

The
View
FROM

高溪園
HIGH FALLS GARDENS

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Dear Friends of High Falls Gardens,

This spring, the pull back to Earth is felt in several ways. When the bloom is off the Nasdaq it's time to take a good look around to decide what's really valuable, and the tangibles stand out. Medicinal plants are right at the top of the list, closely followed by air, water, soil and property values.

Here in the Hudson Valley there is widespread outrage over the proposed construction of at least twelve massive industrial projects along the River, including a gigantic coal-burning cement plant that a multinational corporation wants to build only twelve miles away from HFG's Hillview Farm field. Meanwhile, the New York attorney general is suing other states to the west because their coal-burning industries cause acid rain in the Adirondacks!

We of High Falls Gardens are at one with the protesters in Seattle and Washington DC, as well as those farmers in Concord, Massachusetts 225 years ago, fighting for our land and communities. It seems that suddenly the most vexing divisions among people are no longer along racial or geo-political lines, but rather in how we want to order our lives — with Mother Nature, or against Her. Our favorite protest button reads, "Green Plants, Not Cement Plants."

Honeybees Grace the Field Again

Those "Gift From Heaven" bees, the ones who flew in last summer and made their home in an empty super left over from colony number one, did not survive into this spring. Worse, we heard from beekeeper Kirk Webster of Champlain Valley Bees and Queens in Vermont that he was forced to cut everyone's orders because his

winter losses were unexpectedly devastating. "The Apistan-resistant mites finally made it to our valley," he said, referring to the pesticide used by beekeepers as a Varroa mite control. Like so many other pesticides, Apistan was useful for only the short period needed for the quickly-adaptable bugs to develop resistance.

The honeybee situation is so dire, their immune systems so challenged by intrusive management techniques and pervasive toxins in the environment, that beekeepers are searching everywhere for help. The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently approved a mite-control product called Apicure, based on a food-grade formic acid made in Europe. Formic acid is a natural substance that has been used by beekeepers throughout the world in recent years, although previously not approved in the U.S. where it is a by-product of the wood industry and may contain heavy metals.

Most of the beekeepers in the HFG area have suffered winter losses and no local colonies are available for sale. We drove three hours each way to Middlebury for one large colony, as well as two small ones for a neighboring beekeeper. This new colony has a natural queen and her progeny who have over-wintered in Vermont.

Kirk Webster shares an interest in queen breeding with one of his heroes, Brother Adam, who at age 19 took over the apiary at Buckfast Abbey in southern Devon in the early 20th century about the time when tracheal mites wiped out honeybees in England. The gentle monk devoted his
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HFG FIELD DAY

Saturday,
September 16,
11am-5pm.
Call or email for
directions.



The View FROM
HIGH FALLS GARDENS

P.O. Box 125
Philmont, NY 12565 USA

Jean Giblette, *Publisher*

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For further information contact
High Falls Gardens,
P.O. Box 125,
Philmont, NY 12565 USA
phone 518-672-7365
or email hfg@capital.net.

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DEAR FRIENDS

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life to honeybees, traveling all over Europe, North Africa and Asia Minor to seek out native races of bees to cross-breed with his domestic strains and improve their hardiness. Deceased for a few years now, Brother Adam lives on in his books that have captured the imaginations of a subgroup of beekeepers throughout the world.

With his Champlain Valley bees Mr. Webster practices a breeding technique called "isolated open mating," which involves moving selected colonies up into the higher altitudes of the Green Mountains for the summer and thus controlling genetic access. "Beekeeping is about to undergo a total change," he observed. "We have to question everything we do now, rethink all our practices, to come up with a combination of breeding and management that will enable the honeybee to survive."

As if by Providence, the bees' first day in their new home was full of sunshine and the field lush with plenty of rain. The supers were placed on top of a beautiful new "bee bench," a sturdy low table constructed by HFG field manager and main man Christopher Reed. So the bees were zipping around madly, checking out the *Isatis indigotica*, rhubarb species, various peony species and all the wild natives in bloom, as if to say, "Hey, gals, looks like we just moved into the Shanghai Hilton!"

