Kudzu  
(Pueraria lobata) 
By Steven Horne

If you live in the southern United States, you probably know what kudzu is. I’ve seen it growing over trees, bushes and telephone poles. I’ve heard stories about it growing over and completely covering abandoned cars and outbuildings. Kudzu is a native of the Orient, introduced into the United States where it became a very aggressive weed. In my book, that suggests we need this plant. Why bother harvesting endangered species when we have marvelous healing herbs like this one that need to be harvested because they grow like weeds?

The part used is the root. It has a sweet and pungent flavor; it works on the stomach, lungs and intestines. The plant is demulcent and soothing, reducing heat and irritation. It is also antipyretic (fever reducing), antispasmodic, decongestant, hypotensive (lowers blood pressure), and cardiotonic.

One of the interesting properties of kudzu is its ability to counteract alcohol poisoning or hangovers. It has been used both to reduce the desire to drink and to help the body recover from hangovers. Studies using alcoholic hamsters showed that a water extract of kudzu caused animals voluntarily to reduce their alcohol consumption. It has a similar effect in some people, making it a useful adjunct to therapy for alcoholism.

An even more important benefit of kudzu is its ability to soothe and heal intestinal membranes. Kudzu can be helpful in treating irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhea, colitis, inflammatory bowel disorders and leaky gut. It reduces inflammation of intestinal membranes, promotes healing and helps restore tone to the tissues.

Kudzu is useful for fevers and headaches associated with tension in the upper back and neck. It is very useful for treating torticollis, a condition involving a stiff neck, where muscle spasms on one side draw the head to one side.

Another valuable use of the plant is for hypertension (high blood pressure). It alleviates a variety of symptoms in hypertensive patients including, dizziness, headaches, high blood pressure, tinnitus, vertigo, and numbness in the extremities. It is also helpful for stiff neck associated with fevers and high blood pressure. In one study, where patients suffering from angina pain were given hawthorn and kudzu, 90% experienced pain relief and 43% had improved electrocardiograms. It appears to dilate coronary arteries so the heart gets more blood; this helps bring down blood pressure.

Kudzu also counteracts toxins and has been used to speed recovery from measles and chicken pox. It helps the body clear toxins faster. Kudzu is an ingredient in the formula Kudzu/St. John’s wort, featured in this issue. Kudzu is also an ingredient in Breast Assured, because it contains phytoestrogens.

Selected References
Chinese Herbal Medicine compiled and translated by Dan Bensky and Andrew Gamble
Herbal Therapy and Supplements by Merrily A. Kuhn and David Winston
Legendary Chinese Healing Herbs by Henry C. Lu

In This Issue
Feature Herb: Kudzu ............................. 1
Steven’s Ramblings & Ravings: The Healing Process 2-3
Kimberly Balas’ Clinician’s Corner:
Leaky Gut ....................................... 4-5
Product Handouts:
Inflammatory Bowel Disorders ..................... 6
Kudzu/St. John’s wort ............................ 7
Announcements/Class Schedule .................... 8
The Healing Process

In the last issue, we discussed the process of cellular irrigation. We discussed how osmotic pressure holds the plasma in the blood stream and only allows tiny amounts of fluid to leave the circulatory system to irrigate the cells. We’ve also discussed the four stages of disease and their corresponding tissue states. This time, we’ll begin an exploration of the process of healing.

All acute illness follows a pattern, illustrated in Figure 1. The straight line represents the normal energy level of body tissues. When tissues are exposed to an irritant of any kind, they respond by becoming hyperactive. They increase their energy output in an attempt to expel the irritant. This is the first tissue state discussed in the previous chapter—irritation.

We experience irritation as a lack of ease, which is the literal meaning of the word “dis-ease.” As long as the irritant is present, the sense of dis-ease will continue to mount. If the body is strong enough, and one does not interfere with what it is trying to do, then the body will eventually mount a response that is strong enough to expel the irritation. The point when the irritant is dispelled is called the disease crisis, or “the crisis” for short.

Old-fashioned doctors who observed the natural progress of disease understood this process. Perhaps you’ve seen the old-time movie where the doctor leaves the patient’s room and says “the crisis has passed.” The crisis passes when the cause (the irritant) has been successfully eliminated. With the cause removed, the symptoms of disease immediately begin to subside, and energy levels return to normal.

