



Plants and Healers

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In Memory of Frank Cook

By Thomas Elpel

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I was shocked and sad to hear that Frank Cook died on Wednesday August 19th, 2009. I have "known" Frank for the past seven or eight years via extensive email correspondence. Frank helped edit the 5th Edition of my book *Botany in a Day: The Patterns Method of Plant Identification*, and he used it as a guide in his plant classes around the world. Every time he would place an order for the book, he would provide a new address, "in care of" someone on the east coast or the west coast, or occasionally overseas.

Frank also led online discussion groups using *Botany in a Day*. I enjoyed reading his emails about getting to know the plants, and I was constantly amazed to hear about his adventures as he wandered all over the world discovering new plants and meeting new people. Frank used my book more than I have, and clearly knew more about plants than I ever will. Although I never met Frank, nor spoke with him on the phone, I came to think of him as a friend.

The odd thing is that, having never met Frank, I didn't even know what he looked like. Somehow I imagined him of average build, clean cut, with sharp facial features. Having recently seen his photos and online video clips, he might be better described as a gentle giant (6' 3"), with waist-length dreadlocks and a beard. Yet, the fact that I never met Frank didn't make him any less a friend. I think of Frank as a bit like a grape vine, reaching out this way and that way with his tendrils, making connections with people all over the planet. I was one of those connections, and through Frank's correspondence, I felt somehow connected through him to other people he met in his travels, as well as the plant people he discovered along the way. I also connected with his globe-trotting wanderlust in a vicarious way via his letters. My own life is very tied down with my businesses, projects, and family commitments, and I somehow felt freer just knowing that Frank was out there, exploring the world and getting to know the plant people. I will greatly miss Frank's presence, his correspondence, and his wandering spirit.