

## THE VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

### The Family Who Hated Politics

Matthew Wood

One of the benefits of being a famous herbalist is that you get to travel and speak all over the place and visit some of the nicest people, some of the most eccentric too. And see some of the most beautiful country.

One thing I like to do is stay in touch with relatives. So during my trip to Vermont this October (yes, the leaves were beautiful), I got to sit with my cousins over dinner at their 150-year-old creaky house in the hills above Montpelier. I like family history and it happened to be a memorable evening for that. I was shocked to learn that my cousins' parents—my great aunt and uncle—had been communists! "Card-carrying, rank-and-file," said my cousin with emphasis. Even their three sons didn't know for sure until just recently. It was dangerous to be a communist back there in the '50s; you didn't even tell your children. And the Cold War only thawed yesterday.

"I can't believe this," I said. "My grandfather was a member of the Socialist Worker's Party; they hated communists more than the John Birchers even. How could his sister be a communist?"

"They agreed not to talk about politics," was my cousin's response.

"Do you know for sure?" asked my other cousin, Johnny, the contractor.

"I was diplomatic about it," answered his brother. "You know how dad was the king of denial. He would never admit anything. So one day I just casually asked him, 'So when'd ya quit the party?' Then he started to talk about it."

Johnny and I were fascinated. I had never heard about this and he had never had the opportunity to talk to his father about it.

My aunt and uncle were fanatics, really, but I never knew it. They were members of a New York teacher's union that was a cell of the communist party.

And sure enough, in the early '50s, the FBI started to put the pressure on them. They held government jobs teaching in the New York public schools and they were vulnerable.

No one knew who the stool pigeon was that turned in the names of his friends until years afterwards. When the dust settled, it was possible to see who still had his job. My cousins laughed. The fellow had been a mentor to his parents and then some of his kids moved up to Vermont like they did. One was a mentor to my cousins in their college days. Another was an obnoxious gossip who was trying to upset people over "who slept with who" a generation ago. History had weirdly twined them all together, generation by generation.

"I know who delivered you," the gossip informed Johnny knowingly.

"No, you don't," he said with a smile. He let her rattle on. She didn't know that his parents had died during those hard years and he had been adopted by his aunt and uncle and raised as one of their own boys. Communists can be good people too.

My uncle loved his job as a school teacher but he could see the writing on the wall. To shield his family and the kids at school from the trauma, he quit before they got to him. "I still have the article from the high school newspaper," said my cousin. "Dad talked about how excited he was by the opportunities in the private sector. The real truth was, he loved teaching, and he always missed it."

A friend had an art materials store. He said to my uncle, "You don't need to put up with this, be my partner and they can't touch you." So that was how my great-uncle came to run an art store and that was why I got presents of art supplies every birthday and holiday; presents that enriched my life.

My aunt was a woman, so the FBI took their time getting to her. By the time they got around to interviewing her, a few court cases had been won and they couldn't make her spill names or lose her job. So she stayed.

My cousin paused. "As far as I was concerned, I had a normal kid's life in the suburbs. Despite all this going on in the background, I was totally unaware of it. They shielded us from it, but over the years I put it together."

"Didn't people throw rocks at your house and yell, 'go back to Russia?'" I enquired.

My cousin laughed. "We lived on a cul-de-sac. Every house on the street was owned by someone from the teacher's union. My parent's friends

were always 'so-and-so the electrician, who used to be in the teacher's union,' 'so-and-so from the fish market, who used to be in the teacher's union,' 'so and so the insurance agent, who used to be in the teacher's union.' It took me years to understand what it all meant."

We laughed to think that communism had introduced these intellectuals to the joys of the market economy. Those were the '50s, and most of these people retired very well off. But somewhere up the ladder of the communist hierarchy, my cousin mused, some ruthless person made the decision to use these naive people for all they were worth.

There are some questions you have to ask your father if he was a communist. My cousin had addressed that. "How could you be a communist when Stalin was butchering millions?" His father explained, "If you expressed doubts in the cell meetings, they sent a guy around who could talk faster and smarter than anybody else, and you were persuaded." It was really a cult. But there were good things too. "If you wanted to be against racism in the '30s, there was nobody else." The lawyers for the Scottsboro boys had been paid for by the communist party.

When I got home, I called my grandfather and asked him if he knew his sister was a communist. I knew he was a dedicated member of the Socialist Worker's Party. During the '30s, there had been a falling out with the communists, as the cultic tendencies of the party started to emerge. Then the communists started to obstruct the socialists and work against the labor unions. There was nobody the Socialist Worker's Party hated more; even J. Edgar Hoover and the John Birch Society couldn't have matched the fever of left-wingers hating left-wingers.

"Well, I always gave my sister the benefit of a doubt," was my grandfather's reply. "I told everybody she just voted for the communist in the teacher's union elections because she didn't know any better." He had reached peace with the issue a long time ago and he didn't need to know whether she was or wasn't.

I was always the member of the family who hated politics. I was the artist from childhood on up, and when my hand turned from drawing to writing and herbalism (also an art), I continued to ignore politics. But being an herbalist in this day and age is a political statement, like it or not. So my grandfather got the last laugh. "You can't ignore politics," he told me.

## The Time For Action Is Now

Matthew Wood

The "watched pot never boils," they say, and the same could be said for the "watched millennium," though there is still a case to be made for "the unattended planet warming up." At any rate, that great page-turner, time, caught our attention for a while.

There are many kinds of time. In addition to past, present, and future, there are good times and bad times. It makes a good qualifier—sometime, anytime, or everytime. It can pass unnoticed ("youth is wasted on the young") or altogether unloved ("time to kill"). It can be valuable ("time is money") or unattainable ("not enough hours in the day").

We herbalists are particularly close to time due to a homonymic anti-resemblance. One of our most ancient and distinguished friends is thyme. Thus, the many references to the subject among herbalists. There was an herb store in St. Croix Falls named "Somewhere in Thyme." I suppose somewhere it still is. And at this very moment there is "Present Moment" herbs in South Minneapolis, incorrectly known as "Precious Moments" and "Pleasant Moments."

The most ruthless time is that built into the telomers of our cells. Another ruthless kind is...

### Political time

Once upon a time, about three years ago, the Board of Medical Practice (BMP) went on the warpath against Helen Healy, an innocent, virtuous young naturopathic doctor from St. Paul. Acting like the draconian bureaucratic monsters that they are, the board sent shills to her office who collected minuscule "evidence" against her. Recommending that someone see a medical doctor is, for instance, "practicing medicine without a license."

Many of us in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) were outraged. Practitioners and consumers felt threatened. More than half the citizens of the state use alternative medicine, so thousands responded as the news spread. We wrote and called our Attorney General, Skip Humphrey, and our Governor, Arne Carlson. The total number will never be known, but a harried secretary at the governor's office pleaded with one of my friends, "Could you please tell people to

stop calling about this thing, we can't get any work done here." Good.

Finally, the matter hit the front pages of the regular newspapers and the AG and BMP knew they needed to reach a settlement with Helen to save face. They were relieved when she signed on the dotted line. That's when the wheels of political time began to roll. When the memory is fresh, it is time to act—strike while the anvil is hot. But it is at this juncture that the community had a disagreement. One segment wanted licensure for naturopathic doctors. The other felt that licensing natural health was detrimental to other well-established practitioners, to the consumer, and to the field itself. Does government have the right to licensure or interdict the use of natural substances?

So, a different approach was launched. This is a bill known as the "Complementary and Alternative Health Care Freedom of Access Act" (House file 537; Senate file 689). Like free speech, people should have freedom to attend to their health problems as they wish. This requires an environment in which there is reasonable freedom of practice. Natural healing should be a natural right. We can see the wisdom of this from what has been happening within the licensed profession of naturopathy. In order to curry favor with the Federal government, as it doles out tax dollars to "improve" society, the naturopathic schools have become more and more materialistic and reductionist in their teaching and philosophy. They have abandoned holistic ways in order to impress medical doctors in control of money. Increasingly, faculty members are warned to "sound professional." That means that plants work only because they are like drugs, they are a bag of chemicals. There is no inner life, no spirit, no life force. We are machines and medicine is to be mechanical. As licensed naturopathy has gained power, this has been its voice.

Licensing will always deny what for me is the truth, the life and the way in natural healing. Nature is alive. Material science and reductionist philosophy are man-made institutions that arise out of our own minds and the ever-changing consensus agreement of "experts."

To heal naturally, we must have a relationship with Nature. The plants speak to us. In their shapes, colors, and contours they reveal their essences and their properties. The tense agrimony for tension, the red madder root for the blood, the yellow celandine for the bile. In "spirit signatures," when the plants look like animals, we get the most powerful medicines. Yellow roots, bulging like little men, are the "badger medicines" that help send the food downwards through the intestinal tract (yellow dock root, rhubarb root, goldenseal, American ginseng).

Brown, hairy roots are "bear medicines" that stir the fats and oils (osha root, bear root, balsam root, angelica). Antler-like "elk medicines" give stamina (sumach, blue vervain, royal fern). When did conventional science and medicine ever respect this way of thinking? The Indians of old could have told us this, but they were treated with contempt. Freedom in choice of healing—freedom from persecution by a "consensus science" which makes fun of ordinary people and treats them like they are worthless, freedom to have a relationship with nature that is moral and correct for the individual, not based on enforced chemistry, genetic engineering, and materialist thought—is cultural freedom.

### **Real time**

Political time is not related to real time. The fervor over Helen Healy has died down and, as the politicians say, the public has forgotten. But just now, the "Freedom of Access" bill is reaching a crucial level in its evolution. It has passed the Health Committee in the House and will probably pass the Civil Law Committee, then it goes to the floor in this session, beginning now, in February. That is political time.

So, the time has come. We need you, the supporters of natural healing, to write your representatives and senators at the State Capitol, supporting this bill. If you do not know their names, you can call the "chief clerk of the house" at 651-296-2314. But call, call, write, write, now, now. It is political time.

### **Forget not thyme**

The flu this year has been very bad. I, myself, suffered with it a long time—until I figured out the right remedies. This year, the flu is respiratory in nature: Free secretion with irritation of the membranes, sinusitis, bronchitis, and even pneumonia. For this condition, "stimulants" are very good: Warm, stimulating, pungent plants like ginger, angelica, and (yes) thyme. Or some of the Chinese herbs of the same nature. For the very dilapidated tissues that sometimes set in, in very bad cases, a good astringent like oak bark (small doses) is beneficial. The remedies I mentioned in my previous articles are mostly not the right ones for this year (just like the flu shoots are never quite the right ones)!

## The Mighty Oak And Matters Of Integrity

Matthew Wood

In late February and early March the sap starts to run. For us herbalists, this is the prime time to collect barks. Each tree is laying down a new cambium layer (a new inner bark) and is plumped up with sap. Medicinal properties are at their height.

Most of our roots and barks come from American Indian herbal medicine. The Southern Europeans tended to use the beautiful scented flowers while in northern Europe they used a variety of roots and herbs. Even today we can often tell what tradition a certain herb came from, according to the part used. Slippery elm bark, goldenseal root, echinacea root, oak bark, butternut bark, bayberry bark, prickly ash bark, wild cherry bark, and many others show their origin on Turtle Island, while rosemary, garden sage, thyme, dill, fennel, hyssop, linden flowers, lavender and so on show their origin in the Mediterranean. In Europe, the flowers of the linden were used for quieting restless children (what we might call hyperactivity) while the bark of the basswood (American linden) found similar uses in North America.

Each spring the bear leaves his cavern and searches for food and medicine. If you want to know what to eat and what to cure yourself with, on Turtle Island, you follow the bear. With his long claws, bear digs roots and scrapes off bark, collects berries, in addition to catching fish and small rodents. And that is how the roots and barks came into our herbal pharmacopoeia. And if you dream of the bear . . . there will be one more herbalist in North America.

You learn none of this from reading the advertisements on herbs in the magazines. They are based on pseudo-science, for the most part. Some isolated scientific "fact" is torn out of its natural context, a big Swiss-German pharmaceutical company buys up the crop—10,000 pounds a month from the Amazonian valley or our Midwestern American forest—pours in millions of dollars for marketing and presto! Everybody goes out to buy echinacea or goldenseal or ginkgo or St. John's Wort. You don't learn how to use medicine plants from advertisements, you learn how to abuse them.

This is the time to collect barks, at any rate, and therefore it seems like the time to discuss them. But, as a matter of fact, I only have enough space to mention one or two.

The mighty oak is one of the first trees to catch our eye when we walk outside. The white oak (*Quercus alba*) is the officinal species, although oaks are used pretty much the same throughout the world. They are highly astringent, that is to say, they pull the membranes together, contract them, and give them new tone. Being a very strong astringent, oak bark is used when the tissues are really dilapidated, relaxed as the old doctors put it. The veins are expanded, big, blue/black on the legs, like swollen knotty lumps of grapes, from lack of tone, or there are hemorrhoids, or prolapse of the intestine or uterus, or chronic diarrhea from lack of tone. Oak is high in minerals, and it also helps build the bones and teeth. It is indicated for dilapidated, relaxed gums, sometimes putrid, and dental caries. The dose is small, due to the high astringency—a few drops.

The oak tree has personality and so does the person who needs it. They have integrity and keep struggling on against adversity, as Dr. Bach taught us, never giving up, but never succeeding. As one of my friends said, "oh, I see, it helps you choose the battles you can win." The oak person tries to "out-integrity" the issues of life, taking them on as a matter of integrity or personal challenge, when as a matter of fact, they are not always our personal business. That's why there is a God out there, to help us when we can't do it personally—which is pretty often, unless you're an oak person. It is a remedy for alcoholism. Even the tea will work.

So, I went to visit my friend Maria in an ancient town on the coast of Massachusetts. New England is oak person country. She was in bed, miserable when I got there. Yes, she took on too much over all those years, until at last she was worn out and she came down with prolapse of the large intestine. Or maybe it was genetic. The doctors said it might kill her, and of course, if she wanted to live she had to have surgery, and if she wanted to have surgery she had to have it now, while she was still covered by her husband's soon-to-change policy. So she did.

Of course it didn't do any good. After all the misery of recuperation from an operation they hadn't described to her, complete with going through the vagina to get to the colon, severe internal bleeding, she was no better off than before.

One of my herb students criticized me lately for always telling stories about sudden miracle cures with a single drop of an herb and so forth, so here we will mention only one miracle cure and one slow, ongoing, long, drawn out semi-cure. Our craft—the "craft so long to learn," as



Hippocrates said—is full of perfect cures, imperfect cures, perfect failures and imperfect failures.

From my reading I knew that red root (*Ceanothus americanus*) was introduced into American herbalism by surgeons in Boston, about 1835, to stop internal bleeding after operations. That's one of the few herbal uses we owe to surgeons, though they maybe got the idea from the Indians. Once again, we are talking about a native plant and its root. But at any rate, it seemed the perfect root for a woman operated on in Boston and full of extravasating blood. And of course, the cure was almost miraculous, and she did stand up in 15 minutes and say, wow, I feel human again.

But that wasn't the real problem, if you remember. It was the prolapsed colon. The surgery, it turned out, was a failure. Next time I saw her I suggested white oak bark and ya' know what. That condition slowly got better over two years and she is still taking it and it is still slowly improving and it wasn't a miracle exactly, but she doesn't need to worry about dying anymore.

Another great astringent to pick at this time of the year is sumac bark, but I don't have enough space to talk about that right now. Suffice to say, however, our beautiful little stag horn sumac grows near the mighty oak and the two are wonderful friends, and if you ask them carefully, they might help you. And if we are lucky, we'll be able to talk about that one sometime.

## Freedom Of Access Bill On Its Way

Matthew Wood

As they say, "Don't count those chickens before they hatch." However, a person who started with no eggs can celebrate having acquired some against great odds. That's where we find ourselves today in the battle for health freedom in the state of Minnesota. We won all the preliminary battles, got our bill through two house committees and three senate committees, made some compromises, and in doing so picked up new support and disarmed old enemies.

All this for people who started with no eggs—complementary/alternative medicine (CAM) consumers and practitioners with no rights under the old law. Even if we lose at the next step, we have already done so well that, yes, we have something to celebrate. So uncork the teeny, weenie champagne bottles, but save the big ones for our grand victory.

We got off to a good start almost two years ago. None of us had ever lobbied people at the capitol before. Elected officials seemed very intimidating. After watching the dynamics of the house health committee, our little organization of consumers and providers noticed one representative that seemed the least sympathetic to the designs of modern medicine. Several of our group visited him.

Arlon Lindner, R-Corcoran, was probably the strongest ally we could have found in the house. He had a Texas accent that seems to say, by the intonation itself: "Big government, go home." He said to us, "If the AMA is against it, I'm in favor of it."

So we had one ally at the capitol who would support us no matter what, but if we wanted a sponsor for our bill, Rep. Lindner was not the right person. He was too radical for the likes of most of the people up at the capitol. And so it was we teamed up with Lynda Boudreau, R-Faribault. She saw the basic freedoms that were being denied to massive numbers of people and the need to provide those freedoms. She took a lot of pressure for us and I hope everybody in our field remembers her name as a real ally and friend.

We presented our bill (house file number 537), called the "Freedom of Access, Freedom of Practice bill," to the house health committee. What struck me strongly about the representatives on that committee was how skeptical they were about everything the doctors and big medicine said. It was clear they'd heard b.s. before from big lobby groups like this and

they no longer believed there was an aura about doctors that made them superior human beings. I was especially impressed with Fran Bradley, R-Rochester, who supported our side despite the nature of the district he represents.

Our next hurdle was the civil law committee. Here we had a bunch of lawyers and (to keep them in check) a few non-lawyers, whose concern was to craft legislation that is legally enforceable. And here we met one of our most implacable and crafty foes, Rep. Phil Carruthers, DFL-Brooklyn Center. We also found strong allies like Rep. Andy Dawkins, DFL-St. Paul. We also found a mindless fellow who will remain nameless. Rep. Out-To-Lunch said, in effect, "I don't know anything about your issue and I don't want to learn anything about it either." And indeed, his office was free of the normal clutter of books, charts, and educational materials found in nearly every other office. At least he was impartial in his apathy. The head of the committee was my own representative, Steve Smith, R-Mound. He tabled our bill for the 1999 session and it came up again just this last month.

Well, it was a long, knock-down, fight 'em procedure in civil law. Whereas most bills need a half hour session, ours needed more than 12 hours! Rep. Smith was most gracious, giving everybody time to speak and making sure that all concerns and issues, on all sides, were heard. He clearly sought consensus and came close to achieving it.

The concept of CAM as a basic freedom that the public should possess was hard to understand—especially for a bunch of lawyers. Phil Carruthers was the only one on the committee who really seemed to have read and comprehended every line in the bill, but he genuinely hated it. He was cantankerous, sly, tricky, intimidating, and noisy, but I would not impugn his honesty. He sincerely seemed to think the public needed protection from the dangers of CAM. He favored licensure, not unlicensed freedom.

