

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, AUTUMN 2012

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

Autumn 2012 closes a chapter for us as we reconstruct our home and garden. Thanks to so many of you who have given us extra support in this year of transition for High Falls Gardens, and for Chris and me personally. We are rebuilding our home (including horticultural infrastructure) after a devastating fire in November 2011. (The freak snowstorm of late October was part of the chain of causality for the fire.) Also at that time, we were in the process of moving plants from the field to the 2.6-acre house site, having been informed well in advance that our landlord planned to subdivide the farm and terminate our lease at the end of 2012. Now as this transformational year ends, the plant move is complete, due mostly to vigorous action on the part of our wonderful friends and interns.

Our losses are minor compared to those of others suffering floods, drought, fire, wind, or worse. People ask me if I lost plants, and the answer is yes. But I take joy from those still with us, especially our seed-bearers and companions since the beginning of HFG nearly twenty years ago. Part of the marvelous beauty of perennial plants is that they can be transplanted. They adapt to a new locations and thrive. They express themselves in new ways, and who can say whether it's better or simply different?

I like the expression "compost happens," and now can assure you that sometimes what feels like a heavy blow leads to renewal along with improvements. What helps to create positive transformation? Community – both local and professional. Enough restraint to avoid blaming anyone for what happened. Good insurance. Thank you all!

****** A New Chapter Begins for HFG ******

We celebrated the rollover of the Mayan calendar a couple months early here at High Falls Gardens. On the weekend of September 29-30 a crew of volunteers moved the most valuable plants from the field to nursery beds at the house site. (See the HFG Facebook page for photos of this and other events.)

Another crew of volunteers made a similar move on May 17, 1997 when we moved 1,000 plants off an organic farm located in the southern part of the County to a newly plowed, leased farm field just outside the Village of Philmont. Fifteen years (16 seasons) in that location, and some of the same plants have moved again.

I finally realized something important in recent years. In August 2010, the interns built a biodynamic compost pile with cow manure, then they stirred and sprinkled the biodynamic preparation BD 500 all over the field. (Again, see the HFG Facebook page for photos.) That next spring, the grass was lusher than I'd ever seen it. Amid all the mowing and weeding, I connected the dots: pasture + cows + manure = more grass. Wouldn't it be easier to do something like this: trees + chickens + leaves = more earthworms and mycorrhizae? So we're becoming forest farmers instead of grass farmers, perhaps more like the Mohicans before us.

Thanks to Peg Schafer and her definitive grower guide (http://www.chinesemedicinalherbfarm.com/book_about.html), the plants have become more accessible to all who care to learn, and more people are beginning to grow them. This

new level of activity means that High Falls Gardens can start to specialize in what we do best, because specimen plants are more available elsewhere. Peonies, lilies, shade plants, shrubs and trees will become our focus.

****** Morris Arboretum Herb Walk: Tree Heaven ******

The collection at the Morris Arboretum in Philadelphia is an excellent example of how Chinese medicinal plants are becoming more visible. On May 20, 2012, the Association for Professional Acupuncture in Pennsylvania and the Won Institute for Graduate Studies co-sponsored an herb walk at the Morris (NCCAOM-



Tatarian aster, source of zī wān, complements the autumn colors at the HFG field.



Glorious green at the Morris Arboretum

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certified for three PDA points). Mover-and-shaker Cara Frank (a model of success in private practice who gives back to the community on a regular basis) led the tour along with me; about 30 plant lovers joined us on this gorgeous spring day.

A great feature of the Morris is their gracious, spacious, herbaceous perennial beds found under the trees and along shaded walkways. The beds are where, especially in spring, you can see all the *Arisaema*, *Asarum*, *Epimedium*, *Panax* and *Polygonatum* – sources of *zhì tiān nán xīng*, *yín yáng huò*, *xì xīn*, *xī yáng shēn*, and *yù zhú*, and others. Because of the Morris's involvement in the North America-China Plant Expedition Consortium (NACPEC), many of these plants are the Chinese species.

**** *A Good Year for Communications* ****

HFG's lack of infrastructure in 2012 did not slow the pace of activity following the publication of Peg's book and the growing interest in domestic cultivation and production of Chinese medicinal herbs. Joe Hollis of Mountain Gardens in North Carolina took a major role in keeping everything going, contributing heavily to the HFG annual Seed List and – new this year – a bare-root program in April. We took orders for plant starts (some 30 species) in April and shipped via USPO priority mail in May. Most of the people participating this year are A&OM practitioners. Joe and I deemed this program successful, so watch for an announcement early next year.

Peg and I were invited to give a joint presentation at the EcoFarm conference, California's biggest organic farming meeting (and one of the largest in the U.S.), in early February. On the way down to Pacific Grove, we stopped at both the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in San Francisco and Five Branches University in Santa Cruz for well-attended events.

An audio of the EcoFarm presentation is available at http://www.eco-farm.org/shop/small_scale_chinese_herb_production/. The download costs \$1.99, but Peg and I were in top form so it's a good one to hear. The room was packed, and the stars in people's eyes as they clutched Peg's book to their breasts told me the Work had gone to a new level.

Peg and I also wrote the cover article, "Medicine in Your Hands: Creating a Future for Our Herbs," in the Spring/Summer 2012 *California Journal of Oriental Medicine*. The California State Oriental Medical Association plans to put its journal archives online for members, but that issue is not up yet.

The newsletter of the Illinois Association of A&OM is fully online, and they published a second article of mine, one that addressed the issue of appropriation of Chinese herbal formulas by the pharmaceutical industry. See page nine at: http://www.ilaom.org/images/IL_Acupuncturist_2012_vol2.pdf. The *Journal of the Register of Chinese Herbal Medicine* in Britain (<http://www.rchm.co.uk/>) will publish my article "Ecological Agriculture and Chinese Herbal Medicine" in their November issue.

Besides adjunct teaching at Eastern School of Acupuncture and Traditional Medicine in Montclair NJ, and for Bastyr University's new Holistic Landscape Design certificate program, I led seed germination workshops at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and also the annual meeting of the North American Tang Shou Tao Association in Loveland, Colorado. (NATSTA is a wonderful martial arts society that emphasizes self care; see the paper: http://www.highfallsgardens.net/newsletters/Toward_a_North_American_Fall_Strike_Medicine.pdf.)

"Asian Medicinal Plant Ecology" was the subject of my workshop hosted by Colorado School of Traditional Chinese Medicine in early August. That and "Family Patterns in Seeds" have been certified for PDA points by NCCAOM and California.

Newer PDA-certified programs include a four-part series at Joe Hollis's Mountain Gardens – that was where the 2012 August intensive took place – and a two-day live presentation, "Partners for Domestic Production," which is Peg's and my version of an intense grower training that focuses on how to select species, set up production operations, and meet financial goals. In other words, the challenging parts. We are seeking co-sponsors for the grower training; stay tuned for future announcements. ☒