

YOMOGI



Artemisia princeps

[ar-te-MIZ-ee-uh PRIN-keps]

Family: Compositae

Names: Japanese mugwort, jui hao; Oshiu-yomogi, Maguwato (Japanese); noya; pati, titepati

Description: A perennial from Japan and Korea. Its leaves are green, feather shaped with deep incisions, bearing white dense hairs on the underside. It bears small, buff colored flowers in summer.

3-4 ft.

Cultivation: This species spreads rapidly by means of underground stolons and can become invasive. Easily grown in a well-drained circumneutral or slightly alkaline loamy soil, preferring a warm sunny dry position. Established plants are drought tolerant. Plants are longer lived, more hardy and more aromatic when they are grown in a poor dry soil. Members of this genus are rarely if ever troubled by browsing deer. Surface sow the seed from late winter to early summer in a greenhouse, making sure that the compost does

not dry out. When large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on in the greenhouse for their first winter. Plant out in late spring or early summer. Division in spring or autumn. Basal cuttings in late spring. Harvest the young shoots when about 10 - 15cm long, pot up in a lightly shaded position in a greenhouse or cold frame and plant them out when well rooted. Very easy.

History: Yomogi is an essential thread in the fabric of traditional Japanese life. In the past, at the time of the spring and autumn equinox, people visited their ancestors' graves and made offerings of flowers and foods to the souls of their ancestors. In the old days, it was customary for housewives to pick young Yomogi leaves and mix them with rice to make Kusa Mochi –a special rice cake. Kusa mochi was an important offering to the spirits of dead relatives. The collection of Yomogi leaves for this purpose was a family event and outing. Yomogi was also used to keep evil at bay and to prevent plagues from entering the house.

Ainu people have high spiritual value associated with mugwort plant. They believe that the stems and leaves of mugwort plant protect them from the demons of sickness related to smell. This belief was based mainly on the smell of *Artemisia*, which they think would discourage the demons to come near that plant. Mugwort was used for treating people with psychogenic disturbances. The patient had to be slapped with the plant while shouting 'hussa!', 'hussa!' or 'hus!' for chasing the devils away. Chasing started from patient's head to down through to the feet, and repeated the process through back. Heat and smoke from mugwort-stem fire are thought to be effective in purifying the person affected by psychogenic disease. Withered mugwort stems were bundled and piled for forming six house-

like objects on the riverbank. Once the objects were on fire, the patient was forced to pass 12 times through fire (to and fro for 6 times). While walking/working in the places where devils were thought to be present, Ainu people used to put branches of mugwort on their head, usually along two ears wrapping by a scarf, and facing the upside of the branches forward. Ainu people consider that mugwort has special power to chase devils away; they believed that eating stems and leaves (decocting and drinking leaves and stems of mugwort) drove the disease god away, effectively protecting against any parasite into their body.

During the May festival, parents say special prayers to insure children grow to maturity and adulthood. As a part of this ritual, Yomogi leaves and Calamus root (*Acorus calamus*) are bundled together and placed under the eaves of the house. As long ago as the year 8000 BC parents made balls of musk, cloves, Yomogi leaves and calamus and put them under the eaves of the house for this purpose. Today, the tradition has been simplified and parents simply bundle Yomogi and calamus and place it around the house. The origin of this ancient custom is Chinese and predates the Japanese custom.

Mugwort has high spiritual value in Nepal; it is one of the most religious plants in Nepal, and is offered in almost all ritual celebrations. Mugwort and flower are synonyms. Whenever people build new houses the foliage of mugwort is kept on the ridge of the roof, so that it can protect the new houses from the evils. Mugwort flower has special importance during dashain, the biggest festival of Hindu in September/October. Senior people bless younger putting mugwort flowers/foiliages on their head. Flowering of mugwort is also an indication of approaching dashain festival.

Properties: Bitter, anti-inflammatory

Constituents: Terpene: trans-caveol, α -terpineol, 4-terpineol, α -phellandrene, camphene, α -cedrene, bornyl acetate, elemol, isoborneol, carvone, ethyl palmitate, ethyl oleate, ethyl linoleate, lupenone, lupenyl

acetate, α -amyirin acetate, β -amyirin acetate, glutinone, fernenone, 24-methylene-cycloartanone, simiarenol, trans-phenylitaconic acid; Flavones: eupatilin, 5-hydroxyl-6-7-3-4-tetramrthoxyflavone; Bitter lactones: isoridentin, chrysartemin B, chrysartemin A; Volatile oil: d- α -phellandrene, cadinene I,8-cineole; Adenine; Cholines; Tannins; Vitamins and Minerals; Polysaccharides

Besides chlorophyll and dietary fiber, it contains Vitamin A, B1, B2 and C, as well as minerals such as iron, calcium and phosphorus. Since the leaves contain cineole and other essential oils, they give off a fresh, spring-like fragrance.

Medicinal Uses: Leaves are used to treat eczema, itchy skin and excessive womb bleeding in China. The fuzz on the underside of the leaves is gathered and used in moxibustion in Japan. Its juice is effective at stopping bleeding, lowering fevers and purging the stomach of impurities. It can also be boiled and taken to relieve colds and coughs. The technique of treatment for cold (diaphoretic treatment) was called Yay (oneself)-su (pan)-maw (steam)-kare (to cause to do). The decocted mugwort was boiled in a large pan. The patient sitting near the hearth holds the pan. Patient's head needs to be covered with a hood-like cloth (a blanket would be good), covering his/her face and the pan. Then the steam/vapor causes the patient to perspire. Sometimes the patient drinks the decoction to accelerate the process. The process lasts for 5 to 8 minutes depending upon the steam flow and condition of the patient. The patient perspires profusely. Ainu people used to treat venereal disease such as syphilis and gonorrhea with mugwort plants. Washing genitals with leaves and stems of mugwort or/and drinking the decoction were found to be effective for controlling such venereal diseases. Some eye diseases were treated with leaves of mugwort plant. Broiled leaves of the plant used to be attached to the eyelid of the affected eyes. Yomogi is highly recommended in all inflammatory conditions, especially asthma, hay fever and atopic dermatitis. In these cases,