In the end, even some of our foes came round to support us. The Mayo Clinic lawyers, working through their buddy, Rep. Dave Bishop, R-Rochester, finally came up with language acceptable to the clinic and even Rep. Bishop came on board. The Minnesota Medical Association (AMA Jr.) dropped their opposition, and even the Board of Medical Practice dropped opposition to one version of the bill.

Rep. Out-To-Lunch originally voted in such an erratic pattern that it was clear he did not understand what was going on. No vote for sale here—he couldn't even figure out which vote was in favor and which was against.

But he came around too. Friends in his district lobbied him enough so that he understood the issue.

Eventually, I hope we can thank everybody, name by name, who helped along the way. But let us not count our chickens yet. We are still on the eggs. After the great bottleneck in civil law, the bill skipped through several other committees in the house and senate. As I write, it sits poised to go forward, either for a vote on the floor or for inclusion in the general omnibus bill, combined with a bunch of other healthcare items. If it goes to the floor for a vote, we will need our readers to lobby their senators and representatives. If it goes through the omnibus doorway we will not need it...but why not lobby your legislators anyway?

Our bill is well timed. We just heard a rumor that the White House was forming a group to study CAM education and healthcare. This is exactly what we want to avoid. We want consumer- and provider-driven solutions to problems, not heavy-handed regulation from the top down. That's how we lost control of the field in the first place. The public ceded its right to the "experts."

## Grassroots Effort Moves Mountains

Matthew Wood

IT'S THE LAW! Minnesota passed epoch-making legislation and the governor signed into law an act giving all people the right to seek complementary and alternative medical (CAM) practitioners of their choice—at the same time granting unlicensed people the right to practice these natural, simple, non-invasive methods of healing.

It is not a blank check—there are provisions for the protection of the public against unscrupulous and abusive practitioners. It is a bill balanced by the need for legal responsibilities and liabilities on the part of practitioners, as well as freedom of access and practice.

To me, such rights of access and vocation have always seemed as innate as the right to breathe fresh air. They have seemed like the "natural rights" guaranteed by the Constitution. And yet, they had been taken away.

Those of us who have practiced for a lifetime under the old system, dreading the knock of government on the door on a daily basis, can well appreciate the change. On behalf of all such practitioners, I want to thank all of you who have helped us write letters, call legislators, or who have donated time or money. This has been a movement of and by the people.

Other states will probably follow suit. Minnesota is considered the leader in the country on healthcare. It has the reputation to influence other states. Already, legislators from New York requested a copy of our bill and lay practitioners and consumers in the Empire State are organizing for the legislative push. One New Yorker said to me, "This approach seems spiritually correct. When I first heard about it, it was like a light was turned on."

I cannot help but reminisce about the events that led to this historic sea of change. About 12 years ago, the late St. Paul naturopath, Dr. Tom Stowell, attempted to gain legal status for naturopathy in Minnesota. I guess we could say he "stuck his face into the face of the medical profession." He was turned down, but the Board of Medical Practice (BMP) did not forget. Tom passed away and the mantle of naturopathic medicine fell to his business partner, Helen Healy. The BMP waited for almost 10 years and then sprang their iron-jawed trap on her.

They had an embarrassingly empty case. CAM practitioners rallied to Helen's standard, the public heard about it and the Board and the State Attorney General (who represents the Board) were inundated with letters and calls. We don't know how many, but a secretary in the governor's office pleaded with one of our friends to stop calling—"there are so many calls we can't get any business done." It was a huge fiasco from the standpoint of the Board and the AG (then Skip Humphrey), and they were only happy to settle out of court with Helen.

A huge momentum had built up, but there was a divergence in the philosophy of where to go from there. Helen and a handful of naturopaths wanted licensure for their profession. The rest of us saw this as weakening the position of everybody else. We also felt that the thing should be done in the correct spirit. Natural medicine should be a right of the people, not a right granted by the state.

There were some hard feelings and sense of betrayals on both sides. The pro-licensure people were opposed and stopped by the no-license group. Then the latter began to build a movement.

I fretted that as the months and years passed from the Helen Healy ordeal people would forget, but time and time again, you rallied...in large numbers...on short notice...to call your legislators and support your movement.

We found allies in strange places. The Department of Health issued a study which supported non-licensed regulation along with licensed—both as viable options. A large lobbying firm was mysteriously on our side at, providing services somewhere in the neighborhood of \$500 per hour. We received great advice and help from the lobbyists of this firm, Amy and Jay Nawrocki and Jim Erickson. Far off in another state, there is a secret supporter of our quest for freedom—I wish I could thank him publicly, but he choose to remain anonymous. He, too, was once a natural health practitioner, facing the same climate of fear we faced.

In the house committee on health and human services, we noticed a representative that seemed outspoken enough to support our notion of health freedom. Arlon Lindner, a libertarian-style Republican from Corcoran told us, "if the AMA is against it, I'm for it." We had our first supporter! Rep. Lynda Boudreau, IR-Faribault, stepped forward to sponsor our bill. Although she was not active in the CAM issue to begin with, she saw it as the basic freedom and justice issue that it is. She braved a great deal of opposition, even calls from pharmaceutical

companies! But she stuck with this bill through all the challenges.

It turned out that my own representative, Rep. Steve Smith, IR-Mound, was the head of the most important committee (civil law) in which the bill got bottled up. A bunch of lawyers, with a few normal people scattered in—the civil law committee is there to poke holes in legislature...and they did. But they also offered good advice. Rep. Smith showed himself to be a true gentleman in leading the committee through this thorny issue, spending many hours of committee time to work out a viable solution.

Yes, we did get support from democrats too. Rep. Andy Dawkins, DFL-St. Paul was a staunch supporter on civil law. Mary Ellen Otremba, DFL-Long Prairie was our spiritual sister. We had DFL sponsors in the Senate. However, I have to give credit to the Republicans. They were true to the oft-stated Republican idea that less government is better government. Consistently, it was the Democrats (Lee Greenfield, Phil Carruthers, Allan Spear) who wanted to "protect the public against themselves" at the cost of primal freedoms. Allan Spear, the only openly declared gay on the hill, railed against us in a hateful fashion, proclaiming that vitamin stores should be shut down and people should not be allowed to do anything but follow their doctor's advice. It was unbelievable that someone who lived an unconventional lifestyle should have such utter disregard for another's unconventional lifestyle. Weird. Phil Carruthers was more of a good sport, and at times a valuable critic, but still a true believer in "protecting the public from themselves."

Well, I vote. I don't like politics. It is a necessary evil. My grandfather, the old political activist, summed up my politics pretty accurately. "You are an anarchist—in deed, not in word." Too true. Sorry about all those phone calls from friends, family, students, and clients I have not returned. I've been busy these several years. "I don't know how you manage to live your magical lifestyle," he added.

## Going Back To The Basics, Bacteria, Balance

Matthew Wood

Starting in the late 19th century, the modern medical model began to develop, based on the idea that the general causes of illness were bacteria and viruses. Called the "germ theory," bacteria and viruses were the "causative agents." If only we could kill them, we could cure all disease. But remember, it is only a theory.

Against this argument, there were some other scientists who said no, it's not just the bacteria, it's also the environment within which they flourish. If the body is producing waste products the bacteria can live off, then getting rid of the little critters will not solve the problem.

This view was snuffed out. Today, we think that bacteria causes everything. Modern medicine was thrilled to find that a bacteria caused stomach ulcers, and now they believe it is associated with indigestion and gastric acidity, so they are giving antibiotics for everything the stomach can suffer from. This, of course, does not explain why many people have bacteria but no stomach symptoms.

There are some alternative practitioners who go one up on the doctors. They believe that all diseases are caused by some sort of parasites here or there, bacterium, viri, flukes in the blood, in the liver, in the brain, etc. None of these show up on legitimate medical tests, but they show up on the tests these practitioners give.

I belong to a third school, the old, heretical school that was ignored in the 19th century, which maintains the idea that there is an imbalance in the body which needs to be corrected in order for the bacteria to lose their means of survival. This is the approach of nearly all forms of traditional medicine. In this school of thought, the basic idea of diagnosis is not to isolate a bacteria or a local lesion, but to understand the underlying pattern of imbalance in the tissues. And mostly, this resolves down to whether the body is hot or cold, damp or dry.

In China, there are the five elements (fire, earth, water, metal, wood) and the six causative factors (hot, cold, damp, dry, wind, and summer heat). In Ayurveda, there are the five elements (fire, earth, air, water, and ether) and the three dosha. In Greek medicine, there are the four qualities (hot, cold, damp, dry) and the four elements (earth, water, air, and fire). The metaphors are different from culture to culture. It is hard to get the elements to agree exactly, but most people can agree on the



qualities of hot and cold, damp and dry.

Nineteenth century herbal medicine used a slightly different approach. In an attempt to stay in line with scientific ideas, the old model of hot and cold was dropped. Instead the emphasis was put on the "tissue state," as I call it: Whether the tissues were over-stimulated, over-contracted, or over-relaxed.

Here we follow one of the basic lessons in high school science. We learned in "biology 101" that all living tissue is characterized by the fact that it responds to stimulation, it contracts and then it relaxes. This is true for the amoebae and the human being. The stimulation is the signal from the brain, the arm moves by muscular contraction, then it relaxes at your side again.

If we look at old time medicine—and we are going to do that in upcoming articles—we will find that what the old doctors, both allopathic and herbal, were trying to do was stimulate, contract, sedate, or relax tissues in order to bring them back into a normal life where the bacteria can't survive. There are four to six basic "tissue states," depending on where we draw the lines. First, there is over-stimulation, which the old books call "irritation." The tissues are full, red, hot, irritated, excited, and increased in function, restlessness, hyper-activity, and often what we would call an auto-immune or allergic tendency. These people do best with sedatives and relaxants like linden flowers, rosehips, peach leaf, hawthorn, yellow dock root, lavender, skullcap, etc. Homeopathic remedies include aconite, bellow and apis (honey bee).

Then there is the contracted state or tension. The neuromuscular system is in spasm; symptoms tend to be jerky, sudden, changeable, alternating, intermittent, spasmodic. These people need anti-spasmodics and relaxants: Agrimony, blue vervain, chamomile.

Third is the relaxed state: Tissues are too slow in response, relaxed, pores are open, fluids are lost, or fluids run off until they hit a barrier and build up; exhaustion by loss of fluids or edema with fatigue are common. (Many people in this condition say they have "candida" or systemic yeast). These people need astringents: Oak bark, sumac especially, raspberry leaf, although some of them also need heat-reducers like wild bergamot and yellow dock root (excellent in candida).

The fourth state is the atrophic. Tissues are undernourished and therefore react only weakly to stimulation. There is dryness (because nutrition travels through water to get to the cell), weakness, wasting,

thinness, loss of function (hormones also travel through the water). These people need oils in their diet—the essential fatty acids, evening primrose oil, flaxseed oil—but also bitters (gentian, burdock, Oregon grape root) to stimulate secretion, and sweet mucilages (slippery elm) to build up water.

Finally, we have the fifth tissue state: Depression. Tissues fail to respond to stimulation at all: They are cold, inactive and finally, putrefactive—bacteria sets in to feed off the debris. Hands and feet are cold, skin cool and dry. These people need stimulants—garlic, cabbage leaf, cayenne and other vegetables high in cleansing sulfur and heat. Some remedies are not as stimulating but they clear stagnation: Echinacea, dandelion, pipsissewa. And finally, acids are helpful here (whey, vinegar, lemon juice). These five "tissue states" are easy to see in ourselves and others. They are truly scientific, referring to real conditions in the organism, and they also correspond to the old traditional model: Heat = irritation, cold = depression, dry = atrophy, and damp = relaxation. Tension fits what the Chinese call "wind."

Homeopaths will disagree with this approach, saying that it is cold to hot, contrary to contrary, not according to their motto: Like to like. Unlike drugs however, herbs are gentle. They make the body respond to their influence, but they do not suppress it; they return the tissue condition to balance. I find that every good herb, while it may work by the principal of hot to cold, will also conform to the homeopathic ideal: It will cause the symptoms for which it is remedial. If cayenne pepper over-stimulates, depression will follow. Then we see that cayenne is a stimulant for depression in a moderate dosage. In excess dosage, it will wear out the tissue and cause long-term depression.

One of my criticisms of modern alternative practitioners is that they do not establish a good non-medical diagnosis, a basis for using their herbs or methods. They simply follow what the medical doctor said and try to fit an herb in instead of a drug or they use a homeopathic remedy based on the symptom picture, but without an appreciation for the over-all pattern. The use of liver flukes, parasites, bacteria XYZ is also a smoke screen for lack of a good diagnosis. We need to be able to perceive what is wrong in the organism in an energetic fashion: Hot, cold, stimulated, depressed. It does not matter which system we use, as long as we have this energetic diagnosis available to work from. Otherwise, we are practicing on ignorance and luck. Sometimes we will succeed, but it is like shooting in the dark.

## Dusting Off 18th Century Herb Books

Matthew Wood

Recently I bought an old copy of William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* published in London in 1779, the sixth edition. I scan old herb books for information on our green friends, or for a historical perspective on the history of medicine and herbalism.

This particular book is notable because it was the first medical book published for lay people in the 18th century. The first edition appeared in 1763, and was still in print in 1852, so it was obviously the first text that helped establish domestic and folk medical concepts in early America.

That was one of the reasons I bought the book. However, you can imagine my surprise when I turned to the title page, then the flyleaf, and found the name of my great-great-great-great grandfather, as well as another cousin, Thomas Pearsall, his book bought of Edmund Prior, New York, 1781.

My readers will probably be bored by such musty old stuff. Both the Pearsalls and Priors were old Quaker families living on Long Island. Rachel Pearsall, daughter of Thomas, married Samuel Willis, nephew of Edmund. They were parents of Amy Willis whose picture still hangs on my parents' wall.

By reading this book I not only got a chance to study what early Americans were using for medicine, but precisely what my own ancestors were using too. Here is one of the old family recipes Thomas Pearsall used to cure "king's evil" (swollen glands).

"Take a double handful of the root of frost weed, make it into a salve and apply it on the swellings." Frost weed (*Helianthemum*) is still common on the sandy soils of Long Island.

What I was most interested in was the understanding of the general medical ideas and practices of early Americans. There is an unfortunate tendency to make fun of the practices of the old doctors since "we know so much today."

It's a good idea to treat your ancestors with respect. They knew the best way to survive in their environment, and if we paid heed, we'd find that they knew many things that would help us as well.

Today it's common to laugh at the "heroic" medicine of the 18th century, with its bleeding, blistering, purging, vomiting, sweating, and use of toxic mineral remedies. A look at the book convinced me that this laughter is based on modern conceit and ignorance. Perhaps modern medicine will one day seem even more barbaric.

While it's true that George Washington was bled to death by his doctors, the basic concept of the old doctors was not a blind belief in bleeding, purging, blistering per se, but in stimulating or relaxing, moistening or drying the organism or local area by the use of simple methods.

What would you do if your child had a fever of 105 with red, full hot tissues, delirium, and restlessness? Remember, there are no antibiotics or for that matter, even thermometers. William Buchan says, "in this and all other fevers attended with a hard, full, quick pulse, bleeding is of the greatest importance." That will certainly relax an over-stimulated and excited condition.

However, I do prefer Buchan's herbal advice, "many cooling ligors, which are extremely grateful to patients in a fever, may be prepared from fruits, as decoctions of tamarinds, apple tea, orange whey, and the like." Mucilaginous ligors might also be prepared from marshmallow roots, linseed, lime tree buds, that we call basswood in America, and all members of the rose family—including apple—are heat-reducing remedies.

Lime not only reduces heat and congestion, but specifically in the kidneys, allowing more blood, waste products, and water to pass through them. It also lowers high blood pressure and orthostatic hypertension—a condition that when you stand up feels like your head is going to explode.

Excreting more urine is a natural way to "let blood." Rosehips, peach leaf, and wild cherry bark—the favorite fever remedy of the woodland American Indians—all reduce heat and irritation. But often we need the exact remedy for the situation, not just any old fever remedy.

What did they do to stop bleeding? The opposite of blood letting would be to stimulate the circulation. We read about the Civil War doctors giving whiskey to the wounded who were bleeding and in shock because it was a "stimulant." The modern person snickers and says, "Well, a stimulant would increase bleeding."

Not so. (The snickerers' information is based on theory, not experience). A stimulant opens the capillary circulation and therefore takes the blood

away from the wound. One of my students cut himself across the shin to the bone with a chain saw—three inches long and an eighth of an inch across.

He was so shocked he kept working and didn't look at it for 10 minutes, then he went to the side of the road, gathered up some yarrow—a stimulating hemostatic—chewed it, and put it on the wound. The bleeding stopped almost immediately. The blood pooled under the skin (red and blue) disappeared in 15 minutes, and it appeared that the lips of the wound were closing up.

The latter is an “herbal action” we read about in the old books, but which is discarded by modern authors as an impossibility.

## Try Herbal Medicine For Female Conditions

Matthew Wood

One of the most gratifying conditions to treat and cure is infertility. I recently had a rash of successes which were not only worthwhile in themselves, but taught me more about the how to approach this difficulty. A note on my machine thrust the issue to my attention. "You should have predicted it would work in five days instead of three months!"

One of the great misunderstandings about "female conditions," as we herbalists call them, is that treatment of hormonal imbalances is the most important and primary approach. Actually, hormones are just part of a greater symphony of events. To treat the details—rather than the predominant pattern—is one of the delusions of modern medicine that has, unfortunately, rubbed off on a lot of easily-impressed herbalists. But I am one who trusts the lore of our ancestors, the wise women, old physicians, the Indian people (masters of woodland lore), and the pioneers (sons and daughters of necessity, the mother of invention). I would trust their teachings over the new-fangled, short-lived theories of an arrogant medicine almost any day.

### **Determining patterns in gynecological concerns**

For the sake of simplicity, we can round out gynecological patterns to about five in number. First, we have the hot, irritable states where there is an element of autoimmune over-activity with engorgement of blood to the parts and heat. This tends to promote excessive tissue build-up, endometriosis, uterine fibroids, and heavy bleeding. The main remedies here are trillium, yarrow, and peach leaf. These remedies are indicated by an elongated, reddish tongue with a red tip. Trillium (or birth root) is suited to endometriosis when the uterus is full and hot, where there is too much tissue

to pass and some of it goes back into the body cavities while there is profuse bleeding. Just this week I had a call from a happy woman whose endometrioma was dramatically reduced in size, in just two weeks, from trillium. Always use this remedy in dilution—it is rare.

Speaking of fertility, I helped one woman by telephone who had horrific endometriosis. The doctor recommended a hysterectomy but she was only 27 and she and her husband wanted to have children. She took trillium and was pregnant in two months. At six months she went back to

her gynecologist, who verbally abused her for "trusting her life to an herb"! Some things, for some people, are worth taking risks for! Yarrow is the chief remedy for uterine fibroids, when associated with congestion of the veins and capillaries (the skin looks red with prominent veins) and excessive bright red blood. I have seen it cure fibroids the size of grapefruit, but it takes months and works best in perimenopausal women. Peach leaf (tincture from the fresh leaves or, if unavailable, the kernels deprived of the poisonous pits) is a general, all-around remedy for autoimmune over-activity. It is as soothing as the skin of a peach and should be consulted in those cases where there is infertility from auto-immunity or a "hot womb," as we rustic herbalists call it.

