

The Village Herbalist

A Few More Reasons Why NSP's High-quality Supplements Are Unbeaten

The following information was taken from a recent presentation given by Lynda Hammons, Vice President of Quality Assurance and Regulatory Affairs for Nature's Sunshine Products.

Consider the Source

There's a saying: "Garbage in, garbage out." If you start with mediocre material, there's nothing you can do during the manufacturing process to improve quality. Sourcing is critical to Nature's Sunshine's high-quality supplements.



Every year, NSP scours the world in search of the best fields and crops for each botanical. Some companies own their own fields. But Nature's Sunshine has decided not to own any fields, because if we did, we would have to go to those fields every year and get that crop, no matter how good or how bad it was. Instead, **we go to different harvesters and find out where the best crop is that year so we can use the highest of quality ingredients.**

The Best of Facilities, the Worst of Facilities.

NSP is committed to bringing our customers the very best botanicals from all over the world. And we don't take our suppliers' word for the quality of their facilities. We travel the globe to audit our suppliers firsthand and make sure they are building quality into their entire practice.

Managers often ask about different geographic regions with regard to quality. Some of the highest-quality ingredients are grown in China. Lynda says, "I have seen some of the worst facilities in China, and I have seen some of the best facilities in China." She adds that she has also seen some of the worst and best facilities right here in the United States.

"Managers need not be concerned, because we audit our suppliers to make sure they follow good manufacturing practices," she says.

Nature's Sunshine invests heavily in these audits. It is not cheap to travel so much. But it is critical to see exactly where the botanicals and materials are processed to ensure we manufacture high-quality supplements. Says Lynda, "We closely scrutinize all of their processes: how they harvest, how they process material, how they clean the herb material and their equipment. We take time to look at minute details that other companies may skip."

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Evaluating Vendor “Facilities” For Quality Ingredients

“When we first contact a supplier, they typically say, ‘We’ll put you down for an hour tour of the facility.’ We tell them, ‘It’s not a tour. This is an audit. It can take a minimum of a day, and it can take two days.’

“We look at their equipment. We look at their documentation. We look at every step throughout the process to make sure they are following good manufacturing practices.

“One of the first places I check is the restrooms. I go to both the men’s and the women’s, and I look for soap and hot water. You would be surprised at the number of potential suppliers who fail an audit because they don’t have one of these.

“During an audit in China, the facility did not have any soap because they said people would steal it. FAIL.

“Last year, we went to an audit in Florida, and a Ph.D. Met with us. He knew the raw material very well. I went into the restroom, and they had no hot water. It wasn’t even hooked up! The worst part was that they did not appear to realize they needed hot water for personal hygiene and to clean their equipment. We didn’t even complete the audit. FAIL.

“Many suppliers ask, ‘What are you going to the restroom for?’ Obviously, other companies are not going into their restrooms during audits.

“I’ve earned a nickname in the industry—The Terminator—because it is very hard to pass one of my audits. I’m proud of that because it means Nature’s Sunshine quality is extremely difficult to match.”

Sustainability Is Key

As a manufacturer and distributor of natural, high-quality supplements, NSP feels it has a stewardship to help maintain the environment and preserve natural resources for future generations to enjoy. Last September, Nature’s Sunshine personnel traveled to the Atlantic Coast in Canada to observe the wild-crafted kelp harvest. The upper portions of kelp float on top of the water. Lynda and NSP’s Manager of Purchasing, Ellen O’Neal, spent some time with a local harvester traveling in the boat. The man used a special



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rake to cut off only the top of the kelp. If he had pulled the roots out, the crop could not continue to thrive. His harvesting technique allowed the kelp to grow back, and in several years they can harvest again from the same location.

We also worked with a biologist the company has on staff who travels to each of the harvest sites and documents where that company is harvesting every year and how much they harvested, so they will not go back there too soon to ensure they select the highest-quality ingredients. That company is taking steps to make sure they have [kelp](#) and other sea products available for the future. Sustainability measures are something we consider on every audit.

Mother Nature Doesn't Always Cooperate

A couple of years ago, NSP had a difficult time sourcing [black walnut](#) because it had been so rainy. We received black walnut material from a supplier, but it did not contain the active constituents in the proper ratios. So it was rejected. We can assure our customers that with every lot you're going to get the same beneficial active components in every ingredient because we test for them in every lot.

Harvesting Is Tricky

The timing and technique of the harvest can also play a role in quality of supplements. If you harvest peppermint on a shady, cool day, it has different actives than if it's collected on a sunny, warm day.

The heat level in [cayenne peppers](#) varies according to the temperature at which it is grown. Good cayenne peppers need very hot days and cool nights. A supplier in Puerto Rico tried to grow cayenne peppers there. They sent them to us for testing. The peppers looked beautiful—very red and shiny. But when we bit into them, there was no heat. Puerto Rico's climate did not have the cool nights the peppers needed to grow properly and produce the correct amount of capsaicin for Nature's Sunshine's quality supplements.