

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, LATE SUMMER '03

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

The field is blooming with goldenrod, herald of late summer. Two colonies of honeybees have already laid in their winter stores....Say, aren't you surprised to be hearing from us at this time of year?

Oh, yes, we're still working under all the pressures of the agricultural season. Plus we're getting ready to open the field to the local community on Saturday the 20th of September. But we couldn't wait to tell you the good news. The tenth year in the life of High Falls Gardens is turning out to be the best yet....

****** *Spring Appeal: Magic Happened!* ******

First, we are so very grateful for your response to the Spring Appeal. The many generous contributions to the HFG Fund matched two-thirds of the grant from New York State and we were able to proceed with the project, which is proving to be a big step in the right direction.

Half of this spring's donors are health care practitioners. This tells us that HFG's messages, carried back and forth between farmers and practitioners, are being heard. The principle of community-supported agriculture is proliferating into new niches; many people are ready to join together, with greater awareness and trust, to heal ourselves and our connection to food/medicinal plants and the earth.

****** *Trial Plots Thriving on NY Organic Farms* ******

This year there's special focus on the farming side of the equation. In the first two weeks of June my partner Chris Reed and I drove a van 1500 miles around New York state to plant identical trial plots of Chinese medicinal herbs (*wu wei zi*, *gou qi zi* and *gua lou*) on five certified organic farms. We installed bamboo tripods and fencing to support these vigorous perennials for at least three years.

Words fail me in trying to describe the beauty and variety of these five farms. Let's just say that if I knew there were only a few weeks left in my life, I would consider doing this trip again. The experience was tangible reassurance of the aspirations of the human spirit in the face of all our collective failures and horrible behavior. To see these culturally diverse people living in right relationship to their land is to know it can be done, to feel hope again for our common future.

New York is an agricultural treasure. Our farmers have water, unlike much of the rest of the world, with rich, relatively rock-free soil (compared to New England), a wide variety of soil types and microniches, and many healthy forests under stewardship. This is true wealth – and health – that's worth all our devotion to preserve.

****** *Catskill Mountain Ginseng Direct to Practitioners* ******

Once we produce the highest quality medicinal plants, how do we market them in a way that can sustain the farmers economically? The trend is toward direct marketing, whether through community-supported agriculture, farm markets and farmstands, internet sales, or...a model like the Sonoma County Herb Exchange.

Here in New York, practitioners have asked for a direct connection to native ginseng (*xi yang shen*) and now we can oblige. As part of the marketing piece of our current trials project, a "**Ginseng Direct**" committee has prepared a demonstration exchange for the autumn of 2003. We'll offer freshly harvested and dried, whole root ginseng at least ten years old, wild-cultivated on the properties of several Catskill Mountain farms.

Thanks to John Janiszewski, James MacLean, Wayne Mellor and Susan Risoli for their work on this project. Look for a separate Ginseng Direct announcement in the next few weeks.

****** Medicinal Plant Growers Workshop Planned for January 2004 ******

Not only are our farmers living in right relationship, but a few are in the vanguard of medicinal herb cultivation. We've seen their handiwork and recognize them as experts.

To help others improve their craft, High Falls Gardens will present a two-day intensive workshop, January 16-17, 2004, designed for experienced farmers and growers. Entitled "**Cultivating and Marketing Wild Quality in Medicinal Plants**" the program is co-sponsored by the Center for Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York. We'll feature these innovators as presenters:

- Jean-David Derreumaux, biodynamic grower, The Healing Plant, Camphill Village, Copake NY
- Leslie Gardner, director of the Sonoma County Herb Exchange, Sebastopol CA
- Andrea and Matthias Reisen, Healing Spirits Herb Farm, Avoca NY
- Peggy Schafer, Chinese Medicinal Herbs, Petaluma CA

Contact Jean at the address below for details and an application form.

****** More Student Gardens Sown This Year ******

On the practitioner education side of the equation, HFG received ten new requests for the annual Student Gardens seed distribution. These were from nine different states, from Florida to Oregon and Washington. We were able to accommodate everyone, including older projects, and mailed out over 150 packets. The seeds came from our (unusually paltry) 2002 harvest, supplemented with seeds direct from China.

The Student Gardens Forum at www.craneherb.com funneled the requests to us. In response to demand we opened the distribution to a new category, practitioner-growers who want to experiment with cultivating the plants. We expect that our researchers of the future will come from this group as well as from current students who go on to postgraduate specialties. HFG expects to continue to broaden its services as a resource to the A&OM community.

****** HFG Seeks Three-Year Foundation Commitment ******

Acting on the advice of one of our donors, High Falls Gardens is looking for a three-year commitment from a private foundation to support the development of our educational services to the profession of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

To build on the Student Gardens initiative and provide for plant-based research within the profession, we hope to initiate a graduate fellowship program in 2004. Stipends, room and board, and research supervision will be provided to post-masters degree researchers. HFG will benefit through association with a cadre of herbalists who are familiar with our farm, develop a deeper knowledge of the plants, are adept at cultivation and processing, and can help develop quality standards.

We're also planning to upgrade our group visits from students of A&OM in 2004. The field at Hillview Farm, with its mature plantings of many Asian medicinal herbs, is located less than 200 miles from several colleges in the Northeast. With planning, the distance allows for an inexpensive though rigorous day trip for groups of students.

These days, more foundations are declining to accept applications, and HFG's work must come to their attention through some other means. We ask each of you to be alert on our behalf, to help us make the connections to achieve this goal.

Your fully tax-deductible contributions to the High Falls Gardens Fund are so important to us!

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