

## Herbalist Exam Set For October '95

A certification examination in Chinese herbalism will be given in New York City on October 20, 1995, sponsored by the National Commission for the Certification of Acupuncturists (NCCA) located in Washington DC.

About 214 candidates are expected to present themselves, according to NCCA director Colleen Prasil. The same examination was given this past spring in San Francisco to about 300 candidates and, to her knowledge, this pair of exams represents the first attempt in North America to certify competency in Chinese herbalism by means of an examination.

Such certification is but one step in the process of developing a new category of practitioners trained in traditional Chinese medicine. Licensing of herbalists will be the responsibility of the States, some but not all of which now license acupuncturists.

Acupuncture was adopted so quickly in the West, back in the early 1970s, that many who acquired training -- and certainly the public -- had only a dim understanding that acupuncture as a technique is only one aspect of the vast body of empirical knowledge that constitutes traditional Chinese medicine. The crux of this approach to understanding the human mind and body lies in the prevention of illness or imbalance and thus focuses mainly on behavioral issues -- including spiritual practices, diet and exercise. As herbalist and teacher Jeffrey C. Yuen is fond of saying, "In ancient China, physicians received money only as long as the patient stayed well. When sickness occurred, all payments stopped."

Now, in certifying herbalists, the NCCA is helping to compensate for this lack of awareness about the Chinese approach. Herbalists will be required to demonstrate competency in two areas: herbal knowledge and Chinese medical theory. Likewise, acupuncturists are expected to know Chinese medical theory. Competency in all three areas (herbalism, acupuncture and theory) will be required for the doctorate or OMD. At present, North America has very few colleges that prepare candidates for the doctorate, among them the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in San Francisco.

Some herbalists view the advent of certification and licensing with trepidation, knowing the long history in the West of harassment of practitioners of the old medicine (including torture and execution during the Inquisition).

## HFG SURVIVES DROUGHT

Most of the High Falls Gardens plants have thus far survived the Northeast Drought of '95, thanks to regular hand-watering performed by diligent volunteers. The field crops are located at the Thompson-Finch Farm in Ancram, New York.

A few Columbia County farmers installed irrigation piping in May when accumulated water deficits as of last winter began to threaten this summer's crops. Of course, for piping, a water source is required such as a nearby creek or year-round pond. At the HFG plots in Ancram a new well will have to be dug near the field to support piping. Meanwhile, one of the farmers, either Marnie or Don MacLean, fills a large tank from the main well, pulls the tank into the field with a tractor, we attach hoses and water each plant individually. Such dedication!

In this, the first year of HFG's field crops, we're counting about 700 surviving plants in thirty varieties. Some of these are familiar plants that the Chinese use as medicinals, such as *Isatis tinctoria* (Woad root and leaf) and *Polygonatum odoratum* (Solomon's Seal rhizome). Some have been grown in the West as ornamentals, such as *Houttuynia cordata* (Chameleon Plant) and *Platycodon grandiflorum* (Balloon Flower root). Others, less familiar, are now being propagated by certain North American nurseries that deal in herbs or exotic plants; these include *Anemarrhena asphodeloides* ("Know Mother") and *Schisandra chinensis* (Magnolia fruit).

Most of these plants are perennials that will take from two to five years to mature. All the ones in the Ancram field are first-year plants, so we expect to continue our prayers for rain, mulch well after the ground freezes, and then hope for the best.

However, in this case the NCCA, while giving preference to acupuncturists, clearly recognizes actual practical experience, in lieu of formal training in herbalism, as qualification for this examination.

Over three hundred practitioners had been certified prior to the development of this examination, through credits for academic training and experience. Anyone may obtain a list of NCCA-certified herbalists by sending a written request and \$3 to: NCCA, P.O. Box 97075, Washington, DC 20090-7075. ■

# WHOLE FOODS, WHOLE HERBS

With a plethora of herbal products on the market, why should we bother to grow our own herbs? These products may be extracted, concentrated, granulated or otherwise refined and are, above all, convenient. ("Contains the active principle in ginkgo leaf, brain stimulant since ancient times, in gelatin capsules!") A few manufacturers of herbal products are hip enough to use only organic herbs. So what's the problem?

