

HIGH FALLS GARDENS E-LETTER, SPRING '08

Dear Friend of High Falls Gardens,

Piles of snow still dot the landscape and overnight temps dip down, but inside greenhouses the plant shoots are strong. We're feeding extra honey to the bees as we all wait for warmer weather. While Wall Street's abstract evaluations evaporate into thin air, here on the ground we find the source of real wealth. Organic and biodynamic farmers are working hard, pressed to keep up with demand as more people connect their own health to the health of the whole. Change is in the wind.

**** April 15th for Seed Orders ****

An early but firm deadline for seed orders has been set, due to this spring's packed schedule. Students of Oriental Medicine and cooperating growers are eligible to order seeds from High Falls Gardens free of charge. Check the HFG seed list at <http://www.highfallsgardens.net/botanicalstudies/SeedList.pdf>. Email your list of selections to hfg@capital.net, and don't forget to specify both name and number.

Also, see the Horizon Herbs catalogue and/or website for several items we do not have. Richo Cech visited China recently and as a result is offering several new species, in addition to their already extensive listings, including *bái biǎn dòu* and *Asparagus cochinchinensis* (the source of *tiān mén dōng*). Richo says the *Asparagus* germinates within 30 days when the seed is fresh. We've been accustomed to waiting 15 months for these fantastic little monocots – the round black seeds are encased in moist, translucent sacs that look like fish eyeballs -- so we hope to confirm that observation soon.

**** Local Herbs in the News ****

By now, many of you have seen the March issue of *Acupuncture Today* with two stories related to Local Herbs. (Local Herbs.org is the new website of the Medicinal Herb Consortium, the national network of farmers who grow Chinese medicinal herbs in the U.S.) One of the AT reports describes the full context of the new website, which functions as a portal for OM practitioners to place orders for ecologically, domestically grown herbs. The MHC is documenting support from the profession of Oriental Medicine in order to capitalize their national effort to recruit, train and guarantee prices for the farmers. See: <http://www.acupuncturetoday.com/mpacms/at/article.php?id=31676>.



The triumph of minimalism: At Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, Chicago campus, the student work crew shows off their "garden" planted on March 9th.

**** Spring Garden Events ****

Even with exams imminent, a Sunday full of workshops on March 9 culminated in the planting of 30 species of Chinese medicinal herbs in flats at Pacific College of Oriental Medicine (PCOM), Chicago campus. The flats were tucked away in a special grow-light cabinet beautifully constructed by student Julia Jones and her partner Kate Rickenbacker. The prototype of this seed germination workshop, in which plant family characteristics are described and observed in the seeds,



Just around the corner: blossoms of *Prunus davidiana*, alternate source of *táo rén*.

The second AT story is about the New York Legislative Initiative, a united effort to expand the scope of New York State practice legislation specifically to cover herbal formulations. The wording of the bill does not affect any other type of herbal practice, only that of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine. As New York is home to the largest group of Oriental Medicine practitioners in the U.S. outside of California, the entire profession is watching this initiative closely.

With added security for herbal practice, together with the production capacity of this great agricultural state (yes – New York! – climatically and biologically diverse, relatively unspoiled and a permaculturist's dream), the future for truly local herbs is bright. HFG enthusiastically supports NYS Bill Number A10143. Read more at <http://nysacupuncture.org/>.

To receive the High Falls Gardens newsletter, please send us an email at hfg@capital.net! It's only twice per year, and we never sell or rent our list.

was conducted back in the winter of 2005, upon the initiative of Dara Barr and the Student Council at PCOM NY. In the earlier event, one set of grow lights was suspended off a coat-rack over a table in one of the lecture rooms. After thrilling the students, who loved seeing those little green shoots pushing up through the potting medium, the seedlings met an uncertain fate within the stony corridors of Manhattan. (Let's hope they enriched a compost pile somewhere.) The Chicago group is determined to bring those babies to maturity by replacing all the houseplants in their building with Chinese medicinal herbs.

The Academy of Oriental Medicine at Austin plans to dedicate their garden on Friday, April 4th, at noon. Housed at the American Botanical Council's Case Mill Homestead in east Austin and planted last year, this garden features raised beds in a Ba-Gua shape arranged by treatment function. After barely one year's experience, we're getting a reading on which plants do well in Texas. The ABC site features several other medicinal plant gardens and promises to be an attractive destination spot on the national herb scene.

In northern California mid-May, the Local Herbs show (featuring Jean and Peggy) will hit the road, traveling the north coast with non-stop Chinese medicinal herb talk, plants, seeds and photos. See us at Five Branches in Santa Cruz on May 10, American College of TCM in San Francisco on May 15, and in Mendocino County for a growers' workshop on May 17-18 [TBD]. In good advance publicity, Mendocino public radio station KZYX host Debra Scott interviewed Jean on February 18, and may feature Peggy soon before the event .

****** Internships and Field Days ******

As spring begins, the seasonal pace picks up. Growers' downtime is over and summer will be here too soon. Intern programs have already begun at Peggy Schafer's Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm in Sonoma County and Joe Hollis's Mountain Gardens in western North Carolina. Both these programs (Joe's is residential, Peggy's is not) extend over most of the calendar year.

At High Falls Gardens, once again we will NOT be offering the Graduate Internship due to schedule demands. However, we will offer the student intensive internship again this year, from August 20 through 27. The Hawthorne Valley Farm and the Healing Plant garden in Copake will cooperate with HFG to offer students a full immersion in medicinal plant cultivation, agriculture, biodynamics, conservation and ecology.

Currently enrolled students of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine plus recent graduates since 2007 are eligible. Applications are simplified this year. Send me an email expressing interest in the student internship, and you will receive application instructions by June 1st. No deposit is required, but payment in full is due by August 1st.

Three dates have been set aside for HFG field days this year: June 15, July 26-27, and August 2-3. Advance reservations are required. In addition, we will create a special field day for any group of six or more. Please arrange these well in advance by emailing Jean at hfg@capital.net.

****** Grower Training ******

Please bear with us as we raise funds to support grower training. Many inquiries come in from people interested in growing Chinese medicinal herbs. Established, professional growers with diversified operations may be the most likely to take on this herbal frontier. These days, however, agriculture recognizes a number of creative folks who started as amateurs with a small garden -- one that "got out of control," to quote Willie Denner whose Little Seed Farm supplies the hoop-house spinach I ate for breakfast this morning. Farmers and gardeners are born, not made, and there are many roads to destiny.

While admiring the entrepreneurial spirit, we know from experience that cooperation is utterly necessary in this case. To provide more assistance to more people, grower training programs are needed. Meanwhile, we suggest you follow a three-step process: (1) Grow out a selection of 8-12 species in small quantities -- kitchen garden scale. (2) Based on those results, select one, two or three to concentrate on. We can give you emailed feedback at this stage. (3) You will need to work out most of the horticultural and processing (drying) procedures, adapted to your own operation. A sample of a finished, dried product must be submitted and approved before a production contract is given. ☒