

## *Chapter VI*

# **A Compendium of Traditional Thai Herbal Medicine**

### **A WARNING ABOUT DOSAGE**

Traditional prescriptions are notoriously vague; “a handful” or “a pinch” is often all of the information we are given. Fortunately, with most herbal treatments, there is little danger of adverse reaction. Medicinal herbs offer a natural balance of alkaloids, which work in harmony to promote health and fight disease, while on the whole avoiding severe side effects and other adverse reactions typical of allopathic drugs.

There are some notable exceptions to this generalization in the compendium of herbs found in the next pages. Opium poppy is listed in the traditional Thai pharmacopoeia, as are numerous toxic plants. When a plant in this book is known to be dangerous under certain conditions, a note has been made. However, people may react to herbs in dramatically different ways, and this text can not take into account individual sensitivities and allergies. In all cases, should the patient experience nausea, dizziness, headache, diarrhea, or other adverse reactions, this should be taken as an indication that an excessive amount has been used, and less should be prescribed on subsequent occasions, or alternative herbs should be used. These warnings should be especially heeded in regard to pregnant women, children, and the elderly, who often react with greater sensitivity to herbal medicines and other drugs.

One last caveat should be noted: the claims made in this collection are based on traditional medicinal uses of these herbs. Many of the more popular herbs in this collection are well known to the West, but in the case of some of the more unusual herbs, these therapeutic claims have not been evaluated by the professional herbalist community. Although these treatments are prescribed in Thailand by reputable healers and health institutions, I have not personally tested all of the herbal prescriptions given in this collection, and I strongly emphasize that this book should not replace consultation with a competent herbalist or physician.

The compendium that follows lists herbs commonly used in traditional herbalism in Thailand. Information has been compiled from many sources—including Thai, Ayurvedic, and Western—in order to give a complete picture of the herbs and their usage in many traditions. Sources are noted in the bibliography.

Below is a sample entry, with explanation of the terminology used throughout the collection:

Note that the word “herb” is used throughout this collection to indicate a substance used by Thai herbalists and may refer to fruits, vegetables, barks, minerals, and other natural substances in addition to the more commonly held notion of an herb.

Action: Terms are taken from both the traditional Thai and Western classification systems, as explained in Chapter II.

Common English name, when available

Botanical name

Arabian Jasmine, *Jasminum sambac*

Taste: Most herbs are classified according to the Ten Tastes as discussed in Chapter II. For some herbs, this information is unavailable.

Mali

Thai name: The Thai language has never been authoritatively transcribed in the Roman alphabet, and Thai words still differ markedly depending on the source used. (For example, the Father Doctor himself has been spelled “Jivaka Kumar Bhaccha,” “Shivagakomarpaj,” and “Chewaka Komarapat.” Who could guess that these three names refer to the same person?)

**Action:** Alterative, Cardiac, Emmenagogue, Nervine, Refrigerant, Sedative, Tonic

**Taste:** Aromatic

**Part Used:** Flower

**Internal Application:** Arabian jasmine is used in the Thai sauna and steam bath for calming the mind, easing headaches, and as a tonic for the heart and blood. It is said to be beneficial to pregnant women.

**Preparation:** For steam bath preparations, see *Chapter IV*.

**Topical Application** The leaf of the Arabian jasmine is antiseptic and is used for wounds and acne.

**Preparation:** Use poultice, or add to sauna or steam bath.

Internal and Topical methods of application are listed separately.

**Note:** There are many species of jasmine that may be used medicinally. See also common Jasmine and Night Jasmine.

**Alexandrian Senna, *Cassia acutifolia***  
Ma Khaam Khak

**Action:** Alterative, Anthelmintic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Cholagogue, Laxative, Purgative

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Leaf, Pod

**Internal application:** Tea made from Alexandrian senna pods is a strong and effective laxative for treatment of constipation. The leaves are somewhat more gentle, and tea from the leaves is traditionally used as a mild laxative for the elderly. In smaller doses, senna stimulates the liver and encourages the production of bile, thereby aiding digestion.

**Preparation:** Decoction of 6–12 pods in cold water. Add 1/4 tsp ginger as adjuvant to prevent cramping. Strain; take 1–4 tbs before breakfast.

**Topical application:** Decoction of Alexandrian senna pods is an antiseptic. Applied topically, it is used traditionally as a treatment for bacterial and fungal skin infections. As a gargle, it is used to treat infections of the mouth, including tooth and gum disease, and mouth sores.

**Preparation:** Decoction as above; use as gargle and mouthwash.

**Caution:** Senna is not recommended for patients with hemorrhoids or for those with high levels of stress, tension, or chronic anxiety.

**Note:** Where *C. acutifolia* can not be found, the more common Western varieties, *C. Marilandica* or *C. angustifolia*, can be used.

**Aloe, *Aloe indica, Aloe vera***  
Waan Haang Jarakhe

**Action:** Adjuvant, Alterative, Anthelmintic, Antipyretic, Bitter Tonic, Blood Tonic, Emollient, Emmenagogue, Laxative, Purgative, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal application:** The Thai name for aloe translates as “alligator tail plant.” Well known to the Western tradition as a bitter tonic, aloe has beneficial effects on the liver, spleen, uterus, and blood. The gel of the aloe leaves is taken internally to regulate menstruation, for detoxification, for clearing up persistent lingering illness, for liver disease, and for chronic constipation. As it is a gently detoxifying laxative, aloe is a common adjuvant in the treatment of any infectious disease. Large doses of aloe act as a purgative and can expel intestinal worms and other parasites. The Wat Po texts list aloe in recipes for parasites, vomiting, diarrhea, dysentery, constipation, mucous in the digestive tract, flatulence, fever, blood in breast milk, and infected or stagnant blood. It is used by Hill-Tribes to combat epilepsy, seizures, and rabies.

**Preparation:** Incise fresh mature leaves to extract gel. Take 2 tbs gel mixed with liquefied palm sugar or 1 cup (250 ml) sweet fruit juice 1–3 times daily. Or make tea from dried aloe leaves.

**Topical application:** Topical Application: Thai tradition holds that a dab of aloe gel on each temple is a great cure for tension headaches. Aloe gel is also mentioned in the Wat Po

texts as a topical remedy for convulsions, tetanus, backache, boils, swelling, and tendinitis. It is commonly used topically in Eastern and Western herbalism to soothe burns, cuts, herpes, eczema, and other skin irritations.

*Preparation:* Incise fresh mature leaves to extract gel. Apply topically to affected area frequently.

### ***Alum Powder*** Saansom

**Action:** Astringent, Antiparasitic, Antiseptic

**Taste:** Sour

**Part Used:** Alum powder is a white crystalline salt derived from aluminum sulfate.

**Internal Application:** Alum powder is an antibacterial for infections of the ear, bladder, or eye. An effective astringent, it also is used to treat hemorrhoids, diarrhea, and internal bleeding.

*Preparation:* Take 1 tsp alum powder in hot water daily.

**Topical Application:** Alum powder is added to toothpaste or tooth powder to fight tooth decay and to strengthen unhealthy or loose teeth. It may be used on the skin for rashes, eczema, itching, scabies, ringworm, and other skin parasites.

*Preparation:* Apply powder directly to teeth with toothbrush. Rinse.

### ***Alumina Clay***

**Action:** Antipruritic, Astringent

**Taste:** Bland

**Part Used:** A white powdered clay derived from bauxite or aluminum oxide.

**Topical Application:** Alumina clay is applied topically to soothe skin rashes, hives, insect bites, and irritations.

*Preparation:* Mix clay with warm water; apply to affected areas as needed.

### ***Angelica, Angelica archangelica***

#### Kot Hua Bua

**Action:** Analgesic, Antirheumatic, Antispasmodic, Appetizer, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Emmenagogue, Expectorant, Stimulant, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Hot

**Part Used:** Root, Seed, Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Angelica is beneficial for any type of pre-menstrual symptoms, including cramps, headaches, bloat, and muscle spasms. It is also effective in promoting regular menstruation when blocked. Angelica is used as a cold remedy and against flu,

fever, and generally low energy and low immunity. In small doses, it also stimulates the appetite.

*Preparation:* Decoction

**Topical Application:** Angelica is applied topically to control itching and to help heal wounds and cuts. It also may be applied with hot compress over arthritic joints to control pain.

*Preparation:* Mash angelica with mortar and pestle. Apply with poultice or hot compress.

### ***Arabian Jasmine, Jasminum sambac*** Mali

**Action:** Alterative, Cardiac, Emmenagogue, Female Tonic, Nervine, Refrigerant, Sedative, Tonic

**Taste:** Aromatic

**Part Used:** Flower

**Internal Application:** Arabian jasmine is used in the Thai sauna and steam bath for calming the mind, easing headaches, and as a tonic for the heart and blood. It is said to be especially beneficial to pregnant women.

*Preparation:* For steam bath and sauna preparations, see *Chapter IV*.

**Topical Application:** The leaf of the Arabian jasmine is antiseptic and is used for wounds and acne.

*Preparation:* Use poultice, or add to sauna or steam bath.

**Note:** There are many species of jasmine that may be used medicinally. See also common Jasmine, and Night Jasmine.

### ***Asafoetida, Ferula foetida, Ferula asafoetida***

**Action:** Analgesic, Anthelmintic, Antirheumatic, Antiseptic, Antispasmodic, Aphrodisiac, Carminative, Digestive, Expectorant, Laxative, Nervine, Purgative, Sedative, Stimulant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot

**Part Used:** A resin is extracted by incising the roots of the fresh plants

**Internal Application:** As a hot herb, asafoetida is used in Thai medicine to stimulate digestion and to help cases of flatulence, indigestion, and constipation. Its expectorant action makes it ideal to fight colds, congestion, and asthma. A daily dose of asafoetida is reputed to be a tonic for the brain and senses, and is also recommended to counter arthritis. In large doses, it is a purgative used to expel intestinal worms.

*Preparation:* Take decoction of 1 tsp resin or 1 gram powder in 1 pint (500 ml) hot water daily. Use ginger as an adjuvant to lessen side effects and enhance the flavor of this treatment.

**Topical Application:** Topically, a poultice of asafoetida may be used to soothe arthritis and other joint pain.

*Preparation:* Make thick paste by adding warm water to resin; apply to affected areas.

***Bael***, *Aegle marmelos*  
Matum

**Action:** Antiseptic, Astringent, Carminative, Expectorant, Stimulant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Fruit, Leaf

**Internal Application:** The ripe bael fruit is traditionally used as a decongestant for the common cold, especially when there is excessive congestion of the lungs, as well as for tuberculosis and typhoid fever. It is also prescribed for any type of disorder of the intestines, including diarrhea, constipation, flatulence, and dysentery. Bael fruit is used for its stimulating properties in cases of exhaustion and convalescence from chronic disease or injury, but it is said to inhibit sexual energy, and is for that reason drunk by monks at many monasteries. Unripe bael fruit is an astringent, used as an antidiarrheal and as a daily tonic. Juice from the crushed leaves of the bael is given for respiratory infections, and decoction of the stem is said to be a useful antimalarial.

*Preparation:* Fruit is eaten raw or is sliced, dried, and boiled to make a decoction.

**Topical Application:** Bael leaves may be used topically as an antibacterial and antifungal for skin infections or wounds.

