

高 瀑 園

HIGH FALLS GARDENS

Growers Ask: *How Do I Learn About Asian Medicinal Plants?*

The cultivation of Chinese or other Asian medicinal herbs in North America has advanced considerably since 1990, but actual production is just beginning. Three conditions make the Asian herb market different from that for “Western” herbs:

- A traditional Ayurvedic, Chinese, Japanese or Tibetan medicine practitioner blends several herbs into formulas tailored to the individual patient’s condition. There are many thousands of plant species in the traditional *materias medica*. For growers to choose only the “most popular” species is meaningless. Diversity is strength.
- Traditional Asian medicine represents a vast, complex body of scholarship and the learning curve is long and steep. Cooperation with practitioners and other growers is essential to learning. A national group of growers (Medicinal Herb Consortium) are working together with 150+ species and there’s still an enormous amount of research and information sharing to be done.
- North American farmers cannot compete with global commodity markets AND deliver a quality product. Our preferred strategy is to grow for the “cream” of the market. Direct marketing channels are being built, but this effort takes time and support from nonprofit agencies and grants.

At this time, we offer the following advice to growers.

- ✓ Get as much training, knowledge and practice as you can. Fruit and vegetable cropping, nursery production, and agroforestry are highly relevant experiences. Growers associations prefer to deal with experienced people.
- ✓ Join and work closely with a medicinal plant growers association. Very few growers will be able to work alone and get anywhere. If your state does not have such an association, get three or more interested producers together and ask your state organic farming association or agriculture development agency to help you form a subcommittee for this purpose.
- ✓ Be certified organic AND fully ecological. Growers can be competitive only with the highest quality products. Small scale, high craft, highly biodiverse and even wild cropping systems yield the quality practitioners will pay for.
- ✓ Grow small amounts of several potential crops in a test plot on your farm. Evaluate the results according to what does well, but also consider those species that especially interest you.

Potentially Marketable Species

GENUS	SPECIES	PINYIN	Part(s) Used	FAMILY
Achyranthes	bidentata	huái niú xī	root	Amaranthaceae
Anemarrhena	asphodeloides	zhī mǔ	rhizome	Liliaceae
Artemisia	annua	qīng hāo	herb	Asteraceae
Bupleurum	chinense	chái hú	root	Apiaceae
Dioscorea	opposita	shān yào	tuber	Dioscoreaceae
Eclipta	prostrata	hàn lián cǎo	herb	Asteraceae
Glycyrrhiza	uralensis	gān cǎo	root	Fabaceae
Isatis	indigotica	bǎn lán gēn	root	Brassicaceae
Lycium	chinense	dì gǔ pí, gǒu qǐ zǐ	rootbk, fruit	Solanaceae
Platycodon	grandiflorum	jié gēng	root	Campanulaceae
Salvia	multiorrhiza	dān shēn	root	Lamiaceae
Saposhnikovia	divaricata	fāng fēng	root	Apiaceae
Schizonepeta	tenuifolia	jīng jiè	herb	Lamiaceae
Siegesbeckia	orientalis	xī xiān cǎo	herb	Asteraceae
Colder Climates (Zones 3-4):				
Angelica	dahurica	bái zhǐ	root	Apiaceae
Aster	tataricus	zǐ wǎn	root	Asteraceae
Codonopsis	pilosula	dǎng shēn	root	Campanulaceae
Leonurus	sibiricus	yì mǔ cǎo	herb	Lamiaceae
Mentha	haplocalyx	bó hé	herb	Lamiaceae
Paeonia	lactiflora	bái sháo	root	Ranunculaceae
Dry/Alkaline:				
Astragalus	membranaceus	huáng qí	root	Fabaceae
Scutellaria	baicalensis	huáng qín	root	Lamiaceae
Warmer Climates (Zones 7-9):				
Andrographis	paniculata	chuān xīn lián	herb	Acanthaceae
Atractylodes	macrocephala	bái zhú	root	Asteraceae
Bletilla	striata	bái jī	rhizome	Orchidaceae
Gardenia	jasminoides	zhī zǐ	fruit	Rubiaceae
Ophiopogon	japonicus	mài mén dōng	tuber	Liliaceae
Polygonum	multiflorum	hé shǒu wū, yè jiāo téng	tuber, vine	Polygonaceae
Rehmannia	glutinosa	shēng/shú dì huáng	root	Scrophulariaceae
Zingiber	officinale	shēng jiāng / pí	rhiz, peel	Zingiberaceae
Ziziphus	jujuba	dà zǎo	fruit	Rhamnaceae

Sources of Seed

Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm: <http://www.chinesemedicinalherbfarm.com/seeds.html>

Elixir Farm/One-Garden: <http://www.one-garden.org/Chinese/index.htm>

Horizon Herbs <http://www.horizonherbs.com>