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March/April 1999

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# the HERB GROWER

Published bi-monthly by THE ORGANIC HERB GROWERS OF AUSTRALIA INC.



All over Australia the echinacea harvest is now in full swing ...

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and lots of other interesting news  
and stories .....



# — SPIRAL FOODS —

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Hello everyone. I hope you had a good summer holiday. Howard and I certainly did. We had a great four weeks in India, too short after two years of solid work without a break, but way better than nothing. It was a different trip from our previous ones. We spent our time in three cities, Varanasi, Lucknow and Calcutta, while usually we tour around and see the countryside. But because of bad roads and bandits we couldn't find anyone to drive us from Varanasi to Calcutta, which had been our original plan, so we ended up flying from one to the other, and spending more time in these cities, which allowed us to wander around backstreets and markets for days and really get a feel for them. The picture that ultimately stays in our minds the most are the ghats on the shores of the Ganges. Although Varanasi is so crowded and filthy that, after ten days, we were happy to get to the relative cleanliness and quiet of Lucknow, the pilgrim city will always remain one of our favourite ones. Varanasi (or Benares as the English called it) is the best place to die and be cremated for Hindus, as the soul is then released from the cycle of rebirth. The ashes after burning are thrown into the river. All day and night there are groups of people going through the streets carrying corpses to the burning ghats. These bodies are flown in from all over India. Even Hindus who had migrated to other countries are taken back to be reunited with Mother Ganga in death, and so be liberated forever. You can perhaps imagine that the place almost has a festive air about it. The natives are very conscious of the privilege of living in India's holiest city, even if they're living on the streets and are begging for their food. Calcutta was unforgettable too. Yes, there is a large gap between have's and have not's. Yes, there are lots of people living, and dying, on the streets. And I've seen quite a few unsettling scenes which will forever stay in my mind. This city was once the jewel in Britain's crown, and it's still a wonderful place and we've met some lovely people there. We've been back for a couple of weeks now, just enough time to finish this issue of the mag, but not enough to really get into the swing of things again. I promise that there'll be more practical stuff in the next issue.

You'll find a letter from the Minister of Agriculture re OPAC, AQIS and the OFA in the mag. The OFA held another workshop to which we didn't go, but we were told about 60 people attended, half of whom were government people and that the majority of the other thirty were shop keepers. Maybe you could let us know your opinion on the OFA. Do you think we should spend your money on membership of this organisation, and on partaking in these workshops and other meetings they continually urge us to attend, at our own and OHGA's expense? Howard's article, following the minister's letter, will refresh your memory as to how this body came into existence and what we think of it. We wouldn't stop anyone wanting to become a member of it though, so if you want info on who to contact, let us know.

In This and That you'll find an item on bio-piracy in Sri Lanka, in which an example is given of a natural cure for diabetes. I have first hand experience that these wooden cups really work. On our first trip to India, some seven years ago, I bought a cup in New Delhi. It was advertised as a miracle cure for diabetes. As I'm always curious to see for myself, I bought one of them and sort of stuck it away amongst my other trophies, not having anyone to test it out on. When my parents visited here last year, I suddenly remembered it and decided to try it out on my dad, who always has a high blood sugar level and therefore is on a no sugar diet. I followed the instructions of filling the cup with water in the evening and giving it to him to drink first thing in the morning, and he, as a willing participant in the experiment, gave up his diet and ate cookies and sweets with us. After returning home to Amsterdam, he went to his doctor for a check up. The medic was amazed to discover that his blood sugar was normal! It had really worked! The manufacturer's address is M.M. Industries, 201 Pal Mohan Apartments, 5, North West Avenue, New Delhi - 110026, India, if you're interested.

A bit of bad news regarding Subiaco, the ambitious herb enterprise in NSW, which has gone belly up. A number of years ago, the couple who set it up raised a few million dollars for a large processing plant and herb nursery and farm, and also contracted other farmers to grow herbs for them, primarily echinacea. Several of those farms and Subiaco themselves are OHGA certified. As we all know, I'm sure, echinacea is now grossly over produced, and the price has fallen dramatically. This, however, is not seen as the reason for the failure. The auditor's report blamed it, amongst other things, on being under capitalised (at 2.5 million!) and on trying to grow the herbs organically. We had expected that with that kind of investment the business was bound to be a success. So did the farmers who're now sitting with their crops. What a disappointment.

Still, as I read in an Indian paper, we Aussies don't give up easily. On Jan. 2 the paper said that the world is increasingly falling into the grip of gloom with the number of people hopeful of a better year ahead declining in more than half the countries covered in the Gallup International annual survey on Hope and Despair. It says that the number of hopefuls at the beginning of 1999 were one quarter less than last year. Hope has declined in India, Pakistan, Western and Eastern Europe, particularly Russia and Britain. The article ends to say that notable exceptions to the general trend towards pessimism are Australia and New Zealand. Hopefuls make up 55% and 62% of our populations respectively! Hey, come on, we can't let the Kiwi's beat us in the hope scores! We've got to do better next year!!

*9000*



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## CERTIFICATION MATTERS

The OHGA Standards book has been  
upgraded. If you want a copy, please phone  
the office. It costs \$10.

The main changes, to be in line with the  
National Standard for Organic and Bio-  
Dynamic Produce, are: the In Conversion  
period of three years, of which the first one is  
'Under Supervision'. During the year after the  
first inspection the grower is not allowed to  
sell produce as 'In Conversion' and will not  
receive a certification number. After the  
second inspection, when everything is found  
to be in order, the grower will receive the  
certification number and can start selling with  
an 'In Conversion' label. This rule was  
decided on last year at an OPAC meeting in  
Canberra.

As our inspectors still find people mulching  
their soil with carpet, this has now also been  
mentioned in the standards.

**Carpet and underfelt is heavily impregnated  
with all sorts of insecticides, including  
dieldrin and must be avoided at all costs.**

Changes are also made to the chapter on  
sanctions. If untoward practices are  
uncovered, like hidden chemicals or severe  
neglect of the growing areas, you can lose  
your Grade A status and be forced back into In  
Conversion.

And lastly, there are now standards for organic  
egg production.

### Application fee goes up

The application fee for certification has been  
raised from \$10 to \$50. Yes, we realise that's a  
very steep hike, but we've been ridiculously  
cheap all these years and have found that lots  
of people get all the info, incl. the standards,  
and then never follow up. For \$50 we send  
out the new revised OHGA Standards, which  
are now printed instead of photocopied, much  
to Doug's delight, a copy of The National  
Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic  
Produce and the farm questionnaire and  
application form.

### Certification fee to go up in the near future

Unfortunately we have been told by AQIS that  
they will be substantially raising their audit  
fees. They have not told us yet by how much,  
and you can be assured that Howard, as  
usual, will try his hardest to argue on behalf of  
all of us. After all, we are no rich and fat  
commercial certification organisation, making  
overseas trips on the levies our growers are  
forced to pay us. At the moment we have  
around 350 growers and producers in our  
certification system, and we'll all have to chip  
in when the time comes. Sorry guys!







## The Hon Mark Vaile MP

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Mr Howard Rubin  
Chairman  
Organic Herb Growers of Australia  
PO Box 6171  
SOUTH LISMORE NSW 2480

Dear Mr Rubin

I am writing to you regarding the restructure of the Organic Produce Advisory Committee (OPAC).

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Organic Herb Growers of Australia for their contribution to the establishment of a credible export organic produce industry in Australia. Furthermore, I would like to thank you for the assistance you have given to the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) in developing and maintaining the export accreditation program for organic produce. I have written to the other members of OPAC in similar terms and recognise the personal contribution made by individuals of the Committee to this work.

As you are aware my Department (Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry-Australia) has recently undergone a major restructure coinciding with the new Ministerial arrangements following the election. As a result of this restructure, there have been changes in the areas within the Department responsible for organic produce. The Department's Food and Agribusiness Industries Division has assumed the responsibility for policy management of the organic industry. Additionally, the Quarantine and Export Operations Division of AQIS now has responsibility for the export organic accreditation program. Responsibility for market access negotiations and maintenance remains with the Policy and International Division of AQIS. Previously, the Policy and International Division of AQIS had been responsible for all of these issues. I believe that this restructure, which gives prominence to the needs of all industry sectors across agriculture, forestry and fisheries will lead to better performance of the portfolio. In so far as the organic industry is concerned, I expect that the new arrangements will enable greater attention to be given to your industry.

I note with interest that the establishment of the Organic Federation of Australia (OFA) has also provided this industry with its own peak industry body through which it can promote the growth of Australia's organic produce. It is my desire that the OFA enjoy increasing support from the various segments of the organic produce industry in Australia and provide an effective voice for the industry on key policy issues.





## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

From the minister's letter, you will see the support that the OFA has from our government. We must really begin to ask ourselves why? Why should the government want to support a group that does not have the support of three of the industry's largest certification bodies, which represent over 2/3's of the growers, and which has no real understanding of the complex issues facing growers, certification, and standards. The government say that they want only to speak with one person irregardless whether that person is representative of our industry or not? What is the real hidden agenda here??

