



## HARNESSING THE POWER *of Plants*

The beauty and skincare aisle is notoriously filled with alluring promises: Erase wrinkles! Repair sun damage! Turn back the clock on aging! But, is it true? Thanks to the work of Ilya Raskin, distinguished professor in the Department of Plant Biology and Pathology, the answer just might be yes.

Raskin's lab studies the ways in which plants—and the bioactive compounds they contain—can help improve human health, beauty, and wellness. And this research generally spans three areas. The first includes research on plants with topical benefits, like moringa, a tropical plant with anti-aging and anti-inflammatory compounds. The second area focuses on health-boosting foods like quinoa, and the ways in which these foods can be optimized to deliver bioactives like antioxidants. The third area is focused on nutritional breeding, for example, boosting the nutrient content of a conventionally "empty" food like lettuce.

"We are developing knowledge," says Raskin, "but we also want to be sure that this knowledge is utilized."

One way his research is translated to action is through partnerships with industry. In fact, beauty giant Estée Lauder recently launched a new anti-aging cream featuring moringa extract, based on the research coming out of Raskin's lab.

But Raskin also puts his discoveries to work internationally and for humanitarian purposes, having worked with 18 different countries worldwide to help facilitate local discovery and development of native natural-based medicines. The result? Natural remedies for underserved areas, economic development based on these natural medicines, and conservation efforts to sustain it all. "It's transnational extension," Raskin says. "We're interested in the fruits of our research being utilized by people."