

Corn Silk (*Zea mays*)

Common Names: Maidis stigma, maize silk, zea and Indian corn.

Location: This herb is grown primarily in Bulgaria, Albania and the former Yugoslavia.

Description: The portion of the herb that is used medicinally is the corn silk stigmas of the female flowers.

Properties: Corn silk is known for containing mass amounts of potassium and is a diuretic.

Uses: Use corn silk to help treat premenstrual syndrome (PMS), high blood pressure and carpal tunnel syndrome.

Doses: This herb can be found in tea form.

Warnings: Do not take corn silk while taking the blood pressure medication known as quinapril (Accupril)

Also known as

Zea mays, Indian Corn, Maidis Stigma, Maize Silk, and Stigma Maydis.

Introduction

Zea mays is the botanical name for corn. *Zea* comes from Greek, meaning "to live." *Mays* comes from Spanish *maíz*, or maize, the same word as a term in a native Mexican language meaning "mother," or "mother of life." Corn silks are the silky tassels running the length of an ear of corn. They serve as styles or tubes for collecting the pollen that fertilizes each seed. Corn silk is not considered a food, but it has a long history in herbal medicine as a treatment for urinary complaints.

Constituents

1,8-cineole, alpha-terpineol, beta-carotene, beta-sitosterol, geraniol, hordenine, limonene, menthol, niacin, riboflavin, selenium, thymol, vitamin C, and vitexin. Corn silk contains many of the phytochemicals found in barley greens, the thymol found in thyme, and also the menthol found in mint. It may or may not contain vitamin K, depending on the growing conditions and how it is stored.

Parts Used

Dried silk, whole or powdered.

Typical Preparations

Usually taken as a tea, but can be used as an encapsulated powder or mixed with corn oil for application to the skin. May be administered as a capsule or extract.

Summary

Corn silk relieves a wide range of conditions characterized by urinary inflammation. It is especially

useful in treating inflammation caused by bacterial infection. A complex polysaccharide in the silk activates macrophages (white blood cells) to engulf and dissolve infectious microorganisms. The volatile oils neutralize fungi and yeast. Corn silk is both diuretic and kaliuretic, that is, it encourages retention of sodium and excretion of potassium. Not everyone benefits from excretion of potassium, but people with chronic fatigue, adrenal burnout, and generally "cold" symptoms may.

Precautions

Do not use corn silk if you also take Lasix (furosemide).

Botanical: Zea Mays (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Graminaceae

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---Part Used---Flower pistils.

---Habitat---Sub-tropical countries of the world. and cultivated in warm climates.

---Description---The stigmas (fine soft, yellowish threads) from the female flowers of maize from 4 to 8 inches long and of a light green, purplish red, yellow or light brown colour, stigmas bifid; the segments very slender, frequently unequal, nearly odourless, faintly sweetish taste.

---Constituents---Maizenic acid is present in the dried corn silk; also fixed oil, resin, chlorophyl, sugar-gum extractive albuminoids phlobaphine salt, cellulose and water.

---Medicinal Action and Uses---A mild stimulant, diuretic and demulcent, useful in acute and chronic cystitis and in the bladder irritation of uric acid and phosphatic gravel; has also been employed in gonorrhoea. In action like Holy Thistle.

---Preparations and Dosages---Infusion 1 in 10), 2 fluid ounces. Fluid extract of maize stigmas, B.P.C., 1 to 2 fluid drachms. Syrup of maize stigmas, B.P.C., 2 to 4 fluid drachms. Maizenic is given in doses of 1/8 grain.