*Preparation:* Mash a handful of leaves with mortar and pestle, adding water to make a paste. Apply to affected areas.

***Baking Soda***

**Action:** Antacid, Antipruritic

**Taste:** Salty **Part Used:** Baking Soda is powdered sodium bicarbonate.

**Internal Application:** In the West, we typically use baking soda as a treatment for hyperacidity and indigestion. In addition to this usage, Thai herbalists recommend a teaspoon of baking soda in a glass of warm water as a detoxifying cleanser for stomach, intestines, kidneys, and bladder.

*Preparation:* Take one tsp in lukewarm water.

**Topical Application:** Baking soda is useful topically on insect bites and stings (especially bee and wasp), rashes, itchiness, and skin irritations. Due to its cleansing and whitening action, it is also a common ingredient in toothpaste and tooth powder (See *Chapter III* for tooth powder recipe).

*Preparation:* Mix with warm water to make paste. Apply to skin as needed.

***Banana***, *Musa sapientum*  
Kluai

**Action:** Astringent, Demulcent, Diuretic, Nutritive Tonic, Stomachic

**Taste:** Bland **Part Used:** Fruit, Root, Sap

**Internal Application:** There are a 28 official species of bananas in Thailand, with marked differences in size, shape, and flavor. Each has a different name in Thai, although “kluai” is

useful as a general term. Some bananas are green when ripe, some are pink, others are mottled brown, and according to traditional Thai cuisine, some are best in coconut milk, some are best raw, and some are only eaten soaked in honey and dried. The flowers of the banana plant are similar in texture to cabbage and are eaten in salads or in curries. The rest of the plant is utilized as well: the roots of the banana plant are converted into mulch, the fibers are woven into twine, and the leaves are used as plates and containers. A common method of cooking is to wrap ingredients such as rice, beans, fish, or vegetables in a banana leaf before grilling or steaming. The banana is also a source of wine, vinegar, cloth dye, and flour. Pureed banana is a popular baby food, and batter-fried bananas are a favorite street-stall snack.

The banana plant, in botanical terms, is actually an herb, and the fruit is actually a berry. The fruit of the banana is high in vitamins A and C, potassium, and carbohydrates, and therefore the ripe fruits are useful for emaciation and wasting diseases. The unripe banana is used traditionally as a stomachic to treat diarrhea and peptic ulcers. The ripe fruit is demulcent, the roots are diuretic, and the sap of the stem is astringent.

*Preparation:* Eat 1–2 unripe fruits. Raw fruit may also be dried and ground to make powder. Dosage is 3–4 tbs of powder mixed with 1–2tbs honey. Take 4 times daily, with meals and before bed. Note that this remedy may cause flatulence. Other methods of preparation include decoction of root and sap.

***Beleric Myrobalan***, *Terminalia belerica*  
Samoh Phipheg

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Antiseptic, Antitussive, Astringent, Digestive, Expectorant, Laxative, Tonic

**Taste:** Astringent **Part Used:** Fruit

**Internal Application:** The beleric myrobalan fruit is a very important herb in the Ayurvedic tradition, and consequently, in the Royal Thai tradition as well. It is considered to be a rejuvenative tonic, a tonic for the lungs, larynx, throat, bronchi, digestive system, and eyes, and to encourage hair growth. The ripe fruit is an astringent to treat diarrhea, dysentery, and other intestinal parasites, but the unripe fruit is a strong laxative, which will correct constipation. Unripe beleric myrobalan fruit corrects all types of stones, parasites, and blockage in the digestive, urinary, and respiratory tracts. It is also an expectorant used to treat cough, sore throat, laryngitis, and bronchitis.

*Preparation:* Take 250 mg to 1 g powdered dried fruit with honey.

**Topical Application:** Decoction of beleric myrobalan is a topical antiseptic.

**Note:** This herb is often combined with chebulic myrobalan and emblic myrobalan, found elsewhere in this collection. (See *Triphala* in *Special Medicinal Recipes, Chapter V*, for more information on this combination.)





vanishes into Nirvana without a trace. Camphor crystals are a common ingredient in most Thai saunas, from the traditional hospitals to the modern health clubs.

Camphor is a bronchodilator and a decongestant, and is inhaled to treat colds, congestion, sore throat, cough, bronchitis, and sinusitis. Inhalation of camphor is also beneficial for irregular or blocked menstruation, eye infections, fevers, typhoid, and lung infections. Camphor crystals stimulate the brain, heart, and circulation, but paradoxically have a calmative effect on stress, anxiety, and insomnia. Camphor is therefore listed both as a calmative and a stimulant, and it is used both internally and externally in small quantities for both purposes. The wood of the camphor tree is used as an expectorant and carminative.

*Preparation:* For more information on inhalation by steam bath or sauna, see *Chapter IV*. Only a sprinkle of camphor crystals is necessary to experience the stimulating effects. Internal dosage is no more than .05 grams.

**Topical Application:** Camphor crystals are used topically as an anti-inflammatory for arthritis, sprains, and muscle pain, and as an antiseptic and analgesic on mild cuts, insect bites, and skin infections.

*Preparation:* Apply crystals topically with hot towel or compress.

**Caution:** In large doses, camphor is a narcotic poison and may cause convulsions.

***Candelabra Bush, Ringworm Bush, Cassia alata, Senna alata***  
Chumet Thet

**Action:** Antiparasitic, Antiseptic, Diuretic, Laxative

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Leaf, Flower

**Internal Application:** The candelabra bush, like other cassias, is used as a laxative. It is mentioned in the Wat Po texts as a cure for constipation, flatulence, diarrhea caused by intestinal parasites, and blood or mucous in the stools. It is said that it should be “powdered together with zedoary and dusted on the body of a child who is difficult to rear, in order to prevent illness.”

*Preparation:* Eat two or three fresh flower clusters, lightly steamed, with chili sauce. Or flame-roast 12–15 dried leaves. Make decoction; take before breakfast or at bedtime. For tapeworms or other intestinal parasites, use the “Five Parts” remedy—trunk, root, fruit, flowers, and leaves powdered together.

**Topical Application:** The leaves of the candelabra bush are used topically as an antiseptic and antiparasitic for treatment of ringworm, fungal and bacterial skin infections, and wounds.

*Preparation:* Bruise or crush fresh leaves with mortar and pestle, combining with alcohol or lime juice to make paste. Apply topically to affected areas twice daily as a poultice or hot compress. The decoction described above may also be used topically.

**Note:** Note that candelabra bush leaves may cause nausea and vomiting if the leaves are not fully roasted, and may cause cramping. This plant should not be used for children or patients with inflammatory bowel diseases. Overdose may cause damage to kidneys. Prolonged use may cause chronic diarrhea.

***Cardamom, Amomum krervanh, Amomum xanthioides,***  
*Amomum uliginosum*  
Krawaan (*Amomum krervanh*), Wan Sao Lowng (*Amomum xanthioides*),  
Reo krawaan (*Amomum uliginosum*)

**Action:** Antitussive, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Expectorant, Stimulant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Seed

**Internal Application:** Cardamom is known for its stimulating qualities and soothing effects on the gastrointestinal system. The tea is taken all over the world for cases of flatulence, bloated stomach, sluggish digestion, irritable bowel syndrome, and gastritis. In Thailand, Siamese cardamom and bastard cardamom are used to ease stomach pain and cramping associated with gastritis and indigestion. Cardamom is also widely used as a cough suppressant, as well as to treat colds, bronchitis, asthma, and laryngitis.

*Preparation:* Make powder from dried seeds. Take 2 tsps in warm water or in herbal tea after meals. For cough, drink tea or suck on whole seeds.

**Note:** Where these varieties of cardamom are not available, common cardamom (*Elettaria cardamom*), may be used.

***Caricature Plant, Golden Leaves,***  
*Graptophyllum pictum*

**Action:** Antipyretic, Blood Tonic, Tonic

**Taste:** Bland **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** The caricature plant is used traditionally to detoxify the system, especially in cases of fever, chronic thirst, measles, or food poisoning. It is considered to be a tonic and detoxifying agent for the liver.

*Preparation:* Tea. Drink 1–3 times daily.

***Cashew, Anacardium occidentale***  
Ma-muang-him-ma-pa, Tua cashew

**Action:** Expectorant, Nutritive Tonic

**Taste:** Oily **Part Used:** Nut, Leaf, Bark, Flower

**Internal Application:** Cashew nuts are a common ingredient in Thai appetizers and desserts, and are often stir-fried with chicken and sweet and sour sauce. As with most oily herbs, cashews nuts are recommended by traditional herbalists as a part of the daily diet for those suffering from skin or bone problems, chronic skin infections, dry skin, or frequent allergic rashes. As it is high in caloric energy, protein, and potassium, the cashew nut is a nutritive tonic that gives increased energy and strength, and is therefore beneficial in cases of emaciation, low immunity, low energy, and chronic disease. The young shoots and leaves are eaten raw or in soups, and are expectorants. Decoction of the bark or flower is used to treat diarrhea and dysentery.





increases production of bile. It has a beneficial effect on all liver and gall bladder disorders, as well as diabetes and hypoglycemia. Chiretta is a detoxifying herb, useful in cases of intestinal infection such as dysentery and other diarrhea, and in cleansing the blood. Chiretta is also used to relieve constipation, treat fever, and to reduce blood pressure.

*Preparation:* Tea from 1–5 handfuls fresh herb. Drink 3–4 times daily. Or powder dried herb; take 1.5 grams 3–4 times daily.

**Topical Application:** Fresh chiretta stalks are used to treat toothaches and abscesses.

*Preparation:* Chew raw stalks. Or pound leaves with mortar and pestle; mix with a bit of water; apply to affected area.

**Caution:** In larger doses, chiretta may cause nausea.

**Note:** *A. paniculata* is a local species of chiretta. Where it is not available, *Swertia chirata* (common chiretta) may be substituted.

### ***Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum indicum*** Geh Huay

**Action:** Alterative, Antipyretic, Antispasmodic, Bitter Tonic, Cardiac, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Emmenagogue, Nervine, Sedative, Stimulant

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Flower

**Internal Application:** Iced chrysanthemum tea is one of the most popular drinks in Thailand, available at any market or restaurant. It is reputed to be a stimulant and tonic for the eyes, liver, heart, and nervous system. Therapeutically, chrysanthemum is used to treat all disorders of the liver and eyes, irregular or blocked menstruation, menstrual cramps, and PMS. It is also said to cure headaches and sore throat, to lower fever, and to calm the mind.

*Preparation:* Drink tea 1–3 times daily, hot or iced.

### ***Cinchona, Quinine Bark, Peruvian Bark,*** *Cinchona officinalis, Cinchona succirubra*

**Action:** Analgesic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Bitter Tonic, Nervine, Stomachic

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Bark

**Internal Application:** Until the advent of more potent synthetic medications, cinchona was the remedy of choice for malaria. It is still used for this purpose in isolated areas of rural Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia in places where modern drugs and medical attention are unavailable. In smaller doses, cinchona is also useful for cases of influenza and fever, and as a daily bitter tonic to promote health and longevity.

*Preparation:* Tea. Drink 1–3 times daily.

**Caution:** In large doses, cinchona may cause headaches, dizziness, or stomach irritation. Cinchona may cause uterine contractions and should be avoided by pregnant women.