The OFA grew out of a conference called for and paid for by the government. Two university lecturers convinced a RIRDC employee that the organic industry was fragmented and in total disarray. They said that millions of dollars of export orders were being lost because there was no peak body to co-ordinate the industry. While the reality is that there is not enough certified produce to supply the domestic requirements let alone fill the export potential. The certification bodies at first were not even invited to participate, but after a coordinated approach from all the certifiers we managed to be included in this conference. Quite ironically, the conference turned out to be a farce with a pre-determined outcome of appointing a steering committee. Although their task was to consult with industry, we got only one phone call in a year, which was simply to inform us of their decision to hire a consultant. Not to discuss but to inform.

This consultant put together a standard document, called a industry plan and got a handful of taxpayers money for it. Then a curious thing happened. The consultant got the cushy job which was vacated by the then RIRDC manager, while this same manager then moved into the job that was vacated by the chairperson, who himself got a promotion. A bit of musical chairs for the boys.

At this time, we thought that perhaps it would be better to be part of the group and our editor Elle was elected to their first real committee. However, at the very first committee meeting (teleconference hookup) she was told along with the other members just what she was expected to do by the newly appointed manager (who was the consultant that wrote the report). The committee was to ratify his report post haste, so that the funds for it could be released. Elle told them all to where to go and resigned. There was just no democracy at work. After several more meetings, financed at great expense with taxpayers money from the RIRDC budget, this group finally became the OFA.

The original chairperson had quickly realised his difficult role after his initial excitement, and had

resigned, so they then promoted one of their own to the job of chairperson, who's now in control of the office and secretariat. He's a shopkeeper. Not a grower. And the majority of members of the OFA? Shopkeepers, importers, wholesalers. They in fact should form their own association and stop all this pretence of a Federation representing the whole of Australian organics

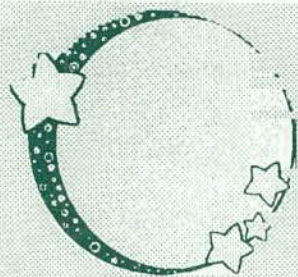
Attempts were made to explain to these people our idea of an umbrella organisation: the coming together of all groups, whereby each group appoints a delegate to represent the interest of that group, to work for a common goal and to work together. But this was not to be. Their intention is this peak body, an organisation that any one can join as a member so long as they pay their fees and have a genuine interest in organics. That's why they have mostly shopkeepers for members. Their businesses will pay for the fees, and hey, of course they have a genuine interest in organics. How ridiculous. And yet they are supported by this government, which has absolutely no interest in the real organic person: the grower! AQIS has told us they will be raising their fees. Who will be paying? You guessed it, the growers! While these OFA people are the ones with the hands out for grants, and getting them too!

What have been their accomplishments in the past two years? Not very much. Well, to be honest, they've done a bit: **1.** they have managed to divide the industry. **2.** they have held meeting after meeting; **3.** sent their own delegates round the world, pretending to be representing the Australian Organic Industry, and **4.** dished out money to their own in the guise of research grants. **5.** They've interfered in the most important topic of domestic legislation to the point where it is now dead in the water. They have done nothing in the way of promotion, which originally was their single task. But yet the government, for its own self interests, encourages this, Why? Because the OFA are pawns in the hands of these bureaucrats. The government can now say that they have held discussions with the organic industry and they have decided after consultations to..... They are determined to manipulate the organic industry to serve their own interests and the interests of their multinational colleagues. Their "clean green" agriculture program has been a dismal failure. And now they want to muscle in on the only word which still has some credibility in the world....organic. I say to government, leave our industry alone. It's hard enough being an organic farmer without your fees and rules and regulations and interferences. We need more farmers committed to organic farming, not more peak bodies costing us more fees for doing nothing. More produce, not more bullshit.

**Howard Rubin**







# GARDENING BY THE MOON

with  
Elle Fikke-Rubin



## MARCH

### 18 New Moon.

19-23 Days to plant or sow leafy annuals like spinach, endive, lettuce, silver beet, cresses, cabbage, parsley, chervil and japanese and chinese greens like bok choy and mizuna.

I read in an article a while ago that lettuce and corn salad are good for our love life.

It said that the thickened milky sap of the lettuce was revered in old times as semen of the gods and, smoked in a pipe, its morphine-like alkaloids produced an aphrodisiac effect. About celery it said that it's had a reputation for centuries for doing wonders on a man by stimulating the glands and metabolism because it contains essential oils and insulin-like substances.

Eating members of the large nightshade family like tomatoes, potatoes, aubergines, green pepper and chili is also said to have a positive effect on one's love life, due to chemical substances like alkaloids which have stimulating effects.

Of course, as organic growers, we grow and eat lots of these vegies anyway, so to us it's really nothing new.

### 24 First Quarter.

25-31 Time for seedbearing and flowering annuals to go in: beetroot, beans and peas, broccoli, cauliflowers, dill and coriander, and where possible cucumbers, tomatoes and capsicums. Calendulas, pansies, poppies and other annual flowers can also be planted out or sown.

## APRIL

### 1 Full Moon.

2-8 Days to work with perennials like spring flowering bulbs and other perennial flowers, fruit trees, shrubs and most herbs. Potatoes, onions, beetroot, parsnip and turnip can also be planted and plants like comfrey, valerian

and burdock can be split up by cutting up the roots and crowns. These days there's quite rightly a lot of emphasis on liver cleansing. One way to look after your liver is to eat those burdock roots. Burdock is real easy to grow, especially in the winter, and the roots are just delicious steamed or added to soup.

Artichokes are also liver cleansers and while you're waiting for the fruit, you can make a healthy (but quite bitter) tea with the leaves.

To keep my liver in good working order I take a home made tincture of celandine on and off. Another easy to grow herb, celandine needs a shady spot with reasonably good moist soil. When it forms its little yellow flowers in late spring, I cut the herb and cover it with vodka for three weeks.

Most herbs can be tincturised this way.

### 9 Last Quarter.

10-15 If you haven't done it yet, this is a good time to harvest your excess herbs. They can be dried in an oven, with door ajar, on a very low setting. Or you can spread them out on newspaper in an airy room, hang them in bunches in a warm place out of the sun, or use a home-size dehydrator.

You will use the herbs through the winter, in the kitchen or in teas, make flavoured honey or vinegars, wrap some lavender flowers, cotton lavender, mugwort or southernwood in a bit of muslin to keep moths away, and add rosemary, thyme or lavender to your bath.

### 16 New Moon.

17-22 Time to plant or sow leafy annuals: parsley, endive, oriental greens, spinach, cabbages, mustard greens, chervil, dill, lettuces and silverbeet.

### 23 First Quarter.

24-30 Days to plant or sow annual flowers and annuals grown for their seed: beans, peas, broccoli, tomatoes etc. Time is fast running out to plant seedlings of spring flowers like





violas and pansies, daisies and poppies and cinerarias, to name but a few.

## **MAY**

### **1 Full Moon.**

**2-8** Days to work with perennials and rootcrops. This is probably the best time of the year to move trees and shrubs or to plant new ones. You should also be busy planting perennial flowers like dahlias, begonias, balsams and salvias, and bulbs like lilies. Beetroot, carrots, kohlrabi, parsnips, turnips, potatoes and most perennial herbs can be planted or sown, if you're in the right district climate-wise.

### **9 Last Quarter.**

**10-14** Time to build up that compost heap. See if you can get some stable manure, sawdust, nutshells, straw or hay; then add comfrey leaves, and material rich in nitrogen like pea/bean/alfalfa/wattle clippings. Insert some yarrow, chamomile, nettle, dandelion and thistle in separate holes in your heap to speed up the composting process. Don't forget to add a sprinkling of lime about every 20 cm. With your comfrey and nettles you can of course also make a wonderful liquid manure. Stick the leaves in a porous bag and hang in a bucket of water for two weeks. Smelly but wonderful for your plants and soil.

### **15 New Moon.**

## **HAVE FUN!**

### **RESEARCH GRANT POSITION FILLED**

You may remember that OHGA advertised in the last issue for a researcher, who would compile a herbal database of an initial 30 herb varieties, consisting of detailed agronomic and horticultural information. We received two applications of which one was accepted at the last OHGA committee meeting.

Our data-compiler's name is Lydia Tumbilis of Minyon Herbs, Rosebank. Lydia has been involved in horticulture for 17 years and has recently worked at the Darwin Botanic Gardens where she helped develop the database on their plant collection. She has also operated an organic herb nursery and grows her herbs and vegies organically. Lydia holds an Associate

Diploma in Horticulture., but what's more, she is one of that rare breed who knows how to work with Mac computers!

(All the OHGA work, both the mag and the admin is done on Macs.)

Welcome to the OHGA workforce, Lydia!

