

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, WINTER '03

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

Yes, HFG is still alive, and so are the honeybees! (Although the Hillview Farm field is resting under two feet of snow right now and the bees are balled up tight around their queen....)

After receiving last winter's appeal, many of you may have wondered whether we survived and, if so, what's happened. Here's the bad news in brief: the 2002 agricultural season was our toughest ever -- a heat wave in April followed by hard frosts in late May, then drought -- and we had to close the Field to visitors. Charitable foundations and donors were also hit by a form of drought in 2002, and HFG received only part of the funding we needed. As a result, certain projects are moving forward while others have to wait. Meanwhile, we're squeezing those nickels and contacting you by e-mail to save printing costs.

Along with our plants, friends like you are the true wealth of HFG. You have given us invaluable support. You'd be surprised how much those \$15 checks brighten my day, because I know it means you believe in HFG's mission.

Now for the good news -- and there's plenty of it!

****** Student Gardens: Web Resource Nears Completion; Seeds Available ******

Thanks to Bill Egloff of Crane Herbs, the website for Student Gardens is being set up as an educational forum at <http://www.craneherb.com>. The exact link will be announced as soon as it's available. Our aim is to begin with a few pages of basic descriptive information about the plants, including some photos, and provide a medium for participants to exchange observations and post comments and questions.

Considering the severe weather this past year, we're especially grateful to have several species of seeds to share with Student Gardens program participants. This second annual seed distribution underscores High Falls Gardens' commitment to the development of gardens at colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine throughout North America. We continue to seek program funding for Student Gardens.

****** New York Plant Trials Program Gets Go-Ahead ******

Five certified organic farmers in New York will establish trial plots for four different Chinese medicinal plants this year, under a High Falls Gardens program funded by the NY Department of Agriculture and Markets. The purpose is to generate production data, to move closer to a locally grown source of herbs.

The farmers -- all together a powerhouse of fruit, vegetable and medicinal herb cropping expertise -- include the Fleig family (James, Patricia, and very capable children) in Middlesex, Linda and Michael Hoffman in Middleburgh, Cathy Popp-McKenna, who farms with husband Dennis McKenna in Stamford, Andrea and Matthias Reisen in Avoca, and Scott Chaskey in Amagansett. We'll be backed up by HFG Advisor Dr. Helene Dillard and her lab at the Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva.

Three valuable perennial species were chosen for study: *Lycium chinense* (gou qi zi, di gu pi), *Schisandra chinensis* (wu wei zi), and *Trichosanthes kirilowii* (gua lou ren, tian hua fen, etc.). These trial plants won't bear fruit for two or three more years. However, the fourth species, *Momordica charantia* -- bitter melon, a vegetable grown as an annual, with interesting medicinal properties -- was included to provide the farmers group an opportunity in 2003 to explore processing, distribution and test-marketing of a product.

Also part of the program, a substantial marketing study will be carried out this winter by our market research subcontractor, Wayne Mellor, M.B.A. Next August, the farmers group will meet at Anna Dawson's commercial kitchen in Kinderhook, NY to stir-fry, freeze, steam, bake, grind and otherwise explore the delivery potential of New York grown certified organic bitter melon.

This program has been designated an official project of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York. An update on the project will be presented at the NOFA-NY's winter conference in Albany, January 25-26. See the conference agenda at their website, <http://www.nofany.org>. (Full link: <http://nofany.org/conference2003/conf%202003%20brochure.pdf>)

****** Herbal Medicine Program at Temple of Jade Purity ******

A long-time dream was realized this past August, when our favorite priest and teacher Jeffrey C. Yuen opened the Temple of Jade Purity in New York's Chinatown. Named for his Daoist order, the facility is located at 60 St. James Place, within walking distance from City Hall/Brooklyn Bridge subway station.

A large, airy, ground floor room with devotional candles and icons arrayed along one wall and a bookcase along another, the Temple facilities accommodate Jeffrey's popular talks on Daoism, meditation, qi gong, and other devotional activities. At the focal point, in the place of an altar in a Christian church, stands a cooking island. This is handy for whipping up a batch of herbs -- or for Danny Yuen to give his demonstration classes in Chinese cuisine -- in any case, a welcome indication of wholesome priorities. The main room connects to the adjoining Ambrosia Foundation space, where Jeffrey and his many capable friends and associates practice their healing arts, including a herb dispensary.

While continuing as Dean for Academic Affairs at the Swedish Institute (and on the HFG Board of Advisors as well as many other involvements), Jeffrey in January 2003 is launching a two-year certificate program in Chinese Herbal Medicine for Acupuncturists, to be conducted at the Temple/Ambrosia Foundation. Ten full weekends per year will find your faithful gardener/reporter in attendance, along with forty or so practitioners, grateful for the opportunity to study the herbs in such a congenial setting.

****** Minnesota Network Publishes Seminal Article ******

Our colleagues in the Medicinal Herb Network of Minnesota recently pulled off a big win for science in the new paradigm. Their journal article -- "Using Chinese Medicine to Understand Medicinal Herb Quality: An Alternative to Biomedical Approaches?" -- has been published in the Winter 2003 issue of the journal *Agriculture and Human Values* (<http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/rhaynes/afhvs/SocietyJournal.htm>). The authors -- Craig Hassel, Chris Hafner, Renne Soberg, Jeff Adelman, and Rose Haywood -- fit our vision of the 21st century dream team, combining the talents of two Oriental medicine professionals, two herb farmers and one university professor of nutrition.

Publication of this scholarly article is an important development for both herbal practitioners and medicinal plant growers because it challenges the unfounded Western assumption that the plant's genetic or biochemical structure determines its medicinal efficacy. Certainly from a classical or traditional medicine point of view (as distinct from the westernized TCM), the discussion of quality or qualities must take place on another level. We need a common descriptive language and evaluation tools that take a whole-system framework into account, including the synergistic and energetic aspects of nutritional quality that are now so dimly imagined.

Native Americans understood that the whole environment formed the medicinal properties of plants -- including the companion plants, trees, animals and soil organisms, air, water and sunshine, moon and stars. The same worldview underlies both traditional medicine AND ecological agriculture. If we take the approach outlined in the article by our esteemed colleagues, we can learn where and how the plants will express their healing qualities.

The article has just been published and is not yet posted at the Journal's website. An electronic or hard copy of the article is available from High Falls Gardens, upon request.

REMINDER: Donations of any amount are always welcome. Large contributions should be made payable to "High Falls Gardens Fund" for tax purposes.

Happy New Year of the Sheep (or Ram, depending on how you want to spin it)!

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