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American Botanical Council

January 19, 2026

Prof. Anna-Rita Bilia
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Sent via email: ar.bilia@unifi.it

Dear Prof. Bilia,

We are writing to you to formally notify you that the American Botanical Council has selected you as the recipient of the 2026 ABC Norman R. Farnsworth Excellence in Botanical Research Award.

As you are well aware, the ABC Norman R. Farnsworth Excellence in Botanical Research Award is named for one of ABC's co-founders, your former colleague and mentor, the late Professor Norman R. Farnsworth.

ABC has chosen to grant you this award for your pioneering work and extraordinary contributions to the knowledge of the bioactivities, composition, formulation, stability, and analysis of medicinal plants and plant extracts. While your research has involved many aspects of medicinal plant research, the publications in the area of formulations, especially on the usefulness of nanotechnology and liposome-based applications to improve bioavailability of plant constituents, are very important. In this regard, the recent publications on nanovesicles loaded with cannabidiol to enhance dermal and intestinal absorption, and to improve the penetration of the blood-brain barrier represent practical solutions to enhance the medical benefits of cannabidiol. Also noteworthy are your research contributions in the field of assessing the therapeutic potential, stability, and safety of ingredients made with St. John's wort extracts. Of particular interest in this regard is your pioneering work on the complexity of St. John's wort extracts, using nuclear magnetic resonance published in 2001.

However, the impact of your scientific contributions goes well beyond your scientific papers and book chapters that you have published as author or co-author. Equally impressive is your dedication and work as an educator and advocate of herbal medicine. This includes your long-standing (2006-2021) involvement as member of the board of directors, vice-president, and president (2016-2019) of the international scientific Society of Medicinal Plants and Natural Product Research (GA), member of the board of directors president (2013-2019) and former president (2020-2022) of the of Italian Society of Phytochemistry and Sciences of Plants for Medicinal, Food and Cosmetic use (SIF), and, since 1997, as the Italian delegate of the European Scientific Cooperation on Phytotherapy (ESCOP).

Based on all your efforts to establish the scientific basis for the use of herbal medicines, improve herbal medicine formulations, and the establishment of rigorous quality control measures, you are uniquely qualified to receive this award.

The ABC Norman R. Farnsworth Excellence in Botanical Research Award will be presented at the Annual ABC Botanical Celebration and Botanical Excellence Awards Ceremony at Natural Products Expo West in Anaheim, California on the evening of March 3rd, 2026. While we would be deeply honored to have you present at the Celebration, we realize that you may not be able to be in attendance for this event due to the travel requirement. In this case, we respectfully request that you please simply send us an approximately 1-minute video acceptance speech on an appropriate digital format, preferably no later than February 20th. (We will send you some guidelines for such a video.)

Additionally, we respectfully request 1-2 brief quotes from you for the press release that ABC intends to issue in March as well as a digital color headshot photo for publication. Your prompt response to this request is appreciated in advance.

On behalf of the entire ABC staff and Board of Trustees, we congratulate you on receiving this well-deserved recognition of your outstanding contributions to the science and quality of medicinal plants.

Our best wishes for your continued robust health and successes for many years!

Respectfully and Cordially,



Mark Blumenthal
Founder & Executive Director, ABC
Editor-in-Chief, *HerbalGram* & HerbClip
Founder, ABC-AHP-NCNPR Botanical Adulterants Prevention Program



Stefan Gafner, PhD
Chief Science Officer, ABC
Director, ABC-AHP-NCNPR Botanical Adulterants Prevention Program