

Siberian Ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*)

Common Names: Ci wu ju, devil's shrub, eleuthero, eleutherococcus, touch-me-not.

Location: Siberian Ginseng is a hardy shrub native to the southeastern part of Siberia, just north of China's Amur River. It also grows in China, Japan, and Korea, and is well adapted to the Pacific Northwest of the United States and British Columbia.

Description: A deciduous plant, Siberian ginseng grows to a height of ten feet and bears three-to seven-toothed leaflets on each stem. Siberian ginseng is in the same family as, but is not identical to, Korean, or red, ginseng. Its use dates back about 2,000 years. When it was "rediscovered" in Siberia in 1855, it was mistaken for ginseng, and used with good results as a substitute for *Panax ginseng*. Thus, it was named Siberian ginseng.

Properties: The dried root is used in herbal medicine.

Uses: Siberian ginseng is considered an adaptogen in that it normalizes body functions. It inhibits the stress response by reducing the activity of the adrenal cortex. It is an immune stimulant that is especially useful for preventing infection during times of intense physical activity and prolonged periods of stress. The herb's stress-fighting and depression-relieving capacities make it useful in the treatment of attention deficit disorder. It is also a versatile training aid for athletes. Siberian ginseng supports the body by helping the liver detoxify harmful toxins, including chemotherapeutic agents and products of radiation exposure. Studies have confirmed the use of the herb for people undergoing chemotherapy and radiation therapy for cancer, to help alleviate side effects, and to help bone marrow recover more quickly. Benefits of Siberian ginseng for specific health considerations include treatment of the following: cancer, mumps, chronic fatigue syndrome, Lyme disease, tuberculosis, viral infections, depression, stress, diminished sex drive and Meniere's disease.

Doses: Siberian ginseng is available as eleuthero extracts, tablets, and teas. It is also available in bottled ginseng tonics, but be cautious if the tonic contains actual Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) or other herbs falsely labeled as ginseng.

Warnings: Using Siberian ginseng may cause insomnia if you take it too close to bedtime, and it has been reported to cause mild, temporary diarrhea in a few users. People who have myasthenia gravis, rheumatoid arthritis, or related diseases such as lupus, psoriatic arthritis, and Sjogren's syndrome, should avoid Siberian ginseng. This herb stimulates the immune system to produce B cells, which in turn release tissue-destructive antibodies, aggravating these conditions. Since Siberian ginseng contains compounds that stimulate testosterone production, men who have prostate disorders should not use it. You should not use Siberian ginseng if you have uncontrolled high blood pressure. It can be used during pregnancy or nursing, however, pregnant or nursing women using this herb should avoid products that also contain *Panax ginseng*. Anyone who takes digoxin (Lanoxicaps, Lanoxin) should seek the advice of a health-care professional before taking Siberian ginseng. This herb-drug combination has been reported to cause dangerously high serum digoxin levels. Animal research has shown that Siberian ginseng can increase the sleep-inducing effects of barbiturates. Persons taking barbiturates for anxiety or insomnia may become more sedated than usual when taking Siberian ginseng.