This application process is for herbalists and health professionals who have already met a standard of training in botanical medicine equivalent to or greater than that required for Registered Herbalist membership 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 accredited (AANP) naturopathic programs who have specialized in botanical medicine. Note that this specialization must be clearly demonstrated.
* Veterinarians with herbal medicine training and demonstrated clinical practice using herbal therapies.

**Standard RH Application Criteria**

The criteria used to score RH applications are based on AHG guidelines for herbal education and clinical experience. Find the AHG Education Guidelines [here](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/herbal_education), and a description of clinical experience requirements below. The Admissions Committee awards points based upon their assessment of your answers on the application as well as your education and clinical experience. Acceptance as an RH member is based on your total score so a low score in one area may be offset by a higher score in another area.

**1. Education and Clinical Experience:**

Applicants should have approximately 600 hours of comprehensive training in botanical medicine achieved through formal education, independent study or a combination of both. In addition, approximately 400 hours of clinical experience obtained through independent practice, formal mentorship, supervised clinical training as part of an academic program, or a combination are suggested.

Clinical experience, where you are *not* the primary practitioner, should account for no more than 100 of your 400 clinical hours. Examples of activities in this category include roundtable discussions of a specific case or treatment protocol, mentoring sessions focused on reviewing individual client cases and supervised clinical training.

A clinical hour is defined as an actual hour spent with a client. The initial intake/consult and research counts for a maximum of 2 hours; follow-up visits count as one hour.

You should have independent clinical experience with approximately 80 individual clients within a two-year period. These are clients you have worked with outside of clinical training or supervised clinical practice. Occasionally adjustments to this minimum requirement may apply in situations where clinical practice has been interrupted due to personal or financial reasons, and for practitioners in rural areas. If you believe you qualify for this adjustment, contact the Admissions Coordinator before submitting your application.

Your clinical experience must encompass more than just casual consultations with family and friends. To qualify, sessions with individual clients must include a full health history intake, differential assessment, herbal protocols and a reasonable number of formal follow-up visits.

Providing herb recommendations in a retail sales environment does not count as clinical experience unless it includes a full health history intake, differential assessment, herbal protocol and formal follow-up visits. It is also understood that while treating common colds and other everyday health challenges are part of herbal care, it is expected that those applying for Registered Herbalist status will have spent the majority of their 400 hours of clinical experience working with health issues that require a broad and comprehensive process of differential assessment, herbal treatment strategies and follow up care.

We recognize that it can be difficult to gain clinical training in herbal medicine. To address this, AHG has established a formal mentorship program that pairs student practitioners, or anyone just beginning to practice, with Registered Herbalists members with extensive clinical experience. To learn more, check out the AHG Find a Mentor listings [here](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/mentors). We also recommend that you refer to the [*AHG Handbook of Mentorship Guidelines*](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/product/ahg-handbook-mentoring-guidelines), a valuable resource for setting up your practice, working with a mentor and documenting your clinical work. The Handbook is a free PDF download for AHG member; $10 for all others.

**2. Materia Medica:** You should have a working knowledge of at least 150 medicinal plants. This includes an understanding of their traditional and historical uses, therapeutic actions, dosing, forms of administration, contraindications, possible herb-drug interactions, and basic phytochemical therapeutics. You may choose to demonstrate your plant knowledge by choosing herbs from one of three categories of *materia medica*: Western, Ayurvedic and Traditional Chinese Medicine.

**3. Therapeutics:** A theoretical foundation for developing herbal treatment protocols, including a demonstrated ability to conduct a comprehensive case intake and provide a differential assessment.

**4. Practice Management and Ethics:** A clear understanding of your scope of practice and personal practice limitations along with a solid referral network of other health care professionals you can consult with or make referrals to as needed.

**5. Basic Sciences:** A practical understanding of human anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, and basic plant chemistry obtained through independent or formal education. See [AHG Education Guidelines](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/herbal_education) for details.

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

**Standard Application Instructions:** [Download](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/sites/americanherbalistsguild.com/files/rh_application_posted_june_26_2019_.doc) the AHG Application for Registered Herbalist Membership. In the four-part application you’ll find sections where you’ll be asked to provide information about your education and clinical experience and give responses to questions about materia medica, clinical protocols, and sample case histories. Specific instructions are included on the application. The AHG Admissions Coordinator is your primary resource for questions about the application process; feel free to contact her by email.

**In addition to the RH Application, you must also submit the following:**

1. **Admissions Processing Fee:** A non-refundable fee of $75.00 for AHG members or $125.00 for non-members is required. The Admissions Coordinator will notify you when your application has been prescreened and is ready to be sent to the Admissions Committee to arrange payment.