### **SOME BUG AND PEST REMEDIES**

*From the Feb. 99 issue of JUST ORGANICS*

- to keep bugs off **cabbages, cauliflowers etc.** use 1tblsp of molasses and a little liquid soap in 1ltr water
- **ants** - a bit of kerosene down the hole, or frequently rotate a stick in the hole
- **nutgrass** - kerosene, applied with a paintbrush
- **canetoads** - 3 drops of dettol to the back of their head
- to keep **cats** away: banana peelings about lawns and gardens
- **fruitfly** - hang one inch wide, six inches long, strips of laser paper (that silvery stuff which catches the light in colours) on the outside branches of your tree, about two dozen in all, so that the wind movement will cause the reflection of sunlight to dance and ripple on the ground, like water. Fruit fly won't lay eggs in fruit suspended over water, as the stung fruit will fall into it and drown the larvae.

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**Name:**  
**ARCTIUM LAPPA**

**Other names:**  
Burdock, burr, gobo (Japan)

Burdock belongs to the Thistle group of the Compositae family. It is a hardy plant, which grows quite large, has a long thick fleshy taproot, and once you have it growing it will be near impossible to get rid of, especially if you let it self-seed. Although most "authorities" maintain that pieces of root don't regenerate, my burdock bed is testimony to the fallacy of that belief.

The plant, which has a dull green colour, can grow up to two metres in height. It has large leaves, furrowed on top, downy grey on the bottom. The bottom leaves are usually much larger than the upper ones. Later in the growing season round heads of purple flowers appear, similar to other thistles.

The seed burrs will cling to anything and anyone, and great care must be taken not to spread them around unintentionally.

Burdock is said to be biennial, which means that it flowers in its second year and then dies, but I have a flourishing burdock bed which is five years old already. The plants will go dormant in the hot summer, and then regrow again later, similar to comfrey.

Burdock is a very useful plant, and one of the best liver-cleansers. It is also one of the four ingredients in the famous alternative Essiac cancer remedy (the others are sheep sorrel, slippery elm and indian rhubarb).

In Holland an ancient anti-hairloss remedy (klitwortel water) is made by steeping the root in brandy for a few weeks and rubbing the tincture into the scalp.

A tea made of the leaves is blood purifying and diuretic and cooling for the whole body system. As a poultice, the leaves are very effective for tumors and rheumatic and inflamed swellings. A tea made of the seeds helps with indigestion, chronic skin diseases and stimulates kidneys, gall and liver.

The root is the part used most. In Japan it's eaten as a vegetable. (You should try burdock root in winter soups. Dig one up, scrub it well and use it like you would carrots. Delicious!) As the roots quickly grow very long, you shouldn't wait too

long before digging them up. A couple of months after sowing they're ready for harvest.

**Climate, soil type & position:**

Burdock will grow almost anywhere. In colder climates it will grow best in summer, in hot areas winter is its best season.

For root harvesting, raised beds and a well worked soil are best. The root will penetrate almost any soil type, but will your garden fork? It likes a neutral pH. In hot areas it likes a bit of shade, in cooler ones it can take full sun. It needs good drainage, and regular watering.

**BURDOCK**  
**Growing Notes**



**Propagation: by seed.**

Depending on your climate, this will be by direct seeding in spring (cool areas) or autumn (tropical or sub tropical areas). Plant the seeds about 3cm deep, where they'll germinate very easily.

**Spacing:**

I plant them in a two row bed with the seeds about 15-18cm apart. The distance between the beds depends on your harvesting method (manual or with a tractor).

**Pests & diseases:**

Like any roots, where the soil gets waterlogged they can rot. But overall burdock is a pretty healthy crop.

**Parts used:**

Seeds, leaves, roots.

**Harvesting:**

**Roots** are harvested two to three months after seeding.

**Leaves:** while they're still young.

**Seeds:** After flowering in the second year. If you want to prevent the plant from flowering and seeding, cut the young flowerstalk, and prepare and eat it like asparagus.

**Drying:**

The root should be dried at a constant temperature of around 40C.

**Yield:**

On the average the yield will be around the 1000 kg/acre, dried weight roots.

Ref.: *A Modern Herbal*, by Mrs. M. Grieve.







## Fundamental Foods

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## A WILDERNESS GARDEN

by Lolo Houbein

As politicians and multinationals see to it that wilderness becomes a rarity in our living environment and our offspring's childhood, we have two choices to stay in touch with other life forms and places of inner renewal. One is to travel annually to refresh ourselves in wild places, usually in the company of dozens of other deprived tourists. The other is to create a micro wilderness in the place where we live.

The garden we left three years ago was situated on top of a hill and surrounded by forest. The wildlife ran from possums, echidnas, bandicoots, rabbits, rodents, foxes, numerous bird species from eagles and cockatoos to finches, snakes, frogs and lizards to kangaroos hopping past our open door on the way to the dam for a drink. Mostly they kept to their ample habitat, the wild forest, and we met on the edges. There was mutual respect and none ever damaged the garden beyond a modest nibble.

But insects came to live throughout that organic garden in great variety. There were little ants, garden ants, hopping ants, praying mantis, stick insects, gorgeously coloured beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, butterflies and moths, caterpillars and luminous spiders. They all thrived and there seemed to be a balance. Almost every morning you'd discover small miracles. Like the pink caterpillar that lived on a needle hakea bush, looking like its pink pea flowers, a perfect camouflage.

The garden was semi-wild. The terrain lent itself to that and its size prevented close cultivation. A gardening wit once said you should always have a garden that is too big for you to maintain. And she was right. Because the constantly weeded, raked and pruned garden gives no scope for insects and small wildlife to make a living and settle down to have a family. Such gardens defy the development of a micro ecology.

When we moved to our present garden three years ago it was devoid of most insects and wildlife, although there were high trees on the fence lines, ferocious climbers along the verandah, showy acacias and eucalypts on dry lawns, a few shrubs, lavender bushes and 80 roses in straight rows. It was easy to maintain. All you'd have to do is run the mower around and prune the roses.

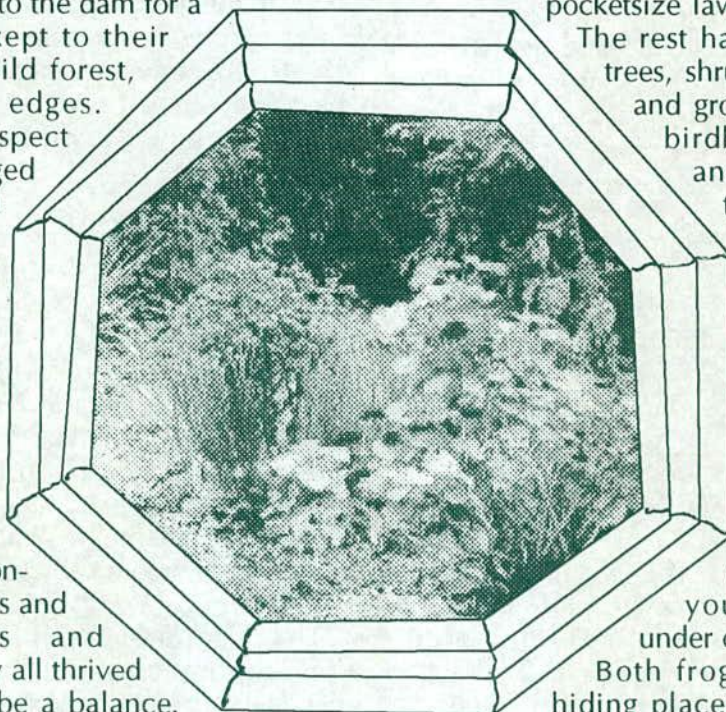
But soon we found that one out of control insect was eating everything in sight and two bird species ravaged orchard and vegetable garden. House and shed roofs and gutters were being damaged by the ferocious climbers, the type nurseries advertise as 'vigorous, no pruning'. Those have gone now, at a price. That was the start of a garden revamp.

Three years later, with a lot of help, there are only curved lines of quarry rubble paths and one pocket-size lawn near the backdoor.

The rest has been planted with trees, shrubs, perennials, herbs and groundcovers. There are birdbaths, a bush house and a pond. Even so it took more than a year for frogs to arrive from the mostly bone dry, routinely sprayed surrounding paddocks. Lizards arrived last year, stumpies and blue tongues. This year mama blue tongue gave birth in an old compost heap and the young ones grew up under cover of an old carpet.

Both frogs and lizards need hiding places under rocks or old bricks. Birds come in such numbers that we almost want to discourage the more ferocious species. So with the snakes!

But my heart leapt this morning when in the wilderness of daisies, geraniums and high grasses by the almond trees I saw an unusual spiderweb. Dead centre quivered what seemed two tiny bird feathers in yellow, red and black, colours of the Aboriginal flag. A small pale spider seemed to cling to this decoration, another black one hung on the edge of the web. My eyes aren't too good. Not until I blew softly on the web did I grasp the real situation. Not a decorated web, but a





decorated spider with two spikes as well. And two empty egg sacks, a baby on the breast and a teenager still in the house!