On the other hand, if the body is unsuccessful in eliminating the source of irritation, then the irritant overpowers the body’s coping mechanisms. As stagnation sets in, the tissue energy slips “below the line” and the system becomes progressively weaker as illustrated in Figure 2.

There are two reasons why the body may be unsuccessful in mounting a crisis. First, the body was too weak to resist the irritant and mount an effective response. This is why building health is the foundation of preventive health care. The stronger the body is, the more easily it will resist an irritant. We call this immunity.

A second reason why the body may be unable to mount an effective disease crisis is because the crisis is suppressed with drug medications. Symptoms, such as fever, runny noses, vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, coughing, sneezing, skin eruptions, and so forth, are methods the body uses to flush the irritants that are causing inflammatory reactions.

Relieving “symptoms” is often a matter of interfering with these natural body responses. This is why drugs are usually small doses of substances that would be toxic taken in large doses. These poisons interfere with natural body processes, resulting in the appearance of a cure. Remember the analogy we used in chapter two about putting “corks” in the body’s chimneys. When we do this, the body isn’t really cured, and the problem is suppressed—progressively becoming a subacute, chronic or degenerative disease.

This process can be understood even better by examining what happens when a person gets food poisoning. Let’s say that someone goes out to dinner at a restaurant that wasn’t paying proper attention to sanitation. A few hours later, they get a queasy feeling in the stomach. Having eaten something that was beginning a process of putrification, they have ingested microorganisms that are releasing toxins into the digestive tract. These irritants are causing an inflammatory reaction, and the stomach and intestines respond by becoming overactive. Recognizing
that an irritant is present, the body starts to generate symptoms.

It starts with nausea. Nausea is an attempt of the digestive tract to reverse the normal peristalsis, so that food moves upward instead of downward in the digestive tract. The nausea grows stronger and stronger as the body gathers its energies to move toward the crisis. Just at the moment when the symptoms become worse, a good thing occurs—you throw up. **Vomiting is the disease crisis** and once the crisis is passed you immediately begin to feel better.

It is obvious that the symptoms of nausea and vomiting were the efforts of the body to expel what was irritating it. They were actually functions of the immune system, working to protect the body.

Now, let’s suppose that the person in this scenario could take a drug that would suppress the symptoms of nausea and vomiting. Would this help to “heal” food poisoning? Of course not. In fact, it would actually interfere with the healing process. What would really help is something that would enhance the ability to throw up, because the sooner the body is able to eject what is irritating it, the sooner the person is going to start feeling better.

Continuing with the food poisoning example, let’s suppose that the person’s body wasn’t strong enough to eject the contents of the stomach through emesis. In this case, these irritants would pass through the entire length of the digestive tract, creating more irritation as they went. This might result in diarrhea, and if the diarrhea and vomiting combined couldn’t flush the irritation, then there would be lingering sickness as the tissue energy is overcome and drops into the subacute disease state.

When the body fails to eliminate the irritant, either through insufficient strength to mount a crisis, or due to suppressing the crisis with medications, then the irritant is still present in the body. At some point the person may decide to improve her/his health. When she/he does so, she/he will begin making dietary and lifestyle changes that enhance energy. As tissues become stronger, a reversal process takes place. In other words, the body goes through the disease process in reverse.

If the person starts the healing process when the body is in a degenerative (atrophyed) state, then the tissues will move through the chronic and subacute states of disease until the body is strong enough to attempt to expel the irritant again. If the process of getting rid of these irritants is gradual, the symptoms of this reversal process may be mild. Sometimes, however, the body will recreate the original acute symptoms. This condition has been called the healing crisis.

The reversal process in natural healing was laid down by a homeopathic physician, named Constantine Hering, and has become known as Hering’s Law of Cure. Hering’s Law states:

**All cure comes from within out,**

**From the head down,**

**And in reverse order as the symptoms have appeared in the body.**

I’ve had many personal experiences which validated Hering’s Law of Cure. In the next issue, I’ll share some of these experiences and explain the difference between a healing crisis and an aggravation of symptoms.

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Can you explain what leaky gut is?

