

Osha (*Ligusticum poreri*)

Common Name: Chuchupate, Colorado cough root, life root, Bear root.

Location: The American Rocky Mountains.

Description: Osha is an antibacterial herb of the American Rocky Mountains, as Echinacea is the antibacterial herb from the American Great Plains.

Properties: Osha is an antibacterial and anti-inflammatory.

Uses: Osha is ideal for viral infections of the sinuses, throat, and upper and lower respiratory systems. It helps bring about respiratory secretions and relaxes and soothes muscles, making it beneficial for coughs and asthmatic breathing difficulties. It induces sweating and helps eliminate toxins from the pores of the skin. Benefits of osha for specific health conditions include treatment of arthritis and carpal tunnel syndrome; bronchitis, colds, influenza, and sinusitis.

Doses: Osha is available as a tincture.

Warnings: if you take this herb for an extended period of time, take a weeklong break every couple of months. Osha should not be used during pregnancy, as large amounts can cause uterine contractions.

## Osha Root Profile

### Also known as

*Ligusticum porteri*, Bear Medicine, Colorado Cough Root, Chuchupaste, Porter's Wild Lovage, Indian Root, and Mountain Ginseng.

### Introduction

A native of the higher altitudes of the Rocky Mountains and the Southwest in the USA, the root of the osha plant is a traditional Native American treatment for indigestion and upper respiratory infections. The related *Ligusticum wallichii* has been used for nearly 2,000 years in traditional Chinese medicine, and most of the scientific studies of osha were actually performed on the Asian species. Osha is sometimes confused in the wild with poisonous hemlock; the difference between the two is that the osha root is extremely "hairy" and smells like incredibly strong celery. Osha doesn't like to be domesticated, and is all but impossible to grow under cultivation. Virtually all commercial osha is wild harvested. Osha got the name "bear medicine" because it was noted by Native Americans and early settlers that bears would seek it out when they first emerged from hibernation as a means to stimulate their appetite, as well as chewing it into a "cud" of sorts and then dripping it down and rubbing it into their fur.

### Constituents

Furanocoumarins, mucilage.

## **Parts Used**

Dried root.

## **Typical Preparations**

Teas, tinctures, encapsulations. Tinctures and extracts vary widely in concentration; be sure to follow instructions on the label. Also used is steams and saunas.

## **Summary**

Ancient Chinese physicians used plants like osha to "open the interstices" or sweat out a respiratory infection. Like its Chinese cousin ligusticum, osha will induce sweating, thought to prevent the development of a full-blown cold or flu. Osha is also used to help coughs become productive. Native Americans used it as part of a smoking blend to soothe sore throats. Like other bitter herbs, osha stimulates appetite ("feeds a cold"). It has been used historically by Native Americans for stomach pain and cramping.