The spiderbook says she may be Spiny Spider (*Gasteracantha minax*) and it looks like these come in many colours. Evidently they can be numerous in some places, but I'd never seen them in our forest garden.

Naturalist and photographer Densey Clyne left her garden overgrown with weeds to attract small wildlife and insects. She and Annemieke Mein, the famous embroiderer, have done much to magnify the world of Australian insects and small creatures for those who cannot have a wilderness at home, or have poor sight.

If you don't have uncultivated land nearby, think of creating some corners where nobody walks but along the edges. Plant independent, self-seeding plants there, daisies, geraniums, iris and lupins, water periodically, try to leave weeds in the mix, built a rock shelter and see what will come to live there from one season to the next. Buy a good magnifying glass and happy sightseeing!

#### References:

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Lolo.

## CARVING A FUTURE WITH CARE

In most villages of the Konkan belt of Maharashtra it is women who plow the fields, fetch water, run the house and bring up the children. The men either migrate to Mumbai or further on to the Middle East in search of jobs.

"The Konkan region has been reduced to a 'money order' economy. The men migrate to the cities and their only contribution towards running their family is the money-order at the end of the month", says H S Sethi, Director of Care India.

Care India's Konkan Integrated Development Programme (KIDP), which was launched in two districts of the region in January 1998, tries to provide a solution to this glaring problem. After tying up with the local Society for Initiative in Development and Directed Human Intervention (SIDDHI), a two-pronged program was launched

in the region - one to instill a sense of confidence in the women folk by making them economically self-sufficient and second, to decentralise development so that the men are not tempted to emigrate.

The program area covers two blocks of the Ratnagiri district. The KIDP operates in a total of 52 villages in these blocks. With women folk comprising the majority population of villages in the Konkan belt, the KIDP is targeted largely at this segment. Of the 52 villages where the project has a presence, almost each one of them is running the Saving and Credit Programme for women, through self-help groups. The programme is tailor-made to fit the bill for village women, largely housewives. The scheme is simple - groups of 10 to 15 women are formed who put in their monthly savings, ranging anything between Rs 2 and Rs 20 into a joint fund (A\$1 = Rs 25 - Elle). The money is then lent back to the members at a nominal rate of interest, on a strictly returnable basis. The Saving and Credit Program issues small loans which are used by the women to invest in simple projects - maybe to buy a sewing machine or seeds for cultivation.

The Bhatade family is one of the 50-odd families living in the Muchri village, in the Konkan belt. Last year Mrs. Draupade Bhatade donated a chunk of her land to the women's welfare society of her village. Government aid was acquired from the District Collector and a shed was constructed from where the women folk operate a thriving food processing cottage industry. They make mango pickle which is sold in the market, and the women are on their way to becoming economically self sufficient.

The second aspect of the project involves developing and upgrading the two main occupations of the region, agriculture and fishery. Farmers have been provided with specialised information and education on new hybrid seeds, better fertilisers and irrigation facilities. And a couple of success stories are there to see. Ashok Salvi was a young landless farmer from the Muchri village in the Konkan region. Seeing a dim future in the village, Salvi migrated in search of money and some creature comforts. But things didn't work out, and eight years later Salvi was back in Muchri. Only this time all the necessary knowledge on how to grow a better crop was made available to him. Salvi learnt about a new hybrid variety of rice and grew a record harvest this monsoon. Today Salvi's landlord insists on





leasing out more land to him.

More on the agricultural front, the focus is to made farming a perennial occupation in the region, but as the soil doesn't hold water, farming is traditionally a seasonal occupation during the monsoon. To break this tradition, since July 1998, farmers of the Kudli village are being educated about mushroom cultivation, as they're an ideal crop for the area, needing minimum water but a humid climate. With mushroom cultivation slowly catching on in the region, the youth should hopefully find themselves employed year round and not contemplate migrating. Agricultural knowledge is also taught in the village primary schools up to class VII, beyond which educating the children becomes too expensive for the villagers.

One mega project is the Greenhouse in the Devale village. Vegetables like capsicum and tomato are grown in this Greenhouse which are sold in the market. It is managed entirely by the students of the school which active support from the villagers who have provided the water tank, pump set and pipe line. Today it generates enough money to sustain itself.

Varuna Verma in the Pioneer, Jan. 2, 1999

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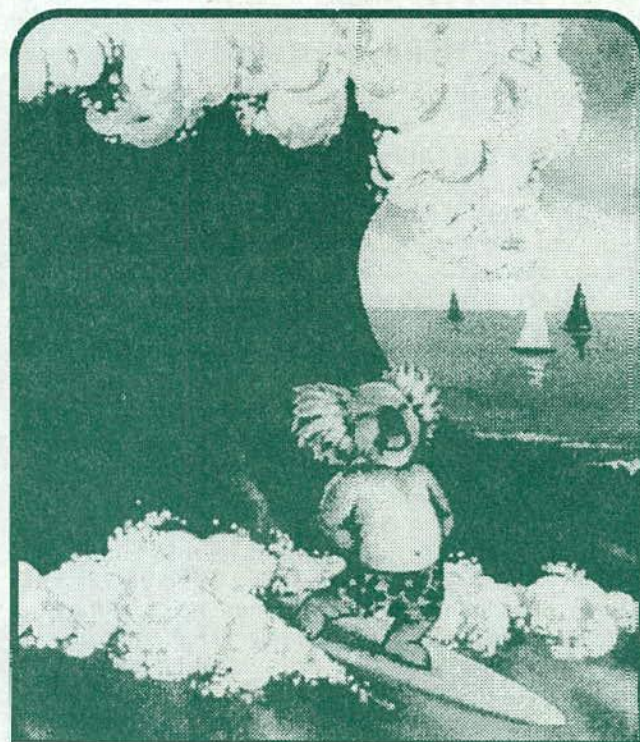
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## "HERBAL HEALTH"

with Herbalist/Naturopath Judith Wicks N.D.

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Lost the spring in your step? The twinkle in your eye? Your sharpness of mind? These are complaints I often hear. And they don't just apply to the elderly. How do you feel after a hard day at the office or after coping with the kids all day? How quickly do you recover after exercise or how well do you cope with stress?

A traditional 'Tonic' formula is probably all you need to get you back on top. And fortunately, the right combination of herbs can have quite a dramatic tonifying and renewing effect on your overworked body.

A good herbal tonic should help improve your mental alertness, sharpen your senses and increase your energy levels. It should also improve your circulation, provide nutrition, keep you looking and feeling young and detoxify your liver. This sounds like a tall order but such a tonic, made from a mixture of natural herbal extracts, is available from **healthstores and selected pharmacies**.

One of the ingredients of such a formula would be an extract of the herb Ginkgo. I have talked many times about this herb but let me relate this story from Mrs H in Buderim, Qld who recently wrote detailing her experience.

"My husband presented me with a bottle of Ginkgo tablets in desperation. He was sick of boosting up my morale, moods, lack of confidence. You name it, I suffered it; I just put it down to hormones as I'm 58.

"Well - without exaggeration the results were almost immediate. I dosed as per directions for the first few days, then cut back a little. After two bottles of tablets,

I'm now taking the liquid and my husband is also taking it and that's saying something.

"I'm waking full of enthusiasm, never tired; I can't tell you how it's changed by moods, thoughts etc. It's wonderful. Several friends even remarked how nice my skin is looking!"

This is certainly a dramatic response for a single herb but does give an indication of the possibilities of herbal medicines.

In a good tonic formula, Ginkgo would be combined with Hawthornberry for the heart and arteries, Saw Palmetto and Siberian Ginseng to keep the reproductive system healthy and functional, Globe Artichoke and Gentian to cleanse the liver and improve digestion. Gotu Kola needs to be included to maintain healthy connective tissue, the ground substance of the body. Along with Sarsaparilla and Yerba Mate, it helps maintain bone density. The immune system is aided by Astragalus and Echinacea, whilst Siberian Ginseng provides stamina and endurance. Oats, which are high in vitamin B, strengthen the whole nervous system and Licorice helps to enhance performance. Ginger should be included as a digestive, spleen and circulation remedy and because it enhances the action of the other herbs in the formula.

Some of the herbs in this formula contain substances known as flavonoids which will also have a natural Antioxidant effect on the organs throughout your body, protecting them from damage by toxins. Give this tonic a try and you will never look back.

I confidently recommend this natural herbal tonic to my clients who want to put themselves back on top. You can write to me c/- Preventative Medicine Society, P O Box 1006, Toowoomba Qld 4350.

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# THIS AND THAT

## TRADE IN BARK TREATMENT FOR PROSTATE CANCER THREATENS TREE

NAIROBI, Oct 8, The Nation — The *Prunus africana* tree, which is the source of the most potent and effective treatment for prostate cancer, is highly endangered by booming trade in its bark in Europe, experts have warned.