The second pattern in gynecology is a very important and prominent one, and accounts for most types of infertility. This is dryness and atrophy. The skin is dry, tissues are dry and hence there is a deficiency of water and lipids to convey food and fluids to the cells and—most importantly, for our hormone-besotted modern sophisticates—to convey hormones from the glands of origination to their receptor sites. Sex hormones, steroids, and thyroxine need lipid carriers to get anywhere in the body; if there is tissue dryness they cannot get around and do their jobs. It is not a matter of stimulating the endocrine system to produce more hormones or supplementing with the artificial variety—it is instead to supply the fats and oils to get the hormones to the tissues. That is why, today, many people take omega 3 oils (flaxseed oil, evening primrose oil, borage oil, etc.). Burdock root, one of our best-known herbal remedies, is the great lipid regulator. It increases digestion, metabolism, and utilization of lipids, helping the thyroid and the endocrine system in general, and also increases the water fluids in the body slightly. However, we have more specific remedies—owing largely to the Indian people—for the female system. False unicorn root (very rare and endangered) and true unicorn root (rare and on the watch list) are the old standbys. They increase nutrition and hormonal activity, hence are useful in infertility, dryness of skin, mucosa, joints, prolapse of the uterus from weakness, etc. I would only use the former (*Aletris farinosa*) in a dilute, homeopathic form, and the latter (*Helonia dioeca*) in dilute herbal form.

### **Five days until pregnancy!**

That brings us to the case where I should have predicted five days to pregnancy. The woman, age 31, was diagnosed as suffering from "probable early menopause." She and her husband had already tried all sorts of fertility clinics at who knows what cost. Helonias was our major

remedy and she was pregnant in five days! Another important problem with dryness is not in the membranes but in the secretions. When the ovum is released from the follicle, it is accompanied by some fluids that wash it down to the uterus. If these fluids and passages become congested we have a common form of infertility that, I was informed by a client, is treated by some women with over-the-counter cough medicine to thin the fluids! We have our own remedy for this that is permanently curative, one of the truly great remedies in infertility. The old doctors used Madonna lily, but Easter lily is more easily obtained in herb and horticultural commerce. That is what I use—and it has brought on successful pregnancy numerous times, both in my practice and that of others.

Another gynecological pattern is cold. The lower back feels cold and stiff as well as some of the joints. This is where I earned my fame for the "five-day prediction." A 41-year-old woman with one child desired another. She had the requisite stiffness and a tense, hard, slow pulse, indicating cold. The best remedy in these cases is wild lettuce. Having seen it work before, I apparently predicted she would be pregnant in five days. At least that is what she told me two years later, when she was bouncing a healthy little boy on her knee.

Another remedy for a "cold uterus" as we herbalists call it, is mugwort. This is an extremely common weed in some places, but only to be used in the smallest doses—one drop, once a day is good. This is indicated when there has been obstetric injuries and scar tissue in the uterus, also in hormonal irregularity.

The fourth condition is the damp or relaxed, where the uterus is enlarged, swollen, prolapsed, and the skin damp. Very often there are enough hormones here, but the uterus cannot support a pregnancy. The remedies here are astringents—raspberry leaf, lady's mantle, and white ash bark, to name a few.

The fifth condition is tension. This affects the uterus greatly, as it is a muscular organ. When the uterus is tight, cold, stiff, and tensed up, the blood does not get in and out well. Blue cohosh is a good remedy here, and is specific for infertility in older women, according to a native practitioner. If the blood is coagulated and dark it means the uterus is not active enough. If there is actual muscular atrophy we need shepherd's purse—this is also to be used in uterine fibroids from a "cold uterus."



## Boosting The Immune System Naturally

Matthew Wood

I stopped by Present Moment Herbs, where I served the first eight years of my herbal apprenticeship. Kathy Anderson, the accountant, said, “why don’t you write about the immune system in your article?” Strengthening the immune system is a big issue in the fall. Unfortunately, by the time this article appears, it will probably be mid-winter and many people will have gotten sick. But, it is a good idea. So clip this article and my upcoming columns, because they will be the best thing you are ever going to read about building the immune system.

We are not going to be learning about the immune system according to the modern fad books, but according to age-old tradition. There are a lot of books and ideas out about the immune system and “boosting immunity.” As with most such ideas, they are presented in a superficial fashion. People don’t really understand immunity, except in a general sort of way, and they don’t apply ideas about immune-building, except in a superficial manner. So let’s try and remedy that situation.

### *The over-looked hypothalamus*

There are two aspects to immunity, or self-governance and self-healing by the organism. That is the hypothalamus and the immune system proper. In the usual, superficial fashion of modern culture, the first is almost completely over-looked, for some unknown reason, while the second is given excessive preoccupation.

The hypothalamus is the “thermostat” of the brain. It regulates interior and exterior heat, keeps it steady, adjusts for sudden changes, and is always active in guarding, when the body is well, and rectifying, when the body is sick. There are “thermoreceptors” in the interior and the exterior; the hypothalamus keeps the body temperature in balance. If the exterior gets over-exposed to cold, the hypothalamus signals for shivering to warm up the exterior.

If this isn’t enough, the capillaries dilate and the blood moves to the surface, to warm the periphery. These actions produce the normal response of “fever”—chills, followed by hot, full, red tissues and fever. Very often the pores of the skin are closed, but when the fever clears, they open up and release perspiration. This sweat, often occurring in the night, is familiar to everybody: it heralds the end of the fever.

The traditional way to deal with fever and temperature changes in the

body is to aid the hypothalamus in adjusting the “vents” (shivering, blood flow, perspiration). Thus, in traditional herbalism, “diaphoretics” or sweat-producing teas and herbs have long been used to treat acute disease or to correct unhealthy, unfinished business remaining after fever—chills, cool, dry, moist, or warm skin. When any of these symptoms are present, the hypothalamus is less strong, less in control, less able to deal with acute disease.

When the hypothalamus is strong it creates what my physiological textbook rather scientifically called a “shield,” or a protection against the exterior. Ninety-five percent of the blood in the skin is there not to feed and nourish the area with oxygen and blood sugar, but to strengthen the barrier against the outside. The hypothalamus moves this blood out or in to the interior, to change the temperature. It adjusts blood volumes continuously. When in health, the hypothalamus keeps up a healthy flow from interior to exterior—the temperature in the organs is about 100 degrees, while it is about 98.6 degrees at the periphery.

#### *Modern medicine weakens hypothalamus function*

Modern medicine does not attempt to strengthen this shield, in fact, it weakens the shield. The modern way to deal with these phenomena is to suppress the hypothalamus and to ignore all of these reactions. Tylenol directly suppresses the fever response and weakens the hypothalamic reactions so that, over-time, the body is less able to react with zest to a fever. Anti-biotics “kill bacteria” that settle in when the body is chilled or over-heated, but they do not work with the hypothalamus. Even in so-called “alternative medicine,” all people try to do is use “natural anti-biotics” to kill bacteria. Well, I got news. That is not natural and it is not holistic. It simply weakens the immune system.

The traditional method works with the body’s natural self-healing ability, under the command of the hypothalamus. It strengthens the shield. If the body is stuck on the chill-mechanism, so that we have the typical symptoms of winter flu—chills and achiness in the bones—we use boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*) or yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). If the skin is dry, hot, and red we want to open the pores, so we use elder flowers (*Sambucus canadensis*, *S. nigra*). If the skin is dry and the heat is deep in the interior we need to dredge it up with hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*). If there is restlessness, over-activity, sleeplessness, hot skin dry or sweaty, or alternating, linden flowers (*Tilia europaea*, *T. americanum*) is suited. If there is a profuse moist sweat, with a cool, moist skin, indicating that the pores are stuck open, we use sweet leaf

or wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) if there is also internal heat, and sage (*Salvia officinalis*) if the system is more cold with perspiration. If there is a profuse oily sweat—the sebaceous glands are involved rather than sweat pores—we use burdock seed (*Arctium lappa*). If there is a mixture of dry and oily skin, we use yarrow (*Achillea*) or elecampane (*Inula helenium*)—the latter especially in acute or chronic bronchitis.

If the stomach or intestines are involved, as in acute influenza, we have resource to another bunch of botanicals that have served people around the world for millenia. Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*) is probably the most famous for upset stomach, gas, cramps, nausea, and chills associated with acute fever. Raspberry leaf (*Rubus idaeus canadensis*) or blackberry leaf (*Rubus villosa*) is better when there is diarrhea or an ameba. If there is both diarrhea and vomiting, with an active, violent side to the symptom expression, it is often wise to use homeopathic Ipecac.

If there is constipation, instead of diarrhea, it is very important to “keep open the bowels,” as the old doctors and grannies would have said. This is especially true of infants. You watch an infant with fever—almost always there is constipation. The remedy for this is catnip, which opens the skin and relieves spasm. Towards the end of the fever of flu the kidneys will sometimes shut down under the stress of removing all the waste products. The urine gets dark and concentrated, or light and copious, the lower back and feet feel achy and tired. The remedy here is goldenrod (*Solidago spp.*)

**Many of these remedies are combined together: Yarrow, elder, peppermint**

(an old fever tea); boneset, yarrow, linden flowers (flu); elder and linden (fever, flu); boneset, peppermint, raspberry (stomach flu). Yarrow, elder and linden are particularly good when we are dealing with children that are already over-active and hot to begin with—hyper-active, as we say. Elder, linden, and hawthorn will usually, in my experience, totally cure hyper-activity and often, attention deficit. (Catnip, on the other hand, is good for children that are mean). It is best to take these herbs as hot teas to expel a chill and open the pores or cold to run off through the kidneys and the bowels. However, for convenience, any of these remedies can be taken as capsules or tinctures.

One final, extremely important remedy should be mentioned. When the hypothalamus is generally running things hot (too much blood, white cells, immune factors, etc.) we have the condition of hyper-immunity,

where we need to sedate the blood and immune system. The best remedy here, in my experience, is peach leaf. If that cannot be had, then rosehips.

The second component of immunity is the immune system proper. That will take a full article to describe, so we will take it up next issue.

## Lymphatic System - Vehicle For Our Body's Immune System

Matthew Wood

Last month we started on a discussion of immunity. First, we discussed the hypothalamus, because it rules the reactions to fever, chill, and stress by opening and shutting the “vents” of the body—shivering, blood flow to or from the surface, and opening or closing of the sweat pores and sebaceous glands. In acute fever, cold, influenza, or bronchial infection it is best to start with the herbs we mentioned last issue (yarrow, elder, linden flower, burdock, catnip, peppermint, boneset, etc.) We help rectify imbalances in the hypothalamic regulation of heat and temperature, and that strengthens the long-term ability to deal with these stresses, including bacteria and viruses that settle in when the periphery is too hot, too cold, too damp, too dry, etc. We will follow up this discussion by focusing on the immune system proper.

The capillary network, through which the hypothalamus guards the periphery by opening and closing vessels, is accompanied by a lymphatic network. The lymphatic ducts drain the interior of the body, just as the hypothalamus is protecting the exterior. They work together. When there is an invasion from the exterior, say a scratch, the hypothalamus floods in blood and blood sugar to accelerate cellular activities and the lymphatic system carries away waste products and provides an accelerated flush of white cells and immune cells to kill bacteria and denature foreign objects. This lymphatic network, which we will discuss shortly, is the most external element in the immune system proper.

### **Immunity and the lymphatic system**

The interior of the body is a great ocean, the internalization of the great mother ocean in which life originated. Each cell is bathed by this ocean, which brings it food and carries away waste products. There are inlets and outlets of this ocean, so that food is carried in and waste products out. Meanwhile, while all this happy feeding is going on, there are “immune factors” policing the internal ocean to keep it clean and healthy. Just as the hypothalamus has a sort of thermic core and periphery, the immune system also has an internal core and an external periphery. We need to keep all of these healthy in order to have a healthy immune system—in addition to keeping the hypothalamic self-regulation healthy.

The lymphatic system is the “vehicle” for the immune system to a large degree. It is the internal “ocean” and the immune system works largely

through it. The core of the immune system, however, begins in the marrow of the bones. The bone marrow is the source of “stem cells” which manufacture immune cells (lymphocytes) that are carried into the lymph and participate in the “policing action” going on in there. It is also the source of production for many of the white blood cells of the body, which are also carried into the lymph, police the interior waters (they are the bacteria-killers), and then move through the lymphatic ducts into the bloodstream, where they continue to carry on their job. The blood is flooded to the periphery, as we saw, to help set up a “shield” against external invasion, so there are 20 times the white cells present in the skin than elsewhere.

So we see that there is an outward movement, from the core to the periphery in terms of the immune system, as well as heat and the hypothalamus.

### **Bone marrow—core of the immune system**

The bone marrow is the core of the immune system, in a sense; the health of

the marrow is essential to good immunity. The marrow produces bone, lymphocytes, white red cells, and red blood cells, so it is very important in other ways as well. In order to have a healthy marrow we have to have healthy kidneys, because they screen the blood and send a signal to the bone marrow to produce more red blood cells. If the signal is down, the marrow tends to be weak. Or, vice versa, the kidney signal may be strong but the marrow itself is weak and cannot receive it. So, first, we attend to the kidneys.

“Kidney anemia” is different from “iron anemia.” It can be measured and distinguished by blood tests, but the old doctors and granny healers could tell by looking at the patient. They called it “poor blood.” It especially affects young women who are slender, pale, tired, weak, with a blue hue showing through the skin; copious, light urine; copious, watery menses; and low immunity. Iron supplements don’t help. The traditional remedy for “kidney anemia” is staghorn sumac or any kind of sumac (bark, leaf or berry, but the berry has additional properties). This is an “elk medicine” (the branches look like antler) so it protects the people by giving stamina.

It is also good for men who urinate too frequently at night (copious, light urine) and children who wet the bed from the same problem. Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*) is an old Indian remedy for protection against the

winter, because by strengthening the kidneys we strengthen the marrow and the immune system. The tea is taken in the fall, cooled to reach the kidneys.

If there is both kidney anemia and bone deficiency (marked by a tendency to thinness with osteoporosis, poor bone-healing, poor closure of the fontanelles in infancy, poor teeth, etc) then we need another, more powerful elk medicine. One old author calls it the “only and absolute cure” for rickets, or poor bone growth in children. This is royal fern, or buck horn brake (*Osmunda regalis*). This not only strengthens the kidneys to retain water and increase the signaling to the bone marrow, but it acts on the marrow to improve building of bone. It is for thin people with weak bones, poor blood, and low immunity. One of the oldest recipes (probably of Native American origin) says to use five parts osmunda and one part sumac.

The third remedy for the bone marrow is sweetfern (*Comptonia asplenifolia*). This remedy reaches through the entire immune system, from the bone marrow, through the lymphatic serum and ducts, and on to the small intestine, the outer boundary of the lymph/immune. It is also another old American Indian remedy (we are giving the traditional native view of immune tonification here, not the modern fad approach). It is for thin people who do not thrive, or anybody with the following symptoms: Diarrhea, poor assimilation and tissue nutrition, food allergies, low immunity, easily made sick by foods, chemicals, and changes in the weather. It acts from the periphery of the lymphatic system, the ducts under the skin, and around the small intestine, through the interior lymphatic system, down to the core in the bone marrow. Thus, sweetfern is for rickets, swollen glands, low immunity, poor blood, and winter colds and flus. It does not act directly on the kidneys, but rather through the marrow, the glands, and the small intestine.

If the marrow is not making good white blood cells, that throws a burden on the lymphatic glands, which also make white blood cells. They cannot keep up, or their function is depressed trying to keep up and the glands cannot clean the lymph so they get swollen and indurated—hard glands around the periphery of the body.

Sweetfern must be properly gathered. The old woman who kindly taught me about this plant said to harvest it after the frosts kill the leaves and turns them black. Always respect the way of the person who taught you about the plant.

These three medicine plants are the basis of fortifying the immune system from the standpoint of the medicine knowledge of the American Indian people of the eastern woodland region, at least, how I learned it. There is an additional herb that fortifies the bone marrow that comes from China. It is now a fad herb—astragalus. In our next article we will take up that plant, plus some traditional European medicinal plants that are used to cleanse and strengthen the interior, the glands and lymph, and the periphery, the peripheral lymphatic ducts under the skin. With that we will have comprehensive view of how to “strengthen the immune system.”



## Herbs Strengthen The Immune System

Matthew Wood

In the last two issues we learned how to treat the immune system from a traditional, holistic standpoint, instead of the modern, faddish perspective, which is fragmentary, counterproductive, even injurious, and paid for by advertisements from big pharmaceutical companies. As we saw, the core of the immune system is the bone marrow, which produces lymphocytes (immune cells) and white blood cells. Its health is somewhat dependent on the kidneys, which signal the bone marrow to produce red blood cells.

We also hinted at the relationship between the bone marrow, the lymphatic system, and the small intestine. If the bone marrow is not able to manufacture enough lymphocytes and white blood cells, this will throw a burden on the lymphatic nodes, which strain the lymph as it heads back into the bloodstream, manufacture white blood cells, and host battles between bacteria, waste products, foreign proteins, and the white cells and immune factors of the body. If the marrow is weak, the lymphatic glands will be stressed to produce enough white cells and will tend to get swollen and hardened because there is not enough white and immune cells to fight the wars of immunity in the interior waters of the body. The reverse is also true: If the lymph nodes are weak, the bone marrow will be stressed to provide enough white and immune cells. The periphery of this system are the lymphatic ducts under the skin, which help protect the exterior against invasion, and the lymphatic ducts (lacteals or mesenteric glands) surrounding the small intestine—they bring in the food from the interior and screen it for bacteria and foreign proteins or toxins with their own supply of white cells and immune factors.

So, there are five keys to strengthening the immune system:

The hypothalamus, which regulates the periphery and body temperature;

The kidneys, which support the bone marrow;

The marrow;

The intermediate lymphatic glands and fluid; and

The peripheral lymphatics, both under the skin and surrounding the small intestine.

## Immune-strengthening herbs

We have already covered the first three elements of this system. Perhaps the most important herb was sweetfern, the great “immune strengthener” used by the American Indian people. It strengthens the peripheral lymphatics, the interior lymph/immune system, all the way down to the bone marrow. It acts less on the kidneys—as would sumac or royal fern.

The major immune strengthening herb that comes to us from traditional Chinese herbalism is astragalus (*Astragalus chinensis*). This, just like the preceding herbs, is used for “kidney yang deficiency,” or inability to retain filtered urine, with copious, light urine, frequent trips to the bathroom at night, and weak lower back and kidneys. By stimulating the kidneys it stimulates the bone marrow and that causes it to have the same, or similar effects to sumac, royal fern, and sweetfern. I might add that knowing many remedies for one condition is better than knowing only a few, because each constitution is different, and one remedy will do for one person, where it will not do for another. Astragalus is often used with red ginseng in China, because that is a “yang tonic.”