Sharlene

Leaky Gut Syndrome (LGS) is a major cause of disease and dysfunction and is the root cause of many other health problems. At least 50% of chronic complaints, as confirmed by laboratory tests, have the foundation of LGS.

In LGS, the epithelium on the villi of the small intestine becomes inflamed and irritated, which allows metabolic and microbial toxins of the small intestines to flood into the bloodstream. This event compromises the liver, the lymphatic system, and the immune response, including the endocrine system. It is often the primary cause of the following: irritable bowel, fungal disorders, fibromyalgia, and inflammatory joint disorders including rheumatoid arthritis. It also contributes to PMS, uterine fibroids, and breast fibroids. It has also been linked with learning disabilities and behavioral problems in children, and with food allergies. Leaky gut syndrome is often the real basis for chronic fatigue syndrome and pediatric immune deficiencies.

Antibiotics have been the primary cause, but non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are a major secondary cause. Antibiotics also damage the intestines by fostering the growth of Candida albicans and other pathogenic fungi and yeast. This overgrowth of yeast, more than any other factor, precipitates leaky gut syndrome. In a healthy situation, the small intestine epithelium maintains tight cell junctions, which contributes to the physical barrier involved in intestinal absorption. In addition to the physical barrier, there is an important chemical barrier within the mucus that contains immune agents which neutralize any toxins that come in contact with the intestinal lining.

Candida exudes an aldehyde secretion that causes small intestine epithelial cells to shrink. This allows intestinal toxins to infiltrate through the epithelium and into the blood. The secondary barrier—immune agents in the epithelial mucus—remain the sole agent for neutralization. Eventually, the immune system becomes exhausted by this continual challenge.

Many people have an erroneous belief that the candida itself enters the blood stream, allowing it to be deposited elsewhere, such as the brain. Unless the immune response is completely depleted, as in AIDS, candida is quickly destroyed in the blood. The real damage done by candida is to the intestinal epithelial barrier, allowing the absorption of serious toxic agents and chemicals, which then enter the bloodstream and affect numerous organs, including the brain.

When the integrity of the intestinal barrier has been compromised, intestinal toxins are not the only pathogens to be absorbed. The barrier, in a healthy state, selectively allows digested nutrients to enter the small intestine when all is ready. With leaky gut, nutrients can be absorbed before they are fully digested. The body’s immune response, through specific antigen-antibody markers, will tag some of these food particles as foreign irritants. Every time that particular food-stuff touches the epithelia, an inflammatory immune response is mounted which further damages the epithelial lining. What started as a candida irritation with shrinking of the cells has now been complicated with active inflammation every time a particular food is eaten. Food allergies are a common problem, secondary to candida, and if present, will maintain the leaky gut continuously, even if the candida is eradicated.

The most common food allergies are dairy, eggs, gluten grains (wheat, triticale, rye), corn, legumes (especially soy and peanuts), and nuts. There are seldom real allergies to meat, rice, millet, vegetables, or fruit, although an allergy to garlic is not uncommon. We have to distinguish a real allergy—that which causes a histamine inflammatory reaction at the site of the small intestine (SI) epithelia—from food sensitivity, which may cause uncomfortable symptoms, but is seldom damaging. Sensitivities are usually due to low stomach acid or insufficient pancreatic enzyme secretion, i.e., poor digestion.

In the healing of the intestinal lining, exposure to a significant allergen can sabotage the treatment. For example, one may be very good at restricting wheat, dairy and eggs, but then compromises the treatment by eating peanut butter.

The metabolic and microbial toxins that enter the bloodstream because of leaky gut end up in the liver, which has the
job of detoxifying and discharging the poisons. Under normal conditions, the liver is taxed just by processing the daily metabolic wastes created by cell and organ activity. Imagine the further load created by dumping serious intestinal toxins on a regular basis. There is a point when the liver becomes saturated; it cannot further detoxify the poisons, and the poisons (toxins) are allowed to enter the general blood circulation. The blood has sophisticated mechanisms for preserving chemical homeostasis, and will diffuse as much of the toxic chemicals and physical debris into the interstitial fluids as is possible.