The annual over-the-counter trade in prunus-based remedies is estimated at \$220 million, according to Icrat's Tony Simons. In Germany, aging men spent \$150 million in 1994 alone on prunus treatments for prostate cancer. "There is no doubt that the market for herbal treatments for urological and prostatic problems is lucrative," says Mr Simons. He says with the rising incident of prostate problems as a greater proportion of the population enters the elderly age bracket, coupled with a growing confidence in herbal treatments, the market for prunus-based medicines is likely to double or triple within the next ten years.

## BIO-PIRATES STEALING TRADITIONAL WISDOM SAY SRI LANKAN SCIENTISTS

COLOMBO, Oct 8, IPS — Long before the arrival of Western drugs, indigenous doctors pounded and prepared medicine from wild plants and flowers gathered from Sri Lanka's thick tropical forests to treat a variety of illnesses.

The ancient formulations of the "ayurveda" system of medicine were zealously guarded and passed on from one generation to the next in families that could trace back their ancestry for many centuries. In the northcentral town of Polonnaruwa an indigenous doctor treats patients with heart problems who would otherwise require bypass surgery for a fraction of the cost of surgery which is at least \$4,500 in hospitals in the country.

Now giant global pharmaceutical drug companies, aware of the therapeutical qualities of medicinal plants, are virtually stealing this ancient wisdom by extracting chemicals from local plants and patenting it abroad, particularly in the United States.

Upali Pilapitiya, director of the Bandaranaike Memorial Ayurveda Research Institute, says that the tremendous interest in the West about natural Ayurvedic remedies, has led to a growing interest in Asia's indigenous plant life. Studies have revealed that more than 40 percent of western pharmaceutical products contain Asian plant extracts but these Asian countries including Sri Lanka have earned very little in return.

Export of medicinal plants or their extracts is banned in Sri Lanka. However bio-piracy is flourishing, quite often with the assistance of Sri Lankans who have no qualms of selling indigenous knowledge and innovation. Last month, a university professor and another wealthy Sri Lankan, whose wife is a social activist, were detained for bio-piracy by security personnel.

"Loopholes in existing laws and other legal snags are robbing the country of millions of dollars that is rightfully ours," asserts Sirimal Premakumara, a scientist at the Ceylon Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research. He said that since the country does not have the hi-tech scientific equipment to analyze chemical components of indigenous plants or the capacity to pay the international patent fee of \$60,000, wealthy countries are taking advantage.

For instance *Salacil reticulata*, the scientific name for the locally grown Kothalahimbutu plant, has been recognized abroad for its ability to control diabetes. Ayurveda physicians in Sri Lanka have always advised patients to drink water left overnight in a hand-carved Kothalahimbutu mug or jug, whose production has become a cottage industry in the island. Newspapers here report that a Japanese drug company patented a product based on this herb through the American Chemical Society last year.

Many other patents, like from the plant *Weniwalgeta* - used effectively as a herbal remedy for fever, coughs and colds - have been registered by Japanese, European and U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturers.

Environmental lawyer Jagath Gunawardene says, "although the law requires that a patent can be obtained only if it is an economically valuable invention created through a methodology, most multinationals have somehow obtained patents for products used in our country for thousands of years."

Scientists say that the normal ruse adopted by drug transnationals is to befriend an indigenous doctor, learn the curative properties of plants and sometimes offer him a trip abroad. The process of extraction of the chemical and export of the product which is often in the form of a powder, chemical solvent or the bark of trees, follows. The two recent cases of biopiracy last month involving a university botanist and a wealthy Sri Lankan got wide publicity and led to a sudden interest in the issue by environmentalists and scientists here. The botanist was intercepted by customs at Colombo airport trying to smuggle some plant extracts in his suitcase. In the same month, customs officials discovered a container load of Kothalahimbutu — 1,512 cups weighing some 4 tons — being shipped to Japan through a firm owned by the wealthy Sri Lankan.

Gunawardene feels that the laws should be strengthened to prevent the smuggling of Sri Lanka's indigenous plants and ayurvedic knowledge.

Normally, product patents are given only if they fulfill the criteria of being new, specify the process and must necessarily have commercial value. If there are discrepancies in this process, the patent can be contested in court. Like in the case of the U.S patent for turmeric which was successfully challenged by India on the grounds that its medicinal properties are well known since ancient times.

However, because India has no worthwhile law to





protect its rich biodiversity or intellectual property rights another U.S company earlier this year took out patents on long-grain basmati rice grown for centuries by farmers in India and Pakistan.

Developing countries, rich in indigenous resources, need to tighten biodiversity laws to stop the usurpation of the resources and knowledge of its people, Sri Lankan scientists say.

### **BIG COMPANIES REAP BIG PROFITS FROM AFRICAN HERBAL KNOWLEDGE**

By Isabirye Musoke

KAMPALA, Oct 4, The Monitor -- My brother-in-law's mother was murdered a few years ago during the rainy season at her home in a remote village in Mityana, Mubende district.

The muddy roads were impassable and therefore the police took more than two weeks to reach the scene of crime, take finger-prints, if any, and other material evidence to help in the investigations. The relatives and village Local Council officials decided not to tamper with the body as it was discovered in the sitting room of a simple mud and wattle, grass-thatched house of the 75-year-old victim.

However, they spread a leafy plant around the body. When we arrived at the scene, the body in its tattered clothes was dry and intact. There was no sign of decomposing at all. No flies attempting to desecrate the body, or any strong, bad smell that's associated with death.

Because it was a sad moment, I didn't have the opportunity to inquire about the names of the tree which were used to preserve the body in that simple but effective way. Now I regret this - because humanity is now the poorer without that traditional information of local medicine.

Before European civilisation descended on Africa, natives had a tested system of traditional medicine which was passed from generation to generation by word of mouth. Even now, remote areas of Uganda which are still cut off from modern hospitals and clinics are thriving on traditional knowledge of medicinal plants and herbs. But these plants are disappearing at an alarming rate, threatening future food supplies and the invention of new drugs.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) warns that since the beginning of the century about 75% of the world's crop plant varieties have become extinct, and around 50,000 disappear every year all over the world as man encroaches on forests and marshlands. It is believed thousands and thousands of useful medicinal plants and herbs disappeared from the surface of the earth when the rainforest was destroyed in North Africa to give way to the Sahara desert.

Ancient Egyptians, for example, had a herbal drug they extracted from a plant which was used to embalm bodies. Some of the mummies discovered in archeological sites are more than 2,000 years old and can be presented today in top form. That drug is of course, extinct - along with those who had knowledge of it.

There are many useful medicinal plants and herbs still

existing in Uganda and yet our celebrated scientists and researchers have neglected their existence, let alone their relevance to mankind. Many of us have been so brain-washed by the Western civilisation that we now despise anything African.

There's this plant which is usually found in front of the main door of most rural houses to prevent mosquitoes from entering. The plant has flowers which, during the rainy season, emit a very strong though nice smell which repels mosquitoes and other dangerous insects and snakes. But I've also been told that the scent of this plant is bad for people who are asthmatic. There are also plants in rural areas which, I've been told, can ward off green houseflies.

There are certain medicinal plants whose leaves can be squeezed in water and drunk to cure such ailments like malaria and even provide immunity from the disease for several years.

Before Viagra stole the world show, we had here in Uganda a herb called omusongola which was as effective as viagra (perhaps more) and there were no reported deaths by users.

Moreover, as our indigenous scientists and researchers continue to neglect our biological heritage, scientists and researchers from powerful multinationals are descending on local unsuspecting herbalists and traditional healers, offering them peanuts and shipping away this billion-dollar information.

Over 90 percent of plant species are located in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Yet this multi-billion dollar market has been cornered by large transnational corporations, mostly from the North, bent on patenting

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International patent law remains open to interpretation, but it is usually the local farmers, herbalists and traditional healers in the south who get the raw deal.

A recent study indicates that if transnational corporations paid developing countries and indigenous people royalties on the plant varieties and local knowledge they have used, it would amount to \$5.4 billion a year - by modest estimates.

### **HERBAL REMEDIES OFFER NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

By Louise Cook

PRETORIA, Sept 30, Business Day -- South Africa has the potential to become a world leader in the development of medicinal products from indigenous plants, Ben van Wyk, head of the Rand Afrikaans University botany department, said yesterday.

Van Wyk, set to deliver the key-note address at the inaugural meeting of a new association for crop research in South Africa, is confident the increasing popularity of herbal remedies as alternatives to chemical drugs could make South Africa a world player in phytomedicines.

"It is of the utmost importance to promote the local innovation and not merely to become the source of cheap raw materials for the sophisticated and booming European and American phytomedicines markets. We have the advantage of a rich plant diversity, access to markets and local scientific expertise to ensure only quality products are released."

However, the method of sorting out the legal implications of marketing the products was still uncertain. This was to ensure that local experts on indigenous material - mostly rural communities, tribal doctors and African farmers - received their fair share in royalties and were protected against commercial exploitation.

