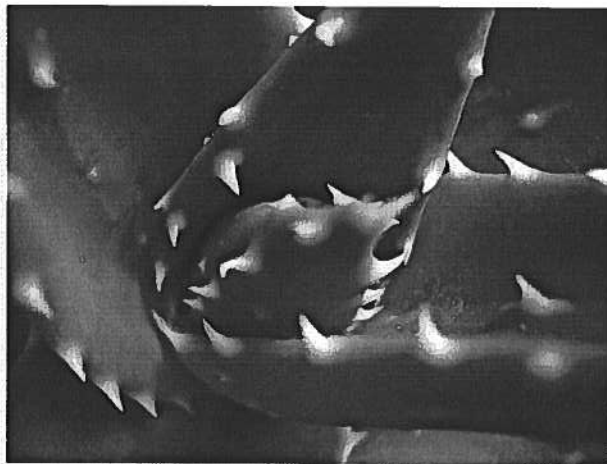


hundreds and hundreds of plants long. Please forgive all the knowledge that we have missed, and do enlighten us with an email.

It should be obvious, but we are not doctors and nothing on this site or anything African Epicure should be construed as medical advice or should substitute for the wise guidance of your chosen health care practitioner.

5 Top West African Healing Plants and Herbal Remedies

1. Aloe



Flickr: titanium22

Aloe vera enjoys the dry, rugged environments around the belt of the Sahel and on the coastline, where aloe grows wild in many places. The clear, sticky sap from the succulent's leaves applied directly on the skin makes a healing salve for a cut or sunburn. Aloe feels cool to the skin but is rather drying, so counter its topical use with some natural moisturizer.

Aloe vera is extremely bitter, but some people take small amounts internally as a tonic, sweetening the sap in sugar water before they drink it. We've heard that this can be quite strong and potentially harmful, so although we love ourselves some aloe vera, we recommend that you use it on the outside only.



Flickr: wlcutler

2. Neem

Neem trees originally come from India. Trade routes and colonizers brought them in, planting them along city avenues and public gardens. In many African capitals, old neem trees still grace some downtown streets. The fresh leaves are extremely useful to ward off mosquitoes. In West Africa, people burn them around and outside houses. In East Africa, some communities boil up young leaves to make a very bitter tea, drunk weekly, said to keep away tropical fevers.

Neem leaves are very healing to the hair and skin and, dried and powdered, can help with a wide variety of fungal and other tropical skin conditions. Neem oil can be used for similar ailments. It is very antibacterial, so neem soap is also good for the household!

3. Kenkiliba (also "kenkeliba")

The leaves of the kenkiliba bush are known through Mali, Senegal, The Gambia, and Burkina Faso as a strong tonic for well-being and longevity. Kenkiliba tea is taken regularly to improve digestion and elimination.

4. Baobab Oil

The nourishing oil from baobab seeds makes a rich, golden oil that is a rejuvenation and restorative facial serum. Baobab oil helps maintain collagen levels in the skin, which means less fine lines through this 100% natural beauty treatment. Baobab oil can be mixed into cocoa butter and shea butter, along with your favorite essential oils, to make a luxurious body butter that is lovely for massages or after showers. This is another luxurious gift from the mighty baobab trees!

5. Lemongrass



Courtesy of Wikipedia

Once established, this long grass makes a sturdy ground cover and self-propagates as it grows. The green leaves, boiled and drank hot, are a warming purgative for fevers, general weakness and stomach aches. Lemongrass, also called citronella, is grown in many home gardens and is known as a general tonic for vitality and longevity.

Lemongrass is often made into tea but can also be used in the bath, in soups, curries and desserts, and as an essential oil mixed into your homemade natural body care products. The *citronella java* variety is an effective natural mosquito repellent, but only when that variety!

*

You probably knew many of these plants were good for you, but now we hope you feel inspired to include one or many in your lifestyle and your daily routine. They are strong plants, so be sure to pay close attention to how you feel and to start with small portions.

To enjoy the beauty of these healing trees and plants, nurture them in your garden, especially the ones that flower, for the bees. We honor our traditions and the Earth when we make choices that bring us closer to the natural healing that is found in nature.

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5 Top Performing African Medicinal Herbs

Posted by Anton On August 27, 2013 In Featured, HealthNo comments

South Africa is renowned for its botanical wealth. To appreciate the magnitude and diversity of this natural resource one need only look to the Cape Floral Kingdom, a UNESCO World Heritage Site covering only 78,000 square kilometres and featuring over 9,000 plant species!

Although not all our plants pack a punch, the indigenous peoples of southern Africa have been tapping into the natural healing qualities of African medicinal herbs for thousands of years.

South Africans Opt for Home-Grown Medicinal Herbs

In fact, traditional healers remain the first port of call for the vast majority of South Africans. Up to 80 percent of the population currently choose accessible and affordable home-grown herbs and plants to treat a plethora of health issues.

Tonnes of Medicinal Plant Derivatives Exported Each Year

It's not only locals who are sold on the efficacy of Africa's medicinal plants and herbs; literally thousands of tonnes of plant derivatives are exported across the globe each year.

