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### Reviewed by Tina Burchill

Tina Burchill RSHom, is the Society's Newsletter Editor and Media Consultant. She qualified in June 2005 and has a clinic in her local area, as well as a homeopathy clinic at the head office of a newspaper group in London. She continues to do freelance work, and has had features published in The Telegraph, The Times and The Guardian, as well as parent/baby magazines.

# Structuralism and The Plant Kingdom

By Stephanie Nile

I am not sure how Stephanie Nile has managed to condense such a wealth of information into such a small volume, but condense it she has, with the end result being a packed little book bursting with ideas. However, I fear that there is a little too much going on and at times it is tough going to keep up with the different concepts and theories, pulled in not just from the world of homeopathy, but also from botany, psychology and Eastern philosophy.

Promised in this first volume, focusing on the monocots, is a combination of the work of Dr Rajan Sankaran and Dr Jan Scholten, offering us a way of better understanding the plant kingdom. Nile says in the book's introduction that "*homeopathy needs to be mapped onto a contemporary landscape*". What the author does is to take a step back from Sankaran's work with families to look at the bigger picture - where the family fits into the classification system within the plant kingdom, and how their evolutionary struggle for adaptation has influenced the picture.

The next step is to apply the concept of "stages", as set out by Scholten on the periodic table of the elements, using the metaphor of the life stages of development from birth to death. Nile suggests that the "miasms" as suggested by Sankaran fit "*naturally*" into Scholten's stages. Converting them, she says is "*like converting Fahrenheit and centigrade...it requires a bit of jiggery pokery.*" It's a fascinating and challenging idea. Nile, a zoologist who

describes herself as "*first and foremost a systems analyst*" has put together a well researched book with a neat "periodic table" at the back, suggesting how the monocot plants compare to the minerals. Her materia medica brings together a variety of information, many of the remedies little known, and suggests similarities with the minerals in the corresponding stages and rows.

The summary and epilogue give a good brief overview of the sensations and themes of the classification hierarchies, but I would suggest that readers study this before looking at the individual remedies.

While overall I found this book useful, and I am sure I will dip into it again, I found much of it confusing and difficult to understand. For me, the inclusion of the discussions of psychology and the "types" didn't seem to be relevant to the structure/sensation approach and the model being put forward and added to the confusion. Perhaps my uneasiness with this book lies in the apparent juxtaposition of these two approaches - while it was fascinating to look at plants in this way, and attempt to make our job at pinpointing the precise remedy easier and to understand how mineral and plant remedies can complement each other, I wonder whether the very nature of plants makes it impossible to squeeze them into the periodic table. While great work has been done by both Sankaran and Scholten, their approaches are different, and for me, overlapping them in this way didn't quite work.