Those who have followed the progress of the whole foods movement of the past thirty years can recognize the irony inherent in this situation. Think of organic pop-tarts. The alternative food market has inevitably demanded convenience foods, complete with an organic label to propitiate the gods of the New Age. Perhaps the time pressures of post-industrial civilization in decline, which make proper food preparation so difficult, are to blame. Yet the same forces are at work on herbs used as medicine. Easier to pop a pill as insurance or magic bullet, rather than to worry about what plants are in it, where they came from, how they were grown and, to the point, how they were processed.

## Whole Foods in the Macrocosm

The whole foods movement has taught us sound dietary principles: to respect the integrity of food, to reduce or eliminate dependence on animal protein, and to combine foods for protein complementation and a balanced variety of nutrients. Annemarie Colbin is one of the gurus of the movement and her cookbook, *The Book of Whole Meals* (Ballantine Books, New York NY, 1983), is prefaced with an elegant summary of the whole foods rationale.

Colbin's points have an analog in an understanding of herbs used as medicine. The key issue is plant integrity. When part of the food plant is taken away, the components that make the rest of it digestible, or provide for maximum assimilation by the human body, may be reduced. A well-known example is the B vitamins in wheat bran and germ, discarded when making white flour. As unrefined carbohydrates, fruit and vegetable sugars may be Nature's way of enticing us to eat these foods. But when we extract the sugars -- cane sugar, fructose, corn syrup, etc. -- and add them to other foods, we are circumventing Nature and destroying the balance that's been created just for us.

We have evolved along with our food plants over millions of years, yet food additives and processing, along with elaborate techniques for the manufacture of drugs from plants, have been prevalent for less than fifty years. A five-decade-old, colossal experiment in circumventing Nature, using ourselves as the guinea pigs -- terrific idea! Under such circumstances, the emergence in our society of a high incidence of obesity, chronic degenerative disease and strange new immune system disorders seems much less mysterious. (And this is without even considering the

effects of the manufactured chemicals put into the soil, water and air.)

Many people would interpret whole foods concepts as dictating the consumption of raw foods -- going into the garden and eating straight off the vine. Banished from Eden as we are, however, our digestive systems sometimes need the help that a little cooking provides. Stated another way, it's best to minimize the energy put into digestion. The Earth School of classical Chinese medicine holds that digestive overload is the trigger of chronic degenerative disease, including the cancers, Crohn's, Chronic Fatigue and others that plague us.

Whether cooked or not, macrobiotic, vegetarian -- whatever the system -- whole foods are the foundation of our health.

## Plants and the Microcosm

Our awareness of food integrity is now expanding. The organic farming movement and related scientific discoveries are beginning to reveal a more detailed picture of the chemistry of soil and of plants themselves. In fact, this chemistry is far more elaborate and sophisticated than anyone in our modern age of materialistic science has ever dreamed.

A good description of this new awareness is Jim Duke's article in the July/August '95 issue of *Organic Gardening* magazine. He explores the concept of synergy in plant food -- that the value of the whole food is greater than the sum of its parts, beyond obvious material characteristics such as fiber, because the plant compounds complement and enhance each other's nutritional potency.

He cites the case of the "weed" *Artemisia annua*, or Sweet Annie, known in China as *Qing Hao*. Popular here in the U.S. for its use in dried floral wreaths, *Qing Hao* has been used in the East for centuries to treat fever and is now being studied for its potency against malaria. Duke says that recent research along these lines shows that mixes of several compounds found naturally in the plant have been demonstrated to be at least three times as potent as using the best-known active ingredient, artemisinin, alone. The AIDS underground is far ahead of scientific research in advocating the use of whole Sweet Annie to treat opportunistic infections.

