

Herbal Adaptogens

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Realigning ourselves with nature's cycles and rhythms enhances the feeling of being connected with all of life, increases our vitality, improves our ability to be discerning-to make choices that support inner peace and harmony, and strengthens the mind and heart's practice, ability to develop mindfulness and compassion. A daily meditation and gratitude practice, ideally done upon rising and before bed, will, over time, deepen our inner capacity to be open-hearted, relaxed, less reactive, and more fully present with whatever is happening around us and within us. Gently bring your mind back to the present moment, again and again. Breathe. Laugh. Be kind to yourself and all of life.

ASHWAGANDHA *Withania somnifera* Solanaceae Family

Part used: Root. In New England, ashwagandha can be grown as an annual.

Thermal nature and flavor: Sweet, bitter, astringent, warming

Actions and Indications: adaptogen, anti-inflammatory, nervine, reproductive tonic

~ **Adaptogenic and rejuvenative** tonic: Calming and strengthening to the nervous system without over stimulating. Strengthens an exhausted nervous system, lessens emotional instability, agitation, and "burn out". Effective for nervous and depleted conditions such as anxiety, impaired memory, panic attacks, insomnia, ADHD, and chronic debilitation due to physical and mental overwork. Calms and clears the mind, promotes a deep, restful sleep, improves memory, restores physical strength.

~**Auto-immune conditions:** May be considered for people with MS, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis.

~**Tissues:** Improves poor muscle tone. Beneficial to children and the elderly who suffer from emaciation and anemia. Post-surgery support.

~**Reproductive:** Female and male reproductive tonic. Increases sperm motility.

~**Gynaecology:** Excellent post-partum rejuvenative tonic and a stimulant for milk production. Tones uterine muscles. Eases a variety of menopausal symptoms including insomnia, anxiety, agitation, restlessness and fatigue.

Safety considerations: Not recommended during acute infections. May potentiate action of barbituates and benzodiazepines. More than 3 grams/day not recommended during pregnancy. (Merrily Kuhn and David Winston, *Herbal Therapy and Supplements*) Avoid for people with hyperthyroidism or allergies to plants in the Nightshade Family.

SACRED BASIL, Holy basil, Tulsi (Sanskrit name) *Ocimum sanctum* Lamiaceae Family

Sacred Basil is regarded by many Hindus as a very sacred plant. Considered to purify the body, mind and spirit and provide divine protection for the household. Revered for its ability to open the heart and mind and to engender love, compassion and devotion.

Parts used: leaf and flower, fresh and dried tea, fresh tincture or glycerite, honey

Thermal nature and flavor: Warming, drying, bitter, pungent

Actions and Indications: adaptogen, antibacterial, antispasmodic, anxiolytic, aromatic, carminative, diaphoretic, expectorant, nervine, rejuvenative

~**Restorative Tonic:** Enhances vitality, prana, ojas, life force. Increases resilience to emotional and physical stress while opening the heart and mind.

~**Digestion:** Eases fermentation and stress in the GI tract. Improves appetite and digestive fire (agni). Clears toxins from the gut. Lowers blood sugar levels, cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

~**Immunity:** Reduces fever and flu symptoms, sore throats, coughs and histamine-induced allergies. Enhances overall immunity and resiliency and protects healthy cells from the toxicity associated with radiation and chemotherapy. Helps repair damage to the DNA from overexposure to radiation and protects the body from chemical carcinogens.

~**Lungs:** Clears dampness and toxic ama from the lungs and upper respiratory tract. Increases vital lung capacity, enhances prana and the vital life force.

~**Mind:** Heightens awareness and mental clarity. Enhances cerebral circulation and memory. Beneficial for people with cloudy thinking, brain fog, poor memory, lethargy, ADD and ADHD. Harmonizes and opens the mind (and heart) to receive insights and perceptions.

~**Nerves:** Reduces levels of stress hormones including cortisol. Eases anxiety, depression, insomnia and other stress-related conditions such as headaches and irritable bowel syndrome. Aromatic oils are uplifting.

Spiritual baths

Safety considerations: Avoid large doses during pregnancy, breast feeding. Culinary use is safe. Avoid use if taking anticoagulants.

Tulsi sun tea in summer helps awaken our heart and mind to the beauty of each new day. Lovely to keep a large pot of Tulsi outdoors near your door (in sun) to clear away disharmony, to honor the Divine Feminine, and to easily nip leaves and flowers for daily prayers and tea.

ELEUTHERO (Siberian ginseng) *Eleutherococcus senticosus* Araliaceae Family

Thermal nature and flavor: cooling, sweet, pungent

Part used: fall and early spring I will be exploring scraping bark from branches

Actions and Indications: adaptogen, adrenal tonic, circulatory tonic, hepato-protective, kidney tonic, immune tonic, rejuvenative

~**Tonic and Restorative.** When taken over 3-6 months, deeply rebuilding and restorative tonic for increasing overall vitality, physical strength and endurance, mental clarity. Strengthens immune reservoir. Excellent support for full time gardeners, farmers, parents, teachers, caregivers, healers, medical professionals.