In China astragalus is used in the fall—as a tea—by people who need to work outside during the winter. It braces the kidneys, improves the function of the marrow, and builds “immunity,” as we call it today. In the same way, the Indian people used—or sometimes still use—sumac and comptonia in the fall to strengthen immunity.

The final remedy we should mention for the bone marrow aspect of immunity is not the least—bone marrow stew. The use of stew bones is an old folk-remedy for strengthening the blood, immunity, and bones, that should not be forgotten or laughed off by modern people who think that cure only comes in a capsule. My friends, “wise women” herbalists out east, consider it essential for deep nutrition of the body.

## The peripheral lymphatics

In addition to strengthening the kidneys and the bone marrow, we need to decongest the lymphatics all the way out to the periphery. Wherever there are swollen glands, left over from an old infection or lymphatic trauma, the lymph/immune system is compromised. For this we need to rely upon a series of remedies known and used by the peasants of Europe: Calendula and wild carrot.

Calendula flowers through the months (or “calends”) from May to

November, if we are lucky. The peasants picked the flowers all summer long, into the fall, dried them and saved them for the winter, when they threw them into soups and stews, the better to protect themselves against fevers, colds, and flus. From what I know of the action of calendula, it does not under any circumstances act on the kidneys or the marrow. Rather, it cleanses old infections and swellings out of the peripheral lymphatic ducts under the skin (and around the small intestines, probably). It thus improves immunity by freeing us from old immune-suppression. When calendula is needed, the tongue is usually flabby and pale, with pale spots around the periphery, indicating peripheral lymphatic stagnation.

The second remedy used to flush out the peripheral lymphatic circulation is wild carrot seed, also known as Queen Anne's lace. We pick the green seed and tincture it fresh to make the best, and use it in small doses. This remedy has an influence stimulating the endocrine system. (It cannot be used during pregnancy, as it is an active abortifacient). It is particularly indicated in women (sometimes men) with low thyroid and weight gain due to water weight, where the peripheral lymphatics are not picking up the fluids enough. The thyroid stimulates some lymphatic activity and this is how Queen Anne's lace works.

Calendula and wild carrot may be assisted by a third medicine plant, red root or New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanum*). This plant also works on lymphatic stagnation, or free secretion (loss of fluids) like Comptonia. Calendula is also important because it strengthens the thymus, or the "brain of the immune system," centered in the chest. When the thymus is suppressed there is generalized, non-specific depression (because the thymus is close to the heart), generalized dampness, and stagnation in the waters. For this, combine calendula and dandelion root.

## **Echinacea**

The most famous immune stimulant of all is echinacea, and this can be used to assist all the others and make them work better. However, if it is over-used it actually weakens the immune system; excessive reliance on it (like every time you have a cold) tends not to cure the immune system but to put off the day of reckoning. Echinacea is a stimulant (tingling), and therefore it can only be used for short periods of time because it will over-stimulate. What it does is stimulate the production of white blood cells. However, over-stimulation will simply wear this mechanism out and the body will become exhausted and suffer from low immunity. So only use echinacea for short bouts—one to two weeks—with

at least a week off before using again.

## Hypo- Vs. Hyperimmunity: Know The Difference

Matthew Wood

In the past three articles we have discussed immunity. We made sure to mention the hypothalamus, which is often overlooked by modern physicians and lay people. It is the regulator of body temperature; it "opens and closes" the "vents" in the skin and periphery which protect the body—the functions of shivering, blood volume, sweat pores, etc.

Nowadays, people use "immune boosters" and "stimulants" in a completely untrained and non-holistic fashion, damaging themselves just as much as helping. Ignorance, quite frankly, is not too unkind a word. We need to know, therefore, how to treat each one of us, according to the condition of our "immunity." Each person is different, and it takes some differentiation and some skill, to see who needs what.

### Treating hyperimmunity

The first thing we must do is to differentiate between the people who are suffering from *hyper-* and *hypoimmunity*. Almost everybody comes to me, in my practice, says they have "low immunity," even those who are suffering from excessive immune reactions. These people are generally hot, red, and dry. They tend towards excessive febrile reactions. They need remedies to sedate heat and increase dampness in the body (which also sedates heat). Often they need diaphoretics to open the skin, which is dry and hot.

The best all around remedy here is peach leaf or twig. This is especially indicated for somewhat pale, delicate-skinned people who easily sunburn, have allergies, sinus problems, or food allergies from a tendency to overreaction.

If peach leaf is not available, use rose hips. The use of rose hips during fever will heighten immune response, but afterwards, it will reduce an excessive response back to normal. Rose hips or vitamin C are, therefore, immune strengthening, particularly to people with hyperimmunity. Linden flowers are also an immune-sedative. Some of the fever remedies or diaphoretics that work here are burdock seed or root, yarrow, elder flowers and linden flowers. All these plants (peach, rose, linden, elder, etc.) are indicated when the tongue is elongated and red, indicating excess heat (hyperimmune tendencies), or when the tongue is dry (burdock, chickweed), indicating a lack of fluids.

One old herbalist said that peach leaf helps get antibiotics out of the bones. There is, of course, no scientific evidence to back this up, and it is even difficult to see how she could have figured this out—or it may be a folk medical expression. Still, when we remember the importance of the bone marrow in immunity, we can see the point. Often, the intuition or advice of an old practitioner is worth more than all the scientific research since Galileo—though such empirical, experiential knowledge is shunned by modern medicine.

(As a matter of fact, let me here thank one of my contemporaries, Phyllis Light, an experienced herbalist in Arab, Alabama, who taught me about "kidney anemia" and helped me to appreciate the place of the kidneys and bone marrow in immune disease. She also helped me understand remedies for endocrine deficiency—only alluded to at the end of this article.)

Hyperimmune people tend to have a strong (overly strong) peripheral defense system and they need and respond well to all the remedies mentioned under the hypothalamus. They usually don't need the remedies for immune weakness. In fact, those remedies tend to over-stimulate them. A good general formula for these people is peach leaf, linden flowers, elder flowers, cleavers (lymphatic cleaning for the hot and dry), and sometimes—yarrow. Add a pinch of echinacea as a catalyst.

### **Treating hypoimmunity**

These people tend to be more pale, cold, damp, thin or thick, but not hot and dry. They have slow kidneys and lymphatics. Water stays in them a long time, or just runs off continually. About the only remedies mentioned under the section on the hypothalamus to which they may respond are burdock root and sage. These are indicated if there is a combination of dry and damp conditions in the interior. They are both very good for older people. Both are really good for toning up the endocrine system (remember wild carrot seed from our previous article as well).

Generally, these are the people who need sumac, osmunda, comptonia, and astragalus for the kidneys and bone marrow. They also need comptonia, calendula, red root, and sometimes wild carrot for the lymphatics. A good general formula for these people is sumac, comptonia, astragalus, and calendula. Add a pinch of echinacea as a catalyst. Only use osmunda if there is evidence of poor bone growth.

If there is endocrine sluggishness or deficiency, endocrine (hypothyroid,

water weight gain, infertility, exhaustion) also make up a formula of burdock root, sage leaf, and wild carrot. Add a pinch of licorice (unless you are on steroidal drugs).

I myself do not use general formulations, because I take a specific case history and address each person according to their individual condition. I use "simples" (single herbs) or compounds that are specific for the person. However, the above are good, general observations and formulations which I think will work well when people make at least the most basic effort to differentiate between hyper- and hypoimmune dysfunction.

Some of the remedies mentioned in this article are hard to get because we are using old Native American recipes for increasing immunity. However, I must ask that you not inundate me with a rash of calls trying to find these remedies. Instead, please ask your herb store or contact Walker Herb Farm (763-498-7140) in Greenfield, Minnesota. I sometimes need to point out that I am a practicing herbalist (consultant), not an herb-supplier.

## White House Commission On Cam Policy In Minnesota

Matthew Wood

Well, we had near riotous fun in the holistic health community a couple months ago when The White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Medicine Policy came to study us. We in Minnesota have been distinguished by the passage of our bill protecting the rights of consumers and practitioners of holistic healthcare. Ours is the first state in the country to sanction practice by non-licensed providers. We feel that this, and only this, provides real healthcare freedom. Many of us in the holistic theatre do not wish to repeat the mistakes of conventional medicine—excess regulation, spirit-killing education, control by insurance companies, high expense practice, and, more than anything else, the rulership of "experts" over us ignorant people. We want true freedom—competition in an open market based on "what works in practice" and "who works." Hopefully, we made some kind of impression.

### Funding vs. freedom?

One of the most dramatic panels was the one (which was added at the last minute) on ethnic healing. The stress here was that medical licensing laws make ethnic healers illegal. There was a woman from Russia, who treated many within the Russian community. "We thought there was supposed to be freedom in the United States, but when we got here we find we are illegal." Another dramatic speaker was Joe Reyes, a Mexican/Indian representative. A commissioner asked him if he would like federal dollars to study his ethnic tradition and make it part of a university curriculum? "I don't want your money," he said simply. "I want my freedom."

Many in the audience noted that it was okay for people of color to have ethnic traditions, and there is sympathy for their rights, but white people are supposed to toe the company line. If they didn't like conventional science and medicine they are treated with contempt. They don't have the right to talk about the spirit and healing and nature without being laughed at.

### Mainstream media bias

This, in fact, was proven by the absurd article visited on us the following day by the *StarTribune* entitled "Federal panel hears ideas on alternative health treatments" by Josephine Marcotty (Mar. 17). This showed the usual prejudice towards alternative medicine we have long observed in



this newspaper. Opening paragraph: "How do you apply reason to alternative healthcare, the parallel universe to medicine that's part belief, part magic, and part placebo effect?"

Both the writer and the paper felt free to insult people holding different views. We lack "reason." We adhere to magic and placebos. We are consigned to a "parallel universe." This nasty, put-down language pervaded the entire article. Even the dignified medical doctors and personnel on the committee were not spared. (I buy the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* when I can; they have proven themselves to be respectful and unbiased towards people who hold a different opinion on this subject).

Those who would appeal to "reason" should act the part. They show an irrational quality when they have to resort to unreasonable emotionalism and name-calling. Rule 1 of a distinguished newspaper: Don't make your point by putting people down. Make it by rational arguments. That shows that you are in command of your subject, not that it is, in some insidious way, in command of you.

Well, since the newspaper couldn't argue the point in an unbiased and newsworthy fashion, let me see what I can do. It happens that I agree. How can we apply, let us say, "scientific standards," to a field which is not based on science? Is it appropriate to do so?

### **Harnessing the ineffable**

What makes us what we are—an alternative—is the fact that we incorporate something that is not scientifically verifiable into the practice of healing. It may be the spirit, soul, mind, God, Earth, Mother Nature, chi, life force, the green nations (plants), or whatever. Let's not go ruining this ineffable "something" by trying to smush it into a scientific/medical model that is already cracking at the seams and downright distasteful to many of us.

But the experts argue, "How can the consumer know what practitioner to go to if the government doesn't tell them?" Since when was it the government's business to tell us how to run our lives? Can they tell us how to trust the spirit, listen to our intuition, make decisions based on our instincts? The new patient will make mistakes. The seasoned practitioner will make mistakes. But through it all runs a fine thread: Complementary and alternative healthcare is based on taking responsibility for our own health. The patient will learn from good and bad experiences. Spirit, intuition, and instincts will be cultivated making decisions about health. This will develop a healthy spirit, not a

government bureaucrat dictating to us.

I don't mind living in a "parallel universe." It's a lot funner [sic] over here on this side of the brain. Right? Left? I can't remember which—it was named by the people on the other side. I like it a lot better than the universe kept in perpetual rationality by the *StarTribune*.

### A “common” cure

Well, we can't spend all our time on politics. Not with the little green things popping up all around us. One of our most valuable little friends is *plantain* (*Plantago major*). That's the little broad-leaf weed in your yard with strings running up and down the leaves. Look it up in a book before you poison yourself on something else. Or buy some in a store. It is perfectly safe if you have the right stuff. Plantain is a cousin of *Plantago psyllium*, the active ingredient sold in drug stores and recommended by doctors as a bulking agent to prevent mild constipation.

But we want to use it for something else, something magical, secret, and unscientific. It is called a "drawing agent" in herbal medicine. Put it on an abscess and it draws out the pus and infection. Most useful of all—chew it up and put it on an abscessed tooth or infected root canal. It will probably (we can't make promises) pull out the pus and infection. I have known it to work dozens of times and save people hundreds of dollars in dental bills.

Don't call me for directions. Just chew up a wad and put it against the tooth morning and evening for five minutes. Or buy a tincture, swish a dropperful around your mouth morning and night. Continue as needed. To ensure the best healing, follow after two weeks with some oak bark. This is pretty astringent, so the dose is small—half a dropperful in water, morning and night.

## Digestive Disturbances Come In All Varieties

Matthew Wood

We whipped the subject of immunity and the lymphatic system to death in my last few articles. This month we'll discuss digestion. We'll learn pretty much how to take care of any simple digestive problem. The most important point is to differentiate the type of problem you are having, not so much in terms of its location, but in regard to whether it is hot, cold, damp, dry, constricted, relaxed, etc. We want to know the type of imbalance we have because pretty much the same imbalance will run through the entire digestive canal from the mouth to the rectum. One person will have dental caries, another gas and bloating, another colitis, another diarrhea. It is not the name of the disease or the location so much as the energy pattern, whether it is over-stimulated, depressed, etc. "Heat" digestion There are six basic patterns-at least the way I practice. The first one is over-stimulation, heat, or irritation. The blood is rich, the tissues are engorged and over-active, secretions are excessive-too much saliva and stomach acid. Digestion is strong and quick, appetite voracious, and there is a tendency (with age) to weight gain from excessive nutrition. The transit time for the stool tends to be rapid, so there will often be diarrhea or at least loose stools. Almost always, the tongue is elongated, shaped like a flame, with red/pink coloration. Symptoms may include herpes, painful tongue, thrush, burning, gnawing stomach, restlessness and sleeplessness, regurgitation of acid matter, stomach ulcers, rapid transit of stool (which is loose), bleeding hemorrhoids, etc. These people need sedation. The best remedies for this condition are acids. You can treat yourself with foods-tomato juice, lemon juice (less often), fermented sour whey (if you can find it, yogurt if you can't), vinegar and water, kombucha (fermented green tea), etc. The sour herbs are peach leaf, yellow dock root (especially for thrush and loose stools), rhubarb root, lemon balm, St. John's wort, and yarrow (not sour but heat-reducing). If the person has taken a lot of antacids to suppress the acidity (which is not healing, it can increase acid secretion or suppress it), the remedy is meadowsweet. "Tissue depression" digestion The second pattern is the opposite-tissue depression. Instead of too much secretion there is not enough. Worse yet, tissue life is depressed. There is deterioration of the tissue, including dental caries, receding gums, bad taste in the mouth, bad breath from rotting food, plaque build up on the teeth, poor secretion in the stomach, no digestion or appetite, rotting food in the stomach, putrid belching, nausea but inability to vomit, a very strong tendency to stomach ulceration, constipation with putrid smelling stool. Even more

seriously, there are pathological growths (as the natural life of the body is suppressed), leading to polypi and favoring cancer. The tongue tends to be dark red, blue, purple, coated yellow brown. What is needed here are the traditional carminatives (warming, aromatic spices) such as cardamom, fennel, dill, or the stronger stimulants-hot pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cabbage leaf juice, mustard seed, rosemary. These can be taken as herbs or foods. Because there is depressed tissue life there may be worms or bacteria and we need a worming remedy like butternut bark, walnut, chamomile, thyme, tiny doses of artemisias, etc. These people also need to put in time rebuilding the flora of the colon (acidophilus, fructo-oligino-saccharides).

"Constriction" digestion The third pattern is constriction or tension. The person eats but spasms develop in the stomach and elsewhere. Gas builds up, there is pain, bloating, belching and then it all releases with a big gust of wind. There tends to be constipation, not from inactivity of the colon, or sluggishness, but from tension. (There are three basic kinds of constipation: sluggish bowels, a movement every few days, requiring the laxatives; constricted bowels, alternating constipation and diarrhea; dry bowels, stool is hard, ball-like, dry, and difficult to move). These people are usually tense, if they eat on the run they should slow down. The most famous remedy for this condition is peppermint, but we can also use spearmint, catnip, or chamomile. In severe tension we might need blue vervain, especially if the intestines are involved.

"Relaxation" digestion The fourth pattern is the opposite of the last-relaxation. The stomach is too relaxed. Food sits there, the muscles move slowly, the secretions are watery and thin. The tongue is moist, round, pale, coated white. Saliva is copious but thin and does not cleanse the teeth, causing dental caries. There is nausea, and unlike tissue depression, there is easy vomiting, because the stomach muscles are relaxed and the abdominal muscles and diaphragm can easily wring it out with a good heave. The stool tends to be loose. Astringents are needed: blackberry leaf tea, raspberry, bayberry, uva ursi, oak bark (especially for rotting teeth and gums), wild geranium, herb robert.

"Lack of secretion" digestion The fifth pattern is dryness or lack of secretion. There is a lack of saliva, dry mouth, dry tongue, sometimes even a shriveled tongue, a kink in the throat-hard to swallow, dry stomach with gas, bloating, flatus, very poor digestion, poor assimilation, and therefore wasting and slenderness. The stool tends to be hard and dry. Constipation here is from dryness. These people often have weak gut level instincts, so they are lacking in confidence, worried, afraid. They tend to get a little nervous so whatever nutrition they do get is quickly burned off. The remedies here need to be soothing, moistening, lubricating, and nourishing. That includes marshmallow root, slippery elm, and American ginseng. If there is a shortage of oil, poor

bile secretion, dry stool, constipation, dry skin, there may be a need for oily foods and herbs-flaxseed oil, burdock, angelica, sage, wild bergamot. "Stagnation" digestion The sixth pattern is stagnation. The system is sluggish. Secretions are slow. Food moves slowly through the stomach and intestines. There is true constipation, not from dryness or spasm, but from a sluggish peristalsis of the intestinal muscles. They are the only type that due well on the bitter laxatives-aloe, senna, cascara sagrada. They also need the bitter tonics to increase secretion in the stomach and the liver. These people often have a sluggish liver with hang-over symptoms. The tongue tends to be coated. In addition to the above, goldenseal in very small doses (one drop a day) as bitter tonic, when the tongue is flabby and apathetic, or chionanthus (fringe tree) when it is dark on the sides. Well, I hope that is enough to guide you through stomach distress, constipation, diarrhea, gum disease, or whatever, to a simple, safe and permanent solution. Remember, drug companies want to keep you on their drugs (not cured, but palliated). With herbs we have no choice. They come from God and Mother Nature and they cure. When the right one has been selected the system is stimulated, sedated, relaxed, astringed, softened, hardened, etc. to return to health.

