

The statistics are startling. One in three women get cancer. Half of all men do. With odds like that, it is understandable why millions, if not billions, of dollars are spent every year in this country on cancer research.

And that research involves everything from the largest pharmaceutical firms to state of the art medical complexes and even one man in the Ozarks and his crop of mushrooms. His name is Tim Hite and he's lost both friends and family to the disease. For that reason, he's dedicated his life to looking into alternative forms of medicine.

Hite lives in Ozark, Missouri. But he spends most of his time in his greenhouse. That's where Hite grows 25 varieties of mushrooms. "Most of the mushrooms we're growing in here are drying. We're blending them into teas," says Hite.

Hite grows the precious fungus at an amazing rate. He is able to grow 2,000 pounds of mushrooms in a month. "What we're involved in is growing gourmet mushrooms. Oyster, European variety," Hite notes.

While the mushrooms may be gourmet, Hite is not on a mission to feed the world. He's more interested in curing it of cancer. "They've proven in a laboratory environment that this mushroom causes neurons to regrow so they are doing medical research on it for disease and disorders. We've developed some new techniques where we can actually quantify and qualify the amount of active ingredients in mushrooms for fighting cancers and different diseases.

Hite says he has lost relatives and friends to cancer, which motivates him to keep growing the fungus. Hite says he has always been interested in alternative forms of medicine and it's his belief that that mushrooms may be able to provide some immediate relief to people suffering from cancer.

"One thing about traditional cancer treatment is it tears the body down. Chemotherapy is devastating to the body. These help rebuild the system so there are less adverse affect from radiation."

Hite grows the mushrooms and puts them into medicinal teas for cancer patients at both Cox and St. John's hospitals. And he's excited because he just got a grant from the state of Missouri to continue his medical research.

The grant allows people who have innovative ideas to give them funding to help demonstrate whether the idea will work. Under the grant program, farmers throughout the state can receive up to \$3,000 to try innovative projects. Hite says he'll use that money to buy growing tanks and an irrigation system.

Beyond the cancer research, Hite is using the mushrooms to reduce yard waste. Mushrooms are an excellent decomposer of forest debris and he plans to work with the city of Springfield about putting the mushrooms into the recycling centers.