

Coriander

Historians disagree somewhat on the origins of Coriander, although it is generally thought to be native to the Mediterranean basin. Either way, its use as a medicine dates back to at least 5,000 BC. References to coriander can be found in many ancient texts including: Sanskrit writings, Chinese herbal documents and even the bible, where in Exodus, it says "And the house of Israel called the name there of Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." Throughout the Roman Empire the use of Coriander spread both as a food and a medicine.

One of the reasons the Romans were so fond of this herb was because of the seeds ability to help in the indigestion caused by overindulgence the Romans were so fond of. The seed contains a volatile essential oil, as does peppermint, which gives it its characteristic scent. In fact, the plant was named after the scent that it reminded the Romans of 'coros', or a squashed insect! Despite this, they really did harbour a fondness for this herbs ability to settle the stomach. The seeds have been used since that time to prepare 'gripe water' to assist in the intestinal colic that babies suffer from. For this use, it is best combined with fennel seeds and chamomile flowers. Not only infants can benefit from the seeds of coriander however, for adults with chronic indigestion, especially after having lived 'la bon vie' or the good life like the French or the Romans before them.

This leads to the quite distinct use of the fresh leaf. Coriander is one of those herbs that give us several distinctly different medicines from its various parts. The fresh leaf is used in herbal medicine as a detoxifying herb. It may be thought of for those with chronic skin complaints and a somewhat stale smell to the sweat. In this capacity it has been employed in Ayurvedic medicine for millennia as a cooling 'anti-pitta' remedy, to cleanse the blood and reduce inflammation. It may therefore be used with other herbs in an acute bout of measles, to assist in 'venting' the rash. In the west it is included in naturopathic juice fasts and is reputed to assist in the removal of heavy metals from the body. Along with grapes and sprouts, it is therefore used in the treatment of cancer.

Finally, this generous herb offers us its root. Although it is principally used as a culinary ingredient in Thai cooking, the root is undoubtedly not without its own medicinal action as the peculiar pungent sweet smell should indicate. When combined with the fresh leaf and drunk as a cool tea, coriander root will act as a gentle urinary cleanser, assisting in the removal of excess uric acid that may otherwise cause rheumatic problems later in life. When combined with the seeds, coriander root may be employed for chronic respiratory disorders where other herbs have failed. The key to its use here is the presence of both raw inflamed tissue and a low level of stubborn soggy fluid.

If that still does not inspire you 'gourmets' to use more coriander, there is always the ancient use of this herb as an aphrodisiac, where the seed is used to heighten sexual prowess and even to cause another to fall in love with you!

In order to obtain the above benefits however, especially the detoxifying properties of the leaf, it is important to ALWAYS buy organic!

- The Barefoot Doctor