## Notes From An Herbal Rebel

Matthew Wood

MEDICAL FREEDOM CAME to Minnesota on July 1, 2001. I was out of town at the time, but on my arrival on July 8, I came under our new law, giving consumers the right to obtain complementary and alternative healthcare from non-licensed practitioners. I resented the lengthy, weighty, and legalistic version required by statute. But, oh well, it is a law I can support; I helped get it through. A new feeling . . . following the calling of my spirit and being legal at it for the first time in my life. One would think it would be all "joy and light" from this point on, but life is not so simple. I had gotten so used to being an outcast - a rebel, an iconoclast, a defamed and persecuted herbalist - that it has been difficult to adjust. I feel like a fish out of water. I'm still ready to pick a fight. The family in which I was born has been politically alternative for about 10 generations, so it was easier for me than for many - natural, in fact - to assume a role contrary to the social norm. Not that it was that easy. The first five or six years I worked at Present Moment Herbs and Books, in south Minneapolis, I was pretty much tortured every day for the knowledge that my path was taking me into waters which were outside the legally defined beach. But I jumped in. I was not going to live a life that was false to my true vocation. That's presuming that the angels of my better nature would have let me live if I had voted to follow that path! One should not take one's talents and time on earth for granted. A misstep can endanger one's life - spiritual and material. People can be excused for making decisions when they don't know any better. Society is based on general convenience. But when we are aware of our calling, to ignore it is perilous. When I got used to it, it was fun being a contrary. There is the rakish, Robin Hood sort of archetype to reward one. But I know for a fact that any Robin Hood would prefer to live out his life on his hereditary estates, in more peaceful days. Even now, not a day passes when I don't wish I was on another path. It's not a good idea for government to pass laws which outlaw people who wish to contribute to society by following their inner guidance. Justified defiance is a dangerous thing. When one law is flaunted, all are called into question. I learned that virtually everybody is breaking the law all the time. It was just a matter of whether government wished to impose a given law at any particular moment - and whether the public will put up with it if they did. We saw, when the Board of Medical Practice tried to shut down Helen Healy, that the public would not. A life lived on one's personal convictions has power. Guilt is not on one's shoulders for breaking the unjust law. There were several times,

when we were fighting with our medical opponents before the Civil Law Committee of the State House of Representatives, that I felt my inner spirit stand up against the Board of Medical Practice and testify on the spiritual plane. They were guilty of denying justice to honest people. After all of this, I found myself in a changed position. While we fought for this bill - three some years, meeting weekly - many of us on the front line lost our clientele. We had to do much of the work ourselves. I already had trouble getting to all my calls; now a great number of them slipped through my fingers. (Sorry about that, if you were one of those people). A similar thing happened to Jerri Johnson and Nancy Hone, who did so much of our lobbying and organizing. Jerri has given up her practice to pursue complementary and alternative health lobbying while Nancy is just returning to her practice now. I wish to thank both of them and I'd like others to know their real sacrifices. About the time my responsibilities with our organization were winding down, I found myself called out of town on speaking engagements. So my practice has continued to wither, despite the freedom I now enjoy to practice! Life is ironic. The struggle continues Being a contrary has not ended by any means. It is pretty clear that the medical doctors are now angling to take over our field, defining it on their own terms. They are pushing a so-called "scientific herbalism" in place of those of us ignorant enough to follow generations of tradition, established literature, and personal experience. I say "so-called" because most of their facts are mere theories and sound-bites marketed by aggressive German pharmaceutical companies. The general public and their doctors think they know about St. John's wort, kava kava, echinacea, goldenseal, bilberry, etc., but a close look shows that their knowledge is coming from advertisements. This delusion has been aided by so-called "herbalists" - seldom actual practitioners - who parrot the official information but have never practiced. These people have not walked in the woods for 30 years. They have not listened respectfully to the older generation - white, red, black, brown, or yellow. They have not practiced herbalism for 20 years. They have not read traditional literature. They haven't even tasted the herb, for the most part. They read an advertisement. . . and they think that is true! A salty old herb wholesaler from "AppaLATcha" once said to me, "The first thing you have to understand about herb commerce is that it has been controlled by two or three German pharmaceutical companies for about 500 years." (Oh, yeah, I read about the Fuggers and the Hapsburgs in my history classes). So I won't get my undies too much in a knot. These problems are old. The truth Herbs don't work by being predictable and easy to understand. Scientists and doctors are misguided and arrogant if they think knowledge of a few isolated compounds is going to teach them about something as complicated as herbal healing.

The green world stands in contrary relationship to their world. When an herb heals it is like an intrusion from another dimension. It is like God or Mother Nature or an angel has spoken. As Arlo Omaha, one of my contrarian friends, said, "Herbs work by magic and they don't work any other way." But that's a big story and it would take another article.



## Elder - A Complete Pharmacopoeia

Matthew Wood

AS I WRITE (in late August) the black elderberries are ripening. This is what elder berry wine is made from. Quite a treat. Elder flowers or berries are a good remedy to stock up on for the winter; they are useful for colds and flu. Thinking about elder brings me back to the old days, 10 or more years ago, when I worked at Present Moment Herbs in Minneapolis. It was one of my co-workers, Chris Hafner (now an acupuncturist), who taught me much of what I know about this plant. The use of elder as an herbal medicine goes way back in the annals of European history and we have inherited most of our knowledge from Old World sources, rather than New, though we use the native elder now (*Sambucus canadensis*). Charlemagne instituted the first public health measures after the fall of the Roman Empire, about 1,200 years ago. He decreed that the monasteries, long centers of Western culture after the fall of Rome, should grow a designated number of herbs to maintain the surrounding population with medicine. Charlemagne also decreed that every household should plant an elder tree for use as a sort of "first aid" kit. The monastic gardens were filled with the medicines of classical Greek tradition, but the black elder (*Sambucus nigra*) represented the dark, barbarian, pagan side of European culture, from which Charlemagne himself sprang. Elder well-rooted in herbal lore Given this boost, elder entered deeply into European folk medicine and culture. In European lore the elder tree is looked upon as an actual personage. She is the abode of, or is herself the "Hilda Moer" or "Little Elder Mother." She is Mother Nature; offerings were placed under the elder each spring to ensure in exchange for medicine. Unlike the American Indian practice, where each plant is offered a gift, in the European peasant tradition a gift is placed by this one tree as the mediator between us and Dame Nature. As the giver and the taker of life, she is Queen of Nature and its soul, the Underworld. To set matters right on both sides of the aisle, the herbs were brought to church at the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mother in mid-August. Elder entered deeply into folk Christianity in the Middle Ages. It was said to be the tree upon which Christ was crucified and also the tree from which Judas hanged himself. From the cross, Christ descended into the Underworld, remained for three days, freed the souls of the dead, and returned to the world of the living. Elder was thus considered to be the all-important crossroads of life and death. Elder served as a complete pharmacopoeia for the European peasantry, as Charlemagne intended. Different parts of the plant were used for different purposes. The bark ("stripped upwards" or taken in a strong

decoction) provokes vomiting; the bark ("stripped downwards" or taken slowly) purges by bowel and kidney. The dried flowers (which are sour, sweet, and slightly acrid) are a sedative diaphoretic, while the fresh flowers (sour, sweet, acrid and pungent) are more stimulating. The leaves placed on hot, swollen boils and bruises move hot, stagnant blood. The sweet and sour berries are used as a nutritive blood tonic. They also have been used as a general remedy for arthritis. In short, elder answers all the needs of a medicine suited to the humoral model of medicine: It vomits, purges, diureses, sweats, and manages the blood. Black elder is native to Europe. It can live long and reach a small, tree-like diameter. This explains the idea that it provided the wood for the true cross. Our elder is a small shrub that grows in swamps and flowers in midsummer and produces purple-black berries. It can be used as a substitute for the European elder. We use the berries or flowers—the leaves and bark are too active for safe use. Red elder (*Sambucus pubescens*) grows on uplands in North America, flowers in spring and produces red berries. This variety should not be used. A complete pharmacopoeia As mentioned above, elder is an excellent remedy for fever, cold, and flu. It is specifically indicated when the skin is hot, red, and dry. It is also indicated by retention of urine, constipation, intestinal colic, and irritable, spasmodic coughing. Elder is also indicated in a surfeit of fluids, thus when the skin is cool, pale and blue; in copious, free expectoration with spasmodic coughing; in diarrhea, dropsy, and free perspiration from sudden cold or fever. It is especially good for a swollen wrist or ankle which is blue or swollen when injured (as opposed to bruises to the muscles which are usually red and blue). It helps arthritis in such swollen joints as well. These complexions (hot, dry, red and blue, swollen, pale) tend to occur together. We often see dry, red, irritable cheeks with swollen blue across the bridge of the nose. Often large, "cheeky" tissues (cheeks, forearms, thighs) show the evidence in dry, red, irritable skin or a sub-dermal, puffy, swollen condition with mottled red, blue, and white coloration—in dark-skinned people, dark and light brown. However, the edema usually follows heat and fever. One thing that Chris taught me is that elder is especially useful in the diseases of infants. It is indicated for babies with red, dry, irritable skin of the cheeks and a blue, pale swelling over the root of the nose. Give an infusion or tincture of the dried flowers to the lactating mother, or a small amount to the baby on the finger. *Sambucus* is one of the most important remedies for fevers, flu, coughs, and colds in children. It is always indicated by the particular complexions mentioned above. In middle ear congestion it can be combined with ground ivy, violet, and lady's mantle. It is excellent in spasmodic croup. (The indications for croup have been particularly developed in homeopathic literature; they

are equally applicable to herbal medicine). Elder is traditionally combined with yarrow and peppermint as a diaphoretic tea. It is also combined with linden flowers for fever and influenza. The leaves of burdock, plantain, and elder, chopped and placed on a boil will provide quick cure for most boils. The flowers are the most amenable part of the plant and are best when dried before use.

## Learning From Anthrax

Matthew Wood

The Anthrax scare is hopefully crawling to a halt as I write. I thought I would take the subject as a point of departure, not only so that we can understand why this bacteria is so dangerous, but so we can learn lessons we can apply in less dangerous, ordinary bacterial infections.

When bacteria invade an organism they secrete toxic substances that help change the environment of the organism so that it will be more suited to their living requirements. They are not the natural inhabitant of the body and they need to modify it in order to be comfortable. In doing so they depress the life of the host organism. Parasites operate the same way.

Many times I have had to treat people who never felt right after a bout of malaria, parasites, or amebic dysentery. The allopathic drugs (flagel, quinine-derivatives, etc.) eliminated the microorganisms, but the symptoms remained. Why? Because the symptoms were caused by the deposition of toxins in the body, not by the mere presence of the bacteria. The cell life of the organism remained depressed after the bacteria were killed, so the people still felt sick. Herbs and homeopathic remedies have no trouble curing these kinds of conditions. By eliminating the toxins, they often make the environment inhospitable to the organism, also sweeping it away. The thing that makes anthrax such a danger is that the toxins secreted by this bacteria are unusually toxic. Also, in the case of inhalation anthrax, the attack is sudden and rapid, so that one has only about 24 hours from the appearance of the first symptom to get antibiotics! No herb is going to act quick enough to reverse that kind of process. The anthrax toxins cause rapid depression and death of the cellular life of the host. The tissue degenerates into a necrotic, pus-filled, boil-infested mass. Some people are hit harder than others. People (or animals) that already have a depressed tissue life (from disease, other bacteria, or simple aging) are quicker to be affected and die. That is why the victims of anthrax so tend to be middle-aged and older.

### **Herbs help in recovery but only after death of the anthrax bacteria**

We may not want to treat anthrax with herbs although they would help with the recovery after the death of the bacteria. However, we can treat many other kinds of bacterial infection.

There is an assumption in conventional medicine—I have heard so-called

educated scientists make this statement in public discussion several times—that there was no treatment for bacterial infections before antibiotics appeared and without these drugs people would die of simple boils and infections. Some have overheard those in non-traditional medicine condemning this ignorance and arrogance as being typical of modern science. There was and still is effective traditional herbal treatment for bacterial infection, boils, fevers, etc. Instead of killing the bacteria, the depressed tissue life is stimulated so that the toxins are metabolized and the bacteria have to leave because their home is no longer comfortable. The organism is returned to real health, not the semi-health of post-antibiotic therapy.

Unfortunately, the tendency in modern herbalism, which has lost its traditional roots, is to ape modern medicine. Thus, "natural antibiotics" are used to substitute for pharmaceutical antibiotics. This gives the same result: Semi-health.

One of my students traveled to Ghana several years ago. Katie refused the standard shots required for yellow fever and malaria when Americans travel to West Africa. When she arrived in Ghana she found that people were well informed on areas of the country where (due to the weather) there were active yellow fever and malaria epidemics. People avoided these places. She found that a whole older generation of Ghanaians—generally many of those over 50 years—were permanently blind from the use of Western drugs in their youth for the treatment of malaria. As a result, nobody used these drugs any more. Everybody had their own favorites and they were quite confident at the treatment of malaria. Americans have a paternalistic, racist, arrogant view of dark-skinned people in Third World countries. We're so sure of ourselves we would poison people to prove ourselves right.

**Old-timer treatment of disease and infection** The old-timers on this continent treated malaria, bacterial infections, boils, yellow fever, etc., confidently themselves. They used several different categories of medicine:

**Stimulants.** These are warming or heating, sometimes stimulating and tingling remedies, like cayenne, horseradish, ginger, onion, etc. This bunch is generally used in a recent cold, flu, or fever where the system is simply chilled and not chronically depressed. Deeper warming stimulants include thyme, rosemary, cumin, coriander, etc. Some stimulants are cooling, i.e., they remove heat caused by tissue degeneration such as echinacea, isatis, baptisia, hyssop, lavender, yarrow. Antiseptics are a specific group of stimulants—cedar, pine, thyme, etc.

**Bitters.** These are particularly used when there are deep chills with body ache, from internal infection. Olive leaf is an important traditional bitter for malaria. The fragrant bitters are an especially potent group because they not only settle deep, congestive chills but kill bacteria and parasites. Boneset, quinine, black walnut, wormwood (toxic), and sweet Annie are figured in this group. For yellow/green, purulent (bacterial filled pus) also add elecampane.

**Acrid nervines.** The chill at the start of a fever causes the hypothalamus to signal the sympathetic nervous system to induce shivering. If the nervous system gets worn down shivering too much it gets stuck in this mode, resulting in intermittent chill/fever with weakness. Good traditional remedies here are the acrid flavored fever remedies agrimony, cinquefoil, and tulip poplar.

It is a testament to the subjective nature of modern science that scientists generally tend to understand concepts in agreement with their own point of view. Clearly, bacteria and parasites could be treated in a rational, scientific manner, but this other method is ignored because it does not fit the accepted approach. The history of science shows that it has been encumbered continuously by fads, blindness, and superstitions. This is as true today as it has always been.

## Agrimony gentle Alternative To Kava Kava

Matthew Wood

The Polynesian herb, kava kava (*Piper methysticum*), has been quite popular for the past decade as an herbal relaxant. It is also something of a stimulant and has become something of a "party herb." Now news out of Germany and Switzerland indicates that it may be implicated in as many as 30 cases of liver damage, resulting in four liver transplants and one death.

As an herbal apologist I thought it would be appropriate to make some initial comments on kava kava. I am not perhaps the best spokesperson for this herb; I have long mistrusted the indiscriminate over-use of kava. Something bad will come of it, I thought. And it has. There are still many issues to be determined, like whether the toxicity is from the herb itself or the manufacturing process.

The German pharmaceutical companies that make herbal products like this are enormous affairs. In Polynesia it is customary to prepare kava by chewing on the peppery roots and extracting the active ingredients in the mouth. This is not how it is done in manufacturing. In addition, European corporations have taken to buying the waste products of kava production in the South Pacific the bark instead of the root. There have also been changes in agricultural production with the increase in popularity.

### **Kavastimulant & relaxant**

Kava acts first as a stimulant and secondly as a relaxant, though in some people the relaxant effects are felt immediately. People at first feel an increase in mental and sensory awareness, not hallucinogenic by any means. This is followed after several hours by pleasant relaxation and sleep. I suppose it stimulates the sympathetic (alert, aware) and then the parasympathetic (rest, digest, sleep). As a side-effect, it often irons out and removes kinks or tension in the nervous system.

One reason I do not trust an "herb" like this is because it operates more like a drug. A gentle herb will not cause side-effects, but a poison or drug will force the body to act in a certain way, and that is how kava operates. The relief of anxiety and tension is a secondary effect following the forced over-stimulation and over-relaxation. In the original setting in Polynesian culture, where the substance is chewed and numbs the throat, there is a natural limit to how much can be taken. Loaded up

in a pill, "purified" by modern pharmacology, people will take more than is necessary or appropriate. Lulled to sleep by the magic of "pill-popping," who knows how much they will take? When taken in the mouth, the peppery taste first stimulates, then numbs the nerves. This prevents overuse. But when the unpleasant effect has been removed by modern pharmacy, perhaps also a natural protection has been removed. Perhaps it takes more of the plant to get the curative effects when it is not extracted in the mouth.

It has been known since at least 1891 that large doses more than anybody commonly takes can cause neurological damage. The numbness in the mouth is a warning. People would naturally not take too much. I have never completely trusted the modern, faddist use of kava. I did not expect anything as serious as liver failure as a side-effect, but I always felt that kava was too "drug-like" in its operations. It is more like a medical or recreational drug than an herb. My trust and affections belong to the gentle simples of fields and gardens rose, rosemary, sage, self heal, peppermint, vervain, agrimony which are hardly more active than a hearty food plant. Drugs, on the other hand, are really toxins or poisons used in small or controlled doses to force the body to do something. Truly benign herbs work gently. They cure not through power but by an almost invisible and immaterial virtue. This virtue is so slight, yet so transformative, that modern science and culture does not believe that it even exists. They are so material in their conceptions that they must have herbs and drugs that knock them over their heads. But as my friend Arlo Omaha once said, "herbs work by magic, and they don't work any other way."

Another reason I did not trust kava was because I noticed in the literature of traditional herbalism (c. 1890-1920) that the old doctors did not use this remedy to relax and remove tension, but the reverse as a stimulant to rouse people from a dilapidated and depressed tissue state. When a toxic plant has two opposite uses, one of them is always going to cause trouble because one represents a poisoning of the organism while the other represents the self-healing reaction by the organism against the toxin. I was not sure which usage was correct, but knowing my contemporaries and their tendency towards simplistic, materialistic, faddist solutions to the problems of life, I trusted the old doctors. Kava acts more like a drug or poison than an herb. That is to say, it is forceful in its activity. By comparison, the truly healing herbs are gentle. They do not force the body to do something, but only operate if there is an affinity within the organism for the message that they bear. Otherwise, that message is so subtle that it is lost. It is like the princess asleep in



the castle, under the spell of the evil stepmother. Only the kiss of the prince will rouse her from her sleep. Not any prince, but the right one.

### **True herbs are mild**

The true herbs of the fields are akin to foods rosehips, peach leaf, hawthorn berry, yellow dock root, rhubarb root, agrimony, raspberry, oak, vervain, etc. They do not operate forcefully, but subtly. They do not possess medicinal compounds that bristle with arrogant strength, attracting pharmaceutical companies like flies. They communicate in the gentle language of nature. It is unfortunate that modern people, brainwashed as they are by scientific prejudices and marketing companies, cannot believe in the magic of the herbs. From so many people the princess will never rise from her sleep. They will never feel the touch of magic, never know the language of the heart, which is also the language of living nature.