Two Strikes for Wu Visit

Amid clear evidence that the new millennium has not yet arrived, the Newman team struck out for the second year in efforts to sponsor a visit to the United States from Wu Zhongfa, the manager of the largest medicinal herb garden in China, the Guangxi Botanical Garden of Medicinal Plants. The visit has been postponed once more, until the spring of 2001, and an appeal to the State Department through the U.S. Senate is in process.

Readers may recall how the Newman network began working on this visit in January of 1999, only to postpone when Mr. Wu's visa application was rejected by the U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou immediately following the NATO bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.

This year Mr. Wu arrived at the same consulate office early in March, fresh papers in hand, only to be rudely quizzed about his itinerary and then summarily rejected without explanation. Administrators at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, the official sponsor of the visit, had trouble believing that the process was so seriously awry and decided to arm Mr. Wu with extra documents for a repeat attempt. Unfortunately he was rebuffed again and, finally, lost patience. Robert Newman, in China again since early May, was able to phone him and apologize on behalf of the U.S. hosts.

The visa application process is a sacrifice for Mr. Wu, as he has to take three days from work to travel by train the 800 kilometers from Nanning to Guangzhou and spend a lot of money each time. We learned from a friend in the Foreign Service that Guangzhou is one of the worst places in the world to do visa work. The lines are huge, fraud is rampant, the Consulate is understaffed, and the officers tend to have a cynical attitude as they are under great pressure to deal with

Champlain Valley Bees & Queens

is at 802-758-2501.

For more information

on Apicure, call 518-692-9802,

or

Betterbee, Inc. at 518-692-9669.

the demand. Nevertheless, Ugly Americanism has no excuse. We are asking for an official apology.

High Falls Gardens is providing Mr. Wu a consulting fee and enlisting his help with the ongoing translations of cultivation and processing information. The work will go forward, thanks to the Internet, and international relations will survive. Someday we will welcome Mr. Wu to our gardens and the pleasure will be all the sweeter because of the pain.

HFG Joins Sustainability Committee, PCA Medicinal Plant Working Group

Imagine an inter-agency team of federal employees who are each working within their respective departments, as well as cooperatively and with academia and industry, to aid the cause of medicinal plant conservation. For many jaded Americans who have become inured to governmental blundering, this idea may seem either a pipe dream or science fiction. But it's real! Not only are these people aware, sensitive and foresightful, but also they're making progress.

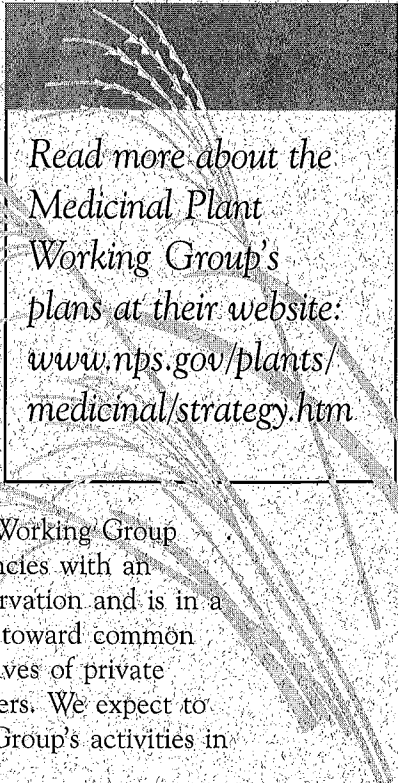
The Medicinal Plant Working Group was formed in June of 1999, within the Plant Conservation Alliance (PCA), a consortium of ten federal agencies and over 145 non-federal groups. Its focus is native medicinal plants, but objectives cover most aspects of preservation of this part of the Earth's inheritance. Biodiversity and habitat conservation, sustainable wildcrafting and cultivation, coordination with the Tribes and other sources of traditional wisdom — this is the Big Tent of medicinal plant conservation.