Duke points out that bugs (either insects or viruses) can much more easily develop resistance to a single or simple compound than to the full array found in the whole plant. Evolution has favored plants that have developed sophisticated defenses against pests. He believes that many of the same phytochemicals that protect plants against insect predators are the same ones that enable human bodies to fight disease. In a fascinating example, he cites cineole, a compound found in the mints that is

both an insecticide and has been found to possibly prevent the loss of a certain chemical in the human brain, which deficiency is implicated in Alzheimer's disease. Since many mints are aromatic -- their essential oils are absorbed into the central nervous system through inhalation or through the skin -- Duke wonders if simply using mint-based shampoos or body lotions would help prevent Alzheimer's!

***How are medicinal herbs most valuable to human health -- as raw material for drugs manufacture, as magic bullets, or as subtle foods?***

In another example, he mentions the drug etoposide or Vepeside, FDA-approved for use against lung and testicular cancers, which cost many millions to develop and generates hundreds of millions per year for the big pharmaceutical companies. But Native Americans were far wiser -- they got etoposide for free. It turns out that the "weed" mayapple or *Podophyllum peltatum* is a source of etoposide. The Penobscots used mayapple to cure cancer, while the Menominees used it to kill potato bugs!

As the matrix that supports the complex chemistry of plants, soil is an integral part of this miraculous synergy. Our concern for soil quality has deepened accordingly. More than merely free of manufactured chemicals, the soil must be alive with microorganisms that keep it in balance and make the micronutrients available to plants.

The concept of healthy food is now broadened to encompass variety in types of food consumed each day, that it is grown in healthy soil free of manufactured chemicals and other imbalancing agents, and that it is as fresh and close to its natural state as possible. The soil must be in balance to enable the plants to be fully potentiated, so that by wisely consuming such foods we may keep ourselves in balance. Whether we recognize it or not, we live, thrive or fall ill in accordance with the ancient Law of Correspondences: "As above, so below."

### ***Herbs as Balancing Agents in the Diet***

A great irony of modern life is that all these wise principles were well known to the ancients. The most sophisticated and complete records that survive are from the Chinese traditions. Their view of medicine is radically different from the one we know in the West. To them, foods and herbs are used as preventive measures for fine tuning. If you feel out of balance, you eat a combination of foods and/or herbs that is in itself balanced. Your body will select what it needs to restore itself.

In contrast to the classical Chinese view, our Western approach has been reduced to using herbs as kin to drugs -- a single herb as a magic bullet to zap a disease agent. Scientific research into whole herbs is done mostly in

Europe, specifically Germany, because U.S. regulations require that a drug be identified as a single chemical entity. As noted in *Science News* of September 9, 1995, in an article entitled, "Yin and Yang: Western Science Makes Room For Chinese Herbal Medicine," it is the consumers who are driving a reorientation in the concept of health care here in America. People whose health is at stake prefer not to wait for science to confirm knowledge distilled from at least 2,500 years of practical experience. That's not an anti-science attitude, it's common sense!

If herbs are considered rather as specialized foods, to be used with discretion in the prevention of illness, then the desirability of growing our own herbs becomes clear. All the reasons to favor fresh, local, organically-grown food apply to herbs as well.

A whole foods/herbs approach to health holds several implications for the way herbs are chosen and handled. The following points are examples:

- Deterioration of plants and plant parts in storage varies considerably. Given even ideal storage conditions, qualities of flowers and leaves will tend to decompose before that of roots, where energy is stored most compactly. Leaves containing volatile oils (the mints, for example) will deteriorate the fastest.
- Herb processing is commonly undertaken to preserve plant qualities. Infusions, decoctions, or tinctures made from either fresh or dried whole herbs are preferable to concentrates and extracts. The latter are to be avoided because they more radically alter the natural proportions and matrices of the whole plant.
- The Chinese practice of combining herbs into formulas is an extension of the whole plant synergy concept. Herbs are chosen to assist each other and to buffer potentially harmful effects.
- Herbs are eaten in very small portions. For example, an adult dosage may be 20 grams per day total of a formula containing several herbs, taken in decoction or as powdered dried herb, preferably divided into three equal portions taken over the course of the day.
- Herbs are taken only for short periods, e.g., three days for acute maladies, ten days to a few weeks for chronic conditions depending on which herbs are used.
- Tonic herbs, such as ginseng, should be used with great discretion and are unnecessary for healthy people. Tonics may reinforce ingrained, undesirable habits or may actually strengthen disease agents.

