

## *Some Information on Wild Yam and Chaste Tree*

Finally there is a combination of herbs with the specific needs of women in mind. This is a combination of Wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) and Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) which is designed to promote functioning of the glandular system in women.

### **Wild Yam (*Dioscorea Villosa*)**

Wild Yam (also known as colic root, rheumatism root, Chinese yam, bitter yam) has historically been used to treat a variety of problems, such as cancer, diarrhoea, colic and rheumatism. In large doses it has been used as a diuretic and an expectorant. Recently it has also been shown to lower blood cholesterol levels.

Wild Yam contains a sapogenin called diosgenin. Diosgenin is a precursor to the hormone progesterone. Although yams do not actually contain progesterone, they do contain "plant estrogen" which does produce estrogenic effects. Wild Yam extract has been shown to reduce fatigue, inflammation and stress related to menstruation. In fact, Wild Yam is a valuable anti-spasmodic, therefore, it is excellent in relieving menstrual cramps. In pregnant women, it is prompt in relieving nausea and can help prevent miscarriage.

### **Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)**

Chaste Tree (also known as Monk's pepper, Indian Spice, Sage Tree, Hemp Tree, Wild Pepper) has an interesting history. Pilgrims believed the tree to have magical qualities and would carry its boughs to ward off robbers and deter the bites of venomous creatures. Even earlier, Athenian women put the leaves of the tree in their beds and monks ground up the seeds for pepper, both actions being taken to ensure chastity.

Although these stories seem humorous, the tree has been shown to contribute positively to the many challenges to women's health. The seeds and berries contain hormone-like substances and when used are able to adjust the production of female hormones. Modern research shows that the plant acts on the hormone producing systems of the body by stimulating progesterone production. Dr Alan Stewart conducted a study in which subjects were given capsules of dried agnus-castus. Sixty percent of the group experienced a reduction or elimination of PMS symptoms, including anxiety, nervous tension, insomnia and mood changes. Extracts of the chaste tree have also been successfully used for treating gynaecological conditions, hyperprolactinemia, symptoms resulting from menopause and menstrual irregularities.

Wild Yam and Chaste Tree berries work synergistically in aiding the above mentioned problems. Female hormone irregularities are smoothed out and stabilised. Since the primary purpose of Wild Yam and Chaste Tree is to "regulate" both over active and under active hormone-related conditions can benefit.