



AMERICAN
BOTANICAL
COUNCIL

Post Office Box 144345
Austin, Texas 78714-4345
Phone 512/926-4900
Fax 512/926-2345
Email: abc@herbalgram.org
www.herbalgram.org

Mark Blumenthal
Editor

Wayne Silverman, PhD
Underwriting Coordinator

Betsy Levy
Densie Webb, PhD
Leela Devi, MSN, RN
Summary Writers

Karen Newton
Database Manager

Kara Dinda, MS
Susan McFarland
Co-coordinators

Dawnelle Malone
Research Assistant

The American Botanical Council provides this summary and the enclosed article as an educational service. By providing this article, ABC does not warrant that the data is accurate and correct, nor does distribution of the enclosed article constitute any endorsement of the information contained or of the views of the authors.

ABC does not authorize the copying or use of the original articles. Reproduction of the summaries is allowed on a limited basis for students, colleagues, employees and/or customers. Other uses and distribution require prior approval.

HERBCLIPTM

FILE: · James A. Duke

DATE: April 30, 1999

HC 020991

RE: Interview with Botanist Jim Duke

Frederick, Sue. An Expert's Advice on Herbal Medicine. *Delicious! 1998 Annual Guide*, pp. 28-32, 34.

James Duke, Ph.D., is one of America's leading authorities on medicinal plants. He has over thirty years' experience as a botanist and biochemist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, numerous publications and research projects and personal botanical research and exploration around the world under his belt. In this interview, Duke doesn't mince words when he explains that he prefers herbal medicine to pharmaceuticals because "it's generally cheaper, gentler on the body, as effective, environmentally friendly, and almost always safer than the pharmaceutical."

In his widely known herb guide, *The Green Pharmacy*, Duke reviews herbal medicines used internationally for 120 ailments. Duke attributes the growing popularity of herbs to people's concern with the harmful side effects of pharmaceutical medicines. He contrasts findings in the Journal of the American Medical Association that pharmaceuticals cause over 100,000 deaths annually with the herbal fatality rate of only a few per year. Duke explains this discrepancy as a matter of adaptation: "We've been exposed to the natural compounds in plants [and adapted to them] for thousands of years, but we've only had synthetic over-the-counter drugs for a few decades." Duke notes that during one decade more than half the drugs approved by the FDA had to be re-evaluated due to side effects that had not appeared during the research phase.

Duke advises new herb users to stick with well-known herbs, sold by well-known brands. Although he prefers to use fresh herbs, he encourages the use of standardized extracts for beginners who feel less confident about seeing the desired effects. Duke also warns against herbs sold in bulk, containers that expose volatile medicinal compounds to damaging air and light. At the same time, Duke doesn't agree "with the silver-bullet approach, whether it comes from a plant or synthetic medicines;" he is concerned that isolated, pure compounds may "throw off the body's homeostasis in ways we don't even know about yet."

There are very few unsafe herbs on the market, according to Duke, and allergic reactions and other complications are often overplayed; he cites over-

coverage of a fairly rare allergic reaction to chamomile. However, caution and informed use is always advised when consuming any new substance.

When pressed to list the ten most important medicinal herbs, Duke mentions bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), *Echinacea* spp., evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*), garlic (*Allium sativum*), ginger (*Zingiberis officinale*), ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), kava (*Piper methysticum*), saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) and turmeric (*Curcuma longa*). Of these, he predicts popularity booms for kava (for relaxant properties) and turmeric (a multi-purpose antiinflammatory). He sees echinacea as holding the greatest benefit for Americans, for treatment of colds; personally, he has greatly benefited from celery seed (*Apium graveolens*) for treatment of arthritis and gout.

This article includes side bars about the forms in which herbs are sold, the standardization controversy, the conservation group United Plant Savers, and therapeutic uses for Duke's ten most important herbs. —*Betsy Levy*

Enclosure: Copyright© 1998, *Delicious!*, reprinted with permission

Bin #155