

Psoralea (*Psoralea corylifolia*)

Common Names: Babchi seeds, bu gu zhi, psoralea fruit, scurfy pea.

Location: Psoralea is a climbing vine found throughout China.

Description: Psoralea seeds, which are harvested in the fall, should be large, solid, and black. Unlike garden beans, psoralea seeds are pungent and bitter.

Properties: Components in psoralea are active principles for inducing pigmentation of the skin.

Uses: Psoralea is one of the main herbs in traditional Chinese and Japanese herbal medicine for the treatment of skin conditions. It has been used in the treatment of eczema and hair loss. In addition, it acts against staph infections and helps stimulate the heart. The Chinese name of this herb means, "tonify bone resin." Psoralea is used to promote bone calcification, making it useful for treating osteoporosis and bone fractures. Benefits of psoralea for specific health conditions include treatment of cancer, psoriasis and vitiligo.

Doses: Psoralea is available in capsules under the name of psoralea seed capsule, scurfy pea, and bu gu shi.

Warnings: Psoralea is unusual in that it can sensitize the skin to both healing and harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun. Unless this herb is being used to treat a light-sensitive disorder, use sunscreen or avoid sun exposure when taking it. If mild stomach upset occurs when using psoralea, take a ginger tea. You should not take with licorice root. In a few cases, local application may irritate the skin and cause blistering.