

Foundation of Texas toward endowing the Dorothea L. Leonhardt Chair of Texas Botany.



Established in 1991, BRIT is a nonprofit international botanical resource center open to the public. Its mission is to conserve our natural heritage by deepening our knowledge of the plant world and achieving public understanding of the value that plants bring to life.

For more information about BRIT and the Dorothea L. Leonhardt chair, visit <http://www.brit.org>, call S. H. Sohmer, PhD, at (817) 332-4441, or call Iona Richardson, assistant director, at (817) 429-3200; e-mail, irichardson@mesquite.brit.org. ♦♦♦

JAPAN APPROVES 34 HERBS In June the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare announced that 34 additional herbs including American and Oriental ginsengs, feverfew, hawthorn, and valerian can now be marketed and sold as supplements in that country.

This latest approval is part of an ongoing review by the Japanese health ministry of certain herbs, vitamins, and minerals to determine whether they should be sold as supplements or drugs. For a complete listing of the herbs or more information about this announcement, contact Randy Dennin at the NNFA; fax, (864) 942-3842; e-mail, randy.dennin@wl.com

♦♦♦ **POSITIVE PSYCHOL-**

OGY TECHNIQUES CUT DEPRESSION IN HALF

Positive psychology techniques that aim to instill a sense of optimism halved the rate of depression in studies of young adults and children, said Martin Seligman, PhD, at a meeting on preventing depression sponsored by the National Institutes of Health.

Investigators screened students admitted to the university using a questionnaire that measured their optimism. Those who scored in the lowest quartile were randomly assigned either to no intervention or to a workshop designed to help boost their optimism.

The 126 subjects who took part in the workshops and 119 controls were followed up for 8 to 10 years. During young adulthood, those from the program were half as likely to have episodes of moderate unipolar

depression (13%) compared to control subjects (27%). Subjects who had taken part in the workshops had half the rate of generalized anxiety disorders compared to controls.

The researchers also studied 10- to 12-year-old children who had symptoms of mild depression. Sixty-seven children participated in a similar positive psychology intervention and 47 served as controls. After 2 years of follow-up, the rate of mild to moderate depression was twice as high among the controls (44%) as it was among children who had participated in the intervention (22%). ♦♦♦

STUDY FINDS MARIJUANA SAFE FOR AIDS PATIENTS

In the first government-sanctioned test of the effects of marijuana on people infected with the AIDS virus, a University of California-San Francisco study found that patients who

smoked marijuana gained weight and came out of the 21-day trial "just as fit ... [as] when they started," in the words of *San Francisco Chronicle* staff writer Sabin Russell.

The 20 patients who smoked marijuana 3 times a day for 21 days gained an average of 7.7 pounds during the study period; those taking Marinol—a prescription drug containing the active ingredients of marijuana—gained 7 pounds. Twenty patients in the placebo group gained 2.9 pounds on average.

No change in the level of the virus among those who smoked marijuana or took Marinol was found. "It's exciting. It's historic," said Dr Donald Abrams, chief investigator on the trial. "It confirms that all the states that have allowed patients to use medical marijuana have not made a serious mistake."

EPISCOPAL CHURCH ELEVATES NIGHTINGALE

In a move symbolizing Florence Nightingale's role in spiritual healing and rewarding efforts by 2 key Nightingale scholars, the Episcopal Church has officially recognized the 19th-century nurse-healer on the church calendar list of *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* that will appear in the revised *Book of Common Prayer*.

This 3½-year joint effort has been the work of Barbara M. Dossey, MS, RN, director of Holistic Nursing Consultants in Santa Fe, NM; Louise C. Selanders, EdD, RN, associate professor of nursing at Michigan State University, East Lansing; and the Reverend Canon Ted Karpf of the Washington National Cathedral, Washington, DC. Formal Episcopal church services to honor Nightingale will begin in August 2001, around the anniversary of her death on August 13.

"There is no doubt in my mind that Nightingale was driven by the passion of God," says Dossey, whose 6 years of research culminated in the publication of *Florence Nightingale: Mystic, Visionary, Healer* (Springhouse, 2000), in which she argues that Nightingale was a mystic healer in the tradition of Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila.

For more information about Dossey and Selanders's efforts, consult the article by Marcy Darin in the spring 2000 issue of the *Journal of Women's Ministries*. To obtain a copy, write to *Journal of Women's Ministries*, PO Box 928, Vineland, NJ 08362-0928.



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