



Beth at home with her 12-year-old German shepherd, Beauty, and her young Australian Shepherd, Jamie Lee.

Beth Lambert: Herbalist & Alchemist

A love of nature, the countryside and science caused this New Jersey C.E.O. to rethink her life and life's work.

Not all that long ago, Beth Lambert of Tewksbury was a high-powered Wall Street executive, hopping on and off planes as often as three times a week. But the pull of her childhood passions - nature, the countryside and science - caused her to rethink her life and life's work. Fittingly, her position as C.E.O. of Herbalist & Alchemist, Inc., a botanicals company based in Warren County, brings together her regard for natural medicine, the Pineland's blueberry growers and scientists at Rutgers University. Not only is the highbush blueberry - *Vaccinium corymbosum*, scientifically speaking - the official state fruit of New Jersey, it

was practically invented here. In the early 1900s, Elizabeth Coleman White of Whitesbog in Burlington County cultivated the wild blueberry. Beth Lambert likes to tell a story about Elizabeth White that claims she gathered the best wild blueberry candidates by holding up a quarter and telling foragers, "if you find a plant with berries this big, bring it back to me!" Today, New Jersey ranks second in the nation in cultivated blueberry production, behind Michigan. It seems appropriate, the, that two products developed by a Garden State industry-university partnership have become wildly successful.

by Pat Tanner, photos by Dan Muro

Jersey Blues™ Iced Tea and Herbalist & Alchemist™ Blueberry Solid Extract owe their popularity in part to recent scientific studies demonstrating the blueberry's prodigious health benefits, Researchers at Tufts University found that blueberries top the list of more than 40 fruits, juices and vegetables in their antioxidant activity, Through antioxidant and other properties, blueberries have been shown in various studies to protect against cancer, heart disease and the aging process, They have been linked to improved brain function (specifically, short term memory), protection against stroke, improved eyesight, prevention of urinary tract infection, and amelioration of the effects of diabetes, Via their antimicrobial action, they promote healing and discourage infection, That's a lot for one small berry. Despite her love of nature and science, Beth Lambert came to her current position at Herbalist & Alchemist the long way around. "I grew up in Canton, Mass., a suburb of Boston, in the countryside," she relates. "I loved horses and science. I went to Wellesley College, where I got my head turned around by a great economics teacher. I majored in economics and political science, and then went on to a career

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lost so quickly..." she trails off. After her mother's death, Lambert took on the task of raising her younger sister. Lambert went on to Harvard Business School, moved back to New York to work in financial services, and sent her sibling through college. This was during the Wall Street hey-days of the 1980's, and Lambert became managing director of a major firm. "I had fabulous maverick clients and I really enjoyed the roller coaster," she begins. "But working seven days a week - often I was on a plane three times a week - well, I just started thinking I would like to get more out of my life. I met up with a fellow in the environmental movement, and this changed my perspective. I had made a lot of money for people in business that were not really helping the overall health of the planet. I wanted to contribute more," Lambert says.

By the time her relationship with the environmentalist ended, she had founded a

community-supported farm in Asbury. "The farm was moderately successful," she says modestly, "but through that I developed an appreciation for what our [botanical] growers go through. I have such respect for growers and those in animal husbandry." A watershed event occurred in 1994 when she was introduced to David Winston, the founder and president of Herbalist & Alchemist. Winston is a lecturer, author, ethnobotanist and internationally respected herbalist. He founded the company in 1982, after finding it difficult to get high-quality extracts for his clients. "David told me he had this herb company and that he thought it should be doing better," Lambert recalls. "He is first and foremost an educator and communicator, but business is not his passion. I was brought in to run the business," she says. "Nothing is more important than the health of people, the land and animals. We support people who are trying to make a living from the land," she says with pride.

Herbalist & Alchemist relocated its manufacturing facility to the Washington Borough in Warren County in 1995. "We renovated a tablecloth factory in an industrial neighborhood of abandoned buildings," she relates. Four businesses are now thriving in that business park. Since then, Herbalist & Alchemist has expanded twice and now utilizes 10,000 square feet of space. The company's growth reflects a widening acceptance of the practice of traditional, nature-based medicine, or what Lambert calls "green medicine." These include the use of botanicals and other alternative approaches, such as homeo-pathy and aromatherapy. The U.S. market for botanical supplements was reported in 2002 to be more than \$3 billion, a figure that does not include the use of botanicals in cosmetics or food.

The term 'botanicals' encompasses plants that are valued for their medicinal or therapeutic properties. They can be fresh or dried, liquid or solid extracts, tablets, capsules or powders. Herbs are a subset of botanicals. David Winston's basic training,

Lambert points out, is in native American medicine, specifically Cherokee. "The Cherokee approach breaks down into three main categories: foods, medicines and poisons. Botanicals use all three in medicine. I think if they are used properly, they are terrific." She points out that "plants were our first medicines" and that "all cultures trace *Jersey Blues[™] Iced Tea and Herbalist & Alchemist[™] Blueberry Solid Extract owe their popularity in part to recent scientific studies demonstrating the blueberry's prodigious health benefits.*

botanicals as part of their medical systems," including the Chinese, the Auyurvedic system of India, and, in the New World, both native and immigrant traditions. "In Italy, even the smallest town has its herborista, where you can get teas, creams and extracts. The British, Swiss and the Middle Eastern countries have their pharmacopoeias," she continues. "Drugs, on the other hand, have a relatively short history of use."

