

# Pharmer's Almanac

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## Digging Deep for Root Harvest

BY MATT DYBALA

Autumn plant dormancy marks the beginning of Herb Pharm's root harvest season, which usually begins mid-to late October depending on weather patterns. November usually brings increasingly wet field conditions which is when root masses begin to resemble a basketball covered in mud, field boots and tires begin to stick, and production slows, but not our crew or their spirit.

Herb Pharm's autumn fields of crops, devoid of flowers and summer scents, are actually teeming with life just below the surface. Plant "roots" come in many forms including taproots, rhizomes, tubers and corms. Invisible to the human eye, these morphological fingers navigate a mysterious underworld providing stabilization, nutrition, respiration and dynamic interaction with nematodes, protozoa, fungi and worms.

As winter approaches, the roots perpetuate the life cycle of medicinal herbs. Plants respond to shorter days and cooler temperatures by sending energy reserves to their underground storage facility. Diminishing shoots and leaves move sugars and salts to the plant's root system. This concentration of sugar and salt in the plant's root cells will later trigger growth in their tips. Root growth will continue until soil temperatures reach their winter levels.

A plant's stored energy allows for immediate root advancement during warm winter days into the early spring. As summer approaches, rapid growth patterns will dwindle as plants begin to focus on growing leaves, flowers and seeds. Roots function as a plant's anchor. Herb Pharm growers pluck root balls from the



earth with a John Deere tractor pulling a mechanical digger. Work begins in the cool, dark early morning hours for our farm crew, who begin working under the tractor and truck headlights. Roots are gathered by hand and loaded into a trailer pulled by our 1950's model G Allis Chalmers tractor, fondly named "Alice."

After transporting the root load to the barn, workers begin washing, chopping and lifting roots which then gently roll through two root washing tumblers. The crew carefully chops open root masses to expose and remove rocks and soil.

The end of a muddy root harvest day often presents the best opportunities for a team photo, a sense of accomplishment, a greater appreciation for the next hot beverage and chance to spray mud off of a fellow worker with a water hose. ☘

*Herb Pharm's autumn fields of crops, devoid of flowers and summer scents, are actually teeming with life just below the surface.*



above: Freshly washed Culver's Root  
left: Hand-harvesting Yerba Mansa  
right: Fresh Valerian root ready for extraction

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# Meet our Principal Scientist

**Kevin Spelman, PhD** may have arrived at Herb Pharm to function as our new principal scientist with an expansive background as a researcher, but, Spelman says, he doesn't want his scientific "pedigree" to eclipse the heart of his work.

"I don't want to be pigeon-holed as a 'science guy,'" he says. "I'm coming from a very different philosophy of life where I see the planet as a living entity. This leads to a very different foundational stance in the sciences and especially the approach to herbal medicine. Herbal medicine is the place where spirit, planetary ecology and human physiology meet."

Still, Spelman's extensive background in the realm of the sciences has equipped him well to not only lead Herb Pharm's research and development team but expand it. Besides participating in the quality control of Herb Pharm products, Dr. Spelman's current focus includes researching various aspects of phytochemistry and molecular biology specifically relating to the development of new potential Herb Pharm products.

Spelman says, "I was drawn to HP's homegrown nature, founders Ed Smith and Sara Katz' reputation for integrity in the natural products industry and their commitment to broad spectrum traditional extractions. In short, we are a good fit when it comes to our approach to herbal medicine, and putting ethics ahead of profits."

Though Spelman's responsibilities keep him busy at our Oregon-based

extraction facility, he manages to maintain ambitious outreach efforts such as collaborating with the National Institutes of Health on a project examining the blood glucose effects of Fenugreek, with the University of North Carolina on the phytochemical differences of Osha and related species, speaking nationally at conferences and writing.

Spelman's educational workshops and presentations reflect his spirit, focusing on plant constituent synergy and broad spectrum extraction. He explains that it's like the difference between the sound of a single instrument compared to the depth and breadth of a full orchestra. Translated to herbal medicine, this means using as much of the complex chemistry of medicinal plants as possible rather than identifying, isolating and extracting one specific constituent which may have been credited with specific healing properties.

Dr. Spelman began working as Herb Pharm's Principal Scientist in May coming from the National Institutes of Health where he was a post-doctoral fellow focusing on brain and ovarian cancer research. In addition to his herbal clinical and research focus, Spelman has provided expert testimony to the Maryland legislators on botanical medicine and supplement safety issues, lectured on a variety of topics including research models and perspectives in medicinal plant investigations and provided extensive consultation in the natural products industry on quality control and instrumentation, research potential, formulations and product development.

While Dr. Spelman's past work with bioactivity in medicinal plants has included analytical, clinical and international research, he stresses his

love of clinical practice – working with people to improve their health and conditions within their communities. And that's cost him plenty along the way – like a case of malaria in Nigeria, Rocky Mountain spotted

fever in Montana and Dengue Fever in Latin America. But he's not complaining... "I love being on this planet," he says. "I love traveling and challenging my cognitive patterns by being immersed in different culture and thought processes." ❀



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## What's New? AT HERB PHARM

HERBAL BREATH TONIC™

**Q:** How do you follow up on the success of one of the most popular and fastest growing products in Herb Pharm's history?

**A:** Offer it in a second flavor and a larger size, of course.

We are pleased to announce the introduction of Spearmint Herbal Breath Tonic™. Like its predecessor Original Herbal Breath Tonic™, now known as Peppermint flavor, Spearmint Herbal Breath Tonic™ is a sugar-free blend of organically-grown herbal extracts. Spearmint is the tasty choice for those who prefer a slightly milder blast of breath freshening power. Spearmint Herbal Breath Tonic is available in half-ounce bottles. Look for it at the checkstand or in the oral care section of your favorite natural products retailer.

