A medicinal plant is any plant which, in one or more of its organs, contains substances that can be used for therapeutic purposes or which are precursors for the synthesis of useful drugs.A definition of medicinal plants for the purpose of this presentation should include the following (Sofowora 2008; Evans, 2008): plants or plant parts used medicinally in galenical preparations (e.g. decoctions, infusions, etc.) e.g. Cascara bark; plants used for extraction of pure substances either for direct medicinal use or for the hemi-synthesis of medicinal compounds (e.g. hemi-synthesis of sex hormones from diosgenin obtained from Dioscorea yams); food, spice, and perfumery plants used medicinally, e.g. ginger; microscopic plants, e.g. fungi, actinomycetes, used for isolation of drugs, especially antibiotics.Examples are ergot (Claviceps purpurea growing on rye) or Streptomyces griseus; and fibre plants, e.g. cotton, flax, jute, used for the preparation of surgical dressings.The term 'crude drugs of natural or biological origin' is used by pharmacists and pharmacologists to describe whole plants or parts of plants which have medicinal properties.Such plants should qualify as medicinal plants.

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