We met with several members of this group earlier this year in Washington, DC. In mid-February Kathe Koumoutseas of the U.S. Botanic Garden shared brown bag lunches with us at their large greenhouse facility in the southern part of the District, which is not open to the public. Several plants donated by Robert Newman are housed there, pending the reopening this autumn of the Botanic Garden's classical building on the Mall, just south of the Capitol, which has been closed for renovation. Kathe informed us that when they reopen, a whole wing of the building will be devoted to medicinal plants,

including signage explaining the traditional usages. Meanwhile, wonderful medicinal plant specimens from all over the world are waiting in the greenhouse. A quick tour, including a brief stop in the orchid room, was the perfect antidote to February gloom.

On April 13th the dogwoods were in effusive bloom at the National Arboretum, a 444-acre preserve located in the northeastern part of the District. (The Arboretum is managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, while the Botanic Garden is under the Library of Congress.) Jim Adams, curator of the Herb Garden, gave us a thorough tour and pointed out that the Arboretum has been collecting Asian plants since the 1950s. As a result, the Herb Garden boasts several full-grown specimens of important Asian medicinal plants, including an *Eleutherococcus senticosus* (Siberian ginseng) bush at least ten feet tall, a lovely mated pair of *Eucommia ulmoides* (du zhong), a shapely, well-pruned, 25-year-old *Prunus mume* (wu mei) and a mature *Ziziphus jujuba* (da zao). Off in the Asian woodlands section, a whole swath of budding *Bletilla striata* (bai ji) raised their heads, and fluid banks of grassy *Ophiopogon japonicus* (mai men dong) lined the pathways. Clearly, many of our plants are very happy in this famously humid, Zone 8 climate.

Thanks to Mary Maruca of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we also met with Michael Tims, chair of the Working Group's sustainable agriculture committee, Jackie Wootton, President of the Alternative Medicine Foundation in Bethesda, an educational organization (see www.amfoundation.org), and Michael McGuffin, President of the American Herbal Products Association (see www.ahpa.org). As a team, the Working Group represents most of the constituencies with an interest in medicinal plant conservation and is in a position to enhance cooperation toward common goals and to reinforce the initiatives of private groups such as United Plant Savers. We expect to report more about the Working Group's activities in future issues. ☺



Read more about the Medicinal Plant Working Group's plans at their website: www.nps.gov/plants/medicinal/strategy.htm

Sonoma County Herb Association to Establish Distribution Center to Link Growers, Buyers

This Locale Provides a Deluxe Model — Resources Galore!

Peggy Schafer is a herb grower who has begun, in recent years, to experiment with Chinese medicinal plants. She is working with local practitioners of traditional medicine who lend assistance concerning the uses of these botanicals, and is now providing organically grown "starts" (small seedlings) to other growers. She shares the aims of many other plant people throughout the U.S. and Canada who are now trying to assess the potential of the vast treasure-trove of Asian traditional knowledge for the future of their farms and businesses.

Unlike most growers, however, Peggy has one enormous advantage. She lives in Sonoma County, California, a region that is probably the most resource-rich in all of North America for the study of Asian medicinal plants, and perhaps for medicinal plants in general. The area boasts an incredible array of facilities for growers of medicinal plants, enough to make herbalists elsewhere turn an even deeper shade of green.

Medicinal Herb Cultivation: A Knowledge-Based Industry

What — besides proximity to San Francisco, the wineries, and a USDA Zone 9 climate — makes this area so special? (Though some would say that combination alone is pretty close to paradise.) The region's abundance of long-established schools, colleges and botanical gardens comprises the hothouse of creativity in this Silicon Valley of herbalism.

Herbalism is long-established in Sonoma County, where in 1978 Rosemary Gladstar founded the California School of Herbal Studies, located in an 80-acre sanctuary in Emerald Valley near Forestville. This school is the nation's oldest existing center for

training in the Western herbal traditions although, as most of our readers know, until the early 20th century America had many colleges of herbal or Eclectic medicine.

