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HERBCLIPTM

FILE: · Herb Market
· Top-Selling Herbs

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RE: Herbal Trends in 1999

Babal, Ken. Great Expectations: Hot Herbs in '99. *Nutrition Science News*, January 1999, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 38-40, 42, 44.

This article is somewhat representative of the kind of information that is occasionally presented to the natural products industry regarding the herb market. New developments in the herb market mentioned in this article are divided among herbs for women's health, herbs for men's health, and herb applications newly arriving from Germany. In the wake of St. John's wort's phenomenal success in the U.S. based on scientifically documented performance in Germany, this author predicts that more of "the most frequently prescribed herbal preparations in Germany" will soon be aggressively promoted in the U.S.

Women's herbs, particularly those that treat the menopause millions of baby boomer women are now contending with, have been and will continue to be a growing category of herbs. Soy isoflavones lead the pack in terms of being well researched; isoflavones also show the most potent estrogenic activity among phytoestrogens, according to this author, competing with the body's own estrogen for estrogen receptors, therefore blocking estrogen's negative actions while producing weak estrogenic effects, often useful to lessen menopausal symptoms. Soy isoflavones may also slow osteoporosis, and protect against kidney disease, diabetes complications, and hormone dependent cancers of the breast and prostate. Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), contains ten times soy's levels of estrogenic isoflavones, including genistein, daidzein, biochanin and formononetin. A standardized red clover supplement (Promensil®) has recently reached the American market.

Remifemin®, a patented standardized black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) extract from Germany, is approved there as a nonprescription PMS and menopausal treatment. Ipriflavone is a synthesized isoflavone that metabolizes in the body to daidzein. It hasn't yet been found in nature, but it is approved in Hungary, Italy and Japan as an osteoporosis treatment. A Japanese study found that women with osteoporosis experienced an average 6 percent increase in bone mineral density after one year taking 600 mg ipriflavone daily. A control group lost 0.3 percent of bone mineral density.

The demand for herbal aphrodisiacs for men is growing in the wake of a marketing of Viagra. Chinese or Korean ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) has a long history of use as a tonic and aphrodisiac; ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*) is used to increase blood flow to the extremities; damiana (*Turnera diffusa*) is reputed as a tonic herb originating in Mexico; wild oat (*Avena sativa*) is another traditional tonic and aphrodisiac, and ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) is used as a male tonic in Ayurvedic medicine. The article also mentions yohimbe (*Pausinystalia yohimbe*), but this herb can cause heart arrhythmia and other dangerous conditions and is not recommended. In addition, the article mentions the use of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) for treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or non-malignant enlargement of the prostate gland.

Herbs currently popular in Germany and poised to gain U.S. consumer attention include:

- Ivy leaf extract (*Hedera helix*) to soothe respiratory irritations – “numerous randomized, double-blind, crossover studies have been performed with children and adults and show the extract to be beneficial and well tolerated,” according to this article.
- Hawthorn leaf and flower extract (*Crataegus laevigata*) – approved by the German Commission E to increase the output of the heart, for which use a “compelling body of evidence exists,” according to this article. Mark Blumenthal, executive director of the American Botanical Council, says that considering how significant a problem cardiovascular disease is in America, the market position of hawthorn is likely destined to go nowhere but up.
- Stinging nettle root (*Urtica dioica*) is an effective urologic agent, useful for increasing urine flow when treating BPH or other conditions.
- Horse chestnut seed extract (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) is widely used in Germany and Italy to support venous integrity, for conditions such as varicose veins.

In closing, this author predicts that consumers will begin to see more products based on herbs from non-western herbal medicine traditions, such as traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurveda, and South American and Native American herbal traditions. —*Betsy Levy*

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