

Ginseng can be a health risk

BY LILLIAN NASH
HEALTH BEAT REPORTER

The health series answers students' health questions. Send any questions in care of the Old Gold and Black to P.O. Box 7569.

Q: What is ginseng? I have heard "ginsana," a ginseng extract, advertised on the radio and supposedly it increases energy and stamina. Is this safe to take?—K.B.

A: Ginseng is an herb that has been popular with Chinese doctors for centuries. Ginseng contains some active agents used as stimulants, sedatives and tonics, especially in traditional medicine. The Chinese used the plant as an aphrodisiac, too. For the most part, ginseng and other herbal remedies are marketed as food, not as drugs, in order to bypass more stringent Food and Drug Administration regulations. But the medical literature varies in its analy-

sis of the safety and effectiveness of ginseng. Generally, I found American research yields decisively negative conclusions about ginseng while European and Asian research portrays ginseng as yet another miracle drug.

Ginseng is marketed in this country for everything from stress relief to sexual enhancement. Using ginseng improperly can cause nervousness, insomnia, breast pain and diarrhea. Because ginseng comes in pill, tea and powder forms with food, not drug labels, it can be difficult to determine what is a proper dose and if there are any product warnings.

In the *Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*, German researchers published that Gincosan, a compound containing ginseng, reduced systolic blood pressure in high doses. Other circulatory benefits of the herb include better muscle use of oxygen during exercise, according to Italian research in *Clinical Therapeutics*. The most astounding

findings of all come from Korea, where researchers claim ginseng prevents cancer.

All of this is very exciting and tempting, but in the case of drugs that potentially have power reserved only for prescription drugs in this country, it may be best to err on the conservative side.

According to the FDA, Chinese herbal medicines have a history dating back to 1974 of containing strong prescription drugs. There have been a handful of deaths due to misuse of ginseng and other herbal products since that time.

Herbs are also dangerous because of their natural inconsistencies. The levels of natural constituents of herbs sometimes vary greatly depending on the part of the plant from which the product comes, the plant's growth stage at harvest, and the degree of processing and dilution during manufacture.

Vitamin supplements are much more consistent, and perhaps more safe, because of their specific ingredients and federal labeling requirements. Furthermore, some ingredients in herbal products naturally contain chemicals that are harmful, such as alkaloids, according to the FDA.



Perritt

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"It's one of those things that you don't notice until someone points it out to you," said Matt Greenwalt, a participant in LEAD. Since the university had already designed several proposals for a flag site, the LEAD group did not have much input into the design. Instead, the LEAD group confirmed that there was desire on the part of some students for a flag on campus, Greenwalt said.

Physical Facilities shared an interest in building the flag plaza because it would eliminate the paths that student traffic makes in the grass. Physical Facilities had originally wanted to plant thick hedges around the oval, but poor soil prevented the bushes from thriving.

After sufficient interest was generated for placing a flag on campus and the designs were completed, the proposal went before the Capital Planning Committee. The committee examined three proposals for the site and felt that the grass area between Benson and Davis was the most appropriate location. The other proposals were to place the flag plaza on the Quad or between Bostwick Resi-

dence Hall and Johnson Residence Hall.

The committee decided that the area between Benson and Davis was the best location because it is a prominent location and is seen by both students and visitors on campus, Mills said.

"It becomes the university's front door," Mills said. He also said he feels that the prominent location of the plaza will make it a landmark. "It will be an area that (students) might stop and talk or it may be a place to meet," he said.

Student response to the new construction has been a bit cautious if not cynical. Many students expressed concern over the cost of the project and the added concrete to the campus landscape.

Junior David Rychy said that he has noticed an increase in the amount of sidewalks every year since he has lived on campus.

"It is symptomatic of their excessive concern for campus appearance," Rychy said. He added that he has noticed new sidewalks wherever footpaths have developed.

Sophomore J.D. Graves expressed concern for the natural beauty that the campus has.

"I think this campus is pretty because it is natural. The more we try to make it more modern the more we take away from its beauty," Graves said.



Jordan Wong

A grounds keeper works on the concrete sidewalk that will be a part of Perritt Plaza, which will be completed by Christmas. The plaza in front of the Benson University Center will also be home to an American flag.

SG

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The commission will open its weekly meetings twice each month for students to come and discuss their experiences with racism. The first open meeting is at 8:30 p.m. Dec. 7 in Benson 310.

At the other SG committee meetings, the Physical Planning Committee discussed the possibility of purchasing holiday lights for the Quad.

The committee had received permission to decorate the Quad, but miscommunication resulted in questions as to who would pay for the lights.

According to sophomore Amy Eckert, the chairwoman of the committee, the committee needs \$1,500 to purchase the lights. The committee plans to apply to various organizations for funding and to conduct a dorm storm to reach the goal. If this

plan fails the committee will apply to the contingency fund after semester break and purchase the lights for next year.

The Physical Planning Committee also discussed problems in the residence hall laundry rooms. They have learned that Residence Life and Housing is currently investigating ID card machines that will enable students to pay for their laundry using the vending strip on their ID cards.

RLH also told this committee that if students notice broken washing machines or dryers, they should call Maytag, and not RLH. The number for this company is posted in the laundry rooms.

The Academic Committee planned a meeting for today with the Committee of Academic Affairs to hear the committee's concerns regarding the syllabus bill, a proposal to put the syllabus of all courses on file in the library.

"Hopefully we will convince the Academic Affairs Committee to make the bill mandatory. At this point we

do not understand why they are troubled by it," Slade said.

Dean of the College Paul Escott discussed a proposal with the committee that he is considering which will allow freshmen to evaluate their academic advisers at the end of the year. This would be the first year that freshmen students could do this.

The Campus Life Committee discussed a new basketball ticket distribution system that will be enacted this year. According to sophomore Deborah Tyson, committee members will meet with the Athletic Ticket office to discuss changes in distribution.

The committee is considering a bulk ticket pickup, which will enable students to pick up tickets for approximately three games at one time.

The Campus Life Committee is also looking to create a bill which will establish a Library Student Task Force. The Task Force will orient new students to the features of the library and acquaint them with its various research facilities.

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