Plans are well underway to integrate the Asian medicinal plants into the area's wealth of resources. Santa Rosa Junior College has a 350-acre farm and is eager to grow medicinal herbs. They boast a state-of-the-art greenhouse, have just put in a 20' x 85' garden of Chinese medicinals, and are working toward field cultivation.

The privately-funded Quarryhill Botanical Garden, located on a 60-acre property in Glen Ellen, has twenty acres of Asian plants that are all wild-sourced and documented. "We cooperate with Kew Gardens in England on an annual seed-collecting expedition," said garden director Bill McNamara. "The primary source areas are western Sichuan, northern Yunnan and south-eastern Tibet, which have a warm temperate climate similar to ours and with some forests still left. Our idea is to recreate a wild Asian mountainside here, as a conservation effort." They are also planning a medicinal plant garden, of approximately three acres, to be available to the trade for identification purposes.

For those who wish to study the Asian medicinal traditions, the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ACTCM) is located in San Francisco, one hour to the south. This school, now one of forty accredited colleges of acupuncture and Oriental medicine in the U.S., was the first in this country to act on the recognition that botanical and horticultural work is integral to the traditions. In 1987 ACTCM invited a professor from the Guangzhou College of TCM, Xu Hong-hua, to the United States. They paid his airfare and rented him a Berkeley apartment for six months so that he could establish a medicinal herb garden at the University of California Botanical Garden.

Elaine Sedlack, thirteen years later still curator of the Chinese Herb Garden at UC Berkeley, would pick up Professor Xu at his apartment and drive him to the garden every day. "It was part of an exchange," she recalled. "Our curator then, Jim Affolter, had traveled to China the previous year to visit hospitals and herb gardens. Professor Xu designed our garden, laid it out in eighteen functional groups corresponding to treatment approaches. For example, one grouping is plants to 'Clear Heat' and so on, plus an anti-cancer section made up of plants from other groups. He brought some plants and seeds with him, and we later acquired others."

Soon after Professor Xu returned to China, a student at ACTCM named Robert Newman was "called" to plant work. In an amazing story familiar to many of our readers, Robert worked with Elaine and other horticulturalists and botanists around the world to collect many hundreds of species of Asian medicinal plants. Since he had no funding whatsoever, regular trips across the Bay were an obstacle and by the early 'nineties his collection, maintained mostly in pots at ACTCM, was by far the largest in North America. He left the College in 1997 after having distributed many plants to eight conservators around the country, including High Falls Gardens. Enough of the plants

remained at ACTCM so that dedicated students, Mary Lynn Morales and others, could carry on Robert's work.

Lixin Huang, current president of ACTCM, notes that a basic botany course is recommended for all their students. "To see the plants instead of only dried products, pills or capsules brings a liveliness to the study of Chinese medicine," she says. "The herbal garden plays a vital role in our students' education, and the whole community feels proud of it."

In Berkeley, Elaine manages the Chinese Herb Garden as well as a 3½-acre Asian Collection, begun in 1932, and a Mediterranean Herb Garden dating to the 1940's. The Chinese Herb Garden has approximately 120 species on display. The Botanical Garden is on a 34-acre site a quarter mile up the canyon behind the University, and with such a variety of climate zones represented, "you can tour the world in one afternoon," as Elaine says. Her garden and the resources in Sonoma are certainly the destination of choice for students of Asian medicinal plants in America.

Premium Prices for Small Quantities

Peggy Schafer reported news that's music to the ears of herbalist-growers and family

farmers all around the country. One of the big problems in herb production has been meeting the minimum requirements of buyers, an obstacle for small-scale growers. This problem seems about to have a solution in her locale.

The four-year-old Sonoma County Herb Association has received a grant from an anonymous private individual for a central distribution warehouse that will connect growers directly to buyers. This warehouse is intended as a distribution point rather than a storage facility, with drying and other processing to be done on-farm.