### ***Cinnamon, Cinnamomum zeylanicum*** Ob Chuey

**Action:** Alterative, Analgesic, Antiemetic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Cardiac, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Diuretic, Expectorant, Stimulant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Bark, Leaf

**Internal Application:** Cinnamon is a stimulant for the kidneys, heart, and circulation, and is especially good in cases of chronic circulatory deficiency, hypotension, and chronic coldness. As a hot herb, cinnamon is used internally as a decongestant for colds and as a digestive against indigestion and sluggish digestion. The tea also counters nausea and vomiting, soothes peptic ulcers and gastritis, and promotes regular menstruation.

*Preparation:* Tea is made from dried cinnamon bark.

**Topical Application:** Cinnamon is used topically to soothe muscle aches and strains, as well as on the thoracic area to break up colds and congestion. It is also a topical analgesic and antiseptic useful for toothaches and mouth sores.

*Preparation:* Gargle with cinnamon tea, or apply directly to skin. Diluted in olive oil or other base oil, essential cinnamon oil is applied directly to the skin on affected areas. (See *Homemade Tiger Balm* in *Special Medicinal Recipes, Chapter V*.) Cinnamon leaves are one of the main ingredients in the traditional herbal sauna and compress (see *Chapter IV*).

### ***Citronella Grass, Cymbopogon nardus, Cymbopogon winterianus*** Ta Khrai Nom

**Action:** Blood Tonic, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Emmenagogue, Stimulant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Leaf, Essential Oil, Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Infusion of citronella leaves is soothing to the stomach and helps counter flatulence, stomachache, indigestion, intestinal cramps, irritable bowel, and gastritis. The essential oil is also diaphoretic and stimulant, and promotes internal detoxification through encouraging sweating. The rhizome encourages regular menstruation, treats blocked menstruation, and halts excessive vaginal discharge. Citronella is used to induce labor, as it promotes uterine contractions. It also acts as a diuretic.

*Preparation:* Infusion of leaves or essential oil, decoction of rhizome.

**Topical Application:** Citronella is a natural insect repellent, and rural Thais place a bowl of pounded citronella leaves under the bed to ward off mosquitoes during the night.

*Preparation:* For insect repellent, apply citronella oil to a diffuser, or to a handkerchief placed over a light bulb. Citronella may be applied to the skin as well. Use 7% essential oil of citronella in 93% alcohol, or see *Herbs in Cosmetics* section in *Chapter III* for recipe.

**Caution:** Citronella should never be used internally by pregnant women.





***Emblic Myrobalan, Indian Gooseberry****Phyllanthus emblica, Emblica officinalis*

Ma Khaam Bom

**Action:** Antioxidant, Antipyretic, Antitussive, Aphrodisiac, Astringent, Blood Tonic, Diuretic, Expectorant, Hemostatic, Laxative, Nutritive Tonic, Refrigerant, Stomachic**Taste:** Sour**Part Used:** Fruit**Internal Application:** The emblic myrobalan is used traditionally for respiratory afflictions, including colds, congestion, cough, and asthma, as well as for indigestion. The fruit is one of the highest natural sources of vitamin C and is a traditional daily tonic for the brain, nervous system, blood, bones, liver, spleen, stomach, heart, eyes, hair, bones, nails, teeth, and gums. Because of its detoxifying and antioxidant properties, emblic myrobalan is especially beneficial for those with frequent colds, low immunity, smokers, and those who live in polluted environments. In Thailand, the dried, pickled fruits are sold in bags, and eaten like we in the West would eat prunes. Emblic myrobalan is one of the most commonly used herbs in the Ayurvedic system, employed to increase immunity, regulate the digestive system, and to treat fever, internal bleeding, diabetes, hypoglycemia, gout, gastritis, hepatitis and other liver disease, jaundice, constipation, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, anxiety, stress, chronic fatigue, low immunity, low energy, osteoporosis, and for aiding in convalescence from chronic disease.**Preparation:** Two to five raw fruits are mashed with mortar and pestle, salted, and sucked 3–4 times throughout the day. For daily consumption, jellied or pickled fruits are highly recommended. Emblic myrobalan may also be powdered or taken in decoction. Use 250 mg – 1000 mg.**Note:** Thai healers may use *Phyllanthus urinaria*, called “Yaa Tai Bai,” as a substitute.***Eucalyptus, Eucalyptus globulus, others*****Action:** Antiseptic, Antispasmodic, Antitussive, Expectorant, Diaphoretic, Nerve, Stimulant**Taste:** Hot and Aromatic**Part Used:** Leaf, Oil**Internal Application:** Eucalyptus is a popular herbal remedy in Thailand, and it has even become somewhat fashionable among young Thais to carry around a vial of eucalyptus and peppermint oil for frequent sniffing. There are many species of eucalyptus, most of which can be used medicinally. Eucalyptus is an extremely effective treatment for colds, especially those with excessive congestion of the sinus and/or lungs, as well as cough, bronchitis, asthma, sore throat, and other respiratory ailments. Symptoms are relieved by inhalation of the vapors, by tea, or by topical application to chest, throat, and under the nose. Eucalyptus tea is also good for indigestion and fever. Hill-Tribes use eucalyptus tea internally as an analgesic and a cold remedy, and the inhalation to stop nosebleeds.**Preparation:** Bruise leaves with mortar and pestle; add to sauna or steam bath, or apply to chest and back with hot herbal compress (See *Chapter IV*) Essential oil of eucalyptus may be used as a substitute in most cases, but only if pure. Tea can be made by infusing 1 fresh or 4 dried eucalyptus leaves.**Topical Application:** The eucalyptus is one of the most potent antiseptic and antibacterial herbs. Leaves are used topically on ulcers, infections, and sores of the skin, and may be safely applied to burns. A poultice may also be used on sprains, bruises, and sore muscles. A few fresh leaves or a small amount of pure eucalyptus oil may be mixed with warm water and used as a gargle for sore throats, cough, and mouth sores.**Preparation:** Mash leaves with mortar and pestle; mix with hot water. Apply directly to affected area. Essential oil of eucalyptus can be used as substitute in topical applications. Apply a small amount directly to the skin with a hot towel.**Caution:** Taken internally in large doses, eucalyptus may be poisonous. Take care when using essential oils to adjust dosage.***False Daisy, Eclipta prostrate, Eclipta alba***

Kameng

**Action:** Alterative, Antiparasitic, Antipyretic, Carminative, Hemostatic, Laxative, Tonic, Vulnerary**Taste:** Bitter**Part Used:** Whole plant**Internal Application:** The whole plant of the false daisy is used to treat chest infections, asthma, and bronchitis. It is a carminative used to expel gas from the lower intestines. It is also considered to be a longevity tonic and a tonic for the liver, spleen, and blood, and it is used to treat cirrhosis, hepatitis, and anemia. The leaf and root are used as a laxative. The root is used for cases of flatulence, temporary paralysis, and fainting or feeling of exhaustion post-partum. The juice of the stem is prescribed for jaundice.**Preparation:** Decoction**Topical Application:** A poultice of the false daisy may be used topically for skin diseases and ringworm. The decoction may be added to olive or coconut oil and massaged into the scalp as a hair tonic to prevent hair loss and early greying. The same oil may also be used as a topical anti-inflammatory.***Finger Root,****Boesenbergia pandurata, Boesenbergia rotunda*

Krachai

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Antiallergic, Carminative, Digestive, Stomachic**Taste:** Hot**Part Used:** Root, Leaf**Internal Application:** Finger root is a common ingredient in Thai soups and curries. As a digestive, it is traditionally included in the diet to aid sluggish digestion, flatulence, and indigestion. The rhizome is also used for tooth and gum disease, diarrhea, dysentery, and as a general diuretic. Tea made from the finger root leaves is employed in cases of food poisoning and allergic reactions to food.**Preparation:** Mash fresh root with mortar and pestle, and make decoction. Or make powder from dried or fire-roasted root.



most hot herbs, garlic is a digestive with carminative action of particular use in cases of flatulence and indigestion. Hot herbs are also effective expectorants successfully used to fight colds, congestion, asthma, bronchitis, and cough. Garlic is a potent detoxifying agent and is therefore beneficial in fighting liver disease, toxic colon, and in general detoxification of the blood and organs. In large doses, garlic has a purgative effect on intestinal worms and other parasites, and is used to prevent malaria and dengue (it is said that mosquitoes won't bite one who eats garlic frequently). Other diseases benefited by garlic include arthritis, heart disease, gall bladder disease, fever, and cystitis. Garlic reputedly lowers blood cholesterol, lowers high blood pressure, raises low blood pressure, and is recognized in many cultures the world over as a stimulating aphrodisiac.

*Preparation:* Eat 2–4 cloves daily raw or cooked in food.

**Topical Application:** As a powerful antiseptic, garlic may be applied topically to bacterial and fungal skin infections, superficial wounds, dermatitis, and swelling. A few drops of garlic in the ears fights ear infections, and in the nose, fights sinusitis. Rubbing the temples with garlic cloves is a classic remedy for relieving headache.

*Preparation:* Mash raw cloves with mortar and pestle; mix with warm water to make a paste, and apply directly to affected areas.

### ***Ginger, Zingiber officinale*** Khing

**Action:** Adjuvant, Analgesic, Antiemetic, Anti-inflammatory, Antirheumatic, Antiseptic, Antitussive, Aphrodisiac, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Expectorant, Galactagogue, Stimulant, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Ginger is the quintessential panacea in the Thai herbal pharmacopoeia. As a hot herb, ginger is a powerful stimulant, especially of the digestive tract. It is the herb of choice for stimulation of digestion, and is used to combat flatulence, indigestion, gastritis, peptic ulcer, diarrhea, sluggish digestion, nausea, and vomiting. Ginger tea is also used for colds, congestion, sore throat, fevers, nausea, seasickness, mouth sores, insomnia, heart disease, arthritis, irregular or blocked menstruation, chronic back pain, hemorrhoids, and beri-beri (vitamin B1 deficiency), earning it the reputation as a cure-all. Hill-Tribe healers give ginger tea to mothers immediately following birth to promote health and rapid recovery. Ginger also acts as a galactagogue, encouraging production of breast milk. Ginger is used as an adjuvant in many herbal preparations in order to lessen side effects and increase the potency of other herbs, and is the most frequently used herb in this collection.

*Preparation:* Decoction from one "thumb-length" (or about 5 grams) fresh ginger, finely chopped, grated, or mashed with mortar and pestle. Boil 10–15 minutes; drink after meals. A gargle for mouth sores may be made by adding salt to ginger tea. For cough and cold, add lemon juice. (See also *Zingiber Tea* in *Special Medicinal Recipes, Chapter V*.)

**Topical Application:** Ginger has a powerful antiseptic action and may be used topically for bacterial and fungal skin infections, parasites, and acne.

*Preparation:* Mash fresh ginger with mortar and pestle. Add a bit of alcohol to make a paste; apply topically to skin. For sores within the mouth, gargle with ginger tea. (See also *Herbs in Cosmetics* in *Chapter III* for skin-care recipes using ginger.)

