

# Galangal Root and Powder Profile

## Also known as

Also known as- *Alpinia officinarum*, *Alpinia galangal*, galanga, lesser galangal, Chinese ginger, Chewing John, and Little John.

## Introduction

Galangal is an East Asian tropical shrub with lance-like leaves, iris-like flowers, and reddish brown, woody rhizomes. It grows mainly in the Eastern Himalayas and Southwest India, and was introduced to Europe in the 9th century. Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179 C.E.) referred to galangal as the spice of life and used it in many of her formulas. The name galangal is derived from the Arabic *khalanjan*, referring to Chinese ginger, whose family it is a member of. Galangal is an important herb in Saudi herbal medicine. Traditional Chinese Medicine uses galangal in formulas for the "spleen" to treat digestive problems and health conditions relating to a lack of the earth element, or difficulties in leading a "grounded" life. Various formulas feature galangal for treating "rebellious qi," in which energies that should go down in the body try to come up, as hiccups, belches, burps, and regurgitation. It is used in many magical workings throughout the world. One reported use is that if you spit the juice from chewing this root on the floor of a courtroom before the judge enters, you will win the case.

## Constituents

Primarily 1,8-cineol, eugenol, tannins. Also contains careneole, pinene, cadimene, galangin, kaempferide, kaempferol, quercetin, isorhamnetin, and galangol.

## Parts Used

The rhizome, washed, dried and cut.

## Typical Preparations

Teas and extracts. Added to aloe to reduce aloe's harsh laxative effect. The chopped root can be added to culinary dishes and the powdered herb is more convenient for making tinctures, but should be used within 1 year of purchase. May also be taken as a tea, extract or capsule.

## Summary

Galangal root is a bitter used to stimulate the release of gastric juices to assist digestion. It relieves bloating, constipation, sluggish digestion, and gas. Although galangal root helps the intestine process fats, one of the chemicals in the herb, 5-hydroxy-7-(4'-hydroxy-3'-methoxyphenyl)-1-phenyl-3-heptanone (HPH), has been shown to lower bloodstream cholesterol in laboratory investigation. According to the German E Commission, galangal can be used for dyspepsia and loss of appetite, and is also considered to be antispasmodic and antibacterial.

## **Precautions**

Galangal root inhibits the release and action of pancreatic lipase, so don't take both galangal and digestive enzymes.