

Healing Plants

Among nature's many gifts are herbs, plants, and flowers that, since antiquity, have been used from generation to generation for therapeutic purposes. Since humans began to care for their health, these plants have been a key source of nutrition and healing. Likewise, modern medicine uses compounds derived from or obtained from herbs, roots, stems, leaves, flowers, and seeds. ●

Contributions from the New World

Various plants were found to possess an impressive number of substances that could be used for therapeutic purposes, as antibiotics, contraceptives, anesthetics, and antipyretics (fever reducers), among others. One example is quinine, used in the treatment of malaria, which was originally obtained from the bark of the quinine tree (*Chinchona* species), a tree native to South America.

SHAMANS

fulfill a central role in ancient communities as healers. Shamans seek to cure illnesses naturally, by means of herbs, roots, and other vegetable substances.



ECHINACEA SP.

The medicinal plant most used by native North Americans. This plant stimulates the immune system.



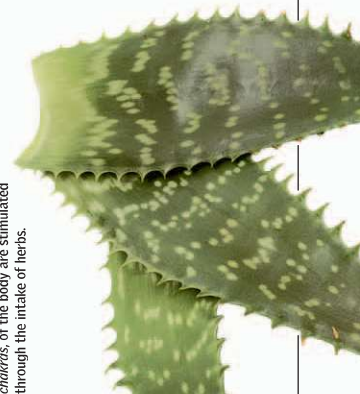
INDUSTRY

Echinacea is consumed around the world as a natural medicine.



Ayurvedic Medicine in India

The knowledge of life is the central principle of ayurvedic medicine. The representation of the elements that form the Universe (fire, air, water, earth, and ether) in three humors (*vata*, *pitta*, and *kapha*) indicate a person's health and temperament. The energy centers, or *chakras*, of the body are stimulated through the intake of herbs.



THE THREE TYPES OF HUMORS

Vata (wind) is associated with air and ether, *pitta* (anger) is associated with fire and water, and *kapha* (phlegm) is associated with earth and water. A holistic approach, Ayurvedic medicine provides integrated treatments that link physical care and meditation with nutrition.



VATA (Wind)

In excess, it influences the intestines, the colon, the ears, the bones, the hips, and the skin.



PITTA (Anger)

It affects the liver, gallbladder, stomach, eyes, skin, and pancreas.



KAPHA (Phlegm)

In excess, it can affect the throat, airways (upper and lower), and joints.

DESCRIPTION

It is associated with a melancholic personality characteristic of dreamy and erratic people.



DESCRIPTION

It represents a choleric personality—people who are decisive, with a tendency to embrace new ideas.



DESCRIPTION

It is associated with tranquility and serenity, typical characteristics of persons with a naturally sensitive attitude.



Chinese Medicine

The philosophy behind traditional Chinese medicine involves a qualitatively different approach from that of Western medicine. It is based on respect for the interaction between the mind, the body, energy, and the environment. Its basic principles include the five elements and the yin and yang. It is based on the concept of chi, the vital energy in equilibrium in people's bodies. Chi regulates lost equilibrium. It is under the influence of the opposing forces of yin (negative energy) and yang (positive energy). Traditional Chinese medicine includes herbal therapies, nutrition, physical exercise, meditation, acupuncture, and healing massages.



TAI CHI OR TAI JI

is the generating principle of all things according to Chinese philosophy. It is represented with the yin and the yang, which together make up the Taoist symbol known as the "Taijitu diagram." In order to maintain good health, it is necessary to balance yin and yang.



YANG

is considered male, bright, and hot.

YIN

is considered female, dark, and cold.

THE THEORY OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS

Chinese tradition adds metal to the elements of the Greek model (water, fire, air, and earth). The interaction among all these elements must be kept in equilibrium, with no single element predominating over the others. Should an imbalance occur, an illness might appear.



FIRE

YIN

Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*), Eleuthero (*Eleutherococcus*), English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)

YANG

Hawthorn (*Crataegus oxyacantha*), sour orange (*Citrus aurantium*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*)



Bitter Herbs

Their action is focused on the heart and the small intestine. They lower fevers and sensations of heat, and they redirect vital energy, or chi.



Sweet Herbs

are tonic and nutritive. They harmonize with other herbs, relieve pain, and stop the progression of severe illnesses.



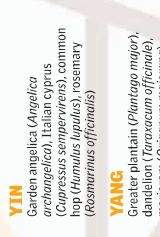
WOOD

YIN

Garden angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), Italian cyprus (*Cupressus sempervirens*), common hop (*Humulus lupulus*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

YANG

Greater plantain (*Plantago major*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), marjoram (*Origanum majorana*)



Sour Herbs

basically act on the liver and the gallbladder. They activate biliary secretions.

Salty Herbs

are refreshing; they soften hard spots, lubricate the intestines, and promote their emptying. They reduce constipation, kidney stones, gout, etc.

YIN

Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*), cinamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), yellow gertian (*Geranium luteum*), Minor century (*Centaurium umbellatum*)

YANG

Lemon (*Citrus limonum*), common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), lemon balm (*Melissa myrtillus*), olive (*Olea europaea*)



EARTH



Spicy Herbs

induce sweating, blood circulation, and chi, or vital energy. They are generally used for superficial disorders.

YIN

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), peppermint (*Mentha piperita*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*)



YANG

Corn poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*), Tasmanian bluegum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), common borage (*Borago officinalis*)



WATER

YIN

Shepherd's purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), red sandwort (*Arenaria rupestris*), rough birdweed (*Stilax aspera*)

