



**LILIUM INITIATIVE**  
AMERICAN GROWN ASIAN HERBS

## LILIUM'S FIRST WEBINAR: AN ADVENTURE OF THE SENSES

To kick off our educational series on quality standards in farming Chinese/Asian medicinal herbs, Lilium Initiative presented its inaugural webinar February 20, 2021: *Organoleptic Analysis with Andy Ellis and Peg Schafer.*

**Dave Melly**, president of Lilium Initiative and the day's moderator, introduced **Andy Ellis**. Andy is the owner of the highly respected Chinese medicinal herb company Spring Wind in San Leandro, CA which he founded in 1992. He is a translator and co-author of several Chinese medical texts, and a respected treasure of knowledge on the history, usage, and quality of Chinese medicinal herbs.

Having been a Chinese medicinal herb buyer for the past 30 years, Andy told us, he has found that the best quality comes from plants grown locally to the highest standards, which is the reason Andy is thrilled to be supporting the Lilium Initiative in their goal to educate farmers in the U.S. about growing Chinese medicinal herbs.

The second presenter, **Peg Schafer**, founder of The Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm in Petaluma, CA, and the author of the book *The Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm: a Cultivator's Guide to Small-Scale Organic Herb Production* has been farming Chinese medicinal herbs for the past 23 years. In lab tests, the farm's herbs

consistently have top ratings for medicinal properties and her book is the go-to manual for both beginners and serious growers throughout the country. Lilium Initiative is founded on Peg's work.

Webinar participants included Chinese medicine practitioners, Chinese medicinal herb growers, backyard growers, herbal pharmacists, practitioners of pao zhi (Chinese medicine makers), and others from VT, NJ, MD, NY, OR, WA, CA, FL, BC Canada, and elsewhere. The chat and Q&A were lively throughout the day with questions, shared discussion on the plants, as well as plant people connecting. Of the participants two-fifths had raw herb samples to smell and taste; the other three-fifths of us were fortunate to have high-resolution visual quality

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## FARMER'S CORNER



### LI GROWERS PARTICIPATE IN OREI GRANT

LI growers Jonathan Major, Dave Melly, Adam Fisher and our beloved advisor Andy Ellis were invited to participate in a meeting of growers and Chinese herbal practitioners to explore the barriers to domestic production in the Pacific Northwest. This meeting was part of an Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) grant put together by Oregon State University, Oregon College of Oriental Medicine with the aid of the Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm. This planning grant aims to identify what specific research and educational support is needed to make production of Asian botanicals a more viable option for farmers. The grant will, hopefully, be followed up and be awarded with a OREI production grant.

## DONATE TO OUR DIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Please help us bring more BIPOC farmers and acupuncturists to our events by making a contribution today.

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE](#)

## LILIUM INITIATIVE PARTNERS WITH CSOMA



Lilium Initiative and CSOMA became partner organizations at the end of last year. "The California State Oriental Medical Association (CSOMA) is a professional association of licensed acupuncturists and supporters of acupuncture, dedicated to the preservation, advancement and integration of the art, science, and practice of all branches of acupuncture medicine into the modern healthcare model, in a caring and ethical manner, thereby enhancing the health and well-being of the general public." Recently, Lilium Initiative(LI) partnered with CSOMA and sponsored their February 11th Continuing Education webinar entitled "Herb Drug Interaction

& Interprofessional Communication Around Herbal Medicine" by Ben Zappin of Five Flavors Herbs. Julia Urcis and Chris Goodman-Smith represented LI, introducing the LI to CSOMA member practitioners for the first time.

Julia Urcis of LI, shared the mission and vision as well as the target audience of growers and practitioners. She discussed LI's work to bring education for farmers and practitioners through workshops like the recent Organoleptics workshop with Andy Ellis and Peg Schafer. She also discussed the need for LI in the preservation of quality herbs and conservation of these ancient Chinese medicinal species. We look forward to the great work LI and CSOMA will do together in the years to come.