it should be used internally and put into the bath. It is safe to be used long term and should be used first to get the condition under control and then at any sign of a return of the condition. A recently rediscovered use of Yomogi is in the prevention and treatment of malaria. Travelers venturing to countries with malaria are now again at risk, as the traditional treatments are no longer working as effectively. Recent research and history reveals Yomogi is an excellent preventative which modern travelers should think about adding to their travel bag before heading to countries troubled with malaria. It can be used to stimulate the body whenever infection is a problem.

Mugwort was also said to be appropriate for relief from dental problems. Mugwort leaves used to be grounded and mixed with salt, then applied to the root of the aching tooth/teeth. Sometimes boiled leaves were chewed with aching tooth/teeth. Yomogi is used for general tonic and cleansing and is particularly noted for women's health. Apart from moxibustion, Yomogi has been diversely used in Japanese folk medicine, internally and externally. Today, people who chose not to use steroids for chronic inflammatory conditions used it as an alternative. Specifically, people with eczema or atopic dermatitis, asthma and chronically inflamed joints take the infusion internally and use it in the bath to keep their conditions under control.

Research shows decoction of Yomogi leaf has an in vitro inhibitory effect against *Staphylococcus aureus*, α -hemolytic *Streptococcus*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Shigella sonnei*, *Salmonella typhi*, and *Salmonella paratyphi*. Crushed fresh leaf of Yomogi placed over the warts of 12 patients, repeatedly, led to the falling off of the warts within 3-10 days. Large doses of Yomogi leaf, given for two days to malaria patients two hours before the onset of symptoms controlled the condition in 89% of patients. In addition, over half the cases tested negative for parasites after the herb was thus used. Research has also showed Yomogi to be a smooth muscle relaxant. It does this by directly antagonizing slow reacting substances of anaphylaxis and

inhibiting the release of inflammatory substances. It contains 4-terpineol which was shown to have a high anti-asthmatic activity - it induced tracheal smooth muscle relaxation. 4-terpineol has also been reported to have anti-tussive, expectorant, analgesic, sedative, anti-pyretic, and bacteriostatic activities. *Oleum Argyi*, a volatile oil extracted from Yomogi, is particularly effective in the treatment of bronchitis and asthma. It has been found to be 85-90% effective in such cases. After spraying the volatile oil into the throat, a marked effect was felt within 30-60 seconds.

Dosage:

Internally: Dried herb 5g per day; Tincture 1:1 5ml per day; Tincture 1:5 25ml per day; Bath herb bag for skin problems such as atopic dermatitis. (Cheesecloth bag filled with the leaves of Yomogi, then dropped into your hot bath)

Other Uses: Mugwort is used as fodder for goat in Nepal. It is also used for manure and insecticide in cropland in Nepal. Its stems are also used for support for young bean plants, probably, presuming its insecticidal role to protect the young sprouts. Broom made of its foliage is thought to be effective in maintaining healthy environment by repelling the insects. Mugwort is very effective in protecting from leeches. People who have to walk or work in leech-prone areas rub its leaves on their skin. If they find leeches biting on their body, they simply squeeze the leaves and drop the extract on the bite-spot. Then the leech immediately ceases biting and vomits blood.

Culinary Uses: The young leaves and seedlings are used in salads and soups and, after being boiled briefly to remove the bitterness, they are pounded into glutinous rice dumplings to which they add delightful color, aroma and flavor. Also used in Korean sweets. After being lightly boiled the young leaves are pounded and it is a vital ingredient of *kusamochi* (rice cake with mugwort) and *hishimochi* (lozenge rice cake) which is served at the Doll's Festival in March. They impart a

delightful aroma, flavor and color. Mugwort mochi is often sold in N. American health food stores.

Recipes:

Kusamochi (Rice Cake with Yomogi)

Yomogi leaves 100 g
Baking soda a pinch
Rice powder 200 g
Boiling water 160-180 g
Red bean paste 200 g
Soybean flour to taste
Sugar a pinch

Wash the *yomogi* leaves, and put them with the baking soda in a pot of boiling water. Boil for one or two minutes. Drain the leaves and grind them in a mortar. Mix the boiling water with the rice powder and knead it until it becomes soft. Put the rice dough into a steamer and steam for about fifteen minutes. Knead the steamed rice dough together with *yomogi*. Form it into balls and fill them with red bean paste. Sprinkle soybean flour on the rice cakes. Enjoy!

Yomogi Fu

1 stick yomogi fu (mugwort gluten)
potato starch
oil for deep frying
4 shrimp
4 fresh shiitake mushrooms

sauce:

[1 cup dashi, 2/3 tablespoon sugar, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon mirin, 1 tablespoon light soy sauce]

potato starch dissolved in water

Cut the yomogi fu into widths of about 1 cm and lightly sprinkle with potato starch. Deep fry in oil heated to about 170F. Peel and devein shrimp. Clean the shiitake mushrooms and cut off stems - make a crosswise cut on cap. In a pot, add the sauce and bring to a boil. Add the mushrooms and cook for a while. Add the shrimp and cook briefly, removing foam as it collects. Remove the shrimp and mushrooms. In the remaining liquid, add the dissolved potato starch and thicken to make a sauce.

Arrange the yomogi, the shiitake, and the shrimp cut in half on a platter. Cover with the sauce



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