According to their Spring 2000 newsletter, *Sonoma Sage*, the organization recently assembled a panel of local herbal practitioners and other buyers before an audience of growers. The panel concluded that, while a premium market for small amounts of highest-quality, locally grown products exists, the buyers' primary need is to "consolidate their local purchasing into a single phone call and a single pickup location." Plans include adapting an old building for re-use, but until then they'll use a spare barn on a local organic vegetable farm. They'll start with pickup once every other week, then expand the number of days as the business grows.

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SONOMA COUNTY HERB

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"We hope to have our sales days coincide with the farm's Community Supported Agriculture pickup days so the CSA members can purchase herbs if they want to," said Autumn Summers, SCCHA President. "It certainly is an exciting time for us, as we received our grant only six weeks ago and feel that we can really move ahead now that we have the money to do it."


Peggy explained that, although only about ten percent of the 250-300 members of the Association are growers, it's a dynamic group. Depending on subject matter, meetings attract 20-90 people — a diverse assortment of practicing herbalists, educators and hobbyists from all over northern California. The group deals mostly with Western herbs, and Peggy is the point person for cultivation of the Chinese medicinals.

The SCCHA growers tend to be organic but not certified. The California certifying organizations

standards. This makes the representation of growing practices a key point in sales, thus an important service for the Association and their distribution center to provide. The Association plans to develop a database of products, growing practices, and buyers' needs, and then help to make the connections. Going online and expanding services to the entire region are also contemplated.

The Model for Production Research

The San Francisco/Sonoma County model is instructive for those of us who are pursuing the possibility of domestic production of the Asian medicinal botanicals. Note that the knowledge base is firmly seated in traditional Oriental medicine, in this case ACTCM which got the plant work started with Professor Xu, Elaine Sedlack at the UC Berkeley Botanic Garden, and Robert Newman. Over a decade later, domestic production research depends upon three mutually supportive groups: the colleges of traditional Oriental medicine and the herbalists/practitioners they are training; horticulturalists and other scientists at botanic gardens and universities; and ecologically-conscious farmers and growers like Peggy Schafer. All three of these groups are thriving and cooperative in this Sonoma model.

"This is an exciting time to be a herb grower," affirmed Peggy. "I'm interested in how sustainable, organic and low-input growing methods can help us produce high-quality medicinal herbs. Also, it's important to establish cultivated sources of the traditional medicinals as so many of these plants are becoming rare or endangered in their native habitat. With the growers, the practitioners, the Newman team and other conservators and botanic gardens all working together, we can build on what we already have." 

Web Addresses for San Francisco/Sonoma Organizations

American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine
www.actcm.org

University of California at Berkeley Botanical Garden
www.mjp.berkeley.edu/garden

California School of Herbal Studies
www.cshs.com

Quarryhill Botanical Garden, Glen Ellen, does not have a website but is an affiliate of these two organizations with sites of interest.

Kew Gardens
www.kewgardens.org

Botanic Gardens Conservation International
www.bgci.org.uk

are not particularly friendly to small growers, who can't pay big fees. An affordable designation exists, but has hardly any oversight and is not as highly regarded due to the less stringent

Herbal Product Makers Consider Self-Regulation

Practitioners of traditional Oriental medicine and some of the herbal product vendors who supply them pondered a unique proposal in San Francisco on May 6th. Henry Lee, head of the Chinese Medicine department at Middlesex University in England, addressed two groups assembled for professional meetings — the Herb Committee of the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM) and a group of traditional Oriental medicinal product vendors who were exhibiting at the annual meeting of the National Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine Alliance (NAOMA).

Dr. Lee advised practitioners and vendors that circumstances in Great Britain had prompted him to bring together a group of herbal product manufacturers for purposes of self-regulation. They have organized themselves as the Chinese Medicine Association of Suppliers (CMAS) to standardize quality control procedures among product manufacturers and to adopt a quality seal or “kite mark” for their products. The quality control process would affect both exporters and importers and would cover all aspects of production from soil testing through processing and warehousing. The Association plans to work with other national and international regulatory bodies to assure quality control, authentication, and conformity with CITES (Commission on Trade in Endangered Species, an agency of the United Nations).

