

By Mother Nature, M.D.

Herbs offer alternative to modern medicine, help prevent illnesses

BY KIFFIN COLLINS
The Battalion

At 10 p.m. and the first symptoms of a cold begin to surface. Head is spinning, stomach is aching and the symptoms of a cold are making themselves known.

The local pharmacy may be closed, but a trip down the fresh food and produce aisle of the grocery store may prove beneficial.

Curing an illness has become a controversy. To use medication or not to use medication — that is the question.

The answer, according to a growing minority, is herbal medicines.

However, to the public, the knowledge of what they are used for, what the benefits and dangers are and where they came from are still in the air.

Medicinal herbs have been used for thousands of years, dating back to the Egyptians who used them to cultivate gardens and maintain their health.

Throughout time, the use of herbs has come from trial and error methods of earlier civilizations.

Today, almost half of the pharmaceutical and over-the-counter drugs available come from herbal sources.

The application of herbal treatments have become common and focus on the body's ability to heal itself, as opposed to the symptom-specific medications prescribed by physicians.

Many people turn to herbal remedies to avoid the harmful side effects of pharmaceutical drugs, when they fall victim to failure of modern medicine, or when they find out the medical industry does not have treatment for their illness.

Jason Elias, adviser for the National Food and Drug Administration, said the FDA has not approved herbs for medicine usage.

"An herb, unlike a drug, cannot be patented by any one company in the United States which means that manufacturers of these remedies have little incentive to brave the costly and lengthy gauntlet of the FDA's approval process," he said. "Also, the FDA cannot allow the packager of herbal products to make any healing claims on the labels of their products and the FDA requires warning of any possible side effects of herbs."

Generally, people take herbs as a supplement or to help them stay well, rather than when they get ill.

Most people prefer herbs because they offer natural remedies. Herbs have the ability to cleanse the body of impurities as well as build the immune system to keep illness from setting in.

Herbs come in many different forms. Some herbs are used externally in the form of lotions, ointments and salves. Others are taken internally in the form of pills or liquid.

Some of the more common herbs in use today include Echinacea, Ginkgo biloba, St. John's Wort and Ginseng.

Echinacea is used extensively to prevent and treat the common cold as well as other viruses and bacterial infections.

It is used frequently as an antibiotic, antiseptic, immune stimulator, a blood purifier and to produce sweat.

It also helps to stimulate the body's cells to produce a chemical, which is naturally produced by the white blood cells while fighting infection.

Elisa Blankenship, a freshman biomedical science major, said she has found many benefits from taking Echinacea.

"After working in a health food store, I discovered the advantages in taking it," she said. "I didn't get sick as often, and when I did, my illness was not as severe as it could have been."

Along with the benefits of Echinacea

there are side effects. It can cause a tingling sensation in the mouth when ingested, and in some cases, lightheadedness can occur.

Echinacea is also listed with the FDA as an "undefined safety" Elias said.

This is due to the fact that "no one has ever had a toxic reaction to the herb yet," he said.

Ginkgo biloba is another common rem-

edy among herbal users.

It is effective in helping to repair the brain from damage, while improving concentration and memory, increasing blood flow and helping menstruation and depression.

SEE HERBS ON PAGE 4.



ERIC NEWMAN/THE BATTALION

StageCenter play marries comedy, drama

BY MICHELLE MCNEELY
The Battalion

Helen and George Butler are left alone for the first time in 30 years after their youngest son, Keith, heads to college.

The Butler's oldest son, Michael, has a research job in Boston and their middle son, Elliot, is married and living in Dallas.

Thoughts of permanent bliss enter the Butlers' minds. They have plans of vacations, extra-curricular activities and most of all, privacy.

But just before the Butlers place the do not disturb sign on the door, their oldest son returns without warning, their middle son soon follows after a falling out with his wife, and Jaine, a college girlfriend of the youngest son, shows up at the Butler's doorstep in search of a temporary home.

Surprise — it is not a new show on the WB network. It is StageCenter's pro-

duction of Lawrence Roman's comedy "Alone Together."

The play takes a look at the relationship between parents and their grown children.

"Alone Together" is directed by Cathy McWhorter and stars a group of local actors with a wide variety of backgrounds.

"College students can relate to the contents of 'Alone Together,'" McWhorter said.

"The play is very interesting and funny because it combines all the sayings that your parents say such as 'Home is where the heart is' into the plot."

Michele Poe, who plays Helen Butler, said students can relate to the close relationship between the Butlers and their children.

"Helen and George Butler have given them a sense of security," she said. "Their children do not feel uncomfortable coming home. Home is still a place they can come to in their time of need."

Eventually, the Butlers' children do come home, seeking shelter from their various problems.

Tracy Johnson, who plays the Butler's eldest son Michael, said his character suffers from the anxieties of the real world.

"Michael is afraid of not making it after college," Johnson said. "He is constantly changing in order to keep depending on his parents."

The Butler's middle son Elliot, played by Tom Tarver, returns to escape his marital problems.

"Elliot is completely self-absorbed," Tarver said. "He is kicked out by his wife for having affairs and all he ever thinks about is himself."

Stephanie Lozos, who plays the role of Jaine Johnson, said her character is trying to learn how to survive in a new environment.

"Jaine has the typical college dilemmas," Lozos said. "She can't find hous-

ing on campus, she has term papers to write and other problems to deal with."

Audiences can expect a different performance every night.

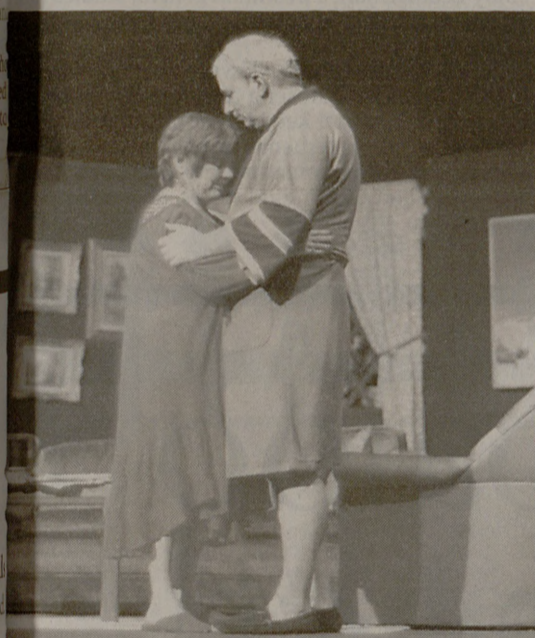
"You never know what to expect," McWhorter said. "There is a certain spontaneity and enthusiasm that you don't get at the movies. There is a totally different emotional bond between the actors and the audience."

Charles Pitman, who plays George Butler, said live theater is more "in your face."

"It's different every night, and sometimes there are screw ups, which make it interesting to watch."

"Live theater is fun," Tarver said. "It's like you're entering someone's living room and coming into the people's lives."

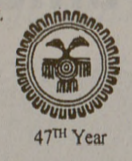
Performances of "Alone Together" start at 7:30 p.m. every Thursday, Friday and Saturday through Feb. 20. All ages are welcome; however, the play does contain some adult language. For reservations, call 823-4297.



StageCenter thespians Michelle Poe and Charles Pittman perform in "Alone Together."

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