

Schisandra (*Schisandra chinensis*)

Common Names: Gomishi, magnolia vine, shhisandra fruit, wu-wei-zi.

Location: Native to both northeastern China and the eastern United States.

Description: Schisandra is an aromatic woody vine, reaching a length of up to 25 feet. It bears oval leaves, pink flowers, and spikes of red berries.

Properties: The berries are dried for use in herbal medicine.

Uses: Schisandra is now a recognized adaptogen—a substance capable of increasing the body's functions; it can improve mental function, increase stamina and physical performance, normalize blood sugar and blood pressure, reduce high cholesterol, improve the health of the adrenal glands, and energize RNA and DNA molecules to rebuild cells. Schisandra is also one of the most useful herbs from the herbal traditions of Asia for the treatment of liver diseases. Because it stimulates the central nervous system to maintain breathing, Schisandra is useful as an antidote to morphine overdose. It also increases visual acuity and field of vision, as well as tactile sensitivity. Benefits of schisandra for specific health conditions include treatment of cancer, cirrhosis of the liver, hepatitis, depression, insomnia, restless leg syndrome, stress, excessive sweating and skin cancer.

Doses: Schisandra is available as capsules and tinctures, and in combination with other herbs, especially hoelen. Practitioners of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) dispense it for use as a tea.

Warnings: It increases the flow of bile. People who have gallstones or blockages of the bile ducts therefore should not use this herb. Schisandra also stimulates the uterus and induces labor, so it should be avoided during pregnancy. People with peptic ulcers, epilepsy, and high blood pressure should also avoid this herb.