The use of herbal products as medicinal remedies has increased greatly in the past decade. We are inundated with advertisements that tell us natural remedies will accomplish cures and imply that the term “natural” means free of side effects. Unfortunately, only a few of the herbal remedies have scientific data to back up their clinical benefits and some are known to be dangerous. Herbal teas remain an underinvestigated group of plant products.

The brine shrimp assay is an excellent tool with which to begin such investigations of an herb’s biological activity. J.L. McLaughlin and his associates (Meyer et al., 1982; McLaughlin & Rogers, 1998) developed this assay and it has been used to identify potent anti-cancer compounds. This in vivo assay is a reliable prescreen for the biological activity of plant secondary metabolites and it has been used successfully in the classroom (Kendler et al., 1992). We have developed two protocols: one uses aqueous extracts from the teas to be tested, and the other, a more quantitative and time-consuming procedure, uses methanol extracts. Brine shrimp were cultured for 48 hours...