If you want a simple, gentle substitute for kava kava that is non-toxic, I would recommend agrimony. This herb is a cousin of the rose and the raspberry, and thus akin to the food plants. It barely has any taste at all, and it has long been dismissed by the scientists and doctors, so you know it is going to be powerful. Without being forceful, agrimony soothes tension like nothing I have ever seen. (You can increase the effect somewhat by combining agrimony three parts and true Solomon's seal, two parts). It will take care of mental tension and even sometimes the causes of the mental tension, like the people giving you the trouble. Strange to say, agrimony will somehow change your environment (or the people you are attracting into your life) so that the tension-inducing problems go away.

If there is one thing I know about herbalism, it is this fact. I have seen it work so many times. Agrimony can be used for muscular and skeletal tension, physical tension, gall stone colic, kidney stone colic, digestive distress, as well as for mental tension because, what it does on one level it will do on another. That is the way of herbs. For muscular and skeletal tensions it should be used with Solomon's seal for best effect. The person who needs agrimony is outwardly happy, cheerful, suave, but inwardly tense, unhappy, all bound up. It is for people who are "torturedly cheerful" "too happy to be believed. But it's also for the suave people that seem so cool and collected people that hide their true feelings behind a facade, as Dr. Bach originally taught.

Agrimony is one of the 38 flower essences of Dr. Bach, but it can also be

used as an herb. In fact, I like it better as an herb because the medicinal power is in the resin on the leaves, which is mostly gone when the plant goes to flower or becomes a flower essence. There are some differences between agrimony and kava, however. The former is cooling as well as relaxing, while the later is stimulating and warming in addition to relaxing. Generally, that means kava should be used in people who are tense, but exhausted, worn-out, played-out, even cold and debilitated. But of course, it is used by the young and head-strong because it is so forceful they can feel it. Agrimony is better where cool-headedness is needed.

## Garden Plants Regulated By U.S.D.A.?

Matthew Wood

It was an easy winter but a hard spring. Finally, we were allowed to poke some seed in the ground. By now the green evidence of my diligence stands before me.

At the present time we take for granted that we can plant anything we want, but if the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has its way, and Congress rubber stamps its suggestions, we will soon only be able to plant from a restricted list of approved genetic strains. These, as you can guess, will be controlled by the large agribusiness corporations. They will be approved by teams of scientists doing expensive research at universities and corporations, rather than by experienced gardeners and farmers relying upon their wits and instincts. Such is the way of modern life. Always the mistrust for simple experience and Nature itself.

The proposal the USDA is considering is called the Draft Action Plan for the Noxious Weeds Program. What it proposes is that the department will maintain a clean list or white list of approved plants and seed strains. Due to the diversity of nature we can truly estimate that 99 percent of all plants will be banned. This aspect of the plan was broached a year ago and the public asked for comments. After receiving an 8-1 opposition from the public, the USDA decided, instead of scraping the plan, to move ahead with it. In fact, now they added permits and inspections of all seeds moving across state lines, with substantial fines for those not providing genetic material from the clean list. It will cost a minimum of \$100 for a permit, per seed or plant, to cross state lines. Gardeners trading unregistered seeds or plants across state lines would be subject to fines up to \$1,000, while professional nurseries would face up to \$250,000 fines. This new addition was placed before the public that, in all probability, even more strenuously rejected it. (I doubt if the statistics on the review are yet available). The comment period was closed on Mar. 29 and probably we will soon see the plan presented before Congress.

The ostensible or good reason for this plan is that the country is being bombarded by alien species, bacterial, fungal, vegetable and animal, which are modifying the environment. Some, like the buckthorn, are virtually ruining native woodlands, while others, like the loosestrife, are ruining our swamps. Virtually every major tree species in the United States is now under attack from some kind of bacteria, fungus, or

disease that was unknown a 100 or 200 years ago, but which has been spread by importation from across bioregions within North America, or more commonly, from other parts of the world. Among the especially threatened trees are the elm, oaks, white pine, butternut, spruce, and hemlock.

Unfortunately, the great plan does nothing for eliminating pernicious invaders already established, the effect of which will eventually be or already has been catastrophic. Rather, the idea is to prevent further damage.

The real reason behind the plan, however, has to be fairly clear to an outside observer. Multinational corporations are already suing farmers whose own seed stock, developed over decades, has become contaminated with their patented and often genetically engineered stock. They are claiming that the farmer is stealing their patented genes. It is clear that, ultimately, agribusiness corporations want complete control over all seed lines and the business that it generates. Government bureaucrats, always on the lookout to expand their fiefdoms and gobble up more tax dollars generating busywork, want to have more and stricter laws to control the marketplace, with permits and fines to throttle the criminal public and small businesses. (Most of the nursery trade is still in the hands of small business, one of the few areas of agriculture where this is the case). Universities and scientists want more classroom instruction, more control over the uneducated masses, more grants and more research grants.

What will the result of all this be? While a certain number of plants and seeds will perhaps remain available because they are native to North America, plants and seeds will eventually be controlled as strictly as drugs. Prices will skyrocket. Background gardening and small vegetable farming will become prohibitively expensive and agribusiness, bureaucracy and science will rule over all. Just as was the case with herbs, experts who know nothing definite about gardening, small farming, or the environmental impact of foreign seed material or plants will hold forth in pious, serious tones about the dangers of simple little plants. Humanity will grow increasingly estranged from nature, the food supply will be even more completely controlled, and innovation, imagination and tradition will be persecuted out of existence in yet another field of human endeavor.

The USDA denies that it is trying to control the marketplace, but their website (<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/weeds>) shows what the Weed

Action Plan is about. The following are direct quotes: any plant, plant product will be required to be accompanied by a permit and a certification of inspection and be subject to remedial measures necessary to prevent the spread of plant pests or noxious weeds. This includes dried medicinal herbs crossing state lines. Food articles sent by gardeners over state lines will be subjected to permits and inspections. (So much for the maple syrup my herbalist friends give me on my trips to New England and New York. So much for tomatoes or zucchinis or apples shared with friends).

For more information about this grand plan from a critic look up the following website: <http://www.jlHUDSONSEEDS.NET/USDACOMMENT.HTM>. To get more information or oppose the Draft Action Plan for Noxious Weeds Program contact the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, at the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Bldg., Room 200-A, 12th and Jefferson Dr. S.W., Washington, DC, 20250; phone 202-720-3631; fax 720-2166; email: [agsec@usda.gov](mailto:agsec@usda.gov).

## What's Missing Is The Magic

Matthew Wood

For several months during late last winter I felt a subtle, underlying depression or malaise. It was hard to put my finger on it. After a while it didn't seem like a normal mood. It seemed like it was coming from somewhere outside myself. Like greater society.

Unlike many who would rather not work on the issues of life, I thought of it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Once I became aware of it I held my council and watched and listened in my inner space.

A lot of people seem to think the world is here for them to have a good time. If something gets in their way they feel it's unfair. Maybe even grounds for a lawsuit or a complaint to the Attorney General. If they don't want to feel the side-effects of being human they can take a pill and continue their consumer lifestyle unexamined and--indeed--incompletely lived.

One could, instead, take life as a challenge. Reserve the pain-killing pills for the really bad parts, if at all. Try to learn from mistakes, problems and pain, so as to become a more fully real person. A mistake is a damn good time to learn a lesson. It is probably the best. Likewise, a period of depression is an excellent time to learn a lesson. "Can't get what ya' want," as Mike Jagger says. So it is a good time to figure out what it is you do want and whether you can live without it or not, or what you're going to do to try and get it.

So at any rate, I was mildly depressed for a few months. I stalked that depression and what I found at the other end was most curious. It seems I live in a society that doesn't want to leave room for magic. By magic I don't mean manipulation of people by unseen forces or witches. I don't mean religion or spirituality. I don't mean God or the devil. I mean something unforeseen, a surprise, a power that is greater than the status quo--in short, something that turns over the table and makes a mess of the plans. That is not something that society wants. It wants everything to be on an even keel. Predictable. Safe.

Last article I mentioned how the USDA wants to outlaw 99 percent of the plant life on the planet. It is too unknown, inconvenient and, in short, "weedy!"

"Yeah, ya' never know what's gonna happen with those plants running

loose all over the place. We pretty much have the animals under control--'cept the little tiny ones. It's about time we round up the plants and show 'em who's in control here."

In the future, when we can control the microbes and finally the basic chemical reactions themselves we'll really be in charge. Everybody will live to a 199, healthy, sexy and never be depressed. The magic will be gone and whatever will be left will be hell on earth.

I wasn't going to talk about the virtue of weeds--though that would be a good thing to study. There's a lot of magic there, for sure. And we will talk about that sooner or latter. It's the whole anti-magical stance of society. No room of it. At the end of that blob of depression was a little tag that read: "you'd better take a stand in favor of magic or you're going to be part of a catastrophically boring and depressing state-of-mind that is conniving to take over the world." So, you know what? I believe in magic.

Furthermore, I recommend it as a general mental health tonic. Every action that everybody takes everyday is a battle ground in the great war between knownism and the unknown, predictability and magic.

This battle has been going on as long as I can remember and I have, at times, felt the stabbing pain of living in a devotedly non-magical society. This is not a social milieu or government that loves herbs, or herbalists. However, this was not a stabbing pain, but something more subtle. Just a little tug on the sleeve and yet, of monumental importance. "Believe in magic or die."

If I have to explain what magic is, then you, dear reader, are already in a bad place. So let's see what our sponsors, the herbs, have to say about it. I know a little one. I've talked about it before. It's all over the place. That would be Plantain (*Plantago major*), a cousin of Psyllium seed (*Plantago psyllium*), from which they make Metamucil and roughage for toning the bowel.

Originally, this plant did not grow in North America. The Indians first noticed it along the trails as the white people were coming into the continent, so they called it "whiteman's footprint." It likes to grow where the ground is compacted by foot traffic. It is often found on baseball fields and in city parks.

So, did the Indian people complain about this new plant? Did they call it a "weed?" No, they studied it carefully because there was undoubtedly

powerful medicine in this new interloper. Powerful magic.

Because it grows on compacted ground, Plantain knows how to pull its food supply and water up from the earth with extra force. We herbalists, the heirs of the native peoples and the midwives and all the magical folk who lived close to the earth, say that it is a "drawing agent." It draws pus, splinters, insect venom, bacteria, out of a wound. It keeps it clean and lets it close up from the bottom up. It is especially good on boils and abscesses. I have, several times, referred to its use cleaning up dental abscesses. If you want to see something magic then put it on an abscessed tooth, an old, infected root canal, a not yet operated on infected root, etc. Identify it, pick it, chew it up and put the wad up by your tooth.

We may believe in magic but you're not going to take responsibility for morons here. So identify this common weed, if you don't already know about it, or buy it at your local health food store. Take a stand in favor of magic.



## Nature Is Alive Mentor Dies

Matthew Wood

This spring I lost a mentor. Dr. Francis Hole, Soil Science Professor Emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UWM). He was not my mentor in the field of soil science, but in the field of spiritual soil science, that is, the living spirit of Nature. He was the one who first taught me, when I was about nine years old, that “Nature is alive.” This is not just an intellectual fact or theory, but an actual feeling that comes out of the earth and is verified in our own soul.

Most people miss having the experience of knowing that Nature is alive. They live in a world that is not alive but boring. It is not, to return to the theme of my last article, a magical world but a dead one. That gives them the right to mindlessly exploit the natural world. If they knew Mother Nature was a living, conscious entity they would be more careful.

As I say, I was about nine years old. I was raised in the Quaker meeting. At that time all the meetings in the north were joined together into the “Northern Half Yearly Meeting.” This was a meeting for business, meeting for worship and friendship which met every half year. That year it was scheduled for Wausau, Wisconsin. That’s the capital of the county where all the ginseng is grown.

In those days there still was a train to Wausau, and that was how we traveled. It was an adventure. Steam came out of hoses from the cars, joining the cool foggy morning late September air. The conductors ran to and fro and the train began with a whistle.

There weren’t many of us, so “halfly,” as it was later called, was held in an old mansion which served as the Marathon County Historical Society. I presume it was built on the ginseng money that made the town rich. It was a beautiful old Victorian mansion with ornate woodwork, carpets, and furniture. I had never been in a place like that before. Since that time some of my most poignant, life-changing dreams have occurred in old, Victorian mansions. There was a gift shop and we children amused ourselves by buying various mementos. I especially liked the old copies of engraved Confederate money. I played with them for many years, until they wore out.

Recently, when I found one at an antique store, I bought it. We children were not expected to sit through a whole silent meeting for worship, so we were herded off to “First Day School,” the Quaker equivalent of

“Sunday School.” Francis Hole was our teacher.

He took us up on Rib Mountain, the geological core of Wisconsin. It was once an enormous volcano that generated a massive mountain that covered half the now-state of Wisconsin. It wore down over the eons to leave a small mountain or large hill and a swell in the earth’s crust that underpins the geography of the state.

I suppose it was just such a place as would delight a soil science professor. There was a fire tower up there and big, basaltic rocks were tossed around like giants had been at play. The brown leaves of fall clung to the trees. Underneath the ground there was a vein of black crystal which is mined somewhere along the slopes.

A few years ago a woman from Wausau gave me a black crystal from Rib Mountain. It is a cherished gift.

Dr. Francis Hole was an animated speaker. He was a member of the Yahara Monthly Meeting in Madison. After retiring from active duty at UWM he became a well known advocate of “soil justice.” He would travel the state speaking at schools, day care centers, prisons, political gatherings and wherever they would have him, singing the “song of the soil,” accompanied by his fiddle. He told the history of the soil, from the retreat of the glaciers to the erosion of Wisconsin hillsides under the plow.

In his lifetime the black prairie soils had run off the hills to reveal the brown subsoil. (Most of those hills are getting a rest at last from a depressed farm economy!) Francis was behind an effort to declare a “Wisconsin state soil” (Antigua silt loam) at the state capital. He was ignored, year after year, until the early '80s, when it became fashionable to recognize the importance of ecology. “Who was that old guy with the state soil science bill?” the senators asked. “We need it to make our declaration of Earth Day look like something.” So Wisconsin got its state soil.

Francis didn’t yet have his fiddle and his songs when he taught our First Day School or it would have been even more memorable. The only specific thing I do remember him saying was genealogical. Pointing to me he said, “Your ancestors lived in a wood, so they were called wood. Mine worked in a hole—they were miners—so they were named hole.”

Francis was an animated speaker. As he jumped up and down a wisdom/knowledge/feeling came out of him that said: “Nature is alive.”

That sunk down deep into my soul and has never left me.

Yes, Nature is alive. I will always know that to be true. And it will always make the biggest difference in the world because knowing that Nature is alive means that one is connected to everything and everyone else. One gains the inner knowledge of, say, how herbs work, and the respect that, as the Indian people say, “We are all related.”

Modern science, and with it, modern society, has been built upon the presupposition that “we can do anything we want.” Sir Francis Bacon, the founder of the scientific method, stated specifically that it was impossible to understand the natural world as it presents itself. Rather, it is only possible to gain knowledge by interfering with nature and watching the results.

I think his actual word was “torture,” not interfere. Where this is all leading is apparent now even to scientists. The natural environment is being destroyed at a rate that ensures catastrophe. Man-made knowledge is convenient to man, but it is not better than Natural Wisdom, which will triumph in the end—is indeed, already triumphing. We reap what we sow.

Modern medicine tortures its patient to “manage” their pain, while natural medicine cures gently and safely. No “management” here. The right herb contains an intelligence from the root of Mother Nature that knows how to right the wrong, replacing disease with a return to true health. One day after teaching an herb class at a yoga studio/farm near Madison one of the yoga teacher/residents, who happened to come from Minnesota, asked me, “So how did a boy like you from Minnesota become an herbalist teaching a class in Madison?” I had a short, one sentence answer. “Did you ever hear of Dr. Francis Hole?”

In the pause that followed I could sense the intuitive gears in my friend’s brain connect with a jolt. He understood completely. That is the way it is with inner knowing.

## Menopausal Symptoms Respond To Herbs

Matthew Wood

The million dollar question since midsummer seems to be: “What can older women take instead of estrogen hormone replacement?” The answer would start with, “how ‘bout nothing?” People just want to pop pills no matter what. A more nuanced answer would be, “some women need treatment for menopausal and post-menopausal problems.” This treatment should be specific to each, not general. General treatment is always faulty, because no two people are alike.

### Fad herbs and pseudo-science

Serious companies are already advertising black cohosh supplements as an alternative to estrogen. Black cohosh is another one of those herbs of which it can be said, “a fad could hardly have happened to a better herb.” St. John’s wort is in the same category. Despite negative publicity based on studies designed with a bias, St. John’s wort really is a good remedy for mild depression and anxiety. (It has never been tested for mild depression, only for severe depressive states that are not treatable with even psychiatric drugs).

Black cohosh is an old American Indian medicine plant. The Indians generally do not get any credit for their magnificent knowledge of wood lore and wild medicine from modern scientists. The latter only value their own peer-reviewed studies. Science is about as intolerant, racist, and classist as it gets.

In case you don’t believe me, let’s take an example. When the Hanta virus struck in Navajo land there was great puzzlement about its origin for about six weeks. Then we suddenly heard “from scientists” that it was caused by mice over-producing in years when the piñon nuts were especially abundant, going into houses and bringing disease with them. All the national news outlets attributed this knowledge to “scientists” of some sort. It happened I was in Santa Fe at the time and picked up the local newspaper. I was much surprised to read that this explanation had been given to the public health officials by Navajo medicine men who had developed this knowledge over generations of observation of natural cycles in their people’s environment. Did the doctors credit the medicine men in the national news? No, they took the credit themselves, because they don’t want to empower and support traditional knowledge or knowledge which arises outside their own cult. Otherwise, millions of dollars in government grants would be going to traditional medicine men

instead of dogmatic, ethnocentric, racist, classist scientists. Money talks. But so does Mother Nature, and one day she will throw these sniveling bigots out of their self-appointed driver's seat.

You might say, "Gee, Matthew, your language is rather harsh." I've been in this business for 20 plus years and I have seen science and biomedicine treat traditional healers with contempt.

**Oils, the basis of hormones** Very often the problem at menopause is not initially a shortage of estrogen, but of the oils which are used to make steroids and sex hormones. Thin, dry women especially should attend to this fact. Fortunately, health food companies have thought this through and introduced such nutritive oils as evening primrose, black current and borage, not to mention the old standby, flaxseed oil. Each has slightly different properties; if one doesn't work, try another.

