

# On-Farm Hedgerow Production of Certified Organic Medicinal Plant Materials<sup>1</sup>

Dean Hively<sup>2</sup>

---

A collaborative project in upstate NY is working to developing production methods for hedgerow cultivation of medicinal plant materials. There is a consensus among local organic grain farmers that preservation of farm hedgerows is of considerable benefit to their cropping system in terms of nutrient control, windbreak protection, and habitat diversity. There is also a realization that hedgerows also represent lost income from land removed from crop production. Harvest of specialty tree products such as medicinals, fruits and nuts can provide a short term cash benefit which can make the on-farm presence of wooded hedgerows and riparian areas a profitable venture.

Four NY state farms, certified organic through the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA), are working with a Cornell University crop science graduate student to design hedgerow production systems for medicinal materials such as hawthorne, ginkgo, paw paw and black walnut. Hedgerow plantations will be established on three collaborating farms, in the spring of 1998.

Production areas include bordering a field drainage ditch, in contour strips on sloping cropland, and in a living fence surrounding a grain field. Another farmer will design and evaluate low-cost, on-farm drying equipment suitable for processing medicinal materials. This equipment will be evaluated using corn silks and black walnut husks. The project looks to supply medicinal materials to regional buyers such as Frontier Herbs, as well as to local markets. Because the farms are already certified organic for field crop production, harvested hedgerow materials will also be certified, and can therefore capture a high value market. To meet the product quality standards of this market, however, efficient post-harvest drying and handling of materials is critical.

This project has been supported by a grant from the Organic Farming Research Association. Additional support has come from upstate NY organic cash grain farmers.

---

<sup>1</sup>Poster abstract present at the North American Conference on Enterprise Development Through Agroforestry: Farming the Agroforest for Specialty Products (Minneapolis, MN, October 4-7, 1998)

<sup>2</sup>Graduate Student, Cornell University, Department of Soil, Crop and Atmospheric Sciences, 331 Emerson Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853  
wdh3@cornell.edu