

countries, the herbs needed for making many of the medicines are in short supply. For example, the Men-Tse-Khang pharmacy in Dharamsala, India -- the most respected source of Tibetan medicines -- turns away all requests for medications except those accompanied by a prescription written by one of their own doctors. They will not accommodate even orders from their own graduates, those who have emigrated from India to other countries, explaining that to do so would deplete the supply of medicines needed in their branch clinics in India and Nepal.

Three different approaches to this scarcity of medicines are being explored. The most obvious and the most urgent is to preserve whenever possible the plants and animals currently used in Tibetan medicines, by protecting the ecologies that support those organisms, planting some species to increase the supply, and developing resources like seed banks to insure these species against extinction.

A second strategy is to extend the area where the herbs grow by planting in the wild and by finding ways of cultivating some species, as a way of preserving those that cannot be preserved in the wild, and as a way of increasing supplies.

The third is to evaluate the medicinal qualities of plants in other areas. Tibetan doctors have always used many imported materials in making their medicines, and believe that using substitute materials with similar therapeutic action is entirely appropriate when the ingredients of choice are unavailable. Tibetan physicians can identify plants indigenous to other areas that are suitable for use as substitutes for ingredients in traditional formulas and in developing new preparations.

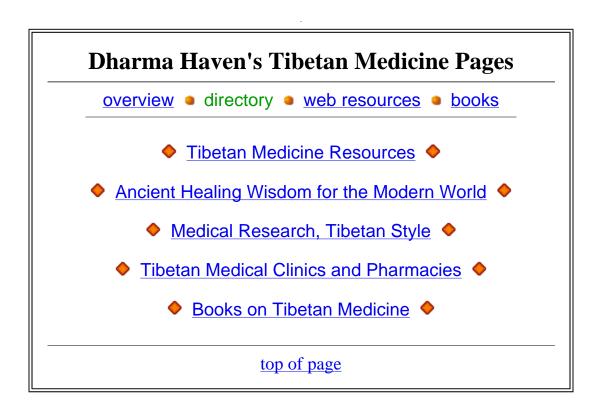
Herbal medicine systems from other cultures will be useful in identifying promising species. Especially promising are two other systems which have ancient connections with Tibetan medicine and are still practiced: Indian Ayurvedic medicine and Chinese herbal medicine. Many of the herbs used in these systems are already used in Tibetan medicine.

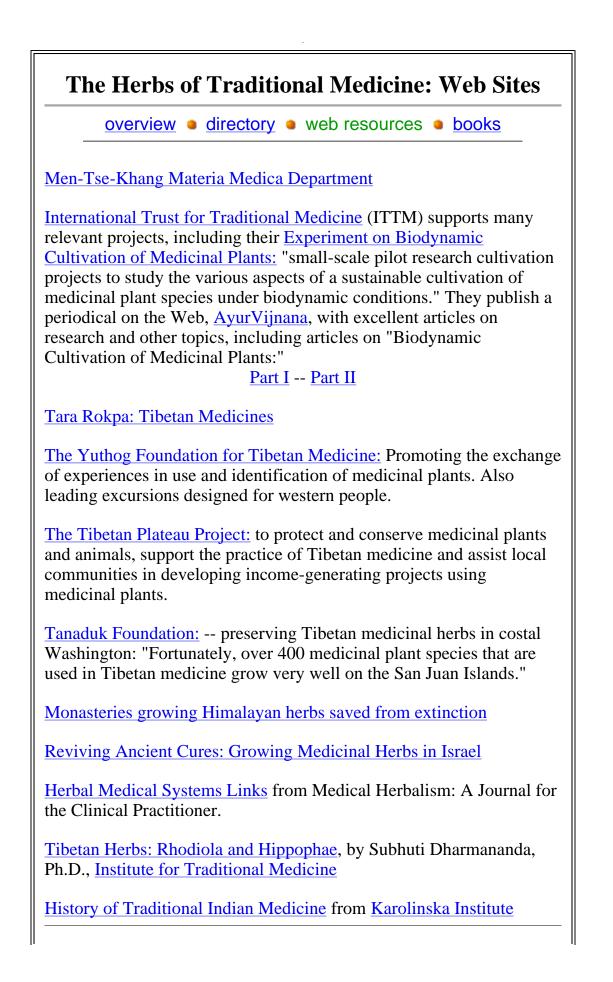
The research needed for effort seems endless. The newsletter of the Chakpori Tibetan Medical Institute in Darjeeling, India, comments on some of the main issues: "To know which plants are vulnerable, endangered, or close to extinction, detailed studies have to be made. Also, the cause of rarity should be investigated (e.g., environmental causes, over exploitation by non-expert gathering, etc.). An important decision has to be made to replant not only the economically valuable plants but also the plants that are environmentally valuable and supportive of the total environment.