From here the lymphatic system will attempt to collect and neutralize the toxins, but, unable to send the toxins to the liver, the whole body starts to become toxic. In this environment, microbes flourish, which can cause chronic lymphatic swelling, especially in children. Over a period of time, toxins will be forced into distal connective tissue around muscles and joints, causing fibromyalgia, or into the cells, which can precipitate genetic mutation and ultimately cancer.

The immune system is stressed by leaky gut in three major ways. First is at the site of the intestinal mucosa. As toxins and food antigens brush up against the mucosa, the immune system mobilizes to neutralize the toxins. Normally, much of this work would have been done by beneficial bacteria, but the friendly flora have been destroyed by antibiotics. For toxins that make it to the mucosa, the body will tag them with a chemical secretory IgA (SIgA), which attracts macrophages and other white blood cells to consume the toxins. It is not long before this immune response is overwhelmed and depleted. This can be measured directly with a stool or saliva test for the intestinal SIgA level.

The second stressor occurs in the liver and lymphatic system, which are also overwhelmed. This weakens the immune response. The third stressor is a consequence of the second. As the immune response diminishes, more microbes (viruses, bacteria, and fungi) multiply, allowing for a state of chronic infection. What might be tagged as a viral infection, such as Epstein-Barr virus for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, is actually an opportunistic infection taking advantage of a weakened immune system.

The most important organ in the production of immune agents seems to be the adrenal gland, and leaky gut syndrome slowly diminishes adrenal function. In the early and middle stages, there is actually an adrenal excess, as measured by excess cortisol output. Eventually, cortisol levels drop, and one now experiences adrenal exhaustion.

Candida flourishes when the terrain in the intestines favors it. Just killing candida is usually not successful, because the chemistry and vitality of the terrain has not been normalized, and candida returns. The terrain of the small intestine requires proper pH and electromagnetic resonance. The idea that lactobacillus supplementation is all that is required after antibiotics is somewhat delusional; in fact most of the lactobacillus from supplementation does not survive in the intestine, due to poor terrain.

Leaky gut syndrome has various components, all of which must be evaluated and addressed. First, ongoing irritants to the small intestine mucosal lining (fungus, food allergens, and NSAIDs) need to be identified and neutralized. Second, nutrients and herbs are required to promote healing of the epithelial lining. Third, and perhaps the key link, the liver needs to be supported. Fourth, the lymphatics and interstitial fluids need to be detoxified. Fifth, the immune and endocrine systems need to be balanced and supported. And sixth, the stomach and pancreas needs to be supported, if necessary.

The therapy for healing leaky gut syndrome takes between four and eight months. Here are some of the products that may be helpful. Each case requires careful evaluation, selecting remedies appropriate to the individual's specific needs.

I have found Kudzu/St. John's Wort very effective for leaky gut. Gastro Health, Spleen activator, probiotics and Small Intestine Detox may also be helpful. Astringent herbs, such as yarrow, oak bark and red raspberry can help tone the intestinal lining. Herbs to eradicate yeast overgrowth and intestinal parasites may be helpful, including Yeast/Fungal Detox and ParaCleanse with Paw Paw. Anti-inflammatory herbs like licorice and chamomile can be helpful. Intestinal Soothe and Build will also help reduce gut inflammation and ease leaky gut symptoms. HistaBlock can reduce allergic reactions.

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Modern medical research is confirming what traditional healers have been saying for years—there is a link between intestinal problems and chronic illness. Research has connected problems like arthritis, allergies, eczema and other skin diseases, some cancers, asthma, and even “mental” diseases like depression, ADHD, and schizophrenia with intestinal inflammation.

Intestinal inflammation is caused by chemical damage to the linings of our digestive tract. It creates abdominal pain and discomfort, bloating or swelling, and other symptoms of indigestion. Repeated irritation of these membranes damages them and creates chronic inflammatory bowel disorders and a condition known as leaky gut syndrome.

Leaky gut syndrome occurs when inflammation makes the intestinal membranes more porous. This allows toxins—materials that should be retained in the intestines for elimination—to be absorbed into the bloodstream and lymph. It’s like having gaps in your defensive front line. The “enemy,” or toxins, are able to slip past your outer defenses.

A leaky gut forces the immune system in the intestinal area to work harder. It weakens the body’s defenses and makes a person more prone to food allergies and hay fever. Toxins absorbed into the lymphatic system increase lymphatic swelling and contribute to respiratory problems. These toxins also put stress on the liver, glands and nerves.

