



The Well



(I Ching) drawing on deep sources of nourishment

Greetings ~

Spring arrives with the strong energy of renewal. A great time for a little spring cleaning of our space, place, homes. Also, a good time for a little internal cleansing; six healing sounds, inner smile, spring-green foods, shifting our diet from the deep roots of winter.

As I write at the end of February, snow is falling and the temperature is dropping below 20°. This is the same weather we had before Thanksgiving when I was writing the last newsletter. In between it's been generally warm and wet. Ah, El Niño! Seasonal changes offer us an interesting chance to learn about the nature of weather, climate change and natural patterns. Which leads us into the feature article - exploring the nature of Chinese herbs. Another of 10,000 opportunities to learn about the natural way of things.

Retreat Report

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who supports and allows me the gift of a month-long retreat each year. A big *THANK YOU!* to Rick Detroye, L.Ac., for covering my herbal practice, allowing me the time and space to focus solely on retreat. It's so much easier knowing my clients are well cared for by such a kind and caring practitioner like Rick.

It's challenging to find the appropriate descriptive adjectives to convey the depth of renewal and practice this retreat process provides. I suggest it for everyone. The best way I know to share the results of these experiences with you is probably not with words, but through ongoing sessions and classes.

Two themes were quite consistent during the month: *forgiveness* and Mother Teresa's simple guidance: *small acts done with great love*. And... it doesn't stop on February 28. Continuity.

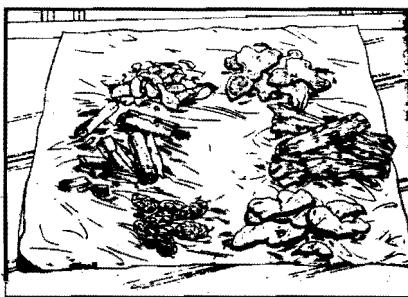
Cheers!

Kyle Clunie, LMT



a Taoist approach to Herbs

The essence of Taoism is to observe, explore, become aware of the nature of any given thing: rivers, trees, mountains, livers, kidneys, hearts, childhood, parenting, grieving. When applied to herbs, this approach allows a very simple and natural unfolding of what to do and not do, basically how to relate to the herbs we take for health and healing. This process naturally leads to energy and balance through being in harmony with herbs. On a practical level there is increased effectiveness, support and nourishment. What is the nature, or natural way, of herbs and how to use them?



Getting Started

Many people are drawn to Chinese herbs as a useful support to heal and nourish body, mind and spirit. Often we turned to herbs without much understanding of how they work, impressed by other people's results and/or relying on a practitioner's professional experience. If curious, it can become clear that there is a lot of information to become familiar with beyond how much to take and when.

One level of the nature of herbs is the technical details of their energy. On first approach, this vast amount of information may be overwhelming. There are different names for herbs, Latin, Chinese, and pharmaceutical. There are energetic properties: acrid, bitter, sweet, cold. Herbs influence organs and meridians: lungs, kidneys, triple warmer. They each have characteristics: Move chi, Build blood, Dredge liver. These induce certain actions like, Dispelling blood stasis, Alleviating pain, Moistening dryness. In addition there is even more detail on the combination or formulas of multiple herbs and how each may be modified in countless ways, as well as different formats: teas, granules, tablets and tinctures.

This is what an herbalist needs to study and know based on historical and modern experience, combined with the whole Chinese medical model to un-

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derstand, integrate and apply for an individual and their condition. It can be daunting, typically beyond what most people want or care to understand. This is why we rely on herbalists for guidance.

There is another level of the nature of herbs that is more general, what most Asians learned growing up in their kitchen and through practical and cultural experience. This is similar to what we have learned about prescription and over-the-counter drugs. It is common for Westerners to take the same approach to herbs as they do these medications, but they have very different natures. What are some of these general differences?

Herbs As Food

Herbs are more like food than isolated pharmaceutical chemicals. This difference impacts many variables.

Timing. The time we take herbs can vary: before, after or during meals. Some formulas

are better earlier, some later in the day. There is also the timing of the seasons, menstrual cycle, life phases, beginning, middle or end of acute conditions like colds, and longer-term recovery of chronic illness. These are many different aspects, but they are all about timing. Recognizing the timing involved is very influential on the therapeutic value of herbs. For example, herbs taken at the initial stage of a cold are rarely very effective seven to 10 days later.

Dosing. Herbs are generally whole foods, not isolated chemicals, so the dose is much different. Pharmaceuticals come in milligrams (1/1000 of a gram). Herbs are typically dosed in grams (1000 mg). The amount of herbal material is much larger because it contains all parts plant. In addition, there can be a wide variety of dosing depending on the individual, formula and condition. For example, with granules, an average dose is 9 g per day, but that can vary from between one to 25 g per day.

Modifying. Herbal formulas are increasingly effective when they are modified or adapted as the body/mind and symptoms change. The modifications reflect the shifting nature of things and follow those changes as a guide. Modifications may occur frequently, every few days in some acute situations like nausea, or weekly, monthly or seasonally in chronic, longer-term conditions. Adapting formulas is a key feature of Chinese herbism, allowing them to be very specifically customized to an individual rather than treating a condition.