In addition, there are herbs which help with the digestion and metabolism of fats and oils. My good friend Phyllis Light was teaching in Minneapolis several months ago (sponsored by the North Country Herb Guild). From her I learned that plain ordinary sage (*Salvia officinalis*; kitchen sage) is a specific remedy for the transition from "fertility level estrogen" to "post-menopausal levels." Sage has an oily leaf and an affinity to oil processes in the body. It is still used in cooking to help with the digestion of fats and oils. I had one case where it seems to have permanently cured gall bladder colic. It stimulates bile production or secretion. It follows oil into the body, from the digestive tract, and clears away problems having to do with lipid metabolism and usage. That includes the production and use of cholesterol, restoring that beautiful hormonal glow to the skin that is so feminine. This fact is remarked upon by Dr. Dietrich Gumble, a German physician who is not afraid to report clinical facts, rather than just research results. It also strengthens the tendons and ligaments. The woman with the gall bladder problem had weak tendons, as I observed when I went to take the pulse on the wrist.

A plant with a similar nature—helping the digestion and metabolism of lipids—is burdock root (*Arctium lappa*). One time burdock helped a 31-year-old woman who was suffering from infertility. After several years and thousands of dollars with the regular fertility clinics she was declared to have "early onset menopause." I gave her burdock root and false unicorn root (our herbal names are better than the drug company names). In five days she was pregnant, and in nine months she was a happy mother.

## Depleted hormones

In some cases we seem to need herbs that are more specifically suited to hormonal imbalances. Here we think of the herbs containing phytoestrogens, such as the famous fad-herb, black cohosh. There are questions, nowadays, about whether phytoestrogens cause cancer, like human estrogens. The short answer seems to be that although they may, they are far less bothersome than the human estrogens and, binding with the receptor cells, keep these more dangerous hormones away from the cells. Besides which, I personally use tiny doses (1 to 3 drops, 1 to 3x/day). These do not replace estrogens, but change the body's way of regulating them. That is how black cohosh should really be used. It is beneficial in cases where there is estrogen deficiency—dryness, lack of flow, fibromyalgia, menopausal hot flashes. I have not found, however, that it is the best in the latter condition. Here I would try sage or blue vervain.

Blue vervain is an excellent menopausal remedy. It is a cousin of the famous fad herb vitex or chaste berry, but is more beneficial in hot flashes and night sweats. It is suited to women who feel nervous, uptight, but depleted. “Not enough yin to hold down the yang” would be the way to say it in Chinese medicine. Sage has the longest history of use for night sweats and hot flashes that I know of—at least a few thousand years. It is suited relaxed women who sweat—rather the opposite of vervain. Osteoporosis I have several times seen herbs or homeopathy dramatically reverse, not to mention stop, osteopenia and osteoporosis. One woman grew two inches in six months. The major remedies here are homeopathic calcium phosphate 6x (1x/day for three weeks, every other day for 2 months would be a good general approach), soup bones, calcium phosphate supplements made from bones, boneset (*eupatorium perfoliatum*), and white oak bark (especially where osteoporosis is preceded by gum disease).

## VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

### Echinacea works best when used intermittently

#### **Matthew Wood, Herbalist**

I was amazed to read in the papers that people are stealing Echinacea from little curbside gardens in Minneapolis. It's hard to imagine a good reason for this. I can picture a busy yuppie stock-broker on his way to work: "Oh no...I'm getting a sore throat. I have to meet the big client for lunch. What am I going to do?" Just then he notices a ripe, plump Echinacea flowering along the side of the street. "Oh...the relief..."

It would be more disturbing if the people picking Echinacea think they are stealing something valuable. Out west, where the best Echinacea grows (*Echinacea angustifolia*), they have banned picking the plant without a license in several states. Of course, 99 percent of the wild crop is killed by ranchers "improving rangelands" with pesticides and wheat farmers plowing down prairie soils. If they only knew the value of *Echinacea angustifolia* they would kick themselves. But instead the powers that be arrest people picking the remnants off roadsides and pat themselves on the back. "Yeah, another good law passed today."

But that is out west. What we have growing in our little gardens is *Echinacea purpurea*, or "Eastern Purple Coneflower." It's easier to grow but it's not the highest quality stuff. It sells for 20 to 25 percent of the price of the western variety. You can't steal it for profit, really. Maybe it's people that are too poor to afford the Echinacea in the stores that are stealing it from gardens. Well, okay, then. Some of us are going to have to drop off bottles of Echinacea at food shelves if we want to stop this trend.

Seriously, it is hard to imagine either a street person or a stock-broker stealing this common garden flower. I hate to think it is some aspiring herbalist. If so...my advice is...grow your own. It's easy, fun, and inexpensive.

The real shame is the extinction of the rare Western Purple Coneflower in the wild. Twenty years ago, before anybody had heard of the plant, a friend of mine was out exploring Western Echinacea in the wild. He found that the place it loved to grow the biggest and the best was in the bottom of an ancient seabed in Kansas, where the chalky shells lay in mounds in the prairies. He wanted to find out what Echinacea needed in order to grow best and he found it. Two years later, he went back to see his robust, happy stand, only to find that it was gone. Ranchers sprayed the prairies

with pesticides for "improvement."

I am an Echinacea skeptic. Yes, the plant does help people survive colds and flus, but a lot of people just keep on getting more colds and flus. That's because using a "shot-gun" approach, general remedy does not really address the underlying problem. For all that "Echinacea stimulates the immune system," it is a general remedy, not tailored to the precise problem. Some trauma to the immune system occurred in the past and it is "stuck" in the body of the sick person, and only a really precise herb or treatment method will ferret it out. Oh well, Echinacea is up there with chicken soup and saunas as a general good thing for the health.

What Echinacea is really specific for are those times when people have worked beyond their natural limits. They are tired, exhausted, and every time they get a little bit of vacation they get sick. Then they go back to work. Echinacea will ferret that kind of sickness and exhaustion out of the body. It works best for people who look tired, or who get boils when they get sick, or who have bad work habits, or feel mentally and physically dull with the fever. It has one specific use that I want to recommend. It is good for people who are undergoing chemotherapy for cancer. It boosts the white blood cells, seems to reduce the nausea and distress, removes the exhaustion faster, and gives them more energy. It shouldn't be used in leukemia (when the chemotherapy is trying to kill white cells) and it should be used intermittently (two weeks on, a week off).

Echinacea works best when used intermittently because it is a "stimulant," not a tonic and will over-stimulate if used persistently, and that will lead to the opposite situation: Low white counts and exhaustion. A tonic can be used for a long time, because it is slowing building and stimulating. A tonic would be like Astragalus, used in China in the fall and winter to build up the strength and resistance of outdoors laborers. The Japanese peasants would use Maitake mushroom in the same way. The European peasants used Calendula flowers, which taste a lot like Astragalus as a matter of fact. They would throw the dried flowers in soups in the wintertime to prevent cough, cold, flu, and fever. They plant clears out old infections in the lymphatics in the throat and elsewhere and gives the lymphatic system, the outward vehicle of the immune system, a snappy, sharp reactivity. These plants I want to particularly recommend as winter approaches.



## THE VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

Flu bugs vary

**Matthew Wood**

Last month, we talked about remedies for flu, and sure enough, we are going to talk about that this month too. I wanted to add more detail about the personalities of these plants, as every species is unique and suited for specific jobs, just as some people like to work with their hands, some with their muscles, some with their minds, some with other people's money. People are happiest doing the job they like best and herbs are the same way. They do the best work when rightly applied. But first, some news.

In July, I wrote that my good friend Will Winter was going to go up against the Veterinary Board, who wanted to take away his license. Many of you wrote and called in with nice comments and I hope some of you did contact the Attorney General's office, but alas...Will did lose his license as expected. His attorney told him that the Attorney General has not once in 100 years interfered with the Veterinary Board...and this is the only state agency that represents the public before the board. These medical boards have real impunity from public input, although we can write the governor and suggest names to be appointed to the board. At any rate, Will's office has been taken over by a first-rate vet, though not an alternative practitioner, so good service can still be obtained at the office. I also want to mention that there is a very good complementary/alternative vet in Washington County, though I feel I shouldn't advertise anyone's name. But she didn't pay me, so I'll give a hint: Sue Swanson.

But back to that happy subject: The flu. By now, some of you have probably contracted it. As we know, each year the flu strain is different. This recognition of a distinct personality in the flu gave the disease its common name: *Influenza* comes from the Italian for "influence of the stars," meaning that a different star rules over the flu every year.

The English physician Thomas Sydenham introduced the idea of the *genus epidemicus*, or the unique species or genus of each flu, and this was further popularized by one of our herbal ancestors, Dr. J. G. Rademacher. This rural German physician taught that for a certain length of time, the *genus epidemicus* would rule and if the specific remedy suited to the species of acute disease could be found, then it would cure the majority of diseases appearing that season. In fact, what was even more interesting, it would cure patients who came to the office decades in the future, if it could be established that their disease started during that period of time. Many

of you, unfortunately, have experienced just this problem: What turned out to be a serious, life-disabling illness began as the "flu."

Over the last 10 years, I have traced the *genus epidemicus* remedy as it has appeared. One year, it was onion (*Allium cepa*): Everybody had runny noses and teary eyes and grief, as if they had just cut an onion. Last winter, there was no flu until very late, about January, but then there were crippling bronchial viruses. I personally found sunflower seeds, of all things, to be beneficial for many people during this time.

This fall, around the middle of September, I saw the first case of a dry throat with red face, fever, and a rapid pulse with a sharp stroke, indicating a harsh, hot fever was setting in. Sage leaf (*Salvia officinalis*) turned out to be the specific in that case, and then in several more. Sage is suited to cases that begin with a dry sore throat, no matter how they may evolve, into the lungs, or whatever. Sweating can be profuse, but eventually the skin dries out.

There are few better remedies to check excess perspiration or dryness of the skin than sage. And yes, it is important to treat dry skin or a burden will be thrown on the other channels of elimination: Lungs, large intestine, kidneys. The old physicians and granny doctors were smart: They knew that all the channels of elimination worked together. Older people with dry skin and (especially) dry tendons, can benefit from this agent, and it is a good remedy even in lichenification of the skin and mucosa. You can make a beautiful, delicious tea out of sage, honey, and lemon according to that great herbal authority, Mrs. Maude Grieve (*A Modern Herbal*, 1931).

One of the most important flu remedies is Boneset (*Eupatorium perforatum*). This is the old remedy for chills and "ache in the bones;" actually, it feels like a crushing pain in the bones. This remedy is also a good one for setting bones, an old Indian and folk tradition. My mother said to one of her friends, a once-prominent state official now retired, "Well, if you were to go to Matthew or one of his friends for that broken bone, they would give you Boneset." The friend responded, "I heard of that when I was a little girl."

The flower of Boneset is "bone white," which gives us a hint as to its healing properties. Plants are marked with signs and signatures that tell us what they can accomplish if we have faith in them (scientists laugh here). Herbalism-it's a matter of faith, sometimes, not just science. White is a cold color, and white saps, flowers, and leaves sometimes indicate an affinity to cold diseases and sometimes to the coldest (most dense) organ,

the bones. Boneset also grows in low, wet, cold places along streams and swamps, where we get cold and chilled.

If the ache and pain is more in the joints than the bones, we turn to another of the ancient remedies for influenza. That would be Agrimony, or its cousin Cinquefoil. These are called for in times of great pain in the joints, as if they wanted to dislocate, with chills alternating with fever.

I also mentioned Yarrow in my last article. That is a good chill and fever or influenza remedy in some years and cases, but it is such a personality and I have so much to say that I'll save it for another article.

## THE VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

### Healing lymphatic conditions

MATTHEW WOOD, HERBALIST

I had more positive feedback the last several months on my articles about the immune system than I've had on any other subject, so I thought I would try to get in the habit of writing about medical topics—from the holistic viewpoint—rather than my favorite topics where I get to complain (such as politics or the perennial rudeness of the *Star Tribune*, or the subject I like best, the herbs themselves). Lymphatic stagnation and immune depression go hand in hand, as I mentioned in these recent articles. When immunity is down, tissues are irritated and the lymphatics are taxed by excess material from congestion and infection. However, I spent a little less time writing about the lymphatic end of the equation.

In conventional medicine, swollen glands are hardly even considered to be a disease unless, of course, they are associated with something serious, like cancer or lymphedema from having had cancerous nodes removed. If the throat cultures out some bacteria, the doctors will give an antibiotic—sometimes even if there is only a virus. However, chronic swollen glands seldom respond to such treatment. They linger and the doctors ignore them.

**The sign of swollen glands** In folk medicine (and that means you and me), swollen glands are considered to be both uncomfortable and a harbinger of disease. A person usually feels a little under the weather and they flare-up. What this means, of course, is that the glands are having to work harder to deal with some infection or congestion. There may be an immune weakness or not; for an immune weakness we use the remedies that tonify down to the bone marrow, such as astragalus or comptonia (sweet fern). For the swollen glands, the congestion, and some depression of tissue life in the glands themselves, we have a simple array of old time standbys. The single most important lymphatic cleanser is calendula (pot marigold, *calendula officinalis*), a bright, happy yellow/orange flower that blooms “through the calends of the year.” A tea or tincture will often help simple lymphatic swellings. If these swellings are associated with an excess of immune activity—a hyper-activity or over-sensitive skin and mucosa—then a good remedy is peach leaf or twig. This is a little hard to get, but we can usually find the tea. The eyes and mucous membranes are sensitive, the head plugged and dull, the lymphatics a bit swollen and taxed.

**Everyday plants heal many lymphatic conditions** Sometimes swollen glands will be associated with dryness-dry skin, constipation, and articular pain from dry internal surfaces. These people tend to be more thin and poorly nourished. As a consequence, the lymphatics, which are not that strong to begin with, are pumped by the movement of the lungs; they get weak, atrophy, and do not convey either food or waste material as well. The glands tend to get more indurated (hardened and impacted). In this condition consider cleavers (a good tincture from the fresh plant is most reliable), mullein, red clover, and violet leaves or flowers. (See what I mean? These are all simple, everyday plants).

Mullein is particularly good for lean, thin people with dry skin and dry articulations. It refurbishes the synovial fluid in the spine and I have seen people who were almost invalid returned to normal spinal and articular health. It lubricates around the bones and joints and gets things in the right places. It is most famous for a dry, harsh, racking cough, or for chronic lung congestion, but it is also a fine remedy for lymphatic congestion.

Violet leaves or flowers have a particularly strong affinity for the area around the ears, and thus they are beneficial for children with chronic ear infections, dry skin, constipation, and chronic swollen glands about the ears. They are sweet and moist, so they moisten to remove the impacted swellings and sweeten to improve digestion and assimilation.

Red clover are especially good for very hard glands-these often need a biopsy-and whatever the cause of the swelling, they are beneficial. They are for when the body walls off an area to contain unhealthy material in a gland.

Cleavers are beneficial to both the lymph and the kidneys. They tend to remove calcifications in the muscles and swellings in the lymphatics and send the minerals and fluids down through the kidneys. They are a “deer medicine” (the deer bed down in them out here in the country, and they often have their fawns in the cleavers patches as well). That means they are especially good for thin, elegant people. Oak bark is not that well known as a lymphatic remedy, but it is specific when there is lymphedema, especially from taking out glands for cancer. I have seen this work numerous times, but I have also seen it fail. Sometimes it needs to be used persistently.

Sometimes sluggish lymphatics need stimulation, and for this we turn to warming or tingling/diffusive/energetic herbs that stir up the fluids. The

traditional remedy here is bayberry bark, which is indicated when there is not only lymphatic swelling but congealed mucus on the membranes, or when the peripheral circulation is weak (cold hands and feet). It is amazing how readily it warms up the hands and feet (not all cases, but especially where there is stagnation of the lymph and mucosa). This is a cousin of sweetfern (*comptonia*), which I mentioned previously, and it is a lot easier to get ahold of.

Another stimulant is echinacea. As a lymphatic tonic we do not want to use it in large, persistent doses, but in small ones, mixed with other remedies, to help them work better. Stimulants and diffusives often have that effect.

In terms of a general lymphatic formula, I would suggest something like the following, as a tea or tincture: calendula, cleavers, red root, violet leaves, red clover, echinacea, one part each. For children with chronic swelling around the ears, ear infections, etc., I would suggest a combination of violet leaves, elder flowers, lady's mantle leaves, calendula, and echinacea, one part each.

For general low immunity, use calendula, astragalus, and comptonia (if you can get it). For over-active immunity, use peach leaf and avoid over-stimulating with echinacea.

# View From Sunnyfield

## Use Herbs to Treat Anger

*Matthew Wood, Herbalist*

I parked my car. I was on my way to the Men's Center, in South Minneapolis, to give a talk on herbalism. Volunteered for the assignment some months ago. When the evening arrived, I managed to remember where I was supposed to be and got myself there with a few minutes to spare. As I walked down the street, I ran into an old friend. Dianna Gross is one of the best acupuncturists I know. She has an office in the same building.

"What are you doing in this neighborhood?" she asked.

"I'm on my way to the Men's Center to give a little class on herbal medicine," I replied.

"Well, I guess I passed a member of your audience on the stairs," she said. "Big guy with a shaved head. He looked pretty angry. Better watch out."

A few minutes later, I was in a room at the Center with a bunch of guys slowly collecting for the evening. Two of them were talking about dogs. Seemed like a male sort of thing to talk about.

Nobody seemed to be there to introduce me. A few minutes after the meeting was supposed to start, I chimed in, "Well, I'm Matthew Wood and I'm here to talk about herbs. I suppose a few more people will arrive over the next few minutes but I guess we can get started."

A half dozen guys looked at me with apparent interest, then one of them said, "We're the group on anger, you must be meeting in the next room." Yes, there was another room across the hall. Since nobody was in it I had assumed that this was the room where I was going to teach. Oh, ah, thank you, I mumbled and got up to leave. At the door one of them asked, "Hey, do you know any remedies for anger?"

"Yeah, well," I answered. "There are a lot of good remedies for anger." So I gave a minute or two talk. It was a legitimate topic. One that deserved more time for an answer. I gave them a few pointers before I headed across the hallway, to the other room.

I sat there for a few more minutes. Nobody was there. Was I angry? No. I'll tell you, I was so tired, so relieved to have the evening free. I put my feet up on a chair. I'd been speaking all across the country on herbalism. A trip a month for the last four months. And this year there had been more requests for little talks around town than I could almost keep up with. I was grateful for the rest. "Remedies for anger," I thought to myself. "That would make a good article." Then I left.

The average person wants to just mindlessly swallow a pill to cure a problem, but in herbalism we recognize that each person, each case, is different. We have to "individualize the case." Ask questions, find out what kind of anger. All the advertising hype about herbs in the commercial marketplace is mostly nonsense. There are no easy solutions. We have to think and consider and ask questions in order to bring out the individual lines of each case. That's the way it is with sore throats, headaches, allergies, and anger.

### **Remedies For Anger**

Agrimony is the remedy for anger that is hidden behind a facade. These people are jovial and outgoing, but underneath they seeth with frustration and anger that they themselves are not always aware they possess. They feel "caught in a bind," often about work related issues. "Torturedly cheerful," I like to say. These are the characteristics we learn from Dr. Edward Bach, who introduced the flower essence remedies. Agrimony was one of his remedies. It can be used as an herb as well as an "essence."