"Replanting sites should have the same characteristics as the original habitat. In traditional Tibetan medical texts, the side of the mountain, altitude, climatic condition, soil composition, etc. are mentioned [as important influences on the properties and potency of the herbs] .... research findings are essential guidelines for replanting the herbs in their natural environment. The size of the replanting area is also crucial because of genetic diversity and the problems of insular ecology. Monocultures, like the usual big plantations, should be avoided: mass plantations of certain species will not have the desired quality or power."

Here on this page we offer links to Web sites relevant to preserving the plant species used in making Tibetan medicines, and increasing the supply of those herbs or finding substitutes, along with books and audio tapes on Tibetan herbs and related topics. Another page, <u>Medical Research, Tibetan Style</u>, gives resources relevant to other aspects of the immense task of preserving Tibetan medicine and making it available to the world.

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Medicinal Plants of Kalimpong, Eastern Himalayas, India: information from ITTM on sources of medicinal plants in Northern India.

Flora of China Checklist: - from the Missouri Botanical Gardens botanical database.

Chinese Medicinal Herbs Database

Ayurvedic Pharmaceuticals: An Overview

Ayurveda - an important source of medicines

University of Maryland's American Herbalism Links

The Apothecary -- Medicinal Herbs: from Algy's Herb Page

Herb Alchemy: Bulk Herbs

Plants for a Future: Database Search

The Gatherer: Plant Use Multiple Database Search Engine

US Agricurtural Research Service: Ethnobotany Databases

Native American Ethnobotany Database

Southwest School of Botanical Medicine: Images, illustrations, maps, manuals, old texts, etc.

A Modern Herbal

Centre for Economic Botany Links: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Herb research Foundation: Links

<u>Plant Net:</u> horticultural databases on the net.

Society for Economic Botany: "concerned with basic botanical, phytochemical and ethnological studies of plants known to be useful or those which may have potential uses so far undeveloped."

Center for International Ethnomedicinal Education and Research

Ethnobotanical Resource Directory

WWW Virtual Library of Botany

Permaculture and Sustainable Agriculture Links

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## **Books and Tapes**

overview • directory • web resources • books

## AUDIO TAPES

The First International Congress on Tibetan Medicine, held in Washington, D.C. in November of 1998, included a session titled "Environmental Implication for Health Systems: The Case of Tibet." The following audio tapes from that session, available from <u>Conference Recording Service</u>, may be of interest:

"Environmental Issues of the Tibetan Plateau" -- TMC98-027

"Utilization & Conservation of Medicinal Plants" -- TMC98-028

"Utilization & Conservation of Animal Species" -- TMC98-029

"Environmental Implication for Health Systems: The Case of Tibet" -- TMC98-030

## BOOKS

*Tibetan Medicinal Plants*, by **T. J. Tsarong**. 120 pp., 95 color photos \$19.95

Available from Wisdom Books

In the Himalaya mountains grow some of the loveliest and most colorful flowers in the world. Many of these wild and exotic plants have been used for centuries as ritual offerings and healing drugs by the lama-physicians of Tibet. These healers, through painstaking trial and observation, have identified these plants and documented their therapeutic action and uses in herbals. This is the latest book by the famous teacher who has spent his life devoted to the preservation of Tibetan medical wisdom. Here are excellent photos and descriptions of many medicinal plants giving both the Tibetan and Latin names as well as indigenous information about their taste, potency, action, uses and the parts that are to be utilized in medicine.

Medical Plants of Himalayas, Vol.1, by Gyanendra Pandey; US\$ 33.30

Materia Medica of Tibetan Medicine, by Vaidya Bhagwan Das; US\$ 80.00

Pharmacopoeia of Tibetan Medicine, by Vaidya Bhagwan Das; US\$ 26.67

<u>Handbook of Traditional Tibetan Drugs</u>, by T.J. Tsarong; Tibetan and English names, composition, use, action, and dosage of 175 popular Tibetan natural drugs.

<u>Blue Poppy Press:</u> Books on Chinese medicine, including herbal medicine and dietary medicine.

Indian Books Center: Ayurveda, Siddha (a medical system similar to Ayurveda), Herbal, and Alternative Medicines

<u>Vedams Books:</u> Pharmacopoeia of India: Books on Alternate Systems of Medicine: Ayurveda, Tibetan, Unani

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