TABLE **12-2**

Botanical Treatment Strategies for Female Infertility

THERAPEUTIC GOAL	THERAPEUTIC ACTIVITY	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
Hormonal regulation	Pro-estrogenic	*Actaea racemosa*	Dong quai
Fertility tonic	Pro-progesterogenic	*Angelica sinensis*	Shatavari
	Reproductive tonic	*Asparagus racemosa*	Black cohosh
	Regulate prolactin	*Dioscorea villosa*	Wild yam
	Unknown activities	*Chamaelirium luteum*	False unicorn
		Paeonia lactiflora	White peony
		Serenoa repens	Saw palmetto
		Tribulus terrestris	Tribulus
		Vitex agnus-castus	Chaste berry
Support immune response	Antimicrobial	*Albizzia lebbeck*	Albizzia
Treat vaginal infection	Immunotonic	*Echinacea spp.*	Echinacea
Reduce inflammation	Anti-inflammatory	*Glycyrrhiza glabra*	Licorice
		Hydrastis canadensis	Goldenseal
Detoxification of environmental toxins	Promote phase 1 and Phase 2 detoxification	*Bupleurum falcatum*	Bupleurum
		Picrorrhiza kurroa	Picrorrhiza
	Support hepatic function	*Schisandra chinensis*	Schisandra
		Silybum marianum	Milk thistle
	Antioxidant activity	*Camellia sinensis*	Green tea
		Curcuma longa	Tumeric
		Ginkgo biloba	Ginkgo
		Rosmarinus officinalis	Rosemary
		Silybum marianum	Milk thistle
		Vitis viniera	Grape seed
Relieve stress	Nervines	*Avena sativa*	Milky oats
		Leonurus cardiaca	Motherwort
		Matricaria recutita	Chamomile
		Melissa officinalis	Lemon balm
		Scutellaria lateriflora	Skullcap
		Stachys betonica	Wood betony
			(Also see index for references to nervines throughout the text)
	Adaptogens	See Chapter 8	

affecting fertility and estrogen dominance affecting infertility (e.g., one factor in PCOS) (See Plant Profiles: Black cohosh for a discussion on the research and possible mechanisms of action). It has been described as a selective estrogen receptor modulator (SERM). It was a favorite herb of the native North American Indians and Eclectic physicians for amenorrhea, as a uterine tonic and a number of other gynecologic applications.[9–11] Black cohosh has been subjected to extensive clinical trials, demonstrating some estrogen-modulating activity and ability to reduce elevated LH levels, while not affecting FSH and prolactin in any way. In modern herbal applications, black cohosh is indicated for infertility associated with anovulation, PCOS, ovulatory pain, and secondary amenorrhea. Some common side effects have been noted, including a frontal headache with a dull, full, or bursting feeling and a low frequency of stomach complaints, including nausea and vomiting. These side effects are most likely with the high end of a therapeutic daily dose. Recent concerns have arisen that black cohosh may be associated with liver disease, including liver failure; therefore, caution should be observed with its use. (See Plant Profiles: Black cohosh.) It is recommended that this herb be avoided in pregnancy.

Chaste Berry

Chaste berry has a long history of use for regulating menstrual cycles, which may result from its ability to regulate prolactin levels, enhance corpus luteum development, and correct relative progesterone deficiency. Vitex is beneficial for ovulatory factors associated with infertility, in particular, modulating the anterior pituitary's production of luteinizing hormone (LH), while mildly inhibiting follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). Vitex has been shown to downregulate the production of excess prolactin in hyperprolactinemia via dopaminergic activity.[9,12] In an uncontrolled study, chaste berry reduced elevated prolactin levels in 80% of 34 women with hyperprolactinemia at a dosage of 30 to 40 mg per day for 1 month and improved symptoms of a variety of menstrual disorders,