Lambert says botanical medicine was going strong in this country up to the early decades of the 20th Century, at which point botanical schools were deemed "old fashioned," and the traditions were lost within a few decades. But Lambert is hopeful about the comeback of traditional approaches even in standard medicine, and mentions an experience she had when a friend was being treated for breast cancer at Massachusetts General. "The caregivers there told us they would work with us any way we wanted. They have seen how herbs have given the gravely ill good quality of life while they are taking leave of the family. They've seen what botanicals can do to ease the suffering of everyday living," she says.

Lambert attributes a recent decline in sales of botanicals, in part, to wrong-headed mass marketing, which often touts 'magic bullet' remedies. "Traditional practitioners treat people, not diseases," she points out. "It's the mainstream, non-traditional uses

where trouble occurs. Take ephedra, for example. In Chinese medicine it is used sparingly to open bronchi. Once that happens, the responsible herbalist moves on to the next botanical. But the marketing machine that exists today promoted it for weight loss because it stimulates the metabolism. This is a misuse of ephedra." The scientist in Lambert recognizes that treating the whole person and not just a specific condition makes botanicals harder ***Lambert says botanical medicine was going strong in this country up to the early decades of the 20th Century, at which point botanical schools were deemed "old fashioned," and the traditions were lost within a few decades.*** to verify. "Western medicine's approach to documenting efficacy is to ask: How did this one thing work for a number of people applied to the same condition? Traditional practitioners are not studying one preparation applied to one condition. For example, our extract of oats is wonderful food for the nerves, but if you are trying to pinpoint why someone is nervous or blue, we have a variety of botanical choices at our disposal. In addition to oats, there is lemon balm or hops, for example. We look at everything that would work for a particular situation and the particular person, not just one thing." Lambert applies the same principles to her own life. Thus, she rides her horse through the New Jersey countryside every morning. "Flashkynd - a.k.a. Flash - is a locally bred Thoroughbred who on his good days we say moves like an Andalusian," she laughs. "I no longer have to hop on a plane. I didn't keep animals when I worked in New York, now I have two dogs." These are a 12-year-old German shepherd named Beauty and a young Australian Shepherd she calls Jamie Lee. Recently Lambert almost lost Beauty when she had a bad reaction to the antibiotics she was being treated with for Lyme disease. "So we worked up a protocol - she had dropped 30 pounds by that point," she says. "With herbs and her

pal Jamie Lee, and the knowledge that we cared for her, we were able to bring her back to health," she reports.

Beth Lambert uses botanicals daily in her own cooking and thinks of them as food, not just extracts. "Blueberries are a good example," she says. "They are mild in their effect on the body, yet really seem to be good for you. But that doesn't mean more is better," she points out. She herself eats the Herbalist & Alchemist Blueberry Solid Extract, a concentrated spread, every day, smearing it on toast or mixing it into yogurt or oatmeal. It can also be mixed into cottage cheese or smoothies or brewed into a tea. The solid paste is made with



sustainably grown and harvested blueberries from New Jersey.

"Yummy" is how Lambert unabashedly describes the product, and confesses that she sometimes finds herself eating it right off the spoon - and she is not alone. Prevention magazine used "yummy" and "delectable" in recommending what it called, the "anti-aging bread spread."

Grace Egan of Titusville, who describes herself as "an avid student of the therapeutic use of herbs" and who has a Masters degree in nutrition, reports that Herbalist & Alchemist Blueberry Solid Extract is "absolutely delicious" and finds that its high concentration of bioflavonoids is particularly useful in dealing with diabetic retinitis. (The extract is available at health food stores across the state and country, although a recent search of three stores in Princeton came up empty. It is also available at www.herbalist-chemist.com.) Blueberry Solid Extract was introduced three or four years ago, the result of a joint effort with scientists at Rutgers, and every batch is validated by them. The extract and the Jersey Blues iced teas represent two blueberry products developed by a partnership of Cook College/New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station at Rutgers University, the New Jersey blueberry growers group, and Herbalist & Alchemist, under the name Blueberry Health Inc. (www.blueberryhealth.com). The project and the partnership began when the state's blueberry farmers approached Rutgers saying they needed help in improving farm profitability. Jersey Blues Iced Tea was introduced via farm stands and at Slow Food events around the state, and proved highly popular. It was reformulated last fall and now contains organic cane sugar instead of high fructose corn syrup, and there is an unsweetened variety available as well. Unfortunately, the teas, which are bottled in New Jersey glassware, can be hard to find these days, other than via the internet,

because of distribution problems. "The tea is my marketing nightmare," Lambert explains. "People want it, but the 'big guys' have distribution locked up. Snapple, for example, has bought up all the distribution in central New Jersey." Ironically, Coke has ***"The tea is my marketing nightmare," Lambert explains. "People want it, but the "big guys" have distribution locked up. Snapple for example, has bought up all the distribution in central New Jersey"***.

exclusive rights at Rutgers, although Lambert recently managed to get the tea into Cook College, where it is the only non-Coke beverage allowed.

As she enters what she calls "the second half of my own personal century," Beth Lambert finds herself reviewing what she wants to achieve going forward. "I foresee big problems for rural New Jersey," she says. "I love the state and it's sad how overdeveloped it is becoming." In addition to her work for Herbalist & Alchemist, Lambert is chairman of the board of the American Herbal products Association, and has been asked to be an adjunct professor in the Rutgers Agricultural Economics Department. She has also served on the board of the Northeast Organic Farming Association.

Five years ago she married John Andrews, a reinsurance lawyer who shares Beth's love of horses and animals. "I was so busy in my work over the years, it took me a while to slow down and find the right man," she confides. "At the time John was working in New York. By marrying me he increased his commute, which had been from Chatham, to two-and-a-half hours each way," she says. Andrews recently retired, although he continues to do consulting and arbitration, as well as charitable work. It seems 1 Beth Lambert's approach to reviewing and renewing one's life can be downright contagious. NJC

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