[You can view the slides on Google here.](#)

## NEW CLASS SERIES FROM OUR FISCAL SPONSOR

The Sonoma County Herb Association(SCHA) is offering a new educational series in 2021 called "Herbal Traditions from Around the World." The focus is on herbs in folklore, ethnobotany, indigenous and ancestral ways, magical systems and more.

January's presentation was called "The Fundamentals of Herbal Astrology" with Paetra Tauchert. February's presentation was "Flower Essences for Communities: Plant Allies for Healthy Interdependence" with Brooke Sullivan. March was "Energy Clearing with Plant Medicines" with Jennifer Heminger.

Check out their website [sonomaherbs.org](http://sonomaherbs.org) to sign up for future presentations.

This series is offered as a fundraiser for The Sonoma County Herb Exchange and prices are sliding scale from \$10-\$20.



## PEG SCHAFFER FEATURED IN MOTHER EARTH NEWS BLOG

If you are a farmer or gardener in North America thinking of growing Asian medicinal herbs, mostly Chinese, *The Chinese Medicinal Herb Farm: a Cultivator's Guide to Small-Scale Organic Herb Production* was written for you. It's both a how-to and reference guide. If you consume or prescribe Chinese medicinal herbs and want to understand why your growing them regeneratively is crucial (hopefully you do!), chapters one, two, and five are for you. This substantial book is colorful, beautifully laid-out, and easy to read.

[Read the rest of the review on the Mother Earth New blog](#)



## HERBAL SPOTLIGHT

*Isatis indigotica, Polygonum tinctorium, Baphicacanthus cusia, or Clerodendron cyrtophyllum*  
Pinyin Medicinal Name: Ban Lan Gen, Da Qing Ye, and Qing Dai  
Common Name: Indigo

### Ancient Dye, Perennial Medicine

The mesmerizing deep blue hues found in your jeans and hand dyed cloth around the world from China, to Central America to West Africa, are not only exquisite visually, but also are a powerful herbal medicine for bacterial and viral diseases. Most people know of Indigo as it continues to be one of the most desired dyes for cloth. What many people may not know is that it is also an important herbal medicine for epidemic and febrile diseases.

on hand in case of contraction of strong fevers. American Dragon says Da Qing Ye treats, “Warm febrile disease, pneumonia, epidemic outbreaks of fire toxin that affects people regardless of their constitutions (severe contagious diseases), [and] fire toxins anywhere in the body (*Chuang Yung*), especially the Lungs and throat.”<sup>1</sup>In other words, these plants that are greatly prized for their many gradations of blue, are also of great value in times like these in the face of virulent diseases and pandemics.



Ban Lan Gen, Da Qing Ye, and Qing Dai are 3 herbs in the Chinese pharmacopeia made from different species of indigo plants. They are all considered to be cold in nature. Ban Lan Gen and Da Qing Ye are both cold and bitter and enter the stomach, heart and lung meridians. Qing Dai is cold and salty and enters the lung, liver and stomach meridians. All are used to lower fever. Da Qing Ye and Ban Lan Gen are prized for their powerful effect on epidemic diseases. Many people keep Ban Lan Gen

Like many Chinese herbs, there are several species that can be used as each of these herbs in a clinical setting. Da Qing Ye is most often the leaves of *Isatis tinctoria*, but it can also be made from the leaves of *Isatis indigotica*, *Polygonum tinctorium*, *Baphicacanthus cusia*, or *Clerodendron cyrtophyllum*.<sup>2</sup> Qing Dai is a powdered substance which is the same as what would be used as dye for cloth. This is most often a mix of indigo plants usually *Baphicacanthus cusia*, *Polygonum tinctorium*, *Strobilanthes cusia*, and *Indigofera suffruticosa*.<sup>3</sup> To prepare the plants for medicine, people follow the same processes as for dye. There are many ways to prepare it, one of the most common ways is in a water solution. “The leaves of the plants are collected in autumn (after they fall to the ground),

then soaked in water. Over time, a solution forms in the

1 <https://www.americandragon.com/Individualherbsupdate/DaQingYe.html>

2 Yeung, Him-che. Handbook of Chinese Herbs and Formulas Vol.1 1983. p.92

3 Yeung, Him-che. Handbook of Chinese Herbs and Formulas Vol.1 1983. p.428

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# LILIUM'S FIRST WEBINAR

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photos of the herbs as Andy was talking.

