

HYSSOP, GIANT



Agastache rugosa

[ah-gas-TAH-kee roo-GO-suh]

Family: Labiatae

Names: Korean mint, wrinkled giant hyssop; Huo Xiang (Chinese)

Description: Short-lived, upright perennial with square stems and pointed leaves that have white, hairy undersides and a mintlike aroma. Small purple flowers are produced in spikes in late summer. Height of 3-4 feet and a width of 24 inches. It is hardy to zone 8 and is not frost tender. It is in flower from July to September, and the seeds ripen in September. The flowers are hermaphrodite and are pollinated by bees. The plant is self-fertile. It is noted for attracting wildlife.

Cultivation: Prefers a sunny sheltered position and a well-drained soil. This species is not hardy in the colder areas of the country, it tolerates temperatures down to between 27 and 22°F. The flowers are very attractive to bees. Seed - sow spring in a greenhouse and only just cover the seed. The seed usually germinates in 1 - 3 months at 45°F. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and grow them on in the greenhouse for their first year. Plant out in late spring or early summer. Division in spring. Fairly simple, if large divisions are used it is possible to plant them straight out into their permanent positions. Basal cuttings of young shoots in spring. Harvest the young shoots when they are about 10 - 15cm tall and pot them up in a lightly shaded position in a greenhouse. They should root within 3 weeks and can be planted out in the summer or following spring. Leaves and stems are collected in before flowering and dried. Native to China and found in Japan, Korea, Laos and Russia.

History: Huo Xiang was first mentioned in a Chinese medicinal text around 500AD. The generic name *Agastache* is Greek for "many-spiked", referring to the flowering spikes.

Constituents: Contains a volatile oil, including methyl chavicol, anethole, anisaldehyde, and limonene.

Properties: aromatic, antibacterial, digestive, anti-spasmodic, diaphoretic, Antibacterial; Antifungal; Antipyretic; Aromatic; Cancer; Carminative; Febrifuge; Refrigerant; Stomachic.

Energetics: pungent and sweet; slightly warm

Meridians/Organs Affected: spleen, stomach, lungs

Medicinal Uses: Korean mint is commonly used in Chinese herbalism, where it is considered to be one of the 50 fundamental herbs. Considered to be a "warming" herb, it is used in situations where there is "dampness" within the digestive system, resulting in poor digestion and reduced vitality. The herb stimulates and warms the digestive tract, relieving symptoms such as abdominal bloating, nausea, indigestion, and vomiting. It is commonly used to relieve or prevent vomiting and morning sickness. It is used to treat the early stages of viral infections that feature symptoms such as stomachache and nausea. The leaves are also used in the treatment of chest congestion, diarrhea and headaches. An infusion of the leaves is used in the treatment of angina pains. The plant is used as a folk remedy for cancer, extracts of the plant have shown anticancer activity. Huo xiang is combined with Baical skullcap and other herbs for symptoms such as malaise, fever, aching muscles, and lethargy. A lotion containing huo xiang may be used externally to treat fungal conditions such as ringworm. A highly effective preventive for heat stroke and summer colds

Combinations:

Giant hyssop and cardamom seed are effective in relieving morning sickness

Combined with Bai Zhu and pinellia, Giant hyssop is used to treat nausea and vomiting, a feeling of epigastric and abdominal distention, or reduced appetite and diarrhea due to "Dampness" blockint the Middle Burner.

For Damp Warm febrile diseases such as malaria and dysentery, giant hyssop is combined with Baical Skullcap, forsythia fruit and talcum. The symptoms include fever, abdominal distention, achy limbs, lethargy, and dark, scanty urine

TCM:

Indications: Damp excess in chest, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, sluggishness and

oppression due to "damp summer heat" excess; external injuries of "wind-cold"

Dosage: 5-7 g

Culinary Uses: Young leaves - raw or cooked. A strong anise-like fragrance, they are normally used as a flavoring or as an addition to the salad bowl. The leaves can be used as a tea substitute. A pleasant flavor. The seed is possibly edible. Fresh or dried leaves provide a mintlike flavoring for meat and salad dishes and make a pleasant tea.

References:

Chinese Herbal Medicine, Daniel P Reid, Shambhala, 1987; ISBN: 0-87773-398-8

Encyclopedia of Herbs and Their Uses

The Encyclopedia of Medicinal Plants

Herbal Healing Secrets of the Orient, Darlena L'Orange, Prentice Hall, 1998

Plants for a Future Database

Resources:

Companion Plants, www.companionplants.com
plants, seed

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