Dr. Lee had been invited to the meetings by Elizabeth Call, L.Ac., M.S., a New York practitioner and Dean of Clinical Training at Tri-State College of Acupuncture in Manhattan, who has written and spoken on the use of endangered species in traditional Oriental medicine. She hopes that what CMAS is trying to do with endangered species and quality control can be replicated in the United States. Dr. Lee invited the U.S. herbal product makers to join CMAS. Although some of the vendors are already members of the American Herbal Products Association (AHPA), CMAS intends to address the special problems presented by the

Asian traditions along with their medicinal products.

Challenges to the Health Care System

The invitation to the product vendors comes at a time when the profession of traditional Oriental medicine, as practiced in the West, has become established enough to confront unexamined assumptions underlying conventional medicine and pharmacology. Oriental medicine has attracted enough of a following that practitioners are in demand. Yet some consumers take traditional medicinal products without any kind of supervision, under the mistaken impression that herbs cannot hurt them. At the same time, the out-of-pocket dollars flowing from consumers to practitioners of this complementary medicine have been noticed by people in other health care specialties, some of whom would like to cash in without benefit of adequate training.

The British initiative, CMAS, is in part a response to calls to ban the importation of certain Chinese herbs. There have been cases of renal failure, starting in Belgium and France in 1993-94, involving *Stephania tetrandra* and *Aristolochia heterophylla* used interchangeably as fang ji and also *Magnolia officinalis*, hou po. Although some cases eventually were shown to be abuses, such as people using diet products over a long period of time without any kind of medical supervision, European authorities focused upon these particular herbs without regard to how they were misused.

System failure in all cases, however, has been due primarily to inadequate oversight of patients by people prescribing the herbs, with serious questions as to whether the prescribers had adequate training to diagnose, to select herbs or formulas, to evaluate the sources of the medicinals, and to follow up. In short, it's not the herbs, it's that inadequately trained health care providers in the West, let alone

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HERBAL PRODUCT

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patients, know almost nothing about how to use them.

Institutional support for training and practice of acupuncture and Oriental medicine in Britain is considerably different from that existing in the United States. Though England has many groups that provide training (Dr. Lee's program at Middlesex is the only one at university level), there is no consistency because no accreditation system exists. In contrast, the Americans have a substantial professional infrastructure including national certification and accreditation commissions, professional associations, state-level licensing bodies and, currently, forty accredited colleges.

Yet, as Dr. Lee explained, market demand for complementary medicine is so intense in England that former Chinese restaurant workers are hanging out their shingles near subway stations to practice traditional medicine. The combination of a dearth of institutional support on one hand, and an overwhelming market demand on the other, creates a dangerous climate in which further abuses are likely to occur.

A Temporary Calm in the U.S.

The immediate reaction of the vendors who listened to Dr. Lee's presentation was skepticism regarding self-regulation. They acknowledge a different culture in America, a more libertarian spirit — "let the buyer beware" — that resists statist solutions to problems. Such attitudes were amply demonstrated in 1994 when Congress

blocked the regulators' bid to classify herbs as drugs by passing the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act in response to massive grass-roots protest.

The vendors exhibiting at the NAOMA annual meeting included many of the most responsible product manufacturers, those who know what they're doing, enjoy a well-deserved respect from practitioners, and are devoted to quality. While the majority of the vendors sell only to licensed practitioners, some do sell over the counter which creates a loophole for an abuse to occur. The main responsibility rests on the shoulders of the practitioners to ensure that the products they prescribe have received adequate quality control, from clean growing practices and correct plant identification to effective manufacturing processes and labeling.

Right now, practitioners have the vendors' word and reputation as a way to know the products are good. In a coherent community, the code of honor is adequate and even preferable to the certification of a third party organization. All's well when trained and licensed practitioners of the Asian traditions are talking to each other or their respected vendors, but the system breaks down in the difference between these practitioners and other health care professionals who lack adequate understanding of the traditions. The divide is not between nationalities or hemispheres but rather the philosophies or paradigms that underlie their practice of medicine.