### ***Ginkgo, Ginkgo biloba*** Ginko

**Action:** Antioxidant, Antitussive, Astringent, Expectorant, Nervine, Stimulant

**Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Ginkgo improves blood circulation, particularly to the brain, and is commonly prescribed to older individuals to maintain mental acuity through old age and to counter or prevent Alzheimer's disease. It may also be used by younger individuals to enhance memory and mental clarity, and as a rich source of detoxifying antioxidants. Ginkgo has also been shown to have a beneficial effect on depression, mood swings, arthritis, arteriosclerosis, stress, anxiety, bronchitis, and can be used to treat varicose veins and other disorders due to chronic circulatory deficiency.

*Preparation:* Ginkgo tea should be taken 2–3 times daily for 3 months for noticeable effect. It is often mixed with Gotu Kola in a 1 to 1 ratio.

### ***Ginseng, Panax ginseng*** Soam

**Action:** Alterative, Antiallergic, Antiemetic, Aphrodisiac, Cardiac, Demulcent, Male Tonic, Nervine, Nutritive Tonic, Stimulant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot and Sweet **Part Used:** Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Ginseng is an example of an herb prized by Chinese medicine that has made its way into the Thai tradition. Almost every sizable grocery store in Thailand has a well-stocked shelf of ginseng extracts and products imported from China or Korea. The extract of the ginseng rhizome is said to be the best longevity tonic for males and is frequently taken by men over 50 on a daily basis. It is held to be a powerful aphrodisiac and a sure cure for impotence, premature ejaculation, and other male sexual dysfunctions. For both sexes, it is a cardiac tonic which helps strengthen the heart and circulatory system, while reducing cholesterol and blood sugar. Ginseng is used as a stimulant for the entire system and to counter low immunity, low energy, chronic fatigue, stress, debility, and emaciation. As a demulcent, ginseng is also useful in cases of nausea, vomiting, sinusitis, hay fever, and other allergies. It is also used to treat blood diseases, irregular menstruation, colds, and bronchial infections.

*Preparation:* Ginseng extract is the most commonly available form of this herb, although the fresh rhizome is used in some tonic food recipes. Extract should be taken before breakfast, and should not be taken with tea or coffee. Dosage differs according to strength of extract, but the average dose is 10ml. Ginger may be used as an adjuvant for heightened stimulating effect. (See *Zingiber Tea* in *Special Medicinal Recipes, Chapter V*.)

**Golden Shower, Purging Cassia, *Cassia fistula***  
Khuun

**Action:** Antipyretic, Expectorant, Laxative, Purgative, Stimulant, Tonic

**Taste:** Astringent                      **Part Used:** Seed Pod, Flower

**Internal Application:** The black, sticky pulp surrounding the seeds of the golden shower is used traditionally as a laxative and expectorant. In larger doses, it is a purgative. Tea from the flower is also a laxative and an antipyretic. Hill-Tribes use the flowers in the steam bath or sauna to treat vertigo, low energy, and fainting, and as a general tonic for health and longevity.

*Preparation:* Boil 4 g of the pulp of the seed pod with salt. Strain; drink at bedtime. Alternatively, boil seeds in water with salt until soft; eat seeds at bedtime. (For more information on steam bath and sauna, see *Chapter IV*.)

**Gotu Kola, Brahmi, Asiatic Pennywort,**  
*Centella asiatica* (synonym: *Hydrocotyle asiatica*)  
Bua Bok

**Action:** Alterative, Antioxidant, Antipyretic, Antirheumatic, Astringent, Bitter Tonic, Blood Tonic, Diuretic, Emmolient, Expectorant, Nervine, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Bitter                              **Part Used:** Leaf, Stem

**Internal Application:** Gotu kola is primarily a tonic for the nervous system, promoting clarity of thinking, mental calmness, and emotional balance. It is used to treat psychological disorders, chemical imbalances of the brain, memory loss, Alzheimer's, and epilepsy. It is high in vitamin A and is considered to be an excellent daily tonic for old age. It has an especially beneficial effect on the immune system, veins, liver, spleen, and gall bladder. As a blood purifier, it is also used to counter colds, fever, arthritis, all types of skin diseases, urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases, hepatitis, and uterine cancer. Tea made from the fresh leaf is used to treat sore throat, fevers, and diarrhea.

*Preparation:* Drink tea made from dried leaves and stem once daily for 1 month. Use honey as an adjuvant. Or extract juice from fresh leaves, dilute, and bring to a boil. Sweeten with honey before drinking. Gotu Kola is often taken with Gingko (see *Gingko*).

**Topical Application:** Gotu kola is applied topically to soothe burns and to help in healing wounds. The leaf has antifungal and antibacterial properties, and is used to treat staphylococcus infections.

*Preparation:* Mash a handful of leaves with mortar and pestle, adding just enough water to make a paste. Apply to affected areas as needed.

**Caution:** Excessive doses of gotu kola may cause nausea and/or vomiting.

**Green Tea, *Camellia sinensis***  
Cha-keay

**Action:** Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Astringent, Bitter Tonic, Cardiac, Digestive, Diuretic, Stomachic

**Taste:** Bitter                              **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Green tea is possibly the most popular beverage in Asia, although Thailand's consumption is somewhat less than China's or Japan's. Mostly, green tea's beneficial properties are due to tannins, antibiotic alkaloids that occur naturally in the leaf. In modern times, green tea has been shown to be rich in antioxidants, which seems to confirm its long-standing reputation as a general tonic. Taken regularly, green tea promotes a healthy immune system, protecting against infections and cancers of the respiratory and digestive systems. Green tea has a regulating and alkalizing effect on the digestive system and helps both constipation and diarrhea. In general it is useful as a digestive, although different processing and roasting methods produce differing results. Green tea also is beneficial for blood circulation, aids in disinfecting bacterial infections of the mouth, and protects against tooth and gum disease.

*Preparation:* Tea

**Topical Application:** Applied topically, green tea is an anti-inflammatory for burns and skin irritations.

*Preparation:* Soak leaves in hot water; apply lukewarm leaves to affected areas.

**Note:** Black tea is made from the oxidized leaves of *C. sinensis* but does not share all of green tea's therapeutic qualities.

**Guava, *Psidium guajava***  
Farang

**Action:** Antiseptic, Astringent, Emmenagogue, Laxative, Sedative

**Taste:** Astringent                      **Part Used:** Leaf, Fruit

**Internal Application:** Guava is most commonly prescribed traditionally for diarrhea because of the astringent qualities of the leaves and unripe fruit. The same tea is also useful to treat cases of blocked or irregular menstruation, and cases of chronic stress or anxiety.

*Preparation:* Flame-roast 10–15 leaves until yellow in color. Boil in 1 pint (500 ml) water. Take 1/2 cup (125ml) decoction every 3 hours as needed. Powder may also be made from the unripe fruit by removing the seeds, drying, and grinding. Take 1 tsp dry or in hot water. For a gentler effect, the unripe fruit may also be eaten fresh, dipped into a mixture of sugar, salt, and chili powder. Or unripe guava may be juiced and drunk with a pinch of salt.

*Schefflera leucantha, Schefflera venulosa*  
Hanuman Prasan Kai

**Action:** Antitussive, Astringent, Hemostatic

**Taste:** Astringent                      **Part Used:** Fresh Leaf

**Internal Application:** The leaf of this plant is astringent and drying, and is used to treat colds, respiratory tract infections, cough, asthma, and difficulty breathing. It is also employed in cases of cough; blood in the vomit, stool, or vaginal discharge; and internal bleeding for its hemostatic effect.

*Preparation:* Decoction from 7–8 clusters of leaves. Take twice daily, before breakfast and dinner.

**Topical Application:** Poultice may be applied topically as a hemostatic to contusions, cuts, and bleeding wounds.

*Preparation:* Apply topically with poultice or cold compress.

**Henna, Lawsonia inermis**  
Thian King

**Action:** Alterative, Antiparasitic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic

**Taste:** Bitter                              **Part Used:** Leaf

**Topical Application:** Powdered henna leaf is widely used in India to dye hair. The fresh leaf may be applied as a topical antiseptic to fungal and/or bacterial infections of the skin and nails. It is also used to treat ringworm and may be used orally as a gargle for mouth and gum disease or infections.

*Preparation:* Mash fresh leaf with mortar and pestle, mixing with equal quantity of turmeric and a pinch of salt. Make poultice.

**Hibiscus, Roselle, Hibiscus sabdariffa**  
Krachiap Daeng

**Action:** Antitussive, Carminative, Diuretic, Expectorant, Refrigerant, Tonic

**Taste:** Astringent                      **Part Used:** Flower

**Internal Application:** Hibiscus tea or juice is primarily prescribed as a diuretic for cases of gallstones, kidney stones, and urinary tract infections. It is additionally used to treat indigestion, flatulence, peptic ulcer, fever, cough, hypertension, kidney cramps, and back pain. It is high in calcium and therefore is added to the daily diet to treat and prevent tooth and bone deterioration. Hibiscus flower is held to lower blood cholesterol. The seed is also a diuretic, and is a tonic for the four elements.

*Preparation:* Tea from dried flowers. Drink 3 times daily. Or take 3 g seed daily in powdered form.

**Holy Basil, Sacred Basil, Ocimum sanctum**  
Kaphrao Daeng

**Action:** Antipyretic, Antirheumatic, Antispasmodic, Antitussive, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Laxative, Nervine, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot                                      **Part Used:** Leaf, Bud, Young Shoot, Seed

**Internal Application:** Holy basil is so called because it is considered sacred in many parts of South Asia. In India, where it is the favored herbs of the Brahmins, it is said to promote spiritual purity and to strengthen the mind. While not necessarily considered sacred in Thailand, this herb is indispensable in cooking and is the primary condiment for most Thai soups and curries. (See *Chapter III* for some recipe ideas.)

Holy basil is a common ingredient in treatments for colds and flu. It is the perfect digestive and is a simple remedy for gastritis, irritable bowel, indigestion, flatulence, nausea, and vomiting. As an antispasmodic, it is useful for any stomach or intestinal cramping, including those caused by irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer, and gastritis. Holy basil is also used in treatments for easing headaches, cough, sinusitis, and arthritis. While the herb may be used to combat constipation, the seeds are more effective laxatives. Some Hill-Tribes use basil in the steam bath or sauna for eye infections or pain, and topically as a poultice for fungal infections.

*Preparation:* Make tea from fresh leaves, flowers, and stalks. Take after meals as a digestive aid. For laxative, soak 2 tsps seeds in water for several hours. Seeds should take up a full glass when fully bloated. Take before bed.

**Note:** Where *O. sanctum* is unavailable, *O. basilicum*, or common basil, may be substituted.

**Honey**  
Nam Pueng

**Action:** Adjuvant, Antitussive, Demulcent, Emollient, Nutritive Tonic

**Taste:** Sweet

**Internal Application:** Honey has a soothing effect on the throat and is typically used in traditional Thai herbalism as an adjuvant, or helping herb, with other remedies, especially treatments of colds, cough, sore throat, and asthma. Honey contributes to general strength and well-being, and is therefore used in nutritive preparations for longevity and convalescence, as well as in general tonics. In the case of cough and sore throat, it may be taken by the spoonful as necessary to soothe symptoms.

*Preparation:* Honey is typically administered with powders or dried herbs, or as a sweetener in herbal tea. (See *Special Medicinal Recipes, Chapter V*, for cold remedies.)