A major cause of intestinal inflammation and leaky gut is antibiotics. The intestines contain several pounds of friendly microorganisms that live in a symbiotic relationship with the body. Antibiotics upset the balance of these microbes and increase the risk of inflammation and gut leakage by promoting yeast overgrowth. Yeast exudes an aldehyde secretion that causes swelling (inflammation) in the lining of the small intestine.

Other causes of intestinal inflammation include food allergens, anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS), birth control pills, antacids, heavy metals, smoking, nitrates, MSG and chlorinated water. Another possible cause are microbes (such as H. pylori) and intestinal parasites.

Common food allergens include dairy foods and grains containing gluten (wheat, triticale, and rye, but not buckwheat). Other common food allergens include eggs, legumes (especially soy and peanuts) and nuts. A good place to start is to learn your body type and avoid foods which are incompatible with it.

The Journal of Immunology in 1991 published a very practical approach to treating intestinal inflammation using four Rs—Remove, Replace, Reinoculate, and Repair.

Step One: REMOVE the Irritants

The first step to healing the intestines is to remove the irritants that are creating the inflammation. Yeast/Fungal Detox can help get rid of yeast. Gastro Health is beneficial for overcoming H. pylori infections. For parasites, Para-Cleanse with Paw Paw is the best choice.

Step Two: REPLACE Digestive Enzymes

Enzymes help the body break down food efficiently, which results in less intestinal irritation and better absorption of nutrients. Proactzyme Plus, taken with meals, is effective for most people. If protein foods are particularly hard to digest, then Protease Plus should also be taken. Small Intestine Detox contains the protein digesting enzyme pepsin, in a base of the mucilaginous herb marshmallow. These ingredients deliver the enzymes to the small intestine where they can help to break down accumulated poorly digested protein materials and promote healing of the intestinal membranes.

Step Three: REINOCULATE Friendly Organisms

The friendly microorganisms in one’s intestinal tract are very important to our health and well-being. Probiotics (friendly microbes) help to reduce waste acids, prevent harmful bacterial infections, block mutation of intestinal cells, produce short chain fatty acids needed for cell health, and reduce food sensitivities.

L. Reuteri can aggressively knock out yeast and other unfriendly microbes, paving the way for friendly microbes to reestablish themselves. Probiotic Eleven is an excellent formula for replacing intestinal flora.

Step Four: REPAIR the Leakiness

Fiber is the most important thing needed to repair gut permeability. Soft, soluble fiber products absorb toxins from the intestinal tract and reduce irritation. For intestinal inflammation of any kind, one of the most dependable formulas is Intestinal Soothe and Build. This formula not only soothes inflammation and irritation, it also helps to tone up the intestines and reduce the leakiness. Other products that can soothe intestinal irritation include Kudzu/St. John’s wort, licorice, chamomile, wild yam, and CLT-X.

Selected References

Prescription for Nutritional Healing by James F. Balch and Phyllis A. Balch
The ABC+D Approach to Natural Healing by Tree of Light Publishing
The Encyclopedia of Natural Healing by Siegfried Gursche

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Kudzu/St. John’s Wort
Herbal Formula for Alcoholism and Intestinal Inflammation

Kudzu/St. John’s wort is a formula with a variety of benefits. It is a mild antidepressant remedy and benefits the nervous system in helping to overcome addictions, especially to alcohol. The formula also benefits the gastrointestinal tract, helping to restore bowel tone, improve digestion and reduce gut inflammation. Irritated, inflamed digestive tract membranes lose some of their ability to filter toxins in the intestines and prevent them from entering the blood stream and lymphatics—a condition known as leaky gut syndrome. Kudzu/St. John’s wort is an excellent formula for helping repair gut “leakiness.” Since the majority of serotonin (a neurotransmitter that elevates mood) is produced in the intestines, this helps explain the formula’s ability to alleviate mild depression.

Some of the potential uses for Kudzu/St. John’s Wort include: treating alcoholism and hangovers; easing intestinal inflammation and repairing leaky gut (preferably used in combination with Intestinal Soothe and Build and/or Irritable Bowel Fiber); relaxing muscle stiffness, especially in the neck; relieving mild depression, anxiety or headaches; and reducing fevers.

