

# Natural Healing

*Grow medicinal plants and reap the health benefits from your garden.*

By Jessie Eisenstein

**Y**OUR GARDEN MAY HOLD THE KEY TO YOUR good health. When used correctly, herbal remedies can provide a safe alternative to modern medicine for curing minor ailments. You can grow many medicinal plants in your own back yard.

The root of the purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), a prairie wildflower that is often planted in perennial gardens, is an herbal treatment for minor viral infections. The herb is considered by its proponents to be

gentler than pharmaceutical treatments because it enables the body's own immune mechanism to fight microorganisms and dispose of them.

Another backyard remedy is found in cayenne peppers and other spicy members of the genus *Capsicum*. The watery eyes and runny nose you experience after eating hot peppers occur because these peppers increase the secretions of the mucus membranes, thinning out the mucus that causes you to cough.

Some hay fever sufferers find relief for their allergy symptoms in stinging nettles (*Urtica dioica*). The leaves are brewed into an herbal tea; many people naturally turn the histamine in the plant into an antihistamine. This natural remedy offers relief without drowsiness and other side effects commonly associated with pharmaceutical antihistamines.

Your garden has spiritual gifts to offer as well. Let all five of your senses drink in its profusion. Walk through the garden and rub the leaves between your fingers to release their scents amidst a rainbow of flowers and plants. However you choose to do it, be sure you take advantage of the restorative powers of your garden.

For more information about herbal remedies, you may order *The Medicine Garden*, two one-hour audio cassettes for \$15.95 plus shipping and handling, by calling 800-5-LISTEN. *The Medicine Garden* is also airing on public radio stations nationwide. Call your community-supported stations to ask about future air dates.

PHOTO, MARK TURNER



Stinging nettle

PHOTO, RICHARD SHIELL



Cayenne pepper

PHOTO, RICHARD THOMAS VISUALS UNLIMITED



Purple coneflower

*Herbal remedies do not take the place of professional medical advice. Herbs and plants should be used medicinally only in consultation with your physician. Exercise caution and moderation when using medicinal plants, as side effects of organic remedies may be unpleasant or dangerous.*