

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, WINTER 2010

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

At long last, we're announcing a new level of development for High Falls Gardens, one that promises to engage more people to further the medicinal plant mission along several different fronts. It's been a long time coming, and now we are poised to become more visible as our green shoots branch out. Why don't you take a minute to go to our revamped website, decide where you fit into this picture, and find out what you can do? We want to hear from you!

**** ***The High Falls Foundation Inc.*** ****

Fifteen years in the making, our new, independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization has been created and dedicated to medicinal plant education, research and conservation. All praise and thanks to the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, which since 2000 has nurtured the High Falls Gardens Fund, the nonprofit aspect of our mission. Lately we've been a cuckoo in their nest, but they kindly supported us to the time when we could unfurl our wings and fly.

Mercy Yule L.Ac., Angela Lee Chen L.Ac. and Jean Giblette are the new Foundation's Secretary, Treasurer and President, respectively. Our long-time, active and extremely helpful Advisory Board stays in place, and we will add new board members as our work continues to develop.



Saturday, April 3rd in Austin, Texas

Academy of Oriental Medicine at Austin

- ☒ 9:30 am Seed Germination Workshop
- ☒ 2:30 pm Asian Medicinal Plant Ecology, Cultivation and Conservation (3 CEUs NCCAOM accredited)

The organizational shift means that High Falls Gardens, the farm, becomes one of several garden sites for study of Asian medicinal plants, and one of a network of farms pioneering domestic production of these botanicals. The HFG Farm continues to cooperate with Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm and others to sell herbs directly to licensed OM practitioners via the website LocalHerbs.org. Growers, please feel free to communicate with us; however, from now on matters concerning production and marketing will be posted at LocalHerbs.org and not HighFallsGardens.net. The HFG website is now dedicated to the Foundation.

**** ***Eco-Ag Advocates in China Learn About Our Work*** ****

Last November, *Chinese Herbal Medicine in the U.S. and Ecological Agriculture* was on the program at a symposium in Changsha, Hunan, sponsored by local, provincial and central Chinese governments and the Institute for Postmodern Development of China (IPDC). Thanks to Dr. Zhihe Wang of the IPDC, who invited me to make this presentation. And more thanks to Dr. Aizhong Li and Jason Wright, Dean at Finger Lakes College of A&OM in Seneca Falls NY, who translated the slide titles into Mandarin – in a last-minute rush! My partner Christopher Hope Reed and I flew from JFK Airport over Hudson Bay and the Arctic to Seoul, then Changsha. There and back again within one week! This amazing experience is documented on the HFG website; see <http://www.highfallsgardens.net/landuse/linked.html>.

**** ***Land-Grant Scientists Seek Funding for Chinese Medicinal Botanicals Research*** ****

For several years I have been privileged to work with people at several of the agricultural universities who are pursuing lines of research related to domestic production and marketing of Chinese herbs. This group has finally coalesced into a strong working team over the past year. We have submitted multi-million dollar proposals to the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, responding to two opportunities thus far. Unlike other scientific research oriented to drug development, our proposals incorporate quality evaluation according to traditional Asian standards, in addition to modern structural analysis. Dr. Craig Hassel and his descriptive sensory analysis work is an essential feature of the proposals. Our team has cleared some tough hurdles in the last few months and is utterly determined to keep trying until we get the funding. Stay tuned!

**** ***Regional Networks Take Shape*** ****

A 32-member Advisory Board has signed on to work with the scientific team. The structure of the Board reflects the supply chain, and a representative of each link in that chain – grower, Extension advisor, Oriental Medicine practitioner, dispensary, distributor, product maker – is on the Board for each of four regions (Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Northeast). One of the original purposes of the land-grant system was to respond to farmers' needs for information and

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research, and this principle of active farmer-citizen involvement is still upheld in the rules for proposal submission. Our proposals are clearly grower-initiated; we can show a broad base of support as well as a pressing need for production research data (which includes economic analyses).

However, the growers also need the active support of the marketplace. The Oriental Medicine profession is learning how the demand side of the market equation informs, leads, and stimulates production, especially in this situation where a large range of products is required to make herbal formulas. Regional groups are active already, and not only in northern New Mexico. To avoid any energy wasted to reinvent the wheel, the regional groups will keep each other informed.

****NMSU Grower Training Goes to Third Session, Continuation Likely****

Specialty crop growers studied Asian medicinal herb production, processing and marketing during intensive training sessions conducted by New Mexico State University, held in early December 2008 in Albuquerque and early April 2009 in Alcalde. Charles A. Martin organized the training program, supported by grants from the Western Center for Risk Management Education, based at Washington State University Extension in Spokane. Peggy Schafer, Jean Giblette, Jackie Greenfield and Loretta Sandoval contributed content and served as instructors along with Charles, for some 55 growers in the first two sessions. Herbs appropriate for Southwest dryland conditions were described. (See the online tutorial available to growers at <http://aces.nmsu.edu/medicinalherbs/>.)



Growers convene at NMSU's Alcalde station, April '09.

Participants begin work on their own marketing plans. In follow-up surveys, growers asked for more assistance in marketing their products, including contact and discussions with Oriental Medicine professionals. To address that need, Charles conducted a third session on October 18, 2009 at NMSU's Sustainable Agriculture Science Center in Alcalde. The third session featured OM professionals Z'ev Rosenberg, Nityamo Lian, Selah Chamberlain and Eric Buckley. New Mexico growers Becky Thorp and Amy Brown were on hand to share the benefits of their experience. A core group of growers and practitioners has followed up to strategize and plan cooperative development of local or regional Chinese medicinal herb production. More training sessions are likely to occur.

Our hope is to replicate this training program in other regions of the U.S., each focusing on the plant species demonstrated to grow well in that region. Organizing efforts are underway; funding is needed.

**** Botanical Studies Milestones ****

Our weeklong intensive August internship for graduate students of Oriental Medicine scored an impressive achievement in 2009. Seven interns harvested a whole mature *Phellodendron chinense* tree and cut the inner bark into Huang Bai strips. It took a long time! The people in China who do this for a living might be entertained (i.e., laugh uproariously) to watch us, but we're learning by doing. See the August 2010 program at: <http://www.highfallsgardens.net/botanicalstudies/internships/index.html>.

**** Honeybee Update ****

Bees are in the news these days, a cause for alarm. This newsletter, on the other hand, has neglected the subject for over two years. That's because the HFG colonies are surviving! We don't take their honey, just leave it for their winter stores, and value them highly for their pollination services. Our two colonies from Russian queens throw off a swarm every year (we haven't managed to catch one yet), work as hard as ever, and get cranky sometimes – probably a sign they want more comfortable apartments. Innovative beekeepers are pushing the envelope in this regard. Top-bar frames that allow the bees to make their own honeycomb demonstrate that bees tend to build a smaller hexagonal cell than the wax or plastic foundations allow. Artificial foundations could be yet another stress factor in conventional beekeeping that weakens their resistance to disease. ☒



Dana Carruth admires *Phellodendron* logs with the outer bark removed, while Heather Bakner takes a photo.