*Like jewels scattered abroad,
the traditions must be handled
with great respect and
awareness if the world's people
are to conserve this treasure.*

How the Asian Traditions Are Exploited

In his description of the British situation, Dr. Lee pointed out that Westerners tend

toward a covert racism, believing that if

someone looks Chinese, he or she must be knowledgeable about traditional Chinese medicine. Although the most cosmopolitan of folks here in the melting pot are less likely to make the same mistake, Americans have our own version of the problem. Too many people in the U.S. mistakenly assume that allopathic physicians know all about herbs or acupuncture, particularly if they have a modicum of training. When such a doctor is Chinese or trained in China, the confusion is compounded. For over fifty years now, Maoism has been the rule in China and spiritual practices of all kinds have suffered persecution. Tibetan physicians are in exile. Depending upon the academic program, medical training in China may be more or less completely Westernized and the graduates may know little about, let alone have respect for, the traditional paradigms. Due to the dominance of Western economic systems, it's as if the traditions of Oriental medicine are surviving in a cultural if not a physical diaspora. Like jewels scattered abroad, the traditions must be handled with great respect and awareness if the world's people are to conserve this treasure.

The dangers of misappropriation lie in wait. As a harbinger of further discomfort for the American practitioners and their product vendors, on May 17th the U.S. media reported that a herbal product based on a traditional Chinese formula is being used to treat prostate cancer. According to the *Wall Street Journal* account, a "Chinese herbal medicine doctor," Allan Xuwui Wang, who claims that his grandfather used this formula while a court physician to the last Chinese emperor in the early 1900s, collaborated with an American chemist, Sophie Chen, who is now on the faculty of New York Medical College in Valhalla, NY, to develop the product. The family of Dr. Chen has founded a company based in California to manufacture this product which is now sold to anyone who wants it, including patients. For the last few years the product has been tested repeatedly, put through clinical trials, and has yielded

impressive results. However, a number of patients are exhibiting side effects similar to those of the conventional hormone treatment. Of course, these people have been taking the product over extended periods of time, even for several years! As a result, some allopathic physicians are pushing to have all traditional herbal products come under FDA scrutiny and control, just like drugs.

So here, apparently, is a case of Westernized Chinese professionals exploiting their own traditions. To belabor the point: no responsible, adequately-trained, traditional practitioner would treat prostate cancer or anything else with a single product over a long period of time. Traditional formulas are designed to be constantly adjusted by the practitioner, mixed and matched according to the patient's immediate signs and symptoms. The medicines are given in decoctions, powders or pills made from dried whole ingredients. That these dried roots, barks, skins and what-nots look primitive to modern eyes belies the sophistication of the theory and long history of empirical practice that stand behind their use. In skilled hands, it's the broad diversity of these substances that enables traditional medicine to be versatile, flexible and specific. Therefore, a responsible modern product manufacturer offers a wide variety of formulas or components that practitioners can combine in different ways.

Challenges to the Pharmaceuticals Industry

The principles involved in the use of traditional medicines present a direct challenge to the modern Western concept of drugs. To a competent traditional practitioner, the idea that one formula is the "cure" for prostate cancer is absurd and can be harmful to the patient. There are literally hundreds of natural substances to prevent or treat prostate cancer or any other kind of imbalance. Each patient and each illness is unique. The genius of the treatment resides within the practitioner.

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patient relationship, to which the practitioner brings his/her understanding of a wealth of ancient knowledge and the patient supplies resolve and persistence.

