

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, AUTUMN '06

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

Mother Nature bestowed extra abundance on HFG this summer. At the Hillview Farm field the *Phellodendron* and *Schisandra* are loaded with their biggest crops of fruit ever. Regular rainfall saves us the work of deploying the irrigation system. Our highly competent team of graduate interns are tough enough to bust sod, withstand bee stings, zip through glitches like dead car batteries, and yet tender enough to appreciate all the garden experience can offer. While the rest of world seems to be tripping over its illusions and falling apart, we take refuge in earth-bound reality.



Schisandra fruit, wǔ wèi zǐ

**** **Benefactor Matches Gifts to Botanical Studies for OM** ****

A generous private benefactor of High Falls Gardens has agreed to match half of all gifts to the Botanical Studies program for the next three years! Yes, your \$100 becomes \$150, your \$1,000 becomes \$1,500 to support universal access to the plants for students and practitioners of Oriental Medicine. As reported early this year, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation granted \$200,000 toward our \$500,000 program which in 2006-2008 will upgrade 15 garden sites around the nation (most at colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine), train teachers and develop study materials and curriculum.

So please help us demonstrate the strength and authority of the profession of Oriental Medicine in determining the future for their medicinal plants. Many of you have already responded affirmatively; we need to broaden this base of support within the profession as much as possible. Write your check payable to the High Falls Gardens Fund, and send to Box 125, Philmont NY 12565. Your gift is fully tax-deductible and will be gratefully acknowledged.

**** **Finally, A Website for HFG** ****

Yes, it's online at www.highfallsgardens.net. The structure has plenty of room for expansion -- more thumbnail photos of plants, progress reports from garden programs, a good selection of links. Let us know what you'd like to see on the site.

**** **Book Party at Hillview Farm Field, September 30th** ****

Imagine an elegant book party in the garden, starring our lovely *Euphorbia pekinensis* Rupr. This plant is one of the species profiled in the new *Mending the Web of Life: Chinese Medicine and Species Conservation* by Elizabeth Call, L.Ac. and others, published by the American Herbal Products Association. (Elizabeth and other authors will be there, too.)

You're invited to attend, rain or shine, at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 30. We'll have a large tent, local gourmet finger-food, sparkling beverages and, in a novel concession to refinement, a portable privy. Come help us celebrate this book, the result of a five-year effort by Elizabeth, Jean, and several others including representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the animal welfare NGOs. Later that day, you may opt to continue sampling the abundant harvest at the Hawthorne Valley Farm Store and/or local restaurants in Philmont and Hudson.

RSVP to Jean and get directions by emailing hfg@capital.net or info@highfallsgardens.net.



**** **Eventful Summer of 2006** ****

The HFG Field Day for the local community on June 18th was a great success, especially considering the 90+ temperatures and oppressive humidity. Fifty people squeezed under the canopy to get out of the sun. This year we featured a talk by Spencertown practitioner Tim Aitken, L.Ac., who with his wife Heidi Harding, L.Ac. moved their Eight Branches Healing Arts from downriver to Columbia County in 2005. Tim presented "The Not-So-Secret Life of Plants," a general approach to understanding the roles plants can play in our health and healing.

The following weekend, the New Mexico Herb Growers Association debuted with a triumphal day-long Herbal Expo held at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque. Jean joined the New Mexican presenters headed by the state's Secretary of Agriculture, Miley Gonzalez, who *left his vacation retreat on a Sunday morning* to give the keynote speech. (Try to picture that happening in any other state.) Dr. Gonzalez asked the approximately 150 attendees, about half herbal practitioners and half growers, to contact their legislators to advocate for the shift of agriculture funding toward specialty crop development. This must happen first at the state level, he said, before federal policy will change.

In several ways New Mexico has become an important center for our work. There is a living memory of the healing plants; Hispanic and Native Americans were dependent on traditional medicine until after World War II. Today a hefty, healthily contentious mix of native healers and plant specialists, naturopaths and, of course, Oriental medicine practitioners enliven the scene. New Mexico encompasses several different ecosystems and climate zones. Although water shortages are serious, the people have reclaimed cooperative ownership of their system of acequias (irrigation canals) in an inspiring example of active democracy. The land grant university and extension service have been quicker than those in other states to understand the potential value of medicinal crops for small farms. The NMSU Sustainable Agriculture Science Center in Alcalde, located between Santa Fe and Taos, is a small but bright jewel of an experiment station, now field testing many of our Asian medicinal plants.

****** Internship Programs Now and Next Year ******

Many thanks are due to our energetic crew of 2006 graduate (L.Ac.) interns: Cris Monteiro, Sally Rappeport, Regina Serkin and Hillary Thing. We still have much to harvest in this abundant year. Some of the harvest will go into the Sample Pack 2006 and more to the Seed Offerings. See the website for more information on internships for next year.

The student internship program is still a work in progress. We have settled on the August break as the main field work opportunity for our over-programmed masters students. High Falls Gardens will provide one setting for these internships in 2007 (please check the website for details) and there may be other locations as well. Stay tuned for developments.

****** In Memory of Alice Lee Chun, M.A., R.N. ******

This spring our beloved HFG Advisory Board member Alice Lee Chun passed on, leaving her husband Jip Chun and children Kevin, Karen and Kendall. My sympathies are with her family and many friends. But I'd like all of you readers who didn't know Alice personally to get an impression of the quality of energy that has guided our mutual enterprise.

In many ways, Alice led the life of the quintessential New Yorker. She was a versatile professional nurse, educator and administrator but with an activist edge, pushing the boundaries. Her work experience included director of nursing in a hospital, certified midwife, home health and public health consulting for the City, licensed nursing instructor. She participated in the famous Nurses' Health Study for over 25 years, and became an administrator with a staff of six of the National Benefit Fund of SEIU 1199. Appointed to several health-related boards and committees in the course of her career, Alice also won honors in both nursing and education. Her papers have gone to the archives at the University of Pennsylvania Center for the Study of Nursing.

I met Alice in 1994 when we were students in Jeffrey C. Yuen's Chinese Herbal Studies program at Swedish Institute. She would usually sit in the back of the class, chuckling over all our attempts to take notes (coping with the well-known drinking-from-a-fire-hydrant effect). She was a natural counselor, and I often hear her voice inside my head: "Now what you should think about is..." Neither she nor Jip could ever merely rest on their many accomplishments. They generously shared their inheritance and achievements with us and many others in the City and state.

Back in 'nineties Alice was officially retired but well into her next career -- acting. Master of New York City's hopes, wishes and dreams, she had the NYU masters degree but also the Screen Actors Guild card, a segment on Law and Order, a guest spot on David Letterman, an award from CineWoman. And in her spare time, she helped High Falls Gardens take shape. Our work is part of Alice's legacy.

Though the price of admission may include hard physical labor, chagrin and humility in the face of nature's astonishing complexity, the ultimate reality of the garden is abundance. However long ago we humans became alienated from this truth, our consciousness can reclaim it. The Web is ours to mend, the Garden ours to regain.