***Horseradish Tree, Moringo, Moringa oleifera***

Mahum

**Action:** Antirheumatic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Carminative, Digestive, Hemostatic, Stomachic, Vulnerary

**Taset:** Hot **Part Used:** Bark, Root, Seed

**Internal Application:** Decoction of the bark of the horseradish tree is a digestion stimulant used traditionally for combating flatulence, indigestion, and bloated stomach.

**Preparation:** Decoction. The young shoots and flowers may alternatively be steamed and eaten with chili sauce or in soups.

**Topical Application:** Decoction of the root is a disinfectant and may be used as an astringent to stop bleeding and help promote the healing of wounds. The seeds, when roasted and ground, are made into a poultice for arthritis.

***Indian Marsh Fleabane, Pluchea indica***

Khlu

**Action:** Diuretic, Tonic **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Indian marsh fleabane is considered to be an excellent longevity tonic. It is used therapeutically for its diuretic action, especially in cases of hemorrhoids, diabetes, and hypoglycemia.

**Preparation:** Flame-roast 15–20 leaves until yellow. Make decoction. Drink 3 times daily before meals.

***Ironweed, Vernonia cinerea***

Seua Saam Khaa

**Action:** Antirheumatic, Antitussive, Bitter Tonic, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Stomachic

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Leaf, Flower, Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Ironweed is a Thai cure-all and is often used as a detoxifying bitter tonic for daily consumption. It is prescribed in cases of diabetes and hypoglycemia to reduce blood sugar and to prevent sores and skin ulcers. It is successfully used as well for colds and respiratory disorders such as cough and asthma, arthritis, urinary tract infections, blocked or irregular menstruation, jaundice, back pain, and beri-beri (or vitamin B1 deficiency). Thais trying to quit smoking drink ironweed tea daily to help overcome the side effects associated with nicotine withdrawal. Ironweed is also a digestive which promotes the natural processes of the digestive system, offering relief from stomachaches and peptic ulcers.

**Preparation:** Make tea with 1 tsp rhizome or with equivalent amount of leaves and/or flowers. Drink 2 times daily, before meals.

***Ironwood, Mesua ferrea***

Boun Nark

**Action:** Antipyretic, Astringent, Cardiac, Stimulant, Tonic, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Aromatic **Part Used:** Flower

**Internal Application:** Tea made from the dried ironwood flower is an astringent used traditionally as a tonic for the four elements. It has a beneficial effect on the blood and heart, and is used in cases of low energy, chronic fatigue, low immunity, hypertension, and fever. Ironwood may also be used in the steam bath or sauna, and the vapor is especially beneficial to the eyes.

**Preparation:** Make tea from dried flowers, or add to sauna or steam bath. (See Chapter III).

***Ivy Gourd, Coccinia indica, Coccinia grandis***

Tam Loeng

**Action:** Antipruritic, Antipyretic, Purgative, Tonic

**Taste:** Bland **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Ivy gourd leaves are taken in decoction as a purgative and for food poisoning. It lowers fevers and is used by some Hill-Tribes as a tonic for general health and strength.

**Preparation:** Decoction.

**Topical Application:** Ivy gourd is applied topically to insect bites, hives, allergic rashes, itching, inflamed wounds, and rashes from poisonous plants.

**Preparation:** Mash leaves with mortar and pestle. Mix with alumina clay and a bit of water to make a paste. Apply to affected area.

***Jackfruit, Artocarpus integrifolia,****Artocarpus heterophyllus*

Kanoon

**Action:** Demulcent, Nutritive Tonic

**Taste:** Oily **Part Used:** Seed

**Internal Application:** The jackfruit is an enormous fruit which often grows up to 3 feet in length. The heartwood of the jackfruit tree is used by monks in rural Northeastern Thailand's "Forest Tradition" monasteries to dye their robes. Chips of wood are boiled in water, producing a rich earth-tone dye called "gaen-kanun," which is held to have remarkable medicinal qualities. In fact, monks of this tradition never wash their robes. Once a week, the robes are re-boiled in jackfruit dye, and are hung to dry in the sun. Robes treated in this manner are said to never smell bad, and monks swear by the protection the dyed robes impart to the skin—such as immunity from fungal infections, skin disorders, and disagreeable body odor.

All over Thailand, the fleshy tulip-shaped segments of the jackfruit are eaten raw when ripe and are cooked in curries when unripe. The seed is a tonic for promotion of general health



*Preparation:* Drink a half cup (125 ml) juice diluted in water, or add to hot herbal tea. Decoction may also be made by steeping rind in boiling water.

**Topical Application:** Lemon is also used topically and orally as an astringent and antibacterial wash for treatment of sores. It may also be used immediately on burns as a refrigerant.

*Preparation:* For topical use, apply juice directly to the skin. (See *Herbs in Cosmetics, Chapter III*, for more information on lemon juice as an astringent.)

**Note:** It is said that lemon is also useful in repelling snakes. Some rural Thais keep lemon wedges by the door at night to ward off these intruders.

***Lemongrass, Cymbopogon citratus***  
Ta khrai

**Action:** Antiemetic, Anti-inflammatory, Antitussive, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Digestive, Diuretic, Expectorant, Refrigerant, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Hot and Aromatic **Part Used:** Stem

**Internal Application:** The lower part of the lemongrass stalk (technically the rhizome) is white in color and possesses the strongest flavor. This part of the lemongrass is a common ingredient in Thai soups and curries. (See *Chapter III* for recipe ideas.) Lemongrass tea is used as a therapy for colds, congestion, fever, cough, sore throat and laryngitis. As a hot herb, lemongrass is also useful as a digestion stimulant in cases of flatulence, indigestion, and constipation. Lemongrass is also used to counter stomach pains, nausea, vomiting, and back pain. Lemongrass is used by Hill-Tribes as a general tonic, for bone and joint pain, and topically for sprains, bruises, and sore muscles.

*Preparation:* Finely chop or pound with mortar and pestle 3–4 fresh stalks; make tea. Take 3 times daily before meals.

***Licorice, Glycyrrhiza glabra***  
Cha Aim Tead

**Action:** Antitussive, Demulcent, Diuretic, Expectorant, Laxative, Stimulant

**Taste:** Sweet **Part Used:** Root

**Internal Application:** Licorice root is most commonly used in the Thai tradition in cold remedies, as well as for flu, cough, congestion, and fever. It is useful for soothing mucous membranes and may be used in cases of stomach pain, peptic ulcers, sore throat, laryngitis, lung disease, and bronchial infections. In the Western traditions, licorice is used as a laxative to counter flatulence and constipation and is gentle enough to be safe for children and infants. As a diuretic, it is also useful against infections and disorders of the bladder and kidneys, kidney stones, diabetes, and hypoglycemia. Licorice is a general stimulant, with a particular effect on the circulatory system and the heart. It increases blood pressure and stimulates the heart muscle.

*Preparation:* Tea from 1 tsp dried powdered root in 1 cup (250 ml) water.

**Caution:** Licorice is a hypertensive and may not be appropriate for people with high blood pressure.

***Lime, Citrus aurantifolia, Citrus acida***  
Ma Nao

**Action:** Antitussive, Appetizer, Astringent, Blood Tonic, Carminative, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Expectorant, Refrigerant, Stomachic

**Taste:** Sour (fruit), Bitter (rind), Bland (root) **Part Used:** Juice of fruit, Rind

**Internal Application:** In traditional Thai herbalism, the kaffir lime is almost always preferred because of its stronger medicinal effects. However, when it is unavailable, the common lime may be used. Like the kaffir, the common lime is useful for treatment of colds, congestion, and cough. It is a digestion stimulant which alleviates flatulence and indigestion. Lime juice is considered to be a blood tonic and is used to promote regularity in the case of blocked or infrequent menstruation. The Wat Po texts mention lime leaf as a remedy for asthma, epilepsy, parasites, blood diseases, fevers, poisoning, headache, cough, mucous congestion, sore throat, and mouth sores. The juice is mentioned as a cure for cough and cold, and as an appetizer. The root is mentioned as a cure for dysentery, gonorrhea, and fever.

*Preparation:* For stomach discomfort and indigestion, take decoction from rind 3 times daily. (See *Special Medicinal Recipes, Chapter V*, for specific remedies, and *Chapter IV* for more information on herbal compresses.) For cough and cold, use juice of 1 fruit diluted in herbal tea or warm water, with honey and a pinch of salt. Sip throughout the day. Dried fruit may be sucked as a lozenge.

***Long Pepper, Piper retrofractum, Piper longum, Piper chaba***  
Dee Plee

**Action:** Antitussive, Carminative, Demulcent, Digestive, Expectorant, Female Tonic, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Fruit

**Internal Application:** The dried unripe fruit of the long pepper is a locally occurring relative of the black pepper commonly used as a spice in pickling and is a popular remedy used to treat colds, cough, and congestion, as well as for stimulating digestion in the case of indigestion or flatulence. It is used to treat any type of stomachache or cramps, and is also effective against diarrhea. The fruit is a tonic for the four elements, and is used to tonify the uterus after childbirth by encouraging uterine contraction.

*Preparation:* Soak 1 fresh fruit in water with lemon juice and salt. For stomach discomfort or indigestion, boil 10–12 dried fruits 10–15 minutes in 1 pint (500 ml) water. Drink 1/3 glass 3 times daily after meals.

**Caution:** Long pepper may be an abortifacient and should be strictly avoided by pregnant women.





**Monkey Jack, Barhal, *Artocarpus lakoocha***  
Mahaat

**Action:** Anthelmintic

**Taste:** Toxic

**Part Used:** Wood

**Internal Application:** Monkey jack is a potent anthelmintic used traditionally for the elimination of tapeworms and other intestinal parasites.

**Preparation:** Boil small pieces of wood, skimming foam that collects on top of the water. Dry foam in the sun, and crush to make a yellowish powder. Take 3 g powder before breakfast with cold water or lemon juice. Follow up 2 hours later with a laxative such as castor oil or other laxative herbs found in this collection.

**Note:** Use only cold water. If this remedy is taken with hot water, nausea or vomiting may result.

**Mulberry, *Morus alba, Morus nigra, Morus indica***  
Bai Mon

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Antipyretic, Antitumor, Antitussive, Aphrodisiac, Carminative, Laxative, Purgative, Sedative

**Part Used:** Bark of Root, Leaf

**Internal Application:** As a laxative, mulberry root bark is used to counter constipation, indigestion, and flatulence. It is prescribed for fever, cough, and in cases of anxiety, stress, or nervousness. It is also said to be an aphrodisiac. Mulberry root bark has been shown to have tumor-shrinking properties and is therefore being researched for treatment of cancer. A green tea and mulberry combination is a popular Thai tea with immune-boosting antioxidants and anticancerous alkaloids. In larger doses, it is used as a purgative to expel tapeworms and other intestinal parasites. A decoction of the leaves is diluted and used as eye drops for conjunctivitis, sties, and other eye infections.