An arts, science and technology parliamentary committee was considering new legislation to enforce protection.

Van Wyk said most of the plants involved were being sold on global markets already.

### **COFFEE-BEAN CHEMICAL EYED AS HIV PREVENTIVE**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 16, Kyodo -- U.S. researchers have found a chemical extracted from green coffee beans, which may help fight HIV infection of human cells, according to professors at the University of California, Irvine.

A recent report in the Journal of Virology said that the researchers' findings could lead to development of a new class of AIDS-fighting drugs without negative side effects.

A group led by Edward Robinson, professor of microbiology and pathology at the university, added the chemical called chicoric acid to cells infected with HIV, the virus which causes AIDS, and found that the acid appeared to halt the infection process, according to the journal. The acid, which is identical to substances used by Bolivian shamans in medicinal plants, stops one of three key enzymes called HIV integrase from promoting the infection, the researchers said.

### **Organic Weed Management - Industry Survey**

There is a broad diversity of opinion in the organic and bio-dynamic grower community about the impact and cost of weeds on production. There is also widespread interest in research which will assist in weed management.

These are two of the early findings to come out of the recent Weed Management Survey conducted by Paul Kristiansen, a PhD student at the University of New England, Armidale. The survey is part of a larger research project looking at organic weed management techniques.

The survey was sent to members of various certifying organisations to gain a better understanding of current weed management practices in the industry. The input from growers was also sought to determine areas of concern or interest to growers.

The overall return rate so far is 43%, with about 320 replies from all states of Australia. The enthusiasm and effort with which people have responded to the survey was very encouraging. Some people sent in extra pages of detailed information, drawings,

photos, tax cheques (accidentally), weed lists and business cards. From forty years as a grain grower to 3 months growing herbs, organic growers are quite a passionate group it seems.

A prize of a one-year subscription to Acres Australia was offered to a lucky survey respondent who replied within three months. The winner was drawn from a random list of respondents and the lucky folks were a pair of organic nut growers from the Wiseman's Ferry area near Sydney. They have been notified and are happy to accept the prize. Thanks go to all respondents who took the time to fill out the questionnaire.

The responses are currently being compiled and will be analysed over the next month or two. It is hoped that a summary of the findings will be available in late April 1999. This will be sent to those who requested the information and will also be presented in industry publications.

For further information, contact:  
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UNE, NSW 2351  
Ph. (02) 6773-2962 Fax. (02) 6773-3238  
Email. pkristia@metz.une.edu.au

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Generally, HIV takes over healthy cells by weaving its viral genetic material in with the cell's DNA, and rapidly makes multiple copies of itself, they said. The chicoric acid appears to disturb this process of HIV integration by halting function of the HIV integrase, thus preventing HIV from reproducing and infecting other cells, they said.

The chemical is expected to be the first effective weapon to attack the HIV integrase, they said. The professors said the finding of the acid was meaningful since it could lead to a development of nontoxic AIDS drugs to which HIV has not become resistant.

Robinson and his colleagues, who have made extracts of more than 60 plants used by shamans of the Kallawaya people in Bolivia, found that several of them included chicoric acid. The acid cannot be extracted from roasted coffee beans, the researchers said. Robinson cautioned, however, that chicoric acid is not potent enough to act as anti-AIDS drug on its own, and said that his group will continue working to make a more powerful synthetic chemical that inhibits HIV integrase as the acid does.

#### **HYPERFORIN IS A KEY TO ST. JOHN'S WORT, RESEARCHERS SAY**

RIDGEFIELD, Conn., Sept. 16, PRNewswire -- Clinical research has shown what may be a key to St. John's Wort's power, a component called hyperforin, which is now widely available in the U.S. in an advanced extract of St. John's Wort found in a new product called MOVANA(TM), Pharmaton Natural Health Products announced today.

"This discovery is extremely exciting for people seeking a dependable route to a positive outlook on life," said Derrick DeSilva Jr., MD, a practicing internist who teaches at JFK Medical Center in Edison, NJ, and is author of *Ask The Doctor: Herbs & Supplements for Better Health* (Interweave Press 1997).

"While previous clinical studies have shown St. John's Wort is effective, questions remained about the identity of the active component and how it relates to efficacy.

The yellow-flowered plant with the Latin name *Hypericum perforatum* has been heralded for decades for its ability to balance emotions. More recently, scientists found it played a role in the transmission of brain signals through gaps in the nerve known as synapses. The transmission requires the release and then re-uptake of chemical bridges known as neurotransmitters. St. John's Wort was shown to inhibit the re-uptake of neurotransmitters such as serotonin (attributed to feelings of cheerfulness and calm, researchers say), noradrenaline (alertness and energy) and dopamine (sociability). By promoting normal levels of neurotransmitters, St. John's Wort helps maintain positive emotions.

St. John's Wort has a strong record of safety and effectiveness in Europe where it has been popular for over 15 years and has been used with no serious side effects. The extract is made from the flowers and leaves of the plant, which blooms around June 24, the birthday of St. John the Baptist.

#### **FARMER PLOWS UNDER HEMP CROP**

By Bill Cleverly

ISLAND VIEW BEACH, B.C., Sept 21, Times Colonist  
Farmer Vern Michell plowed under his 10 acre crop of commercial hemp last Friday, unable to put up with the thefts of his plants. Michell estimated about 100 groups of mostly youths have been wandering up to the field adjacent to Island View Beach. He will absorb about a \$10,000 loss on the one million plants he destroyed.

This is the first year industrial hemp has been planted on the Island.

*done 4/5 99*

#### **PLANT DUBBED 'NATURE'S VIAGRA'**

By Carol Harrington

CALGARY, Nov. 15, Canadian Press --

Nature thought of it first.

Puncture vine, affectionately called "nature's Viagra," is a common plant that proponents say may be as effective as the famous anti-impotence pharmaceutical.

"It really works," says Eric Wicik, 25, who took puncture vine drops to improve a sex drive temporarily lowered by strict fasting. "I noticed an improvement after two days."

Puncture vine -- so named because its sharp seeds can flatten bicycle tires -- grows wild throughout North America.

Naturopaths or homeopaths prescribe an extract of it to treat impotency. Some bodybuilders also use it as a "natural steroid." "It increases testosterone production," claims Edmonton botanist Robert Rogers, who owns a

*✱*

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herbal centre. "Studies found that in just five days of taking puncture vine, it increased testosterone levels by 30% or more."

Rogers cited a 1981 study by the Chemical Pharmaceutical Institute in Sofia, Bulgaria, of more than 200 men suffering from impotence. It found an increase in sperm production, survival rate and motility. Other benefits cited in the study were increased immunity and self-confidence, lower cholesterol levels and generally better moods.

Puncture vine is usually listed on herbal bottles by its latin name, *Tribulus terrestris*, says Tom Chan, a researcher with Organika Health Products in Vancouver. It is often manufactured with a combination of other herbs, as are most herbal concoctions, and can be purchased in some drugstores and herbal shops, Chan says. Wild oats and plumbtree berry extract are two other herbs that optimise testosterone levels, he claims. Europeans, particularly Romanians, have been using puncture vine for more than 1,000 years, mostly as a muscle enhancer, he says.

The drops can be used by either sex, Rogers says.

### **CATHOLIC CHURCH SAYS LOCAL MALAWIAN HERBS ARE HELPING AIDS PATIENTS**

By Raphael Tenthani

BLANTYRE, Malawi, Dec. 23, PANA -- The Catholic Church in Malawi claims a number of AIDS patients in the country have been cured of AIDS-related illnesses through the use of local herbs such as aloe vera, frangipani, guava leaves, sweet potatoes and okra.

Sr. Lilia Conol of the AIDS Patients Home-Based Care Unit of the Church told reporters the use of a cocktail of the herbs have successfully cured AIDS-related ailments like shingles. "People have been cured of shingles and mouth sores after using these herbs," she said.

Conol, therefore, called for concerted efforts between the government and other stakeholders to promote the use of herbal medicines instead of relying on "very expensive cocktails from the West."

Gracian Namanja of the same project said they are already working on treatment guidelines. Plans are also underway to establish gardens in all the seven dioceses in the country for further research.

The church will work hand-in-hand with the National AIDS Control Programme, the ministry of health and the World Health Organisation to pursue the discovery.

"We know that if indeed these are certified as cures they will be very accessible and affordable to the common man hence our interest to pursue the initiative," Namanja added.

Malawi has one of the highest AIDS figures. Recent reports say that over 900,000 people in the country have been tested HIV-positive.

The Catholic church's claim for a cure come three years after that of 1995 when a 79-year-old local medicine man caused a flurry of excitement when he claimed to have dreamt of a cure for AIDS. For six months, many Malawians and people from as far as the US, England and neighbouring countries flocked to his hitherto little-known village in the southern district of Machinga to sip the herbal concoction.

