

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, AUTUMN '04

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

Once again the seasons change and the plants bed down for winter dreams under starlight. After the downpours from the hurricane series, autumn has been calm and serene in the garden. First frosts were light, wolfberries gave us a bumper crop, the bees had plenty of 50-degree days to fly. Tatarian Aster put on quite a floral display in mid-October, its clear purple complementing the vivid orange maples surrounding the field; we received comments from several passers-by. But that wasn't the only plant attracting attention.....

****** Herb Samples Star in Roadshow ******

This fall, the Medicinal Herb Consortium (MHC) pulled out all the stops in an effort to fascinate, seduce and tantalize the senses of Oriental Medicine practitioners around the country. What better way than to present a glorious array of freshly harvested and dried, domestically and ecologically-grown herbs?

Deep green whole leaf chòu wú tóng, fat yellow julienned strips of huáng bǎi, a green-gold tapestry of qīng hāo and, of course, bright red unsulfured gǒu qǐ zǐ, along with about forty other samples in small clear baggies, have been touring from California to West Virginia, New York and Minnesota. It's the culmination of a year-long feasibility study conducted by the MHC, the five medicinal plant growers associations working together to figure out how they can provide the Oriental medicine community in the U.S. with fresh and ecologically grown herbs.

This effort is just beginning. Response from the Oriental medicine community has been consistently supportive of the farmers, as if to say, "Yes, we want this to happen, but how?" This fall, herbalists shown samples tended to amplify their response – "This *must* happen, this is OUR FUTURE!" Yes, we know the way to a herbalist's heart!

****** Herb Notes From All Over******

Fall events staged by the MHC and their cohorts began in September. On the 16th in Alcalde, north of Santa Fe, previous attendance records were broken when 150 people showed up for a Medicinal Herb Field Day. Charles Martin offered commentary on cultivation while Deborahlise Mota, D.O.M., discussed medicinal properties of the herbs. In California on the 18th, the popular Sonoma County Herb Association annual festival drew the crowds. A separate booth set up to feature the Chinese medicinal botanicals was an innovation that got steady traffic all day.

Outside California, October is the primary harvest month. By the time of the West Virginia Herb Association annual conference on Oct. 29-31, fresh-dried herb samples from all over converged on Morgantown. On November 19th, we packed the lower level of Ambrosia, Jeffrey Yuen's clinic in NYC Chinatown, when over fifty students and practitioners showed up for an Open House. Visitors to Chinatown are accustomed to exotic aromas, but this time it was domestic fragrances wafting up the stairwell! The following day Jeffrey's two-year program in Chinese Herbal Studies convened in the same location, and an additional group of practitioners got to indulge their senses.

The final scheduled event (although New Jersey practitioners are demanding equal time) is at Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington, Minnesota on Dec. 4th. This is a 4-CEU-credit workshop on "How Domestic Cultivation Can Elevate Quality and Assure Future Access to Our Materia Medica." Mercy Yule, D.O.M., L.Ac., president of the Washington practitioners association, will be the featured speaker.

The MHC will wrap up the project in January and issue a final report. We will tell you exactly how to get your hands on these, and more, samples.

****** And How Did They Get So...Gorgeous? ******

At the West Virginia conference, growers Matthias and Andrea Reisen presented details of their operation including their solar herb dryer, an important development that makes the herbs "sweat" out their moisture quickly and preserves color and fragrance.

My first experience with commercial-quality herb drying took place in October, thanks to local herbalist Isa Coffey's adoption of the Reisen hoop-house solar dryer model. Isa assisted (invaluably!) with the preparation of a

number of lovely samples from High Falls Gardens, contributed to the MHC array. The results show the superiority of the drying method which, by the way, is entirely off-grid.

**** **Newman to Lead China Herb Tour** ****

Robert Newman, L.Ac., M.S.T.C.M., collector extraordinaire, will lead a herb tour to southwestern China on March 17 to April 2, 2005. He'll show herbs under cultivation and in the wild, visit the famous Tong Ren Tang pharmacy, and much more. A unique opportunity to travel to China with a major plantsman -- and for under \$3,000, airfare from LA included! Limited to 25, so contact Robert ASAP at newmanacupuncture@yahoo.com.

**** **The Next Step: Botanical Studies in A&OM** ****

Having read this far, you might suppose I was having the time of my life drying herbs and watching practitioners' eyes bug out when they saw the samples. No, actually in this remarkable year I discovered something that's *even more fun* – teaching field botany to masters students!

The interest in Botanical Studies in A&OM is a groundswell, brought on partly by increased science hours required in the curriculum but also by cosmic timing. If farmers are to produce our herbs, then we must train a generation of practitioners with the capacity to evaluate the quality of domestically-grown herbs and, in essence, adapt the supreme Asian knowledge of herbal medicine to our circumstances here in North America.

In response to inquiries over the summer, High Falls Gardens ran four different workshops for students and practitioners, testing different formats and working with colleges of A&OM to see what fits students' needs. All were met with considerable, and occasionally wild, enthusiasm.

Botanical Studies is important enough to our future that High Falls Gardens has made the following decisions:

- Next year we will move to full nonprofit status as an educational organization.
- Very soon, we will announce a major appeal to underwrite a national program in Botanical Studies for A&OM. The first step is to solicit three-year pledge commitments from A&OM students and practitioners. (The number of people pledging is more significant than the dollar amount of pledges.)
- The second step will be to secure a three-year, high six-figure grant from a large foundation based on the pledge commitments from the profession. The Student Gardens program will be upgraded. We will develop teaching sites, teachers, curriculum and materials appropriate for the profession of Oriental medicine in the U.S.

**** **HFG Internship Opportunity in 2005** ****

We're moving quickly to ensure that High Falls Gardens is able to meet next year's demands for seed, cultivation knowledge and horticultural expertise. After trying different kinds of apprenticeship arrangements, I've concluded that our mission is best served by training members of the profession of A&OM to do plant work. Students and licensed practitioners may apply.

Four internships will be awarded for 2005. Room and board is provided with a \$300 stipend for travel. The format consists of four weekend workshops as follows (dates to be confirmed). Contact me ASAP if interested.

1. SOWING	Feb. 25-27, 2005	3. CULTIVATION	Aug. 19-21
2. PLANTING	May 20-22	4. HARVEST	Sept. 30 – Oct. 2

Watch for the Botanical Studies appeal letter. This is how we will support our farmers -- by ensuring that Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine takes the high road in 21st century science and remains true to the spirit of the plants. Your contribution will make this mission possible.

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