~**Immune support.** Long term use helps body's ability to cope and recover from injury, surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy, lyme (prevention, during infection, recovery), use when traveling, jet lag, exposure to environmental pollutants, radiation and toxins.

~**Liver and digestion,** protects the liver and enhances its ability to break down and eliminate toxins. Stimulates digestive fire (agni) helping to improve digestion and absorption of nutrients.

~**Memory and concentration.** Helps maintain healthy blood flow through the arteries to the brain-improving memory, concentration and overall mental clarity.

~**Menopause support.** Restorative, helps women feel like they are standing on solid ground as hormones are changing, improves memory. Deeply restorative.

Safety considerations: Discontinue use during acute phase of an infection. Avoid in pregnancy, breast feeding (few studies), hypertension, avoid use with immune-suppressant drugs, steroids, digoxin. Extreme overuse may cause tension and insomnia. **Long-term safety:** No safety issues expected.

SCHISANDRA *Schisandra chinensis* Magnoliaceae Family

Parts used: red berries-fresh are the best

Thermal nature and flavor: Warm, dry, sweet, sour, salty, bitter and pungent. The Chinese name, Wu wei zi, means "five flavors fruit."

Part used: red berries, fresh berry tincture is the best, dried for tea, frozen for smoothies

Actions and Indications: adaptogen, astringent, hepato-protective, improves memory, eases insomnia, eases inflammation, steadies the heart.

When taken over several weeks or months the berries astringent and adaptogenic properties help build one's inner capacity to be less reactive and to be more inwardly resilient, physically grounded and at ease in one's Heart and Spirit.

~**Tonic and Restorative:** Ease chronic stress, chronic fatigue, insomnia, poor memory, depression, fear. Regulate blood sugar levels, improve stamina and endurance. Strengthen immune system. Rebuild Resiliency. Daily use in water bottle -sip throughout the day. Supportive for gardeners, farmers, parents, teachers, caregivers, healers and medical professionals.

~**Calming effect on body:** Reduce stress-induced heart palpitations. For people who feel emotionally vulnerable and not able to hold good energetic boundaries.

In Chinese Medicine "Quiets Spirit while calming and containing heart qi: palpitations, irritability, dream disturbed sleep, insomnia during menopause"

~**Kidneys**: astringent tonic to nourish kidneys and help with incontinence and for those who urinate frequently. **Tonifies kidneys, binds essence, stops diarrhea in Chinese Medicine**: urinary frequency due to kidney deficiency, daybreak diarrhea (spleen and kidney deficiency).

~**Liver**: Regenerate hepatocytes and protect liver when body exposed to toxic chemicals or drugs. Use with milk thistle seed and turmeric for preventing liver damage caused by industrial solvents, drugs, alcohol, viruses including Hepatitis B.

~**Menopause support**. Night sweats, heart palpitations, insomnia, memory loss, anxiety. Feel supported during transitions. In Chinese Medicine inhibits sweating and generates fluids-reduces night sweats, excessive sweating, especially with thirst or dry throat.

~**Respiratory tonic**: Strengthens lungs, eases chronic coughs, allergic asthma with wheezing. Acute or long term grief.

Safety considerations: Avoid use during pregnancy, acute fevers, flu and pneumonia, and any acute skin condition with heat. Small amount (5-10 drops) in water when nursing.

The Heart in Chinese Medicine is 'Lord and Sovereign' and is the residence of the Spirit (Shen, your Divine nature). If the Lord and Sovereign of your Body/Mind/Spirit is to bring your truest self into Life, it must provide an inner sanctuary from which the Spirit can shine its light. Schisandra holds the Heart steady so your light can shine. Amy Jenner, Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbalist

Solomon's Seal, True Rusceae Family (formerly in Liliaceae family)

Polygonatum biflorum, P. biflorum var. commutatum, P. multiflorum (native to Europe)

Parts used: rhizome fresh tincture, dry for tea, powder and oil

Thermal nature and flavor: cool, moist, sweet slightly acrid

Actions and Indication: qi and yin tonic, demulcent, kidney tonic, nutritive, rejuvenative, restorative tonic to the musculoskeletal system

~**Digestion**: Nutritive and lubricating. The rhizomes moisten and soothe the mucosa lining of the intestines and relieve dry constipation and gastritis. A restorative tonic for people whose digestive tracts are weak due to poor-quality food and chronic stress. Consider using for people with hemorrhoids (end of GI tract) and Crohn's.

~**Gynecology**: Nourishing, moistening and strengthening tonic. Very beneficial for women experiencing menopausal changes such as mood swings, anger, agitation, a loss of identity or direction, hot flashes, or dry vaginal tissue. A really important herb for any aged women, especially menopausal and post-menopausal women, to nourish the quality of yin (moisture) which diminishes with age.

~**Jing Tonic**: Nourishes and cares for ancestral energy we are born with.

~**Musculoskeletal**: Strengthens, tones, lubricates and repairs injuries to the bones, tendons, ligaments, attachments and joints. Shifts overly tight or overly loose tendons, ligaments and joints and helps heal repetitive-use injuries like carpal tunnel-and supports healing process of broken bones.