The government issued a cautious warning against

believing the cure but some people still claim to have been cured to date.

### **AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION WARNS HERBAL CIGARETTES NOT HARMLESS**

CANBERRA, Dec 21, AAP -- The Australian Medical Association today warned herbal cigarettes could be just as harmful as normal cigarettes, and dismissed claims they could treat health conditions.

AMA president David Brand said magazine articles promoting the cigarettes as a possible cure for bronchial conditions were seriously misleading.

"Absolutely no herbal cigarette is capable of curing, treating or alleviating any such symptoms," Dr Brand said in a statement. "Herbal cigarettes do the same damage as nicotine based cigarettes. "Some herbal cigarettes are blended with tobacco and have high tar and nicotine levels."

Dr Brand said research recently reviewed by the American Medical Association found herbal cigarettes possessed all the hazards of smoking, and may cause severe lung injury and respiratory infections. "Smoking herbal cigarettes is not the path to take if you want to quit smoking," Dr Brand said. "The best advice is from your general practitioner and Quit services."

*Even on holiday I can't seem to escape from articles about the evil corporation. The following appeared in a newspaper on our breakfast table in Calcutta:*

### **MONSANTO SEEKS OKAY FOR BIOTECH SEEDS PROJECT**

The Telegraph (Calcutta, India) 20-1-1999

Monsanto India Ltd, the wholly owned subsidiary of US based Monsanto Holdings, is planning to produce and commercialise biotechnology seeds in India.

In its application submitted to the Foreign Investment Promotion Board recently, Monsanto India said it would develop, produce and commercialise seeds, including biotech seeds in India. It has, however, not revealed the quantum of investments planned in the new venture. Monsanto's application assumes significance as the company has been mired in controversy over the 'terminator technology' which is supposed to prevent the genetically altered seed from germinating after one season. This, some fear, will make Indian farmers always dependent on Monsanto or other foreign companies for the supply of seeds. The fears are not restricted to the terminator gene alone. It is also alleged that seed multinationals will threaten the Indian farmer's rights as a cultivator, protector and conservator of the gene pool.

However, Monsanto officials have allayed such fears. They insist that in India they are only testing transgenic seeds that are resistant to Bollworm - a cotton pest - and that they are not working on terminator seeds in any part of the world. Bio-technology, they say, will help farmers protect their crops from dreaded pests such as Bollworm and bring down the use of insecticides.

Groups like the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangh, led by M.D. Nanjundaswamy, had taken the battle against Monsanto to the streets and its activists even burnt crops at several trial sites in Karnataka (an Indian state).





Andhra Pradesh (another state) was also forced to pass a resolution urging the Centre to prevent the introduction of the terminator gene either directly or in transgenic form.

### ACTION ALERT

To all food activists - GE Foods - Labelling Loophole  
We had a partial victory on GE food labelling when the Health Ministers met in December, but one of their decisions (see the official text below) means many food commodities and the processed products containing them may be unlabelled.

For example, Monsanto has applied for six Roundup Ready and Bt (insect killer) foods - corn, cotton, canola and soy - which may be exempt.

Register with the Food Authority to participate in the second round of consultation on these foods:

"Standards Liaison Officer" <sl@anzfa.gov.au>

Please also write to your state Health Minister and the Commonwealth Minister, again saying ALL GE foods must be labelled.

The Ministerial Decision:

**AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND FOOD STANDARDS COUNCIL**, Thursday 17 December 1998

### HEALTH MINISTERS DECIDE KEY FOOD ISSUES

The Australia New Zealand Food Standards Council (ANZFC) met in Canberra today and made a number of important decisions about the safety of the food we eat.

ANZFC consists of Health Ministers from the Commonwealth, each state and Territory and the New Zealand Associate Minister for Health. It is chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Senator the Hon. Grant Tambling.

The following important decisions were made.

### THE LABELLING OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD WHERE IT IS SUBSTANTIALLY EQUIVALENT

Health Ministers, by a majority vote, have asked ANZFA (the Australia NZ Food Authority) to require labelling of genetically modified food where it is substantially equivalent, by developing a draft amendment to the Food Standards Code which takes

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into account the need to:

- label if the manufacturer knows the food contains genetically modified material; and
- if the manufacturer is uncertain about the food's contents, they must indicate that the food may contain genetically modified material.

If the manufacturer knows the product to be free of genetically modified material there will be no requirement to label the product however it may be labelled as free of genetically modified material.

Health Ministers asked ANZFA to develop for their further consideration a definition of the term genetically modified food, recognising that there are many food ingredients such as sugars and oils which can be made from genetically modified plants but are not themselves genetically modified.

Early next year, Ministers will consider the draft amendment to the Food Standards Code proposed by ANZFA.

### SUGARFREE? FORGET IT!

by Nancy Markle

I have spent several days lecturing at the World Environmental Conference on "ASPARTAME marketed as 'NutraSweet', 'Equal', and 'Spoonful'". In the keynote address by the EPA, they announced that there was an epidemic of multiple sclerosis and systemic lupus, and they did not understand what toxin was causing this to be rampant across the United States. I explained that I was there to lecture on exactly that subject.

When the temperature of Aspartame exceeds 86 F (34C), the wood alcohol in ASPARTAME converts to

continued on page 24

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## PASTA SAUCE

(takes about 1 1/2 hours)

### Ingredients:

4 tblsp. vegetable oil  
4 onions, finely chopped  
4 cloves garlic, crushed  
8 cups of tomatoes, roughly chopped  
1 green capsicum, chopped  
1/2 cup fresh oregano, chopped  
1/2 cup fresh basil, chopped  
4 tsp salt  
2 tsp black pepper  
2 tblsp sugar/honey  
1 cup tomato juice  
4 tblsp tomato paste

### Method:

Heat the oil in a big pot, saute onions and garlic. Add salt, pepper, oregano, basil. Stir. When onions are soft, add tomatoes, stir in capsicum and the tomato juice. Simmer for 20 minutes or longer, stir regularly. When tomatoes are soft, remove from heat and blend about half the mixture in a blender. Pour it back into the pot, add tomato paste and sugar/honey, and reheat, simmering until the sauce is the consistency you want. This makes approx. two litres.

### Bottling:

Heat up 6 or 7 screw top bottles (350 ml) in the oven to sterilise them - 20 minutes on 200F. Fill the bottles to within 1cc from the top, screw lids on loosely. Place the bottles in another large pot, fill with boiling water to within an inch of the top of the bottles. Simmer for 20-30 minutes. Remove bottles and screw lids on tight.

*John Drysdale, Clunes*

## MARINATED LEFTOVER VEGETABLES WITH ROASTED PEPPERS

Serves 4

Leftovers never tasted so good! Our recipe for Marinated Leftover Vegetables with Roasted Peppers takes last night's dinner time extras to new heights.

*Prep. time: 15 minutes*

*Cooking time: 20 minutes*

### Ingredients:

3 large sweet red or yellow bell peppers

3 tblsp extra-virgin olive oil

2 tsp chopped fresh garlic

3 tblsp seasoned rice wine vinegar

1/2 cup thinly sliced fresh basil

1/2 cup thinly sliced fresh fennel bulb or celery

1/4 cup sliced green onion

4 cups cooked seasonal vegetables, cut into bite-size pieces (e.g. beans, summer squash, corn, potatoes, eggplant, etc.)

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1/3 cup grated cheese.



### Method:

1. Preheat oven to 450F. Cut peppers in half. Remove seeds and stems. Cut into large wedges, toss with garlic and 1 tblsp of olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and arrange on a baking sheet, skin side up. Roast, turning occasionally, for about 30 minutes or until peppers are soft.

2. In a medium bowl, combine remaining olive oil, vinegar, basil, fennel, green onions and vegetables. Toss and store at room temperature until peppers are roasted.

3. To serve, divide peppers and arrange around the edges of four salad plates. Mound a generous cup of marinated vegetables on the centre of each plate. Sprinkle with grated cheese.

*From the web - recipe files of Delicious! Magazine.*

**Hey, you food fanciers out there!!**

**After all the requests I've had for a recipe page, I do expect you out there to send them to me regularly.**

**They don't have to be fancy, just yummy and they should include some herbal ingredients. Could be drinks, soups, desserts, whatever.**

**As long as it's delicious, eatable or drinkable.**

**Just watch the deadline!**

**-Elle**





continued from page 22

formaldehyde and then to formic acid, which in turn causes metabolic acidosis. (Formic acid is the poison found in the sting of fire ants).

The methanol toxicity mimics multiple sclerosis; thus people were being diagnosed with having multiple sclerosis in error. The multiple sclerosis is not a death sentence, where methanol toxicity is. In the case of systemic lupus, we are finding it has become almost as rampant as multiple sclerosis, especially amongst Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi drinkers. Also, with methanol toxicity, the victims usually drink three to four 12 oz. cans of them per day, some even more. In the cases of systemic lupus, which is triggered by ASPARTAME, the victim usually does not know that the aspartame is the culprit. The victim continues its use, aggravating the lupus to such a degree, that sometimes it becomes life threatening. When we get people off the aspartame, those with systemic lupus usually become asymptomatic. Unfortunately, we can not reverse this disease.

