

Plant extract may help depression

St. John's wort has been a popular remedy in Europe for 15 years

By Kari Thorene
Higher Education Reporter

Newsweek calls it "A natural mood booster."

MSNBC calls it "Nature's Prozac."

It is hypericum, or St. John's wort, and it is being touted as a natural remedy for everything from depression to PMS and alcoholism.

St. John's wort is a yellow flowering plant, the extract of which is used in herbal tinctures and pills. It has been a popular remedy for depression in Europe for about 15 years, according to Newsweek. More than 50 percent of depression, anxiety and sleep disorders in Germany are treated with hypericum, according to the "Hypericum and Depression" Web page.

The National Institute of Mental Health is funding a multimillion-dollar trial to test the flower's effectiveness in treating depression.

In the meantime, so many people are trying St. John's wort that many companies are having difficulty keeping up with the demand, according to MSNBC. Because it is an herbal product and considered a dietary supplement, anyone can buy it.

St. John's wort is primarily discussed as an alternative to traditional antidepressants. According to the Web page, it is difficult

to nail down other specific illnesses hypericum can be used to treat because many of them, such as eating disturbances, fatigue and sleeping irregularities, are symptoms of depression.

"Depression is a biochemical imbalance in the brain," according to Web site. "Low levels of three neurotransmitters — the chemicals the brain uses to communicate with itself — have been pinpointed as the cause of depression: serotonin, an adequate supply of which heals the bottomlessness of depression; norepinephrine, which adds energy and alertness; and dopamine, which as the name implies ... makes you feel good."

Hypericum works as a re-uptake inhibitor for those three chemicals, according to the Web page. In this way, St. John's wort works like traditional serotonin re-uptake inhibitors, including Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and Trazadone.

Dr. William Disher of the Student Health Center said serotonin re-uptake inhibitors work to combat depression by blocking the chemical reaction that brings active serotonin back into the neuron and forcing it back into the brain.

Disher said the bottom line is that inhibitors keep serotonin working and circulating in the brain.

Hypericum used to be considered a Monoamine oxidase inhibitor, or an MAO inhibitor, which works at a different part of the chemical process, Disher said.

"If it is a MAO inhibitor, that is only one of its many properties, and it's a very small part," he said.

Traditional MAO inhibitors can have drastic side effects, Disher said, so they are not used as antidepressants much anymore.

"It's being used more and more frequently [at the health center]."

William Disher
Student Health Center doctor

"They have potentially fatal side effects when mixed with certain foods — wine, cheese and so forth," he said.

Hypericum, however, doesn't appear to cause the same problems, Disher said.

The potential side effects, which include photosensitivity, sluggishness, headaches and skin sensitivity, occur at very low rates, Disher said.

"I personally haven't seen anybody with serious side effects," he said.

But Disher warned against self-medication, suggesting students consult a practitioner before taking St. John's wort.

"It's being used more and more frequently [at the health center]," Disher said. The students taking St. John's wort have had "varying results," he said, ranging from very good to minimal changes.

Crime: Motel, restaurant also targeted

Continued from Page 1

hair and blue eyes and wearing a black bandana over his face, a black coat, black gloves and black jeans.

The second suspect is described as a white male, 5 feet 8 inches tall, 145 pounds, with brown eyes and wearing a red bandana, a maroon-hooded sweatshirt and baggy pants.

The third robbery occurred just after 9 p.m. at the Glenwood Restaurant at 2588 Willamette St.

The suspect entered the restaurant, which was closing, through a rear door.

He met three employees inside the restaurant, pointed a pistol-grip shotgun at them, threatened to shoot and demanded money. He was given an

undisclosed amount of money and fled in an unknown direction.

The robbery was reported almost simultaneously by a 911 call and by an employee contacting a patrol car which was in the area.

The suspect is believed to be a white male in his early 20s, 6 feet tall, 165 pounds and wearing a black full-face ski mask, a dark "starter's jacket" with no insignia and dark jeans.

Eugene police officers did extensive area checks in all of these cases but were unable to locate the suspects involved.

As of Sunday evening, no arrests had been made, and no further information was available on any of the cases.

THE IT CURRICULUM

Information Technology & Computing Workshops Winter 1998

The Internet * Email * Basic UNIX * Microsoft Word * Macintosh * Surfing the Web * Windows 95 * PowerPoint * Computer Viruses * Job Hunting on the Internet * Web Publishing * Using Janus * Virtual Reality * Searching the Web * UNIX Security * Photoshop * Using Multimedia Software

Free workshops for all UO students, staff and faculty
No registration -- just show up
Many workshops are hands on

Copies of the Winter 1998 workshop schedule are available in libraries and computing labs, and on the web at <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/it/>.

For more information, contact the Office of Library Instruction:
346-1817 or cbell@darkwing.uoregon.edu.

PIZZA!



One Large single topping
only
\$9.95!

FREE DELIVERY!

FIND OUT WHY OUR CUSTOMERS SAY IT'S
"THE BEST PIZZA IN LAKE COUNTY"
call 334-5000

CHECK IT OUT!!

Not valid with any other offer. Expires 1/15/98
2310 W. 11TH (NEAR CITYVIEW)

LAI LAI

CHINESE RESTAURANT
Mandarin and Hong Kong Cuisine

來來飯店

\$6.95 Student Dinner Special
Beef Noodle Soup \$5.95
15% Student Discount
on regular dinner menu items with ID

343-2828 • 1525 Franklin Blvd.
Free parking with purchase of a lunch order.
485-2090 for Delivery

The Finest Entertainers, Poets, and all the caffeine you need.



She Brews
He Brews
A Coffee House

BYO mug & get 1/2 off on coffee (and save a tree)

1059 Hilyard Street (corner of 11th & Hilyard)
"Cheapest coffee prices in town!"

1/11 Student Art Reception	1/18 Open Mike...Live Music
1/12 Study, Food, Music	1/19 Study, Food, Music
1/13 Student Poets	1/20 Poetry Open Mike
1/14 Open Mike...Live Music	1/21 Open Mike...Live Music
1/15 Live Music	1/22 Live Music

Good For One Free Snack
Upon Purchasing A First Snack
at

SHE BREWS / HE BREWS

The Coffee House at Hillel
1059 Hilyard St. (Corner of 11th & Hilyard)
January 11 - January 22 • Sunday - Thursday • 8:00 pm - 12:00 pm