Chamomille is an old "gramma" remedy from Europe. It's the one they give babies, to calm them down. It's especially suited for whining, peevish, complaining, and temper tantrums.

"That must be for the passive-aggressive types," quipped one of the men in the anger group.

I always say, "Chamomille is the remedy for babies. . . babies of any age." Everybody understands that. I have a friend who is a practicing herbalist in New York City, the capital of whining. He says, "If the patient whines on the first visit I give him Chamomille and have him come back next week."

Chamomille can be used as an herb tea, a tincture, or even in homeopathic form. The fresh plant and the tincture made fresh have the most rich flavor and strongest medicine power. You don't get that in the supermarket tea bag.



Nux vomica is a homeopathic remedy, especially for people who have "foul moods." They not only get angry, but they like being angry, they like to indulge themselves in anger. Most of the time they aren't a very happy camper, with complaints about this or that, outbursts of anger. This is probably the boss who is telling the Agrimony how to do the job the wrong way and yelling at him at the same time. And a long line of physical discomforts that accompanies such moods. Indigestion, gas, bloating, constipation alternating with diarrhea, colic, irritable bowel syndrome. There is a great variety of symptoms. I heard of one doctor in California who had a clientele of abused wives. She finally got sick of treating the women, who were all ready enough for change, and had them slip their husbands Nux vomica on the sly. That took care of more than half her cases.

That reminds me of another women doctor who said, "if a man complains that he can't get along with his wife. . . give him a dose of Chamomille."

At any rate, if you are experimenting with a homeopathic remedy like Nux vomica, use the low potencies (6-30x or 6-30c).

Another extremely valuable homeopathic remedy for anger is Staphysagria. That is for people who feel violated or put upon and can't express their anger. One of my cousins waited all day for the plumber, who said he was going to come in the morning. By the time he arrived it was almost dinner time and my cousin was fuming, but he was afraid if he said anything the man would leave. (This was in Philadelphia. Everybody has bad manners on the East Coast, so the plumber probably would just have left). A few hours later, my cousin got a bladder infection. Staphysagria is the remedy for being "pissed off." It is often used for bladder infections following unexpressed anger. My cousin knows his homeopathy. He took Staphysagria and the next day he was fine.

Guess what. There is even a remedy for RAGE! That would be another homeopathic, Hepar sulph. This kind of person just feels that old rage boil up and just can't keep a lid on it, and they might explode. It's also a remedy for boils, so we see how the physical body mirrors the inner self. A good lesson indeed.

## VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

### Plant personalities evolved through survival

#### ***Matthew Wood, Herbalist***

There are many different ways to learn about the properties of herbs. The modern fashion is to study the chemistry. Many organic chemicals have known pharmacological effects. Anthraquinones purge, so plants containing them (rhubarb root, yellow dock root) purge. Thus, the use of a plant can be "scientifically known."

Recently, the medical establishment published an *Herbal PDR* based on this approach. While this is an admirable start toward "accepting herbs," I noticed that none of the authors were practicing herbalists. So I thought I'd be a heretic and write from that terrible excuse for an education called *experience*.

Plants didn't just blindly evolve a bunch of chemicals for no good reason. Nature is ruthless. Only the fit survive. A chemical that is not needed will be thrown away. Chemicals in plants serve a purpose; they are used intelligently by the plant, which itself is acting to fulfill the very precise needs of the environmental niche in which it grows.

The "intelligence" in the plant is something more like "blind instinct" than the intelligence we are familiar with as human beings. Each species is intelligent, has its own approach to the world, and because of this, we may speak of each species as being analogous to a different personality. The plant is so refined by the need to survive that it becomes a very precise being, a personality. Or perhaps it is the other way around--personality came first, physical properties second.

But we heretics knew this all along. From the beginning, the basic way to learn about plants was not to analyze the entrails, the chemicals of the dead body, but to talk to the personality, the entity of the plant. That's how Indian medicine men still largely conduct herbal business at present day and that has always been a favorite way of learning about the virtues of herbs.

The physical appearance of a plant also tells us about this intrinsic personality. There is not a shape, color, or smell that is accidental. Every detail is pregnant with meaning if we had but eyes to see.

A plant's personality seen in its shape

This leads us at last to that great heresy, at which the scientists scoff, the doctrine of signatures. This is the second oldest way of learning about the properties of plants--the first being talking to them directly. The doctrine of signatures tells us to look at the plant carefully as to shape, color, smoothness, roughness, and environmental niche. If the plant grows in water, it is often a kidney medicine (horsetail, gravel root, alder). We can easily see that nettle, which grows downstream from a septic system or manure pile, is going to have an affinity to deteriorating proteins, uric acid, hence to the kidneys, gout, but also to nutrition (it is highest in protein of any plant). Even a scientist might be able to see the logic here, but the doctrine of signatures goes much further. Sometimes the plants look like the organs, tissues, or diseases themselves; they have a cartoon-like resemblance.

In an old herbal called *Adam in Eden* by William Coles (published in London in 1657; I had to go to Cincinnati to see a copy), Coles said that garden sage (not the wild kind but the culinary kind) was good for parched, dried out skin because the leaf looked dried and parched. "How ridiculous," I thought. Then I was helping somebody with dried-out tendons and I thought to use sage--it worked. Then I had a case of lichenification of the mucosa and it worked. If there is one plant that looks like lichenified skin it is sage.

One of my favorite herbs is agrimony. It is the great herb for tension. If we look at agrimony, it is all tensed up, like a cat with its hair standing on end. And yes, it did cure a cat with its hair standing on end!

People go out and try to "tune into the plants and talk to them." Smart idea, but it would be like going to a small town and sitting in the bar, "tuning into to everybody," and trying to talk to them about their inmost secrets.

It was only after I had been using agrimony for over 10 years, hundreds of times, that he talked to me. Clear as day. Just after I had finished helping someone on the phone with agrimony. "You can tell I'm a wolf medicine because of the leaflet on the end; it's the leader of the pack."

To me, a wolf medicine is a plant that has a square or a cross in it, representing where the ego and the spirit cross. These plants act on the gallbladder, which is the residence of the ego in folk medicine (a person with a strong ego has a lot of "gall"). Or, to put it another way, these plants act on the autonomic nervous system to relax the sympathetic and make room for the parasympathetic (switch from "fight or flight" to relax and

digest), soothe nerve tensions, iron out issues of egoic frustration and anger, and open the gall ducts (parasympathetic reflex). If you can't relax, you can't digest and you can't regulate the bile correctly.

Those plants. They have their own way of thinking, and when they talk, they choose their own words. And I've noticed, one sentence is equal to a whole book.

I was out in Oakland talking to native herbalist Karyn Sanders, a warm, nice, friendly healer and beautiful soul. When the plant looks like an animal she called this a "spirit signature." In an intuitive flash, I saw what she was talking about. When the plant resembles an animal there is extra power.

The great animal beings (bear, turtle, wolf, eagle, deer, elk, panther) represent basic patterns in Mother Nature. One of my students called them the "clans of the earth." When a plant is a "spirit signature," it personifies one of these great niches in the natural world, and thus it has extra power. These primal constitutional types (clans of the earth) correspond to human constitutions, plant constitutions, and organ-systems.

I got the picture in a flash and I was flabbergasted. It filled out the missing piece in my experience of herbalism. This was like the primal code for me. (I've lost the scientists by this point, I suppose). All my different experiences and ideas about herbs began to reformulate and make sense around this pole which Karyn had provided. But I was plunged into depression, too. "This may make a world of sense to me," I thought, "but it is really out there," and I knew it was going to make me feel isolated. So I was depressed for six months until one day, "pop," I had assimilated it enough that I could talk about it to become more just the stray weirdo.

## THE VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

### Try a natural remedy for flu

#### ***Matthew Wood, Herbalist***

In late September, the daily papers bristled with pharmaceutical excitement, announcing that major drug companies were introducing prescription drugs for the flu and were going to flood the market with millions of dollars worth of advertising. Well now, we herbalists have been fighting the flu for millennia. What do we have up our botanical sleeves?

#### **The simple answer**

The simple answer is, of course, the well-known "natural antibiotics" and "immune boosters" of the herbal marketplace: Echinacea, goldenseal, astragalus, etc. These plants have been marketed by big concerns--divisions of German pharmaceutical companies for the most part--and adopted by the hopeful public to replace drugs. They are used in a general, non-specific fashion that requires no thought (just like a drug). This is not the best that traditional, well-grounded herbalism has to offer. We need to know our little plant friends in more intimate detail to really benefit from them.

Some products just use popular herbs because they know the name "echinacea" or "astragalus" sells. But that is marketing, not good herbalism. These two agents have exactly the opposite approaches to "immunity." Echinacea has a sharp, tingling, penetrating taste that indicates it is a strong stimulant. Anything that is strongly stimulating should only be used for a short time--up to 10 days--because it will first stimulate, then exhaust. Echinacea should only be taken for a short time. Astragalus, on the other hand, is one of a few agents used around the world by "the peasants" (i.e., our ancestors, whatever our nationality) to "fortify" against wind and chill. It is taken as a "tonic," starting in the fall and running into winter. Only an uninformed person would mix these two, yet we find them widely marketed together as "immune boosters."

Chinese peasants used astragalus when they had to work in cold and wind. The similar plant in European peasant medicine is calendula, the beautiful orange flower that Minneapolis herbalist and acupuncturist Christ Hafner has rightly named "herbal sunshine." It looks like the sun come down to earth and it conveys sunshine in the depths of winter. The peasants gathered the flowers all summer (it is in flower through the "calends of the year") and threw them in their stews in the wintertime. The

similar plant used in Japanese peasant herbalism is maitake mushroom. (Generally, these remedies clear out peripheral lymphatic stagnation accompanied by lingering infections.)

As for goldenseal, this is an endangered plant and can be easily substituted by other plants that contain "natural antibiotics" (berberine compounds), and we shouldn't need to use it in this fashion. I always say, "if you want to use a natural antibiotic, why don't you just use an unnatural one." The whole idea of killing bacteria to cure colds and flu is not holistic. Bacteria are not necessarily the cause of the disease, but can be scavengers coming in to occupy an environmental niche in the body, an imbalance. Sometimes they are the actual cause of disease; that is why we don't drink sewer water.

### **What the smart people use**

My cousin came down with poison ivy in rural Pennsylvania 25 years ago. He wandered into the little town of Mechanisburg and found a quaint house with a sign on the lawn that proclaimed it to be the residence of the old town doctor. The old guy looked him over, confirmed the diagnosis, told him what conventional medicine had to offer, then added, "but you can also do what the smart people do." "What might that be?" inquired my cousin. It was homeopathy, and it cured right away. (There are many herbs and homeopathic remedies for poison ivy by the way. But we were talking about the flu.)

Around the world, people noticed that when they broke out into a sweat, maybe in the middle of the night, the fever passed. From this simple observation rose the near universal approach to treating fevers and flus in traditional medicine: "Open the skin and warm the stomach." Why, even hot chicken soup will do that! Or a warm herbal tea! Or a steam bath or a sauna! The universal treatment for acute fever and flu in the New World, long before its "discovery," was--still is--the steam bath or sweat lodge. This is not only ceremonial, but practical. An old book written in 1851 by Dr. Beal P. Downing of Utica, N.Y., relates:

*I was among the Indians in the West [i.e., Midwest] four years, and did not find but one down with a fever; but saw many sweating themselves over a hot stone, by turning water on it, and covered with a blanket. Fever is the same in all countries, and with all classes of the human species, at the commencement; and the same thing will cure all, if taken in season. Some are attacked more violently than others, and then they are alarmed and send for the doctor, but he cannot cure it unless he can open the*

*pores of the skin, and warm the stomach.*

That is traditional medicine. Dr. Downing adds that the Indian people sometimes used "mountain mint" (*Pycnanthemum virginicum*), as a tea with the steam. This herb is the American analog of peppermint, which has been so used from time immemorial in the Old World.

Certain herbs have long been used for this purpose. They do not artificially "boost the immune system" by increasing white cells, as does echinacea, nor do they kill bacteria, like goldenseal. The old timers would say they expel the toxin through the skin. If the body does it every time we recover from a fever, there must be a reason.

Herbs have specific indications. So here is my list of the best herbal teas for bringing on a sweat, warming the stomach, and driving out fever and flu: Yarrow (sudden fever in robust persons; fever or chills; clammy skin in some places, dry in others; tongue red and clean indicating no mucus yet; Elder (dry, hot, red, irritated skin of cheeks, arms); Peppermint or Mountain Mint (fever with upset stomach); Boneset (chills, aches in the bone; this is the best remedy for winter flu); Sage (respiratory infection starting with a dry throat); White Hoarhound (cold, sore throat starting with excessive salivation); Raspberry Leaf (stomach flu, diarrhea); Ground Ivy (middle ear infection). I am going to write more about these plants next month as they all have personalities and it is best to use herbs in an informed way, not in a flat, advertisement, drug-like fashion.

## THE VIEW FROM SUNNYFIELD

### Digestive Disturbances Come In All Varieties

MATTHEW WOOD, HERBALIST (AHG)

We whipped the subject of immunity and the lymphatic system to death in my last few articles. This month we'll discuss digestion. We'll learn pretty much how to take care of any simple digestive problem. The most important point is to differentiate the type of problem you are having, not so much in terms of its location, but in regard to whether it is hot, cold, damp, dry, constricted, relaxed, etc. We want to know the type of imbalance we have because pretty much the same imbalance will run through the entire digestive canal from the mouth to the rectum. One person will have dental caries, another gas and bloating, another colitis, another diarrhea. It is not the name of the disease or the location so much as the energy pattern, whether it is over-stimulated, depressed, etc.

**"Heat" digestion** There are six basic patterns-at least the way I practice. The first one is over-stimulation, heat, or irritation. The blood is rich, the tissues are engorged and over-active, secretions are excessive-too much saliva and stomach acid. Digestion is strong and quick, appetite voracious, and there is a tendency (with age) to weight gain from excessive nutrition. The transit time for the stool tends to be rapid, so there will often be diarrhea or at least loose stools. Almost always, the tongue is elongated, shaped like a flame, with red/pink coloration. Symptoms may include herpes, painful tongue, thrush, burning, gnawing stomach, restlessness and sleeplessness, regurgitation of acid matter, stomach ulcers, rapid transit of stool (which is loose), bleeding hemorrhoids, etc. These people need sedation. The best remedies for this condition are acids. You can treat yourself with foods-tomato juice, lemon juice (less often), fermented sour whey (if you can find it, yogurt if you can't), vinegar and water, kombucha (fermented green tea), etc.

The sour herbs are peach leaf, yellow dock root (especially for thrush and loose stools), rhubarb root, lemon balm, St. John's wort, and yarrow (not sour but heat-reducing). If the person has taken a lot of antacids to suppress the acidity (which is not healing, it can increase acid secretion or suppress it), the remedy is meadowsweet.

**"Tissue depression" digestion** The second pattern is the opposite-tissue depression. Instead of too much secretion there is not enough. Worse yet, tissue life is depressed. There is deterioration of the tissue,



including dental caries, receding gums, bad taste in the mouth, bad breath from rotting food, plaque build up on the teeth, poor secretion in the stomach, no digestion or appetite, rotting food in the stomach, putrid belching, nausea but inability to vomit, a very strong tendency to stomach ulceration, constipation with putrid smelling stool. Even more seriously, there are pathological growths (as the natural life of the body is suppressed), leading to polypi and favoring cancer. The tongue tends to be dark red, blue, purple, coated yellow brown. What is needed here are the traditional carminatives (warming, aromatic spices) such as cardamom, fennel, dill, or the stronger stimulants-hot pepper, ginger, cinnamon, cabbage leaf juice, mustard seed, rosemary. These can be taken as herbs or foods. Because there is depressed tissue life there may be worms or bacteria and we need a worming remedy like butternut bark, walnut, chamomile, thyme, tiny doses of artemisias, etc. These people also need to put in time rebuilding the flora of the colon (acidophilus, fructo-oligino-saccharides).

**"Constriction" digestion** The third pattern is constriction or tension. The person eats but spasms develop in the stomach and elsewhere. Gas builds up, there is pain, bloating, belching and then it all releases with a big gust of wind. There tends to be constipation, not from inactivity of the colon, or sluggishness, but from tension. (There are three basic kinds of constipation: sluggish bowels, a movement every few days, requiring the laxatives; constricted bowels, alternating constipation and diarrhea; dry bowels, stool is hard, ball-like, dry, and difficult to move). These people are usually tense, if they eat on the run they should slow down. The most famous remedy for this condition is peppermint, but we can also use spearmint, catnip, or chamomile. In severe tension we might need blue vervain, especially if the intestines are involved.

**"Relaxation" digestion** The fourth pattern is the opposite of the last-relaxation. The stomach is too relaxed. Food sits there, the muscles move slowly, the secretions are watery and thin. The tongue is moist, round, pale, coated white. Saliva is copious but thin and does not cleanse the teeth, causing dental caries. There is nausea, and unlike tissue depression, there is easy vomiting, because the stomach muscles are relaxed and the abdominal muscles and diaphragm can easily wring it out with a good heave. The stool tends to be loose. Astringents are needed: blackberry leaf tea, raspberry, bayberry, uva ursi, oak bark (especially for rotting teeth and gums), wild geranium, herb robert.

**"Lack of secretion" digestion** The fifth pattern is dryness or lack of secretion. There is a lack of saliva, dry mouth, dry tongue, sometimes

even a shriveled tongue, a kink in the throat-hard to swallow, dry stomach with gas, bloating, flatus, very poor digestion, poor assimilation, and therefore wasting and slenderness. The stool tends to be hard and dry. Constipation here is from dryness. These people often have weak gut level instincts, so they are lacking in confidence, worried, afraid. They tend to get a little nervous so whatever nutrition they do get is quickly burned off. The remedies here need to be soothing, moistening, lubricating, and nourishing. That includes marshmallow root, slippery elm, and American ginseng. If there is a shortage of oil, poor bile secretion, dry stool, constipation, dry skin, there may be a need for oily foods and herbs-flaxseed oil, burdock, angelica, sage, wild bergamot.

**"Stagnation" digestion** The sixth pattern is stagnation. The system is sluggish. Secretions are slow. Food moves slowly through the stomach and intestines. There is true constipation, not from dryness or spasm, but from a sluggish peristalsis of the intestinal muscles. They are the only type that do well on the bitter laxatives-aloe, senna, cascara sagrada. They also need the bitter tonics to increase secretion in the stomach and the liver. These people often have a sluggish liver with hang-over symptoms. The tongue tends to be coated. In addition to the above, goldenseal in very small doses (one drop a day) as bitter tonic, when the tongue is flabby and apathetic, or chionanthus (fringe tree) when it is dark on the sides. Well, I hope that is enough to guide you through stomach distress, constipation, diarrhea, gum disease, or whatever, to a simple, safe and permanent solution. Remember, drug companies want to keep you on their drugs (not cured, but palliated). With herbs we have no choice. They come from God and Mother Nature and they cure. When the right one has been selected the system is stimulated, sedated, relaxed, astringed, softened, hardened, etc. to return to health.