On the other hand, in the case of those diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, (when in reality, the disease is methanol toxicity), most of the symptoms disappear. We have seen cases where their vision has returned and even their hearing has returned. This also applies to cases of tinnitus.

During a lecture I said "If you are using ASPARTAME (NutraSweet, Equal, Spoonful, etc.) and you suffer from fibromyalgia symptoms, spasms, shooting pains, numbness in your legs, cramps, vertigo, dizziness, headaches, tinnitus, joint pain, depression, anxiety attacks, slurred speech, blurred vision, or memory loss - you probably have ASPARTAME DISEASE!"

People were jumping up during the lecture saying, "I've got this, is it reversible?" It is rampant. Some of the speakers at my lecture even were suffering from these symptoms. In one lecture, attended by the Ambassador of Uganda, he told us that their sugar industry is adding aspartame! He continued by saying that one of the industry leader's son could no longer walk - due in part by product usage!

We have a very serious problem. Even a stranger came up to Dr. Espisto (one of my speakers) and myself and said, "Could you tell me why so many people seem to be coming down with MS?" During a visit to a hospice, a nurse said that six of her friends, who were heavy Diet Coke addicts, had all been diagnosed with MS. This is beyond coincidence.

Here is the problem. There were Congressional

Hearings when aspartame was included in 100 different products. Since this initial hearing, there have been two subsequent hearings, but to no avail. Nothing has been done. The drug and chemical lobbies have very deep pockets. Now there are over 5,000 products containing this chemical, and the PATENT HAS EXPIRED!!!!

At the time of this first hearing, people were going blind. The methanol in the aspartame converts to formaldehyde in the retina of the eye. Formaldehyde is grouped in the same class of drugs as cyanide and arsenic - DEADLY POISONS!!!

Unfortunately, it just takes longer to quietly kill, but it is killing people and causing all kinds of neurological problems. Aspartame changes the brain's chemistry. It is the reason for severe seizures. This drug changes the dopamine level in the brain. Imagine what this drug does to patients suffering from Parkinson's Disease. This drug also causes Birth Defects. There is absolutely no reason to take this product. It is NOT A DIET PRODUCT!!! The Congressional record said, "It makes you crave carbohydrates and will make you FAT". Dr. Roberts stated that when he got patients off aspartame, their average weight loss was 19 pounds per person. The formaldehyde stores in the fat cells, particularly in the hips and thighs.

Aspartame is especially deadly for diabetics. All physicians know what wood alcohol will do to a diabetic. We find that physicians believe that they have patients with retinopathy, when in fact, it is caused by the aspartame. The aspartame keeps the blood sugar level out of control, causing many patients to go into a coma. Unfortunately, many have died.

People were telling us at the Conference of the American College of Physicians, that they had relatives that switched from saccharin to an aspartame product and how that relative had eventually gone into a coma. Their physicians could not get the blood sugar levels under control. Thus, the patients suffered acute memory loss and eventually coma and death.

Memory loss is due to the fact that aspartic acid and phenylalanine are neurotoxic without the other amino acids found in protein. Thus it goes past the blood brain

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barrier and deteriorates the neurons of the brain.

Dr. Russell Blaylock, neurosurgeon, said, "The ingredients stimulates the neurons of the brain to death, causing brain damage of varying degrees. Dr. Blaylock has written a book entitled "EXCITOTOXINS: THE TASTE THAT KILLS" (Health Press 1-800-643-2665).

Dr. H.J. Roberts, diabetic specialist and world expert on aspartame poisoning, has also written a book entitled "DEFENSE AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE" (1-800-814-9800). Dr. Roberts tells how aspartame poisoning is escalating Alzheimer's Disease, and indeed it is. As the hospice nurse told me, women are being admitted at 30 years of age with Alzheimer's Disease. Dr. Blaylock and Dr. Roberts will be writing a position paper with some case histories and will post it on the Internet. According to the Conference of the American College of Physicians, "We are talking about a plague of neurological diseases caused by this deadly poison".

Dr. Roberts realized what was happening when aspartame was first marketed. He said "his diabetic patients presented memory loss, confusion, and severe vision loss". At the Conference of the American College of Physicians, doctors admitted that they did not know. They had wondered why seizures were rampant (the phenylalanine in aspartame breaks down the seizure threshold and depletes serotonin, which causes manic depression, panic attacks, rage and violence).

Just before the conference, I received a fax from Norway, asking for a possible antidote for this poison because they are experiencing so many problems in their country. This poison is now available in 90 PLUS countries worldwide. Fortunately, we had speakers and ambassadors at the conference from different nations who have pledged their help. We ask that you help too. Print this article out and warn everyone you know. Take anything that contains aspartame back to the store. Send us your case history.

I assure you that MONSANTO, the creator of aspartame, knows how deadly it is. They fund the American Diabetes Association, American Dietetic Association, Congress, and the Conference of the American College of Physicians. The New York Times, on November 15, 1996, ran an article on how the American Dietetic Association takes money from the food industry to endorse their products. Therefore, they can not criticize any additives or tell about their link to MONSANTO. How bad is this?

We told a mother who had a child on NutraSweet to get off the product. The child was having grand mal seizures every day. The mother called her physician, who called the ADA, who told the doctor not to take the child off the NutraSweet. We are still trying to convince the mother that the aspartame is causing the seizures. Every time we get someone off of aspartame, the seizures stop. If the baby dies, you know whose fault it is, and what we are up against. There are 92 documented symptoms of aspartame, from coma to death. The majority of them are all neurological, because the aspartame destroys the nervous system.

Aspartame Disease is partially the cause to what is behind some of the mystery of the Desert Storm health problems. The burning tongue and other problems discussed in over 60 cases can be directly related to the

consumption of an aspartame product.

Several thousand pallets of diet drinks were shipped to the Desert Storm troops. (Remember heat can liberate the methanol from the aspartame at 86F (34C) ). Diet drinks sat in the 120F (49C) Arabian sun for weeks at a time on pallets. The service men and women drank them all day long. All of their symptoms are identical to aspartame poisoning.

Dr. Roberts says "consuming aspartame at the time of conception can cause birth defects". The phenylalanine concentrates in the placenta, causing mental retardation, according to Dr. Louis Elsas, Pediatrician Professor - Genetics, at Emory University in his testimony before Congress. In the original lab tests, animals developed brain tumors (phenylalanine breaks down into DXP, a brain tumor agent). When Dr. Espisto was lecturing on aspartame, one physician in the audience, a neurosurgeon, said, "when they remove brain tumors, they have found high levels of aspartame in them".

Stevia, a sweet food, NOT AN ADDITIVE, which helps in the metabolism of sugar, which would be ideal for diabetics, has now been approved as a dietary supplement by the F.D.A. For years, the F.D.A. has outlawed this sweet food because of their loyalty to MONSANTO.

If it says "SUGAR FREE" on the label - DO NOT EVEN THINK ABOUT IT!!!!!!

Senator Howard Hetzenbaum wrote a bill that would have warned all infants, pregnant mothers and children of the dangers of aspartame. The bill would have also instituted independent studies on the problems existing in the population (seizures, changes in brain chemistry, changes in neurological and behavioral symptoms). It was killed by the powerful drug and chemical lobbies, letting loose the hounds of disease and death on an unsuspecting public. Since the Conference of the American College of Physicians, we hope to have the help of some world leaders. Again, please help us too. There are a lot of people out there who must be warned, please let them know this information.

Sent to us by Brian & Lyn Bagnall.

<rdoherbs@gl.hardnet.com.au> Thank you!

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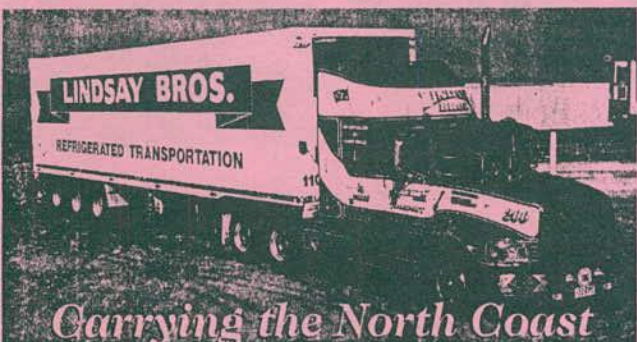


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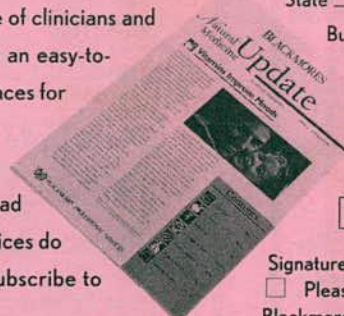
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