

firm. An effervescent form of the vitamin is one of the most pleasant forms for use. (Andrew Weil, in his *Eight Weeks to Optimum Health*, suggests the use of three additional vitamins: beta carotene with lycopene included [25,000 IU], vitamin E [400 IU under age 40, 800 IU over], and selenium [200 micrograms].)

### SHIITAKE (*Lentinus edodes*)

**Part used:** The mushroom.

**Collection:** Mushrooms are a fruit, like apples. When they appear, before they begin to dry out, is the time to gather them. They are more commonly bought than found and have been a primary remedy in China for centuries.

**Actions:** Immunostimulant, antiviral, antitumor.

**Active against:** Viral encephalitis.

#### *About Shiitake*

Shiitake mobilizes the immune system against viruses, bacteria, cancer, and parasites. One of its major constituents, lentinan, has been shown to stimulate immunocompetent cells (T cell production and aggressiveness, natural killer cells, and macrophages), to be directly active against viral encephalitis, and to have potent antitumor activity, preventing metastasis of cancer to the lungs. In general, shiitake increases the activity and aggressiveness of the human immune system against abnormal cells and organisms defined as "not us."

### Finding Shiitake Mushrooms

Shiitake is relatively easy to find in bulk at decent prices. The mushrooms can be bought dried in whole form and reconstituted for use as food or ground for encapsulation or use as a powder. The other two potent Asian mushrooms, maitake and reishi, are much harder to find. Maitake is also edible and can be found wild in the United States, where it is called hen of the woods. Maitake has the additional property of being active against HIV *in vitro*. Reishi is not edible, being a hard woody mushroom. Unfortunately, the commercial supplies of these two alternatives are limited, and they generally command unrealistic prices.