1. **Your curriculum vitae or resume.** This should contain the following information:
* **Education:** A list of all herbal education programs and trainings you have attended, completion dates and the names of your primary instructors. Attach legible photocopies of relevant professional training diplomas, licenses and certifications.
* **Clinical Experience:** Documentation for 400 hours of clinical experience. Indicate the number of hours of clinical experience gained from each of these categories: independent practice, formal mentorship, and supervised clinical training. Include the names and contact information for 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 upon request.
* **Professional Affiliations:** Any professional organizations, societies or associations you belong to.
* **Publications:** A list of 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.
1. **Three Letters of Recommendation.** Letters should be from health care professionals familiar with your training and clinical work, and preferably from practitioners skilled in herbal medicine practice. At least one letter should be from one of your primary instructors or clinical mentors. If this is not possible, please include a note explaining why you are unable to provide this. Other acceptable sources for letters of recommendation: AHG Registered Herbalist members; other qualified clinical herbalists; your clinical training mentors or instructors; other licensed health professional with **herbal** experience. Letters from clients, family, other students and friends are not acceptable.

Your references should complete the Recommendation for Registered Herbalists Application Form and email it, along with their letter of recommendation, to the Admissions Coordinator.

1. **Three Case Histories.** Case histories should be taken from your independent clinical experience. The Admissions Committee looks for case histories that show skill and excellence in the use of complex herbal protocols with extensive (at least two) follow-ups*.*

While the Committee recognizes that diet/nutrition and lifestyle changes are foundational and in many cases other therapies may also useful (flower essences, homeopathy, nutritional supplements, bodywork, etc.), the case histories you submit should focus on herbal treatment strategies and clearly show your ability to create effective, case appropriate herb protocols, along with a concise explanation of why specific herbs were chosen.

Case histories should be informed by the type of assessment that you use in your clinical practice. This process, often referred to as "differential assessment," is one where the clinician brings together all of their observations and answers to personal health questions including, most importantly, a clear description of their presenting symptoms, and makes a preliminary assessment, based on the individual client.

Differential assessment may be based on an established traditional system such as a western biomedical, Traditional Chinese, or Ayurvedic model, or another traditional model as long you demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the system and your protocols are consistent with your differential assessment. Common differential assessment measures include, but 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).

Case histories should be concise, comprehensive and no longer than 3 typed single spaced pages each. They should include the results of your intake process in the form of a differential assessment, specific recommendations, and detailed treatments protocols, along with treatment outcomes from two or more follow up visits. Do not submit actual copies of your case intake forms. When preparing your cases for submission take care to remove names and any personal information about the client. If you need more guidelines about how to prepare a case for review, here is a link to helpful AHG webinar, [Preparing a Case Study for Review](https://vimeo.com/183326546/1e8041f1d8). You’ll also find case histories templates and other useful forms in the [*AHG Handbook of Mentorship Guidelines*](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/product/ahg-handbook-mentoring-guidelines)*.*

When submitting your application, please include *only* the items requested. Don’t send copies of books or articles, diplomas or certificates from programs not relevant to the study of herbal medicine, or any other materials.

You can expect to hear the results of your application approximately 2 months following the submission deadline for each cycle (not the date you submitted your application.)

Questions? Contact the Admissions Coordinator.

Download the [Registered Herbalist Standard Application](https://www.americanherbalistsguild.com/sites/americanherbalistsguild.com/files/rh_application_posted_june_26_2019_.doc)

**Expedited RH Application Criteria**

If you qualify for the Expedited Application process, please submit the following items in lieu of the Standard Application:

* A letter of intent that states why you are interested in Registered Herbalist membership and provides detailed information about your qualifications.
* A current curriculum vitae or resume that includes a detailed list of all botanical medicine classes, workshops, seminars, clinics, apprenticeships or internships attended or completed. Attach legible photocopies of professional certification or licensure (or equivalent) and other relevant training diplomas, licenses and certifications
* Two case histories drawn from your clinical practice that clearly demonstrate the use of botanical therapies. Please refer to the guidelines for submitting case histories under the Standard Application section.
* A letter of recommendation from one of your primary instructors in botanical medicine.

All items listed should be sent at one time to the Admissions Coordinator. Once your application has been prescreened, we’ll be in touch to collect your non-refundable admissions processing fee: AHG members, $75.00; non-members, $125.00. All expedited applications are sent to the Admission Committee monthly. The Expedited Application review process takes approximately 6 to 8 weeks from the date it is submitted.

If we determine that you don’t qualify to apply for the expedite application process, you are still eligible to submit the full Standard Application as outlined above. Questions about the Expedited Application process? Contact the Admissions Coordinator.