Body Feedback. An herbalist relies on many sources of information from the individual: pulse and tongue are the most well-known. However, personal feedback from the individual is very helpful in making decisions about formulas, timing and changes. This is quite different than blood/lab work,

MRI's and x-rays. Daily personal experience and observation often tells most of what is needed to know about the nature of a condition and how herbs are working. Often without knowing it, our daily experiences provide valuable herbal feedback.

Format. The different ways we take herbs each has their own qualities. Most tablets are powdered, raw herbs; teas are made by boiling herbs in water, granules are the teas with the water extracted; and tinctures are made with herbs soaked in alcohol. Each format of the exact same set of herbs may have slightly different characteristics; each having advantages and disadvantages to consider as their nature. For example, tablets are typically cheaper, but as they are raw, uncooked, take more digestive energy to process well. Granules are a little easier to assimilate, but cost more. Teas are fresher, but labor-intensive and deteriorate slightly by exposure to heat.

Context. Motivation for taking herbs also is a part of their nature and use: acute symptoms, chronic conditions or a constitutional ongoing support. A constitutional approach is more general, supporting general health rather than treating specific symptoms or conditions. This is where the nature of herbs is more apparent as food—substances that nourish our well-being. In fact, in Asian cultures, a large part of herbal use is incorporated with the cooking of daily meals. For example, Congee (jook) rice porridge for breakfast traditionally has herbs included based on the nature of the person, season and climate. Another classic example is Chinese herb chicken soup, a blend of 12-16 different herbs slow cooked with vegetables and chicken. Typically, most of these food herbs are eaten whole, like a root vegetable, rather than just drinking a tea decoction. When herbs are combined with food, it becomes more than just the energetic qualities of herbs, the food also becomes a part of these energies.

As an herbalist, I take into account the nature of the individual herbs, the formula, the condition and the nature of the person. The individual details of each of these can seem overwhelming and complex, yet, surprisingly, when focusing on their nature, natural ways, the complexity typically dissolves and a resonant balance and harmony arises.

Anyone interested can learn about the nature of herbs through experience, observation and feedback from an herbalist and in so doing, facilitate their effectiveness. What we learn in the process isn't limited to herbs. It can be applied to Western pharmaceuticals, diet, exercise - anything we are curious enough to explore can be a part of and reveal the underlying natural way of things. Each can be an illuminating gateway to energy, balance and harmony.

The Nature of Ginger



Zingiberis rhizoma, gan jiang, Zingiber officinale:
Acrid & Hot; heart, lung, spleen and stomach organs;
Warms spleen, Unblocks channels, Warms interior,
Transforms mucous, Expels cold.

Mantak Chia Classes

May 18-24

In May we have a wonderful opportunity to continue learning some of the chi kung and meditation practices of the Universal Tao from Mantak Chia. He has been doing this since he was a young boy and teaching for over 40 years. He is a great source of information and inspiration for our own personal practice. This year he will teach **Cosmic Fusion** 5/18-19 (\$395/295) and **Chi Nei Tsang** 5/20-24 (\$595/495). Both: \$850/695. Pre-registration discount in bold. He'll also be doing **Basic Practices** and **Healing Love** in Seattle, May 13-17.

Chi Nei Tsang is a practice that combines bodywork, specifically the abdomen and internal organs, with all of the chi kung and meditation practices. It is a very dynamic and powerful combination, not something I find with many systems. While it is very useful for bodyworkers and other health professionals, anybody with an interest and curiosity about working on their own abdomens and others will find this useful.



Fusion is more of an internal, meditative practice. It would be good to have some kind of basic practice before taking this class. The Microcosmic Orbit is very helpful. I offer this class in April and May. The ongoing class schedule is listed below.

Call me if you have questions about the class content. Call **Jon Weston**, **503-794-2717**, for registration.

Equinox & Solstice Meditation & Potluck

Spring Equinox meditation will be on Sunday, Mar. 20, 4:30-6 pm. Following there will be an optional potluck dinner, 6-7 pm. Please call to let me know you'll attend and your food contribution. Also, please bring a place setting for yourself and any necessary serving utensils for your dish.

Summer Solstice will be June 19, probably with the same format, maybe out in the courtyard, weather permitting.

UNIVERSAL TAO SPRING/SUMMER 2011 CLASS SCHEDULE

See class descriptions on back page
(schedule subject to change. Call 503-222-1416 to verify and register)

MARCH:

- 3 Weekly Meditation
(cont'd 10, 17, 24, 31)
- 7 Tai Chi Chi Kung I
(cont'd 14, 21, 28)
- 20 Spring Equinox Meditation

APRIL:

- 4 Microcosmic Orbit Evening Class
(cont'd Apr. 11, 18, 25 May 2, 9, 16, 23)
- 7 Weekly Meditation
(cont'd 12, 19, 26)

MAY:

- 5 Weekly Meditation
(cont'd 12, 19, 26)
- 18-19 Mantak Chia: Cosmic Fusion
- 20-24 Mantak Chia: Chi Nei Tsang

JUNE:

- 2 Weekly Meditation
(cont'd 9, 16, 23, 30)
- 6 Iron Shirt I Evening Class
(cont'd 13, 20, 27)
- 19 Summer Solstice Meditation

JULY:

- 7 Weekly Meditation
(cont'd 14, 21, 28)
- 11 Healing Love Evening Class
(cont'd 18, 25, Aug. 1)

AUGUST:

- 4 Weekly Meditation
(cont'd 11, 18, 25)
- 8 Tai Chi I Evening Class
(cont'd 15, 22, 29)