Just before this issue went to press, on June 8th the *New England Journal of Medicine* published a report that received wide comment under headlines such as "Chinese Herb Suspected in Cancer" (which appeared in *The New York Times*). The piece was a rehash of the flap over Aristolochia (fang ji), abused by improperly supervised patients in Belgium and elsewhere. No such cases have been reported in the United States. The *New England Journal of Medicine* has become notorious in recent years as a defender of the faith, in contrast to its sister *Journal of the American Medical Association* which tends to evaluate studies based on their merits. The report was accompanied by a drum-beating editorial by Dr. David Kessler, former commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, who seems to want nothing more than to repeal the 1994 act of Congress which undercut the FDA's authority in these matters.

Contrast the traditional viewpoint with that of the Western pharmaceuticals industry, which is currently engaged in a frantic search for little silver bullets among the world's supply of medicinal plants. In a process that critics have termed "biopiracy," researchers use traditional knowledge as an effective guide to locating the species that yield the chemicals from which profitable new drugs are developed. As if separating content from context isn't bad enough, the over-harvesting, outright theft, patenting of life forms and genetic engineering of medicinal plants are an ominous threat to the eighty percent of the world's population that still depends on traditional medicine.

To recoup the billions expended in product development the pharmaceuticals must sell snake oil, not medicines. The essence of the marketing pitch has to be, "Come get our elixir! It's a secret recipe, but anyone can use it, and you can take it for the rest of your life (we hope)!" Now bypassing physicians with advertising aimed directly at consumers, the Western system is perilously similar to drug-pushing. In this environment, to produce a traditional herbal formula, market the product like a drug and allow untrained Western physicians to prescribe it like a drug, is a gross perversion that can only result in harm to patients. Such trivialization and exploitation will lead to an eventual loss of credibility for traditional medicine.

Whether or not the responsible product makers will band together in self-defense, the profession of acupuncture and Oriental medicine needs more public education to counteract spurious claims and distance themselves from abuses. Traditional practitioners have already created a system of professional institutions in the U.S. which provides both credibility and some degree of resistance to co-optation by Western medicine and the pharmaceutical interests. Now the public needs to know more about what complementary medicine really means in order to make informed choices. As

Elizabeth Call pointed out, "Traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine can't complement each other unless they're different. Our practitioners must lay claim to the traditions at all levels, from training to practice to production and distribution of the medicinals, so that we can maintain that distinction."

Meanwhile, health care consumers must continue to scrutinize the credentials of practitioners, and to challenge the prevailing assumption that conventional Western medical training, plus maybe a quick course of study, is sufficient to prescribe Asian medicinal herbs. Let the buyer beware! ☹

How To Find A Qualified Practitioner of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine

For a thorough discussion of this topic, see our article in *The View*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Spring/Summer 1998. Contact the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) for the most recent and authoritative information (11 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 300, Alexandria VA 22314, 703-548-9004). See an updated list of websites below.

www.nccaom.org	NCCAOM website, a searchable directory by ZIPcode
www.aaom.org	American Association of Oriental Medicine, search by state
www.naoma.org	National Acupuncture & Oriental Medicine Alliance, link to Health World Online (www.healthy.net)
www.healthy.net	Health World Online
www.healingpeople.com	(Formerly www.acupuncture.com)

Box 125, Philmont, New York 12565 USA

HIGH FALLS GARDENS

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High Falls Gardens (HFG) seeks to advance the practice of traditional Chinese medicine in North America through cultivation and study of the medicinal plants used traditionally in Asia. A garden has been established in Columbia County, in the Hudson Valley region of New York, to propagate plant material received directly from China and to serve as a teaching and research facility. The collection is comprised of hundreds of species, including closely related North American and European medicinal plants.

HFG works with practitioners of Oriental medicine and other herbalists to learn more about the plants and to find ways to develop domestic production of the medicinals, as well as with

agronomists, farmers and other growers who are investigating the potential of these plants as new specialty crops.

HFG is supported by both public and private sources, including membership dues, currently \$15 per year. Members receive a newsletter, *The View From High Falls Gardens*, and advance notice of scheduled events.

High Falls Gardens
Jean Giblette, Director
Box 125
Philmont NY 12565 USA
518-672-7365
hfg@capital.net