Despite commercialisation of a handful of botanicals such as buchu, rooibos, devil's claw & pelargonium sidoides, the vast majority of species are informally harvested from wild stocks to meet demand.

Medicinal Herb Hit List

Five of the top performing medicinal plants are:

Buchu



The buchu herb (*Agathosma betulina*) is commercially cultivated in the Western Cape for its essential oils. It is a world renowned natural anti-inflammatory and antiseptic used to treat high blood pressure, UTI infections, arthritis, gout and countless other ailments. A range of buchu health care products are available in South Africa under the BuchuLife label and include Sparkling Herbal Water, UTI Relief Capsules, Joint Health Capsules and First Aid Gel.

Devil's Claw



Image by Henri Pidoux

Devil's claw (*Harpagophytum*) is endemic to the dry areas of South Africa, Botswana and Namibia. Its medicinal properties are confined to the large tuberous roots that are harvested and dried to form powders, tinctures and extracts. It is commonly used to treat pain, enhance mobility and provide relief from a wide range of musculoskeletal conditions, diabetes, neuralgia, headaches and menstrual problems.

African Potato



Image by Marco Schmidt (CC BY-SA 2.5)

African potato (*Hypoxis*) is indigenous to the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Gauteng and Limpopo. It is well known for its immune boosting properties and is reputed to be effective in the battle against cancer, TB, asthma, HIV Aids and a host of other chronic conditions. The corm of the plant is dried and crushed into a powder and sold in the form of capsules and creams online and at wellness outlets countrywide.

South African Geranium



Image by Derek Ramsey (CC BY-SA 3.0)

South African Geranium or Umckaloabo (*Pelargonium sidoides*) is similar to a geranium and is packed with natural healing properties. The medicinal part of the plant is the fleshy blood red rhizomes which are dried and formulated into powders, tinctures and infusions. Its potent antibacterial and antiviral properties are ideal in the treatment of chronic respiratory tract infections such as bronchitis, sore throat, sinusitis, colds and flu. It is manufactured under licence of Schwabe Germany and is available at health stores and pharmacies nationwide.

African Ginger

Top 10 Chinese Medicinal Herbs

10

Chinese have used herbs for treating diseases since centuries. They have literature which lists medicines made of out herbs for curing specific ailments which dates back to thousands of years. Shennong, popularly known as Divine Farmer, classified various species of herbs, woods, and also animals into different category of medicine which proves useful even in modern times.

1. Ginseng

Known mostly for its aphrodisiac qualities, this is most famous of all the herbs known to man and has great health benefits and healing properties. It has been used in Chinese medicines for thousands of years to treat erectile dysfunction, hepatitis, menopausal problems, high blood pressure and many other common ailments.

2. Angelica Sinesis or Dang Gui



Dang Gui is a respected herb in Chinese medicine

as it has amazing property to relax muscles, which helps in treatment of various diseases. It has great healing power in treatment of infertility in women and heart related ailments. The herb has been extensively used to treat angina, irregular heartbeat and high blood pressure.

3. Mushroom

Mushrooms are generally considered healthy as they are low on calories, yet high on nutritional values. The Chinese had discovered their medicinal properties, which they used to maintain good health of the people. Out of the 200 species of mushrooms found in China, 25% of them are known to have great capacity to fight tumors; furthermore, it has also been known to help reduce insomnia and female sexual dysfunction.

4. Goji or Wolfberry



The herb has been used in preparation of food, in addition to its use as a medicinal herb in Chinese medicine for more than 2000 years. Chinese consider the wolfberry a treasure of their nation because of its great healing property, due to which the products are now commercialized and exported to western nations.

*protects eyes, prevents liver damage
protects against cancer, stabilizes
blood sugar, depression, anxiety, sleep*

5. Coptis Chinensis

Coptis chinensis, also known as Chinese goldthread, is one of the bitterest herbs. It is acknowledged for effectiveness in healing diseases of digestive tract. It is one of 50 basic herbs of traditional Chinese medicine.

6. Licorice Root



Licorice root has been an essential ingredient in Chinese medicines, since it has great healing property and detoxification power, which can be used to treat various ailments like hepatitis, asthma, depression, cold, flu, cough, heartburn and many more. It is used in Chinese medicine to harmonize all the other medicinal herbs that goes into a formula.

7. Astragalus

The herb has been used in Chinese medicine for 4000 years as a tonic for enhancing immunity of human body, metabolism rate and digestion. The herb is also known to heal wounds and injuries quickly and prevent infections.

8. Ginger



Ginger is an aromatic herb which is used as spice for its flavor and taste, as well as for its medicinal property for curing indigestion, improve blood circulation, stop diarrhea and also to treat cardiac problems. Many home remedies are prepared using this herb to treat cough, nausea, common cold and cough.

9. Ephedra Sinica

Ephedra Sinica also known as Ma Huang is one of the oldest known herb of Chinese medicines, which has been used effectively to treat asthma, cold and hay fever.

10. Bupleurum

The herb Bupleurum, one of the important herbs of Chinese medicine, is known to aid in treatment of liver diseases, arthritis, ulcers, mental disorders and many more.

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