We need only tend our gardens to stay healthy. The problem, however, is that our efforts must be on a planetary scale in order to stave off the destruction wrought by industrialism run amok. ■

© 1995 Jean Giblette and Laura Smith. References cited upon request.

## THE HFG WAY OF TEA AND SOUP

To increase the nutritive value of your daily tea or soup, add herbs appropriate to your prevailing conditions -- the season, your level of energy, the work requirements of the day. Several herbs can be added to a green or red tea base and simply steeped for three to thirty minutes. This is an excellent way to benefit from the balancing qualities of herbs, whether warming, cooling, neutral, energizing, calming, stomach-soothing, appetite enhancing, etc. Examples of tea herbs are:

<u>Warming</u>		<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Cooling</u>
Astragalus	Ginger	Hawthorne	Burdock Seed
Cardamom	Mugwort	Licorice	Chrysanthemum
Cinnamon	Perilla/Shiso	Lycium	Fritillaria
Fennel	Tangerine Peel	Red Date	Honeysuckle
Fenugreek	Lovage		Mint

A nourishing stock for soup, stews, or rice can be made by beginning with water and adding Astragalus, Kelp, dried Shitake Mushrooms with soaking water, plus any herbs for immune boosting, digestion, or whatever is appropriate. The stock should be simmered for 10 to 30 minutes (Kelp should be removed after 5 minutes), then strained.

Soup ingredients, whether vegetables, legumes or grains, can be chosen for nourishing and energetic properties. Herbs may be added for flavor and for supporting, sustaining and/or balancing qualities. A few examples of soup ingredients are:

<u>Soup Ingredients</u>	<u>Useful Properties</u>
Beets	Cool, nourishes blood, cleans liver
Burdock Root	Cold, detoxifies, resolves phlegm
Cabbage	Warm, tonifies kidneys, resolves food stagnation, diuretic
Carrots	Cool, strengthens spleen/stomach, detoxifies, energizes
Celery	Cool, tonifies kidneys, strengthens spleen/stomach, moves blood
Mushrooms	Resolves phlegm, energizes, detoxifies
Onions	Warm, resolves phlegm, promotes blood circulation
Potatoes	Cool, detoxifies, energizes, strengthens spleen/stomach
Spinach	Cool, strengthens all organ systems, lubricates intestines
Winter Squash	Detoxifies, dispels dampness
Yams	Regulates lung, detoxifies, strengthens spleen/stomach
Barley	Cool, strengthens spleen and lungs, dries dampness
Bulgur	Cool, calming, nourishes heart system
Kasha	Strengthens stomach and blood vessels
Millet	Cool, stops vomiting and diarrhea
Oats	Warm, strengthens spleen/stomach
Rice	Strengthens spleen/stomach, stops diarrhea
Adzuki Beans	Detoxifies, strengthens spleen and kidneys, diuretic
Mung Beans	Cool, detoxifies, diuretic
Basil	Warm, nourishes stomach
Celery Seed	Cool, strengthens spleen/stomach
Coriander/Cilantro	Promotes blood circulation
Dried Mushrooms	Detoxifies, anti-tumor effects
Garlic	Hot, anti-fungal/viral/bacterial, detoxifies meat/seafood
Ginger	Warm, detoxifies, resolves phlegm, digestive, diuretic
Kelp/Seaweeds	Cold, adds minerals, softens tumors, detoxifies
Lovage	Warm, promotes circulation, calms, regulates energy
Miso	Cool, detoxifies, lubricates lungs and intestines
Orange/Tangerine Peel	Warm, improves energy and digestion
Parsley	Warm, aids digestion, moves stagnant food
Perilla Leaf/Shiso	Warm, dispels wind-cold, relieves chest congestion