

White Peony Root Profile

Also known as

Paeonia lactiflora, Bai Shao Yao, Peony root, and Chinese Peony.

Introduction

The dried root of 3- to 4-year-old white peony is one of the oldest remedies in traditional Chinese medicine for diseases of the "liver." It was first mentioned in the "Pouch of Pearls" in the 12th century. While the "liver" in traditional Chinese medicine coincides with the organ we identify as the liver today, the ancients believed that its "energies" were a collection of the emotional experiences of the whole body. Thus, treating the "liver" with white peony healed both the physical organ and the thoughts and feelings that accumulated in it. Peony is named after Paeon, the Greek physician of the gods, and Hippocrates was known to recommend it for epilepsy and as a blood purifier. In the middle ages it was used to protect against the evil eye, and American Hoodoo folk magic uses it as protection against misfortune and to break a jinx.

Constituents

Paeoniflorin, paeonol, paeonin, albiflorin, triterpenoids, sitosterol.

Parts Used

Root, dried and chopped or powdered.

Typical Preparations

Teas, tinctures, encapsulations, almost always used with other herbs. Used with dong quai and licorice for dizziness, blurred vision, and dysmenorrhea. Used with corydalis and cyperus for menstrual cramping. Used with white bupleurum root for flank pain due associated with unresolved emotional issues. Used with cinnamon for upper respiratory infection.

Summary

White peony is one of the oldest plants cultivated for its flowers alone, a practice going back to 2000 B.C.E. in China. It was brought to Japan by Buddhist monks from China, where it is still considered today to be a symbol of prosperity. White peony appears in a great variety of herbal formulas designed to resolve menstrual irregularities and complains of menopause. Used with any source of calcium, it can be used by itself to treat hot flashes.

Precautions

Should be avoided by persons who have diarrhea due to AIDS or cancer.