**Preparation:** Decoction of root bark. Or grind dried root bark to make powder. Take 1/2 tsp dry or with hot water.

**Caution:** The unripe fruit of the mulberry is poisonous.

**Musk**  
Kee Cha Mod

**Action:** Analgesic, Anti-inflammatory, Antitumor, Aphrodisiac, Emmenagogue, Stimulant, Tonic

**Taste:** Hot

**Part Used:** Musk is obtained from the glands of the male musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*).

**Internal Application:** Musk is a stimulating tonic, particularly for the brain, central nervous system, and circulatory system. It is recognized as an aphrodisiac by many cultures

around the world, and is therefore often used in perfumery. In the Thai tradition, musk is commonly taken medicinally as a stimulant for the nervous system and in larger doses for cases of fainting, unconsciousness, or coma. It is also used both internally and topically to combat tumors, to reduce swelling, and as a general analgesic.

**Preparation:** Musk is dried, powdered, and usually taken in pill form, ranging in dosage up to .1 gram.

**Caution:** Musk is an abortifacient and may cause miscarriage. It should be strictly avoided by pregnant women.

**Neem, *Azadirachta indica***  
Sadao

**Action:** Alterative, Anthelmintic, Antiemetic, Antihistamine, Antiparasitic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Bitter Tonic, Blood Tonic, Expectorant, Stimulant, Stomachic, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Bitter

**Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** The neem tree is a natural pharmacy in and of itself, and is prized by the Thai system, the Ayurvedic tradition of India, and indeed throughout Asia, as an essential source of herbal medicine. The bark of the stem is used as an astringent to treat dysentery and diarrhea. The bark of the root is used as an expectorant, a bitter tonic, and an antimalarial. The heartwood effectively treats nausea, vomiting, and parasites, and is used to calm chronic anxiety and stress, and delirium due to high fever. The fruit is an astringent anthelmintic which treats intestinal parasites, hemorrhoids, and malaria. The young shoots, leaves, and flowers are used as a bitter tonic for detoxification of blood, for treatment of vomiting, stomach pain, indigestion, fever, and malaria. Decoction of these parts is also a general internal antibacterial, antiviral, and diuretic used frequently treat dysentery, diarrhea, and parasites. Chewing the stems is said to stimulate the appetite, and the Wat Po texts mention the seed as a mild stimulant and as a treatment for poisoning.

**Preparation:** Decoction can be made from any part of the neem. Alternatively, the northern Thais make a delicious appetizer by stir-frying the flowers and leaves with chili sauce.

**Topical Indication:** The young stems of the neem tree are used throughout Asia as a toothbrush. The ends of the stem are chewed until fine and stringy, and are then rubbed against the teeth and gums to cleanse and stimulate. Neem oil is used in natural toothpaste preparations throughout South Asia and may also be used as a mouthwash or gargle on a daily basis. It is an antiseptic for mouth sores, gum disease, oral infections, and abscesses. (See mouthwash and tooth powder recipes in *Herbs in Cosmetics, Chapter III*.) Due to its antibacterial properties, the oil of the neem tree is a common additive to soap, and may also be dropped into the ear canal to treat infections. Applied to the skin, the leaf, seed, and/or oil cures fungal infections, eczema, acne and scabies, lice, ringworm, and other skin parasites, and may safely be used as a vaginal douche for infections. Hill-Tribes use neem for dermatitis, rash, and warts. Neem oil is often used in cosmetic skin preparations to enhance skin tone, elasticity, and youthfulness. It is also an effective insecticide.

*Preparation:* Essential neem oil may be added to fragrance-free skin lotion or to olive oil. Use 5%–10% neem oil. Neem tea for use as a mouthwash can be made with fresh stems or pure essential oil, but be sure to dilute well, as the flavor is intensely bitter. The tea may also be used as a hair rinse, vaginal douche, or skin toner. (See *Herbs in Cosmetics, Chapter III*, for additional ideas.)

***Night Jasmine, Coral Jasmine,***  
*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*  
**Kanika**

**Action:** Antipyretic, Appetizer, Cholagogue, Laxative, Tonic

**Taste:** Aromatic

**Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** While not properly a species of jasmine, the night jasmine has many of the same medicinal properties as *Jasminum officinale*. The flower is used to treat fever and vertigo, and was used traditionally to make a saffron-colored dye used for monks' robes. Decoction of the stem relieves headache. The leaf is a cholagogue, stimulating appetite and enhancing digestion by increasing the production of bile. The root is a laxative and a tonic which balances the four elements.

*Preparation:* Mash fresh flowers, leaf, and/or root with mortar and pestle, adding a bit of water to make a paste. Strain; take liquid 1–3 times daily before meals. Flowers may also be added to sauna or steam bath.

***Noni, Indian Mulberry, Morinda citrifolia***  
**Yo Baan**

**Action:** Alterative, Analgesic, Antiemetic, Anti-inflammatory, Antioxidant, Antitumor, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Nutritive Tonic, Stomachic

**Part Used:** Fruit

**Internal Application:** In Thailand, the unripe noni fruit is traditionally used as a digestive and to counter nausea and vomiting. This fruit is widely known throughout the Pacific islands, however, as a universal panacea, and its popularity is growing worldwide. Noni has been used successfully for treating colds, tuberculosis, flu, asthma, indigestion, gastritis, chronic constipation, and internal parasites, as well as for bladder, kidney, and urinary tract infections and disease. It is a rich source of vitamin C and other antioxidants, and is used as a nutritive tonic to boost the immune system. The noni fruit is also a tonic for the respiratory system, controls high blood pressure, treats diabetes and hypoglycemia, and has been shown to retard the growth of tumors and cancerous cells. In modern Thailand, it is used as a daily tonic in the treatment of cancer, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, and other severe diseases.

*Preparation:* Thinly slice unripe fruit and fire roast. Decoction from 2 handfuls of roasted fruit in 1 pint (500 ml) water. Drink as necessary while symptoms persist, or take daily as a tonic. The raw fruit may also be substituted for papaya when making *Som Tam* (see recipe in *Chapter III*). The young leaves and shoots are frequently steamed and eaten with chili or added to soups and curries.

***Nutgrass, Sedge Root, Musta, Cyperus rotundus***  
**Ya Haew Moo**

**Action:** Alterative, Analgesic, Anthelmintic, Antipyretic, Antispasmodic, Astringent, Carminative, Cardiac, Diaphoretic, Digestive, Diuretic, Emmenagogue, Stimulant, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Bitter

**Part Used:** Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Taken daily, nutgrass is a tonic for the liver and heart, a digestion stimulant, and an aid against hypertension. It is extremely useful in cases of blocked or infrequent menstruation, menstrual cramps, and PMS. In Thai tradition, it is used to treat fevers, especially those that occur during menstruation. It is also commonly used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, stomach or intestinal cramps, irritable bowel, gastritis indigestion, flatulence, colds, flu, and congestion.

*Preparation:* Pound 1 handful rhizomes with mortar and pestle. Make decoction, or eat pulp with honey. Use ginger as an adjuvant.

***Nutmeg, Myristica fragrans***  
**Chan Thet**

**Action:** Antipyretic, Antispasmodic, Aphrodisiac, Appetizer, Astringent, Blood Tonic, Carminative, Digestive, Male Tonic, Nervine, Sedative

**Taste:** Hot

**Part Used:** Wood, Seed

**Internal Application:** The seed kernel is properly called nutmeg, while the membrane that covers the kernel is called mace. Nutmeg is used in small quantities in Thai cuisine as an appetizer, digestive, and carminative. It is added as a spice to food to enhance assimilation of food, lessen flatulence, and correct sluggish digestion. Nutmeg is also considered to be a tonic for the blood and a sedative with muscle relaxant qualities. According to Ayurvedic tradition, nutmeg calms the mind and cures insomnia, incontinence of urine, and premature ejaculation. In larger doses, it is strongly hallucinogenic and has been used in some areas of the world as a psychoactive drug. Mace is not used medicinally by the Thais, but it is a popular condiment. Decoction of the wood is a lung and liver tonic.

*Preparation:* Add a pinch of nutmeg to food or tea.

**Note:** Use only a pinch of nutmeg at a time, and avoid overdose, as nutmeg may be fatally poisonous in large doses.

***Nyang Plaamoo***  
***Acanthus ilicifolius***

**Action:** Antipyretic, Diuretic

**Part Used:** Root, Trunk, Leaf

**Internal Application:** This plant is a diuretic used to help expel kidney and bladder stones, and is also an antipyretic for fevers, especially those associated with skin symptoms such as measles, chicken-pox, and scarlet fever.

*Preparation:* Decoction



***Papaya***, *Carica papaya*  
Malakor

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Antioxidant, Antirheumatic, Antitumor, Cardiac, Digestive, Diuretic, Emmenagogue, Laxative, Nutritive Tonic, Stomachic, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Hot (seed), Sweet (fruit)      **Part Used:** Seed, Fruit, Leaf, Root

**Internal Application:** Papaya is a digestion stimulant and aids in assimilating food due to the large amount of the enzyme papain present in the fruit. The enzyme is so effective that, in many parts of the tropics, tough meat is soaked overnight in a marinade that contains papaya pulp or juice as a tenderizer. Papaya also contains large quantities of vitamins A and C, well known antioxidants. The fruit of the papaya is eaten both ripe and unripe (see *Som Tam* recipe in *Chapter III* for a recipe based on unripe papaya). While the unripe fruit is a digestive, the ripe fruit and the seeds are mild laxatives taken medicinally to treat constipation, indigestion, flatulence, and cramping of the intestines. Papaya seed is also used to purge dysentery and other parasites of the gastrointestinal tract. The root is a diuretic used to treat venereal diseases such as gonorrhea. Papaya is recommended as part of the daily diet for cases of arthritis, allergies, asthma, hypertension, hysteria, influenza, toothaches, and cancerous tumors. Either the seeds or the fruit may be taken as a general tonic for low immunity, low energy, chronic fatigue, and wasting diseases.

**Preparation:** Eat papaya fruit in the morning on an empty stomach, or take 1 tsp seeds after meals.

**Topical Application:** The leaf of the papaya is used topically on wounds, skin ulcers, and other sores, as it cleanses and speeds healing.

**Preparation:** Bruise leaves with mortar and pestle; apply topically to affected areas.

***Paracress***, *Spilanthes*, *Spilanthes acmella*  
Phak Khraat Hua Wan

**Action:** Analgesic, Antiemetic, Antipyretic, Antirheumatic, Antiseptic, Appetizer, Carminative, Digestive, Stomachic

**Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** Paracress tea is a digestion stimulant. It is useful in cases of flatulence, nausea, and vomiting, and is also prescribed for fever, arthritis, and gout. Mixed with vinegar, it makes a mild antiseptic for mouth sores and sore throat. The stems are also chewed for toothache and are sometimes given to children with speech disorders such as stuttering. Paracress is said to cure these problems, as well as paralysis of the tongue and general weakness of the mouth.

**Preparation:** Tea. For toothache, stems and flowers may be pounded with a mortar and pestle, mixed with a pinch of salt, and chewed.

***Peppermint***, *Mentha piperita*, *Mentha cordifolia*, *Mentha arvensis*  
Saranae

**Action:** Analgesic, Antiemetic, Antispasmodic, Antitussive, Aphrodisiac, Appetizer, Carminative, Cholagogue, Diaphoretic, Digestive, Expectorant, Nervine, Refrigerant, Sedative, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Hot and Aromatic      **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Peppermint tea is a general digestion stimulant and is the preferred treatment for stomach spasms or pains, nausea, abdominal cramps, indigestion, irritable bowel syndrome, and gastritis. Tea or inhalation is prescribed to treat cough. Peppermint has a calming effect on the nervous system, and the vapor is used with success in the treatment of nervousness, insomnia, and stress-related or migraine headaches.