In the first half of the webinar, Andy Ellis presented historical and current usage, planting, fertilizing, and harvesting suggestions and comments, organoleptic quality indicators, and pao zhi (medicinal processing) recommendations for six herbs:

Dan shen, *Salvia miltiorrhiza*, Red sage

Xia ku cao, *Prunella vulgaris*, Heal all

Jing jie, *Nepeta tenuifolia*, Japanese catnip

Hong hua, *Carthamus tinctorius*, Safflower

Huang qin, *Scutellaria baicalensis*, Baikal skullcap

Qing hao, *Artemisia annua*, Sweet annie

Those of us with the herb samples of the above plants then dove into analyzing them, and commented in the chat on Andy's organoleptic explanations. We compared samples of the same species, tasting and noting initial and lingering after-tastes, smelling and noting age, color, size, bark, roughness, length of spikes, type of knife cuts (slanted, direct coin cuts, diced, length-wise), fracture quality, and the effect of preparation and processing.

Peg Schafer then presented on "Organoleptics by way of Growing," noting that the Chinese pharmacy is based on wild-crafted plants and although she has incorporated semi-wild techniques in growing, she grows as a

modern organic farmer. And yet chromatographic lab analyses show her farm's crops consistently produce the compounds that the Chinese pharmacopeia is looking for. She saves seed carefully so the germplasm continues to grow true to the traditional medicinal uses. She then discussed some best farming practices for these medicinal crops, and responded to questions from grower participants.

Andy and then Peg shared thoughts on dao di (roughly, the Chinese concept for medicinal plants analogous to "terroir"). Plants from places historically famous for their medicine almost always fetch higher prices than the same plants grown elsewhere without the local "branding." They agreed that for some plants with a specific, narrower growing range with very particular requirements, the concept of dao di is applicable, but many plants can adapt and have done so widely to other growing conditions both inside and outside China. Testing, whether organoleptic or by lab analysis or both, is crucial to see how medicinal properties fare in different growing conditions.

Participants requested future webinar topics, which are being planned right now. Stay tuned in through our email list and checking our webpage [liliuminitiative.org](http://liliuminitiative.org). Lilium Initiative looks forward to welcoming you in our family of growers and supporters!

## HERBAL SPOTLIGHT

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water. The solution is stirred with a type of milk until it turns from black to green to red. The solution is then dried in the sun and allowed to form a powder."

The origins of the use of indigo plants as dye, date back at least 6,000 years ago. There is evidence of their use not only in China but in Ancient India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and even the Indus Valley Civilization. Archaeologists have, "recovered seeds from at least 4 different species of the genus *Indigofera* from the town of Rojdi (2500 -1700 BC)," in the Indus Valley as well as remnants of cloth dyed blue dated to 1750 BC. It became popular with the Greeks who, "called this blue pigment 'indikon', meaning a product from India" which later was anglicized to Indigo. It seems to be endemic to Africa, India, and South America. It is still a highly valued dye in West Africa.

Enslaved Africans also brought it to the US, where it became another cash crop much like tobacco and cotton. Today many people use a synthetic dye in its place, though it is still cultivated and used around the world. Most of these species are very easy to grow. Indeed, one must take caution to keep them from going to seed and becoming a noxious weed. The species *Isatis tinctoria*, commonly known as Woad, is a biennial that grows about 40-100 cm tall. They have acid yellow blossoms in April to June. The fruit is black or dark brown and mature in May - July.

So whether you use it as dye or as medicine, these amazing plants have been precious companions to human beings in all corners of the world for millennia. Just remember, they are easy to grow but not easy to stop - so take special care to contain them.