Fans of our original Peppermint flavor will be pleased to learn that it is now available in a one-ounce, value-size spray bottle. At double the size, the new one-ounce bottle offers exceptional

value. Now you can keep a one-ounce bottle in your medicine cabinet for home use, and take the compact half-ounce bottle with you wherever you go.

Herb Pharm's Herbal Breath Tonics are blends of organically grown herbs such as Peppermint, Cinnamon, Spearmint and Ginger. Our sugar-free formulas are kind to your teeth and gums, and don't cause rebound bacterial growth that is often associated with sugared breath fresheners, chewing gum and candy.

Herbal Breath Tonic™ from Herb Pharm – the original and still the best.



## We're Changing Some Names

We're at it again – changing the names of several of our herbal compounds to make identifying the products' benefits easier for all.

Here is our complete list of recent name changes...

FORMER NAME	NEW NAME
Bugleweed/Motherwort Compound	> Thyroid Calming™ Compound
Eyebright/Nettle Compound	> Pollen Defense™ Compound
Goldenrod/Horsetail Compound	> Urinary System Support Compound
Nettle/Bladderwrack Compound	> Thyroid Lifter™ Compound
Spilanthes/Usnea Compound	> Fungus Fighter™ Compound
Wild Cherry/Petasites Compound	> Herbal Respiratory Relief™ Compound

We will announce additional name changes later this year!

from top: Motherwort, Stinging Nettle, Spilanthes, Horsetail

# Stress Manager™ Compound

BY DAVID BUNTING

**Some say that life is a response to stress. While** that may seem callous, it is safe to say that our responses to normal stress help keep us alive. Stress resulting in a fight or flight response is part of our adaptive process, keeping us out of immediate danger and is typically short-lived and our recovery from it rapid. However, stress changes when it becomes a day-in, day-out condition without chance of recovery.

The deleterious effects of chronic stress include reduced immunity, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular manifestations, fatigue, poor digestion, and mental anomalies like loss of concentration, anxiety, depression and insomnia. Elevated cortisol levels from over-amped adrenals are being implicated in the dramatic rise in inflammatory diseases often associated with aging in industrialized societies.

*Adaptogens like those in Stress Manager™ are becoming more important in today's world because they improve our response to newer, constant stresses like pollution from chemicals, noise, radiation and an over-abundance of information.*

Lifestyle choices are critical in dealing with stress and should include some form of relaxation. It is also helpful to regularly engage in some enjoyable and nurturing activity. Herbally, there are plants called adaptogens that are particularly well suited to helping us cope with chronic and excessive stress. Adaptogens help the body to rebalance internal regulating systems and increase biological resistance to diverse physical, chemical, biological and psychic factors. The ideal adaptogen is non-toxic and non-specific in the sense that it increases resistance to a wide range of stressors and has a normalizing action – whether dealing with excessive conditions or insufficiencies.

Our new Stress Manager™ Adaptogen Compound contains the following adaptogens:

- Eleuthero** (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) root
- Reishi** (*Ganoderma lucidum*) fruiting body, also known as "mushroom"
- Holy Basil** (*Ocimum sanctum* & *O. gratissimum*) herb
- Rhodiola** (*Rhodiola rosea*) root
- Schisandra** (*Schisandra chinensis*) berry

Eleuthero, formerly known as "Siberian Ginseng" is one of our most important adaptogenic herbs. Eleuthero appears to enhance resistance to overwork, environmental factors such as heat and cold, and to radiation and chemical exposure, making it a useful adjunct in radiation or chemotherapy. It is a superior herb for supporting the adrenals in long-term exhaustion, drug and caffeine use and excessive chronic stress.

Reishi has been used for thousands of years in China and Japan as a longevity tonic and is referred to by names translating as "spirit plant" and "divine mushroom." It is an important adaptogenic herb, aiding adaptation to both physical and mental stress. In traditional Chinese medicine, Reishi is an herb that has the ability to enhance shen (spirit) and is thus of service in mental, emotional and spiritual stress.

Holy Basil is used in Ayurvedic medicine to clear the mind and improve memory, enhance immunity, strengthen the nervous system and improve digestion. Recent research suggests that Holy Basil is an antioxidant, helping to curb destructive free radical reactions (peroxidation) in the body.

For centuries, Rhodiola has held a place in Asian and Scandinavian traditional medicine for enhancing strength and physical endurance, longevity and fertility. Over the past 30 years, studies in Russia and Sweden have confirmed these uses. Rhodiola is particularly well suited to deficient, stress-related states that manifest in disturbed sleep, poor appetite or over-eating, irritability, depression, hypertension, headache and general fatigue.

Schisandra was listed in ancient Chinese texts among the superior medicines, which were claimed to slow aging. From these revered texts, Schisandra is becoming evermore popular in modern Western herbalism. Like Reishi, Schisandra is also said to quiet the spirit and calm the heart. This action makes Schisandra valuable in conditions including neuroses, irritability, memory loss and insomnia, including dream-disturbed sleep.

Adaptogens like those in Stress Manager are becoming more important in today's world because they improve our response to newer, constant stresses like pollution, noise, radiation and an over-abundance of information. Strengthening nerves and immunity coupled with an antioxidant action and ability to promote calm energy and mental clarity make Stress Manager a wonderful daily tonic. In today's world of increasing chronic stress, Stress Manager is something we can all use. ❀