**Preparation:** Tea or inhalation 2–3 times daily. Drink tea after meals. (For more information on inhalation, see *Chapter IV*.)

**Note:** *M. piperita* is preferred over the other two varieties, as its effects are stronger.

*Oenanthe stolonifera*  
Phak Chee Lom

**Action:** Antiemetic, Antipruritic, Antitussive, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Purgative

**Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** Phak chee lom is used in decoction as a carminative to treat asthma, cough, and bronchitis. It is a diaphoretic which detoxifies the skin through inducement of sweating. It is considered to be a purgative with no laxative action and is also used to counter nausea and vomiting.

**Preparation:** Decoction

**Topical Application:** This plant is used in the traditional sauna or steam bath for treatment of skin infections, allergies, and hives.

**Preparation:** See *Chapter IV* for more information.

***Pineapple***, *Ananas cososus*  
Sapparot

**Action:** Anti-inflammatory, Antitussive, Blood Tonic, Diuretic, Expectorant, Female Tonic, Nervine, Nutritive Tonic, Stomachic

**Taste:** Sour      **Part Used:** Fruit, Rhizome

**Internal Application:** The rhizome of the pineapple plant is a diuretic recommended for those suffering from kidney diseases, kidney stones, bladder infections, and urinary tract infections. Pineapple fruit juice is recommended for inflammatory internal diseases, diseases of the liver, and cough or cold with congestion. It is a nutritive tonic for convalescence and is said to detoxify the entire system. It is also recommended for diseases

of the uterus and for post-partum tonification and strengthening of the female reproductive organs. The fruit juice is used in treatment of depression, and due to the vitamin content, has an especially beneficial effect on the brain and nervous system. The Hill-Tribes take pineapple juice to treat stomachache and use it topically on warts, rashes, and dermatitis.

*Preparation:* Eat fruit raw, or drink juice. Pineapple shoots and fruit are used in curries, soups, and stir-fries.

***Plantain, Plantago major***  
Phak Kaat Nam

**Action:** Alterative, Antitussive, Astringent, Demulcent, Digestive, Diuretic, Expectorant, Hemostatic, Stomachic, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Astringent **Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** The fresh juice from the whole plant is drunk as a diuretic to treat bladder or urinary tracts infections and kidney stones. It is an expectorant to help clear up cough, laryngitis, sore throat, and any other respiratory problems. It soothes digestive problems, peptic ulcers, and gastritis. As an astringent, it is used to counter mucous or blood in the stool, sputum, or vaginal discharge.

*Preparation:* Drink 1–2 cups of fresh plantain juice daily.

**Topical Application:** Apply fresh juice to dermatitis, sores, wounds, insect bites, and allergic skin eruptions. Hill-Tribes use a poultice of plantain over broken bones, and chew the plant for toothache.

***Plumbago, Leadwort, Plumbago zelyanica*** (white leadwort),  
*Plumbago rosea* (rose leadwort), *Plumbago indica* (Indian leadwort)  
Chettamuun Phloeng Khaao (white leadwort), Chettamuun Phloeng  
Daeng (rose leadwort, Indian leadwort)

**Action:** Blood Tonic, Diaphoretic, Diuretic, Emmenagogue, Female Tonic, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Root, Bark

**Internal Application:** As it stimulates the Fire element and warms the body, the root of either type of plumbago is used as a carminative to stimulate digestion and as a diaphoretic. The root and/or bark of the plumbago may be used to treat cases of blocked or infrequent menstruation and to increase female fertility, although it is also an abortifacient, and should never be taken during pregnancy. Plumbago is also used to detoxify the blood and is prized by some Hill-Tribes as a general longevity tonic. The root of the rose leadwort is also used to treat hemorrhoids. The aerial parts of either plant are used in treatment of kidney disease, kidney cramps, and accompanying back pain.

*Preparation:* Decoction.

**Caution:** Plumbago may cause miscarriage and should be strictly avoided by pregnant women.

***Pomegranate, Punica granatum***  
Tubtim

**Action:** Alterative, Anthelmintic, Antipyretic, Astringent, Galactagogue, Refrigerant, Stomachic, Tonic

**Taste:** Astringent (fruit), Toxic (root bark) **Part Used:** Fruit, Root

**Internal Application:** Fresh pomegranate juice is an astringent and a refrigerant, and is used to lower the body's temperature in cases of fever. The rind of the pomegranate is a strong astringent used to treat diarrhea, dysentery, blood or mucous in the stool, and food poisoning. The bark of the root is effective in purging tapeworm and other intestinal parasites. The Wat Po texts mention pomegranate flowers as a tonic to improve the quality of breast milk.

*Preparation:* For diarrhea, prepare decoction by boiling dried rind of 1/4 fruit in 1cup (250ml) boiling water with a pinch of quicklime. Take once or twice daily. For purgative, decoction of root bark may be taken in the morning for up to 10days. For dysentery and chronic diarrhea, use the famous "Five Parts" recipe: young leaves, fruit, flowers, stem and root. Always use cloves with pomegranate as an adjuvant to lessen the unpleasant side effects such as headache and/or nausea that occur at proper dosage.

**Topical Application:** Fresh pomegranate juice may be used topically as an astringent and antifungal, or as a gargle for sore throat or mouth sores.

*Preparation:* The entire fruit (without the peel) may be liquefied in a blender and strained. Apply juice directly to affected areas.

**Caution:** Large doses of root bark may be toxic.

***Pomelo, Citrus maximus***  
Som Oh

**Action:** Antipruritic

**Taste:** Sour **Part Used:** Leaf

**Topical Application:** Pomelo fruit looks like a huge green grapefruit. The rind is thicker, and the pulp is much larger, but the flavor is similar to the pink grapefruits we know in the West. Pomelo fruit is eaten by itself or mixed with roasted garlic, onions, chili, and peanuts to make a tangy and delectable salad. Decoction of the leaf of the pomelo is used for dandruff and dry, brittle hair. It may also be added to the sauna for the same purposes.

*Preparation:* Decoction, steam bath, or sauna.

***Pumpkin, Cucurbita moschata***  
Fak Thong

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Aphrodisiac, Diuretic, Tonic

**Taste:** Bland **Part Used:** Seed, Root

**Internal Application:** Stewed with coconut milk and palm sugar, sautéed with red curry paste, or stir-fried with Chinese vegetables, pumpkin is a common ingredient in Thai curries

and sweets. The seeds are used traditionally in Eastern and Western herbalism to purge tapeworm and other intestinal parasites from the gastrointestinal tract. The Thai system holds pumpkin root to be an aphrodisiac and tonic.

*Preparation:* Fire roast 60 grams of seeds. Mash with mortar and pestle. Mix seeds with 500 ml water or milk. Drink  $\frac{1}{3}$  of this mixture 3 times at intervals of 2 hours. After final dose, follow up with a laxative such as castor oil or other laxative herbs found in this collection.

**Note:** This pumpkin is closely related to the jack-o-lantern pumpkin, *C. pepo*, which may be substituted where necessary.

***Purple Allamanda, Laurel-Leaved Thunbergia,***

*Thunbergia laurifolia*

Rang Juad

**Action:** Antiallergic, Antipyretic, Blood Tonic, Carminative, Digestive, Diuretic

**Taste:** Bland

**Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Purple allamanda is most commonly used in the Thai tradition as a detoxifying agent. It purifies the blood and is therefore used as an antidote to all kinds of poisonous food or chemicals. Some Hill-Tribes prescribe it for poisonous snake or insect bites. Its detoxifying properties make it the preferred treatment of hangovers, and it is prescribed daily for countering the cirrhosis associated with alcoholism. Purple allamanda is also useful in treating indigestion, flatulence, diarrhea, mucous or blood in the stool, and intestinal parasites. It is also prescribed as a remedy for fever, allergies, and asthma, and is recommended for diabetes and hypoglycemia, as it reputedly lowers blood sugar. This plant is mentioned in the Wat Po texts as a remedy for vomiting in infants, for blocked or irregular menstruation, gonorrhoea, sores on the tongue and mouth, as a diuretic, and as a poultice for burns.

*Preparation:* Decoction.

***Queen's Flower, Pride of India,***

*Lagerstroemia speciosa*

Inthanin Nam

**Action:** Diuretic

**Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** Queen's flower tea reduces blood sugar levels and is therefore good for diabetics. As a diuretic, it is also useful for irregular or painful urination, kidney and bladder stones, and venereal diseases.

*Preparation:* Tea

***Railroad Vine, Goat's Foot Creeper, Ipomoea pes-carprae***

Phakbung Talae

**Action:** Antipruritic

**Part Used:** Leaf

**Topical Application:** Railroad vine is applied topically to soothe insect bites, inflammation, allergic reactions, hives, and rashes. It also relieves the painful sting of jellyfish.

*Preparation:* Pound leaves with mortar and pestle. Mix with a bit of water or alcohol to make paste. (If for jellyfish stings, use distilled vinegar.) Strain, and apply liquid topically to affected areas.

***Rangoon Creeper, Quisqualis indica, Quisqualis densiflora***

Lep Mue Naang

**Action:** Anthelmintic

**Taste:** Toxic

**Part Used:** Seed

**Internal Application:** Rangoon creeper is a purgative traditionally used to expel tapeworms and other intestinal parasites. It is recommended for children, as it is not too strong.

*Preparation:* The kernels must be extracted from dried ripe seeds. Boil kernels in water (adult dosage 5–7 seeds, children 2–3). Strain; drink water before breakfast. Or grind dried kernels; mix with fried eggs.

**Caution:** Take only with cold water. Warm water may cause nausea.

***Reishi Mushroom, Lingzhi Mushroom,***

*Ganoderma lucidum*

Hed Lhin-Jeu

**Action:** Tonic

**Part Used:** Mushroom

**Internal Application:** Reishi mushroom can be found in any herb market in Thailand. It has long been prized in Thai medicine, and is one of the most revered herbs in China. Reishi is traditionally used to tonify *qi* (energy), and to enhance the immune system. It is commonly used in rebuilding therapies to strengthen and revitalize after illness and during changes in the seasons. It has been shown to possess antiviral and antibacterial action, and to support cardiovascular and liver function. In China, it is also used to combat altitude sickness and to enhance athletic performance. This herb is also used to treat cancer, diabetes, hypoglycemia, hypertension, and chronic heart disease.

*Preparation:* Decoction

**Safflower**, *Carthamus tinctorius*

Dawg Kum Foy

**Action:** Alterative, Antirheumatic, Cardiac, Carminative, Diaphoretic, Diuretic, Emmenagogue, Laxative, Male Tonic, Tonic, Stimulant**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Flower, Seed**Internal Application:** Dried safflower is a tonic, especially for the heart and the circulatory and nervous systems. Because of its beneficial effect on the circulation, it is used to treat cases of male sexual dysfunction and to encourage regularity in cases of blocked, irregular, or painful menstruation. The flower is used as a calmative in cases of stress, anxiety, and panic attacks. It is also an effective therapy for colds, arthritis, and constipation. The seed is a purgative and expectorant, and may also be used to encourage menstruation and to lower cholesterol.*Preparation:* Tea from 1 tsp dried flowers. Drink twice daily.**Topical Application:** Safflower is used topically as an antibacterial, as well as to ease inflammation, arthritis, pinched nerves, and sciatica.*Preparation:* Oil from the seeds is mixed with equal parts vegetable oil and alcohol. Massage affected parts with oil.