There are three ingredients in this formula, St. John’s wort, Kudzu and alfalfa. Here is what each of these herbs does:

St. John’s wort

This herb is an abundant weed in the United States and Europe. In recent years it was widely promoted as a remedy for mild to moderate depression, but this is only one benefit of this powerful medicinal plant. It is a very valuable remedy for the nervous system, helping to promote rapid healing of damaged nerves. It has been used for helping spinal and head injuries to heal, as well as nervous conditions such as sciatica, neuralgias, and Bell’s palsy. It is used both topically and internally for these problems. Besides easing depression, St. John’s wort also helps ease anxiety.

St. John’s wort is a mild astringent, and has been used to treat diarrhea. It increases blood flow to damaged tissues, helping tone and heal them. It has been applied topically to speed the healing of wounds, burns, and sunburn. Another valuable property of St. John’s wort is its antiviral action. It has been used for herpes, mononucleosis, and flu.

A little known benefit of St. John’s wort is its ability to harmonize digestive function. It appears to act by regulating the solar plexus, a bundle of nerves that controls digestive organs. It decongests the liver and soothes and heals the stomach and intestines. It works well for people who suffer from digestive upset associated with fear, worry or nervous exhaustion.

Alfalfa

A highly nutritious herb, alfalfa is rich in trace minerals, vitamins, and amino acids. It has been called the father of all foods. It has a nourishing effect on body tissues and promotes tissue growth and repair. It has a mild anti-inflammatory and blood thinning action, which makes it useful for arthritis and gout. It has also been used as a digestive tonic, to improve appetite and digestive function.

Kudzu

Kudzu, a member of the legume family, is a native of the Orient and was introduced into the Southern United States where it has become a very aggressive weed. It grows over bushes and trees, choking them. The root, however, has some wonderful medicinal qualities. It is demulcent and cooling, helping to reduce fever and inflammation. In traditional Chinese medicine it was used to clear heat from the body, easing fever, headache, stiffness in the upper back and neck, and general muscle pain. It has also been used in Chinese medicine for diarrhea.

Western herbalists have discovered kudzu is very valuable for irritable bowel syndrome, colitis and leaky gut. It reduces intestinal inflammation, especially when combined with herbs like yarrow, wild yam or chamomile.

In laboratory studies, alcoholic hamsters voluntarily reduced their consumption of alcohol when given a water extract of kudzu. It has also clinically helped some people to reduce (not stop) their alcohol consumption.

Suggested Use

Suggested dosage is 1 capsule three times daily. For alcoholism, add Milk Thistle Combination. For digestive problems and leaky gut, take with Intestinal Soothe and Build or Irritable Bowel Fiber.

Selected References

Legendary Chinese Healing Herbs by Henry C. Lu.
The Book of Herbal Wisdom by Matthew Wood
A Handbook of Native American Plants by Alma R. Hutchens
Chinese Herbal Medicine by Daniel P. Reid.

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More Iridology Videos

For those of you interested in iridology, Steven Horne has completed two more iridology videos.

Iridology Part 3: Charting the Iris

In this video, Steven explains how to use iridology charts to determine potential weaknesses in specific body systems. *Available in August.*

Iridology Part 4: Character

This program explains how to determine characteristics of a person's personality from the iris. This information is very helpful in knowing how to communicate with clients in a way they will readily understand. *Available in September.*

Each video runs about 60 minutes and includes a set of handouts. Videos are $29.95 or 4 for $100. You can also subscribe to the Herbal Hour video club and receive a new video each month, automatically, for $24.95.

Sunshine Sharing Back Issues Available

We have copies of the following back issues of Sunshine Sharing available for $9 per bundle of 25 copies, plus shipping. Available while supplies last.

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Antioxidants
Roots of Health—Inflammatory Bowel Diseases
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In an effort to offer you a variety of viewpoints and to broaden your scope of health, body systems and natural healing, *Nature’s Field* selects a variety of qualified writers with diverse experience and talents in these areas. The viewpoints expressed by each writer do not necessarily reflect the opinions or philosophies of Steven Horne or Tree of Light and its staff. We hope that you continue to learn and grow in your health endeavors through our publication!

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