

Gynostemma Herb Profile

Also known as

Gynostemma pentaphyllum, Jiao Gu Lan, Miracle Tea, Southern Ginseng, Crown Herb, Five Leaf Ginseng, Sweet Tea Vine.

Introduction

In the 1970's, a nationwide census in China revealed an incredible statistic. In a certain mountainous area of China there lived a large amount of people that were well over the age of 100 years, more concentrated than anywhere else in China. Research into the lifestyle of the inhabitants' revealed one common dietary element: they all drank Gynostemma tea on a regular basis. Ancient Chinese folklore tells that Gynostemma is an immortality herb, and those who take it on a regular basis live longer than those who do not. Whether this is true or not is debatable, but it has been shown to have many of the same characteristics of ginseng, except that they are about four times as strong. It has been shown to be a wonderful antioxidant, boosting the activity of white blood cells and relieving stress by relaxing the central nervous system. It was spoken as far back as the First Dynasty, and mentioned in Zu Xio's Materia Medica for Famine in 1406. It is commonly found growing wild in China, Korea, and Japan, although it can be grown and cultivated on farms. It is sometimes used as a sweetener in Japan.

Parts Used

The roots and the leaves of the plant.

Typical Preparations

Traditionally taken as a tea, but can also be taken in capsule form. Tinctures seem to be less commonly found.

Summary

Gynostemma has shown to have, like ginseng, a unique ability to restore balance and equilibrium to all five of the body systems. It has traditionally been used to treat chronic disorders such as asthma, migraines, bronchitis, and impaired functions of the respiratory and gastrointestinal tract. A study done at Guiyang Medical College in China found that it can help increase strength and endurance in the body, perhaps making it a good herb for those seeking a competitive edge in athletic performances.

Precautions

Although historically there have been no marked side effects, pregnant women should avoid taking Gynostemma as it has been shown to increase the time blood needs to clot.