

Passionflower (*Passiflora caerulea*, *Passiflora incarnata*)

Common Name: Apricot vine, blue passionflower (*Passiflora caerulea*), maypop.

Location: Native to North, Central, and South America.

Description: Passionflower grows to a length of about 30 feet. Passionflower bears three-lobed leaves, purple flowers, and an egg-shaped fruit. Passionflower's name comes from an analogy drawing between the appearance of the plant's ornate flowers to elements of the crucifixion of Jesus: the three styles for the three nails used to affix him to the cross; five stamens for the five wounds he suffered; and white and purple-blue colors believed to symbolize heaven and purity.

Properties: The use of passionflower to tranquilize and settle edgy nerves has been documented for over 200 years. This herb relieves muscle tension and helps calm extreme anxiety.

Uses: It has a depressant effect on the central nervous system and lowers blood pressure. Passionflower is especially good for nervous insomnia. It is also a source of an antioxidant chemical known as Chrysin, which helps the body conserve testosterone. It does not cause the body to produce more testosterone, but, by conserving the testosterone already in the body, it can have the effect of increasing testosterone levels. A wide range of potential therapeutic applications of chrysin are currently being investigated. This compound relaxes the lining of artery walls; reduces blood pressure; stops chemical reactions that cause nausea and vomiting as a result of withdrawal from cocaine, heroine, or opiate painkillers; and in laboratory tests, stops the growth of certain kinds of thyroid cancer. Benefits of passionflower for specific health conditions include treatment of anxiety, attention deficit disorder, insomnia, and restless legs syndrome.

Doses: passionflower is available as a tea or tincture. The term chrysin appears in the names of products used for diminished sex drive.

Warnings: Both passionflower and chrysin products can cause drowsiness, and both increase the effects of both alcohol and psychoactive drugs such as sedatives and tranquilizers. You should not use passionflower during pregnancy, because it may stimulate the uterine muscles. Women seeking to become pregnant should not take chrysin. Adults over the age of 65 and children between the ages of 2 and 12 should take only low-strength preparations, and you should not give this herb in any form to a child under two years of age. Many herbalists recommend using only professionally prepared remedies. *Passiflora caerulea* contains cyanide, and there is some fear that this may accidentally be substituted if you purchased the unprocessed herb.

Passionflower Herb and Powder Profile

Also known as

Passiflora incarnata, *Passiflora caerulea*, Apricot Vine, Blue and Purple Passionflower, and Maypop.

Introduction

Passionflower is a climbing vine native to South Texas, Mexico, and Central America. Growing to a length of 30 feet (9 meters) under ideal conditions, the vine bears three-lobed leaves, purple flowers, and yellow-to-orange egg-shaped fruit. The name of the plant comes an analogy between the plant's

ornate flower to the elements of the crucifixion of Jesus, white and purple to symbolize heaven and purity, five stamens for the five wounds he suffered, three style for the three nails used to affix him to the cross. A Spanish doctor named Nicolas Monardes was the first to document the flower used in Peru in 1569, which he then brought back to Europe with him, where its popularity spread quite rapidly as a sedative. It was later classified by Linnaeus in 1745, when he noted over 20 species. Nowadays, there are reputedly over 400 different species.

Constituents

Chrysin, harmane, harmaline.

Parts Used

Dried leaves and stems. Passionflower powder must be stored at temperatures below 77 degrees F (25 degrees C), and should be used within six months of purchase.

Typical Preparations

Teas, tinctures and encapsulations. Sometimes found in relaxing bath blends and sleep pillow mixes.

Summary

Herbalists in Mexico, Central America, and Texas have used passionflower as a calmative and sleeping aid for over 200 years. Relieving muscle tension, the herb lowers blood pressure and calms anxiety. Passionflower is also a source of chrysin, a chemical that helps the body release testosterone. Chrysin stimulates the production of testosterone, and may aggravate conditions caused by excessive testosterone (baldness and prostate problems in men, unusual aggression, hair growth, and skin problems in men and women) so this should be evaluated before consuming too much Passionflower. Currently there is a German E monograph for passionflower citing its use as having sedative qualities.

Precautions

Pregnant women should avoid passionflower, since it can stimulate uterine contractions. Safe dosages for children under 6 have not been established. Caution should be used buy those on other sedatives as passionflower may intensify the effects.

Botanical: *Passiflora incarnata* (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Passifloraceae

- [Description](#)
- [Constituents](#)
- [Medicinal Action and Uses](#)
- [Dosages](#)
- [Other Species](#)

---**Synonyms**---Passion Vine. Granadilla. Maracoc. Maypops.

---**Part Used**---The dried herb, collected after some of the berries have matured.

---**Habitat**---Virginia.

---**Description**---The Passion Flowers are so named from the supposed resemblance of the finely-cut corona in the centre of the blossoms to the Crown of Thorns and of the other parts of the flower to the instruments of the Passion of Our Lord. *Passiflora incarnata* has a perennial root, and the herbaceous shoots bear three-lobed, finely serrated leaves and flesh-coloured or yellowish, sweet-scented flowers, tinged with purple. The ripe, orange-coloured, ovoid, many-seeded berry is about the size of a small apple; when dried, it is shrivelled and greenish-yellow. The yellow pulp is sweet and edible.

---**Constituents**---There appears to be no detailed analysis of this species, but its active principle, which has been called Passiflorine, would appear to be somewhat similar to morphine.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---The drug is known to be a depressant to the motor side of the spinal cord, slightly reducing arterial pressure, though affecting circulation but little, while increasing the rate of respiration. It is official in homoeopathic medicine and used with bromides, it is said to be of great service in epilepsy. Its narcotic properties cause it to be used in diarrhoea and dysentery, neuralgia, sleeplessness and dysmenorrhoea.

---**Dosages**---3 to 10 grains. Of Fluid extract, 10 to 20 minims.

[\[Top\]](#)

---**Other Species**---

Many species yield edible fruits or are cultivated for their beauty and fragrance.

P. caerulea, the familiar Blue Passion Flower, hardy in southern districts of this country as a wall-climber, was introduced into England from Brazil in 1699.

P. quadrangularis, the Common Granadilla, a native of Jamaica and South America grown for its large edible fruit, the purple, succulent pulp of which is eaten with wine and sugar, has a root said to be very poisonous and a powerful narcotic; in small doses it is anthelmintic. It is used in Mauritius as a diuretic and emetic.

The fruit of *P. edulis* in colour and flavour resembles that of the orange, with a mixture of acid.

P. macrocarpa bears a gourd-like, oblong fruit, much larger than any of the other species, attaining a weight of 7 to 8 lb.

P. maliformis, the Apple-fruited Granadilla, the Sweet Calabash of the West Indies, has a fruit 2 inches in diameter, full of a pleasant gelatinous pulp. The juice of the leaves, and also of those of *P. pallida*, is used by the Brazilians against intermittent fevers.

P. laurifolia, the Water Lemon of the West Indies, is much cultivated throughout South America for its fruit, the aromatic juice of which quenches thirst, allays heat and induces appetite. Its bitter and astringent leaves are employed as an anthelmintic.

The roots of *P. contrayerva* and *P. normalis* are reputed to have counter-poison properties.

P. foetida is used in hysteria, female complaints and as an expectorant, and the leaves as a poultice in skin inflammations.

The flowers of *P. rubra* yield a narcotic tincture.

P. capsularia is said to possess emmenagogue properties.