

Herbs Enhance Healthy Breast Tissue



by Joel Faville

Using herbs for breast health and enhancement is nothing new. Their healing and mastogenic effects (the enlargement and growth of healthy breast tissue), have been recognized by various cultures throughout the world. Modern science is just becoming aware of the healthy aspects of such phytoestrogens (natural plant compounds that mimic estrogen) and their role in increasing the size and health of the breasts.

Fenugreek

For centuries, rumors have floated out of the Middle East noting that harem women historically have been fed fenugreek seeds (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) to make them more buxom. According to the phytochemical databases of James Duke, Ph.D., a former researcher with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the seeds contain diosgenin and other mild plant estrogens. He notes in his seminal book, *The Green Pharmacy*, that, like natural estrogen, these compounds can increase healthy breast tissue.

In India, traditional ayurvedic physicians have long prescribed fenugreek to nursing mothers to increase

their milk. In American folk medicine, fenugreek was considered a potent promoter of menstruation. It even became a key ingredient in Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, one of 19th century America's most popular patent medicines for "female weakness" (menstrual discomfort).

Saw Palmetto

Saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*; *Sabal serrulata*), now a popular treatment for prostate enlargement in men, originally had a place in natural medicine as a breast enlarger. Late 19th century author and artist Susan Hale noted that Native Americans in the southeastern United States used saw palmetto berries for both food and medicine, including "the treatment of infertility in women, treatment of underdeveloped breasts, increased lactation [and] painful menstruation cycles." Duke reports that naturopathic physicians still recommend it today for its breast-enhancing effects; in numerous studies, the herb has shown no side effects or drug interactions.

Wild Yam

In *Herbal Healing for Women*, author Rosemary Gladstar states that wild yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) "is the most widely used herb in the world today," with derivatives of the herb present in thousands of prescription and over-the-counter medicines. It is used both as a breast enhancer and a sexual stimulant, and is recommended by herbalist Susun Weed, author of *Breast Cancer? Breast Health!* for fostering healthy breast tissue. Weed suggests adding the herb to creams for breast massage and notes that women using this mixture see improvements in both breast health and size. Duke further notes that wild yam contains less diosgenin than fenugreek, but contains other compounds that contribute to breast health and enhancement.

Other Herbs

Red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and soy isoflavones belong to a class of phytoestrogens structurally similar to estrogen. In her book, *Menopause with Science and Soul*, Judith Boice, a naturopathic physician, notes the balancing effect these nutrients can have and states, "This could at least in part explain why Japanese women tend to be at lower risk for breast and other reproductive cancers."

Research at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston has spurred interest in the use of turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) in both preventing and treating various cancers. Their scientists observe that, "Extensive research over the last 50 years has indicated [curcumin] can both prevent and treat cancer." Its anticancer potential, they believe, "stems from its ability to suppress proliferation of a wide variety of tumor cells." A study published in *Cancer Letters* in 1999 showed the herb's remarkable ability to contain the spread of breast cancer when used in conjunction with other breast cancer treatments.

Herbs and Breast Health

Dr. Andrew Weil, author, medical researcher and head of integrative medicine at the University of Arizona, cites large-scale demographic studies of cancer rates as his rationale for recom-

mending diets rich in estrogenic herbs and foods to women. In his online guide, *Healthy Aging*, Weil notes that in Asian populations, where women consume up to 20 times more phytoestrogens than western women, rates of breast cancer are one-fifth of what they are in the west. These populations also experience the lowest rate of hysterectomies.

Finally, for anyone considering breast augmentation, wise use of these herbs could be the answer to avoiding painful and sometimes dangerous surgery, while improving overall breast health. As Duke remarks in his book, "If my daughter wanted her breasts enlarged, I'd certainly encourage her to try natural approaches first."

Joel Faville is the founder of Greenbush Natural (GreenBush.net). Greenbush began offering pure, additive-free herbs for breast health and enhancement in 1999, based on the recommendations of the cited experts. Its archives include thousands of unsolicited letters from women describing positive results with the herbs.