

Invite an Herb Into Your Life

Herbs aren't just for cooking; herbal medicine can make a difference in how you feel.

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THE USE OF HERBS as medicine has been practiced by all the ancient civilizations including Egyptian, Indian and Chinese. The first Chinese written word about them was composed on silk and found in a burial ground between 100 and 300 B.C.

Each herb is known to have different actions on the body depending on its use, and whether it is used alone or as part of a formula with others. The current encyclopedia of Chinese herbs known as the *Materia Medica* contains more than four hundred and seventy varieties. Here, we look at just a few of them.

Turmeric (Yu Jin)

The chief culinary spice in Indian and Thai dishes, turmeric has been used for its many health benefits for centuries.

Throughout the past few years, the National Institute of Health has completed twenty-four studies on turmeric and its chief isolate, curcumin. As of late, turmeric has taken the spotlight, as researchers have found this traditional herb promising to help prevent and treat some of today's most common diseases. It also:

- Helps in the prevention and slowing of Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis and heart disease
- Decreases arthritis pain and increases joint flexibility
- Delays liver damage that could eventually lead to cirrhosis
- Inhibits the growth of skin cancer melanoma and slows the spread of other types of cancer
- Aids in fat metabolism and weight management
- Reduces inflammation by lowering histamine levels

Astragalus (Huang Qi)

Astragalus is one of the most potent herbs for strengthening the immune system and protecting the body from the negative effects of stress. It is antibacterial and antiviral and can help both prevent and treat colds and the flu. In fact, almost every popular immune support formula contains astragalus as one of the chief ingredients.

Studies conducted at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Research Center in Texas, the largest cancer research institute in the United States,



found that astragalus stimulates the immune system in patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiation. Researchers found that patients who took astragalus had fewer side effects, recovered faster and lived longer.

Dandelion (Pu Gong Ying)

Nutritionally ranked as one of the top four green vegetables overall, dandelion is one of the easiest herbs to integrate into your diet. Its long green leafy nature may taste bitter, but its health benefits are incredibly sweet. Benefits include:

- Possesses rich amounts in beta carotene, potassium, iron, magnesium, calcium
- Balances healthy blood sugar levels
- Supports gastrointestinal health
- Helps lower high blood pressure and cholesterol
- Supports liver function and detoxification
- Purifies and cleanses the blood

Goji Berry (Gou Qi Zi)

Goji berries have recently made their way to fame. These days, you can find Goji berries in many foods, including chocolate, cereal and power bars. Known today as a mega superfood, Goji berries originated from a category of herbs called “superior tonics.” These herbs were traditionally used as a lifelong practice to preserve youth and health, and promote general well-being.

Interestingly enough, one of the greatest benefits of Goji berries is their rich source of antioxidants. Research has shown that antioxidants may help slow the aging process by minimizing damage from free radicals that injure cells and DNA. Antioxidants can also help protect from cancer, heart disease and many other serious health conditions.

Goji berries are also a rich source of vitamin A, which helps protect vision, boost immune function and may have antiaging benefits.

Aloe Vera (Lu Hui)

An herb local to Malibu, aloe vera was previously known as the “herb of immortality” by the ancient Egyptians. Aloe vera contains a full roster of both health and beauty benefits. The Journal of the American Podiatric Medical Association notes its anti-inflammatory properties. The British Journal of General Practice recognized its use for lowering cholesterol.

Aloe vera is noted to do the following:

- Reduce inflammation
- Regenerate skin tissue due to burns, abrasions, allergic rashes, psoriasis
- Help boost the immune system and may help shrink cancer tumors because it contains the phytonutrient acemannan
- Benefit colon health: for ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn’s disease, celiac disease
- Stabilize blood sugar in diabetics
- Lower cholesterol and triglycerides
- Reduce liver toxicity due to cirrhosis and Hepatitis C

Check with your doctor before beginning any new herbal regimen.