CHEW ON THIS
Scientists at chewing gum maker William Wrigley Jr. Company have been looking for an herb to add to their gum and mints. They found magnolia bark (Magnolia officinalis) highly effective in destroying three types of oral microorganisms. When employees chewed mints containing the bark extract after lunch, bacteria in their mouth dropped by 43% within 40 minutes. Chewing gum without magnolia only reduced bacteria 18% and plain mints had less than 4% antibacterial action. This included a group of bacteria responsible for tooth decay. More than 61% of germs that cause bad breath died within 30 minutes, a comparable rate to commercial mouthwashes. (Foul-smelling, sulfur compounds form as mouth bacteria break down protein.) Magnolia also did not stain the teeth like many pharmaceutical anti-bacterial agents and has been shown effective against the helicobacter pylori bacteria responsible for stomach ulcers. Among eight medicinal plants tested by the National University of Singapore, magnolia was the most antimicrobial, especially against several infections, including Candida albicans and staph. It also had the most antioxidant activity, along with the leaves of curry leaf plant (Murraya koenigii), marsh pepper knotweed (Polygonum hydropiper), and heartleaf (Houttuynia cordata). Traditional Chinese medicine uses it to treat fever, headache, and stress.


HAWTHORN-CAMPHOR
Two placebo studies from the University of Munich found that hawthorn berry extract (Crataegus spp.) combined with camphor (Cinnamomum camphora) and a small amount of menthol for taste improved brain function. The volunteers in this study who took the formula Korodin® could process mental information better and their visual speed was faster. The combination also raised systolic blood pressure within 2-5 minutes so may prove helpful to those with chronic low blood pressure, which can lead to problems such as dizziness and also lower mental skills. [Ed. Note: Use camphor with caution.]


CHAMOMILE for MIND & HEART
A double-blind study with 61 participants at The Depression Research Unit at the University Science Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania found that chamomile (Matricaria recutita) helped people who had mild to moderate anxiety within two-months. Researchers in Japan and the UK think that a daily cup of chamomile tea taken with meals may help prevent complications of low blood sugar and diabetes. Preliminary studies indicate that chamomile does so by inhibiting an enzyme (aldose reductase) and increasing liver glycogen levels, which keep blood sugar levels from rising. Another indication is that chamomile also inhibited the accumulation of sorbitol in human blood cells in the lab. Chamomile has also been shown to inhibit the body’s natural COX-2 enzyme that produces inflammation and resulting pain. It does so without affecting the non-inflammatory COX-1 enzyme. It acts similar to non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs, such as sulindac, also a COX-2 inhibitor.


MULBERRY FOR DIABETES
Mulberry (Morus rubra) is rich in a compound that may help prevent type-2 diabetes. Researchers of one study think the leaves could be used to keep blood sugar from rising too high after a meal. They tested blood sugar levels of volunteers who first ate the enriched powder and then sugar. This could be helpful to overweight individuals, who are susceptible to type-2 diabetes. A compound (deoxynojirimycin) in the leaves inhibits its carbohydrate digestion by an enzyme (glucosidase). The production of food-grade mulberry powder with a high content is underway for use in dietary supplements. According to Tohoku University, in collaboration with the National Agricultural Research Center in Japan, the most potent leaves are young ones collected from the top branches in summer. Indian and UK scientists also purified a protein from mulberry that may protect against pathogenic bacteria.
