Hydrangea Root and Powder Profile

Also known as

Hydrangea arborescens, seven barks, wild Hydrangea, and mountain Hydrangea.

Introduction

The hydrangea has shown up in the fossil record as far back as 70 million years ago in North America, and in Asia as far back as 25 million years ago. This stately flower is native to the southeastern United States and northeastern Asia. It grows near water, hence its name. The name is derived from the Greek, meaning water vase. They were brought to England in the 1730's where the popularity as an ornamental grew quite rapidly. The grayish roots used in herbal medicine have little odor but a sweet and pungent taste. The Cherokee Indians were the first known to have observed the usefulness of the herb in treating kidney stones, as well as externally for wounds, burns and sore muscles. Traditional Chinese medicine use the whole plant as part of a cure for malaria. English folklore calls it an unlucky plant for young ladies looking for a husband. It has been said that people who allow the plant to grow near their house have cursed their daughters to the life of a spinster.

Constituents

Calcium, chromium, cobalt, kaempferol, magnesium, manganese, phosphorous, potassium, quercetin, rutin, selenium, silicon, sodium, tin, zinc.

Parts Used

Dried rhizome and roots.

Typical Preparations

Traditionally used as a tea or in sugar syrup. May also be taken as a capsule or extract. Found in cosmetic preparations.

Summary

A scientific study published in Bioscience, Biotechnology, and Biochemistry in 2003 noted that hydrangea root extracts have greater antioxidant power in liver tissue than milk thistle and turmeric combined. The findings of Japanese researchers amplify observations of nineteenth-century American physicians who used hydrangea primarily as a treatment for "kidney gravel," small stones in the kidneys that could be passed with a minimum of pain after treatment with the herb. Physicians of the time also used hydrangea as a treatment for chronic chest pain caused by bronchitis. Hydrangea root powder has a greater diuretic effect than other preparations of the herb , but it has less of an effect on pain.

Precautions

Overdosing can cause dizziness and headache. Not recommended for long term use, or if you have a history of Liver or Kidney problems.

Botanical: Hydrangea arborescens (LINN.)
Family: N.O. Saxifragaceae

---Synonyms---Wild Hydrangea. Seven Barks. Hydrangea vulgaris. Common Hydrangea.
---Parts Used---Dried rhizome, roots.
---Habitat---The United States.

---History---The Hydrangeas are marsh or aquatic plants, and hence the name is derived from a Greek compound signifying water-vessel. Four of the known species are natives of America; one, the garden Hydrangea (*Hydrangea hortensis*), is widely cultivated in the gardens of China and Japan. Many methods are employed in this country for imparting the blue tinge to its petals. The oak-leaved Hydrangea (*H. quercifolia*), a native of Florida, is also cultivated for its beauty.

The bark of *H. arborescens* is rough, with a tendency to peel, each layer being of a different colour, from which it has probably derived its name 'Seven Barks.' The roots are of variable length and thickness, having numerous radicles, reaching a diameter of more than half an inch. They are externally pale grey, tough, with splintery fracture; white inside, without odour, having a sweetish, rather pungent taste. When fresh, the root and stalks are very succulent, containing much water, and can easily be cut. When dry, they are tough and resistant, so that they should be bruised or cut into short, transverse sections while fresh. The taste of the bark of the dried root resembles that of cascarilla. The stalks contain a pith which is easily removed, and they are used in some parts of the country for pipe-stems.

---Constituents---The root has been found to contain two resins, gum, sugar, starch, albumen, soda, lime potassa, magnesia, sulphuric and phosphoric acids, a protosalt of iron, and a glucoside, Hydrangin. No tannin has been found, but a fixed oil and a volatile oil have been obtained. From the alcoholic extract of the flowers of *H. hortensia*, two crystalline substances were isolated, Hydragenol and Hydrangeaic acid.

---Medicinal Action and Uses---Diuretic, cathartic, tonic. The decoction is said to have been used with great advantage by the Cherokee Indians, and later, by the settlers, for calculous diseases. It does not cure stone in the bladder, but, as demonstrated to the medical profession by Dr. S. W. Butler, of Burlington, N.J., it removes gravelly deposits and relieves the pain consequent on their emission. As many as 120 calculi have been known to come from one person under its use.

The fluid extract is principally used for earthy deposits, alkaline urine, chronic gleet, and mucous irritations of the bladder in aged persons. A concentrated syrup with sugar or honey, or a simple decoction of the root, may also be used. In overdoses, it will cause vertigo, oppressions of the chest, etc.

The leaves are said by Dr. Eoff to be tonic, silagogue, cathartic and diuretic.

---Dosage---30 grains. Of fluid extract, 30 to 100 minims. Of syrup, 1 teaspoonful, three times a day.