## Salet Phangphon

*Clinacanthus nutans***Action:** Antipruritic **Part Used:** Leaf**Topical Application:** A tincture of salet phangphon (pronounced "salet pang-pon") is used topically to soothe skin ulcers, herpes, allergic rash, hives, shingles, burns, insect and snake bites.*Preparation:* Mash 10–20 fresh leaves with mortar and pestle. Soak in alcohol for 1 week, stirring daily. Strain; apply tincture as needed to affected areas. For snake or poisonous insect bite, use 20–30 leaves, pounded with alcohol. Apply paste immediately to bite for 30 minutes.**Sandalwood Tree**, *Adenanthera pavonina*

Maklam Tah Chang

**Action:** Alterative, Anti-inflammatory, Antipruritic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Bitter Tonic, Blood Tonic, Hemostatic, Refrigerant, Sedative**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Wood, Essential oil**Internal Application:** Sandalwood is taken internally to treat fever and to detoxify the blood. It is used by Hill-Tribes to revive unconscious patients and as a tonic.*Preparation:* Decoction of wood.**Topical Application:** Sandalwood paste is used by many in South Asia as a topical refrigerant. In many places, a small smudge is applied over the third eye or on the forehead

to cool the entire body and to lessen sweating. These smudges have taken on religious symbolism in India and are used to differentiate different Hindu sects. Sandalwood paste is not used in this way in Thailand, although sandalwood oil is a frequent ingredient in soaps, shampoos, and fragrances, all of which have the same cooling effect on the body. Sandalwood may also be applied to dermatitis, herpes and infection, and inflammation of the skin.

*Preparation:* The Ayurvedic recipe for sandalwood paste calls for 4 oz (120 grams) sandalwood powder in 1 pint (500 ml) water. Let sit overnight. Combine with 1 pint (500 ml) coconut oil and cook without boiling over a low flame until water has evaporated.

## Sarapee

*Ochrocarpus siamensis* (synonym *Mammea siamensis*)**Action:** Blood Tonic, Cardiac, Tonic**Taste:** Aromatic **Part Used:** Flower**Internal Application:** The sarapee flower is used as a tonic for the heart, blood, and circulatory system. It is especially recommended as a longevity tonic for older adults.*Preparation:* Drink tea, or add to sauna or steam bath.**Satinwood, Orange Jasmine, China Box Tree***Murraya paniculata*

Kaew

**Action:** Anti-inflammatory **Part Used:** Leaf**Topical Application:** A tincture of satinwood is used topically as an anti-inflammatory. It soothes sprains, joint pain, bone pain, contusions, toothaches, and swollen, painful insect and snake bites.*Preparation:* Mash 15 leaves with mortar and pestle. Soak in alcohol 3–5 minutes; strain. Apply tincture to affected areas on skin or mouth.**Sea Holly**, *Acanthus ebracteatus*

Ngueak plea mo

**Action:** Diuretic, Tonic **Part Used:** Whole plant**Internal Application:** The leaf of the sea holly is combined 2 parts to 1 with black pepper as a longevity tonic. The seed is anthelmintic. The juice is used as a hair tonic. The whole plant is a diuretic used to treat kidney and bladder stones.*Preparation:* Decoction**Topical Application:** The whole plant is used as a topical antibacterial.*Preparation:* Poultice

**Sea Salt**

Glaur Talay

**Action:** Antiseptic, Laxative, Purgative**Taste:** Salty

**Internal Application:** Sea salt is used in Thai medicine as a gargle for mouth sores and infections. A sea salt solution may be drunk twice daily as a laxative, to purge the digestive system of excessive mucous, and to encourage drainage of lymph. The same solution may be used as a disinfectant eyewash, gargle, nasal wash, or enema, and may be swallowed and vomited up to remove mucous or foreign matter from the stomach.

*Preparation:* Drink 3 tbs sea salt in 1 pint (500 ml) lukewarm water.

**Sensitive Plant.** *Mimosa pudica*, *Mimosa hispida*  
Naiyaraap (*M. pudica*), Rangap (*M. hispida*)

**Action:** Analgesic, Diuretic**Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** The whole plant is decocted and taken internally by many Hill-Tribes as a diuretic for kidney dysfunction and/or stones. Sensitive plant also is used in the Thai tradition to treat anemia, jaundice, and emaciation. The root is a remedy for dysentery. A tincture in alcohol is used to lower high blood sugar levels.

*Preparation:* Decoction

**Topical Application:** Sensitive plant is used topically for aching muscles.

*Preparation:* Poultice or hot compress.

**Sesame Seeds**, *Sesamum indicum*

Nga

**Action:** Antirheumatic, Demulcent, Emmenagogue, Emollient, Laxative, Nutritive Tonic**Taste:** Oily**Part Used:** Seed, Oil

**Internal Application:** In Thai medicine, sesame seeds are recommended dietary supplements for sufferers of joint problems, tooth decay, and bone weakness. Sesame promotes strength and increases body warmth and is therefore a nutritive tonic as part of the daily diet. As a demulcent, sesame seed is also taken in cases of cough, constipation, hemorrhoids, and painful or blocked menstruation.

*Preparation:* Eat seeds raw or dry-roasted, or use sesame oil. Seeds or oil may be added to salads, vegetables, and other dishes as an alternative to less-beneficial oils such as peanut or vegetable-based oils frequently used in Asian cuisine. (See also *Sesame Leaf Snack* recipe in *Chapter III*.)

**Shorea**, *Shorea roxburghii*

Phayom

**Action:** Astringent**Part Used:** Flower

**Internal Application:** Shorea flowers are used to treat diarrhea, bloody stool, or other excessive discharge.

*Preparation:* Flowers can be eaten raw or steamed with chili sauce. They are frequently eaten with fried eggs or in the hot and sour soup called "kaeng som." Shorea is also a typical ingredient in betel-nut preparations, which are chewed as a general stimulant in many areas of South Asia.

**Soap Nut, Soap Berry**, *Sapindus rarak*  
Makham Dee Khwai

**Action:** Antiparasitic, Antipruritic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Bitter Tonic**Taste:** Bitter**Part Used:** Seed, Fruit

**Internal Application:** The seed of the soap nut tree is traditionally used for treatment of fever and food poisoning, and is considered to be a bitter tonic. The Wat Po texts mention the pulp of the soap nut fruit as an antibacterial used in making ear drops.

**Topical Application:** The soap nut fruit was at one time used in South Asia as a natural soap and still is an ingredient in natural herbal soaps and shampoos. In Thailand, the soap nut is used medicinally to counter itching of the skin such as in the case of allergic reactions, hives, rashes, and dandruff. It is also used as a skin tonic and as a remedy for ringworm.

*Preparation:* Make decoction from 4–5 de-pitted and crushed fruits. Apply decoction to skin or scalp twice daily.

*Aganonerion polymorphum*

Somlom

**Action:** Digestive, Laxative, Stomachic**Taste:** Sour**Part Used:** Root, Leaf

**Internal Application:** Decoction of the root is used to treat abdominal cramps, intestinal pain, stomachache, indigestion, irritable bowel, and gastritis. The leaf has a laxative effect as well and has a tangy lemon-like flavor that tastes great in soups or curries.

*Preparation:* Decoction of root. Eat leaves raw or cooked. A traditional rural recipe for a delicious laxative soup calls for somlom leaves stewed with galangal, garlic, and chili peppers.

**Star Anise, Chinese Anise, *Illicium verum***  
Poy kak

**Action:** Analgesic, Antispasmodic, Antitussive, Carminative, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Expectorant, Sedative, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot and Sweet      **Part Used:** Seed pod

**Internal Application:** Anise is mainly a digestive used to counter flatulence, indigestion, irritable bowel, gastritis, and other stomach or intestinal cramping. It is gentle enough to use safely with children and infants. Star anise is a useful cold remedy for cases of dry cough, congestion, flu, and sore throat. As an expectorant, it is especially useful in cases of bronchitis, asthma, and other respiratory infections. It is an excellent remedy for insomnia and promotes regular menstruation.

*Preparation:* Make tea with 3–4 star-shaped pods, or 1 tsp dried seeds. Drink after meals.

**Stevia, Sweet Leaf, *Stevia rebaudiana***  
Yaa Wann

**Action:** Adjuvant

**Taste:** Sweet      **Part Used:** Leaf

**Internal Application:** This leaf is a native of Brazil and Paraguay but is currently used widely in South East Asia and China as a sugar substitute for diabetics, hypoglycemics, and weight-conscious individuals. By weight, it is up to 300 times sweeter than sugar but has virtually no calories. Diabetics and hypoglycemics should always use stevia as a sweetener in herbal teas rather than honey or sugar.

*Preparation:* Use the dried and powdered leaf as you would use sugar. Alternatively, you may make a sweetening syrup by boiling stevia in a small amount of water. Use up to 1 gram per day.

**Sting-Ray**  
Pla Kraben

**Action:** Female Tonic, Nutritive Tonic

**Taste:** Salty      **Part Used:** Tail of *Dasyatis bleekeri*

**Internal Application:** The meat of the sting-ray's tail is prized for its tonic properties in a way similar to the horseshoe crab. It is typically eaten by children to prevent a host of childhood illnesses and by new mothers for tonification of uterus and other female reproductive organs after pregnancy.

*Preparation:* Eat steamed.

**Sugar Apple, Sweet Sop, Custard Apple, *Annona squamosa***  
Noinae

**Action:** Antiparasitic

**Taste:** Toxic (leaf, seed), Sweet (fruit)      **Part Used:** Leaf, Seed

**Internal Application:** A popular fruit in northern Thailand, the sugar apple is used medicinally for treatment of lice.

*Preparation:* Grind 8–12 seeds or 15 g fresh leaves to a powder. Mix 1 part powder with 2 parts coconut oil. Apply to hair, and wrap with cloth. After a half hour, wash thoroughly. Repeat once a day for 2–3 days to kill lice and eggs. This preparation may also be used to kill ringworm and other skin parasites.

**Caution:** This preparation is toxic and is an irritant to the eyes and other mucous membranes. Use with care.

**Sugar Cane, *Saccharum officinarum***  
Oi Daeng

**Action:** Adjuvant, Antitussive, Demulcent

**Taste:** Sweet      **Part Used:** Various types of sugar and their uses follow

**Internal Application:** Sugar cane is commonly available from vendors in the streets of South Asia. Whereas in India, traveling cane-presses allow a thirsty visitor to enjoy a fresh-squeezed glass of juice, in Thailand, iced sugar cane is sold in bite-sized chunks. The cane is chewed, and the woody pulp is spat out when the juice has been extracted. Any way it is eaten, there are few things more pleasurable on a hot sticky day than fresh sugar cane.

Traditionally, sugar is typically added as an adjuvant to herbal teas to soothe the throat and to make the taste more palatable. Different types of sugar will be added depending on the symptoms. Fresh sugar cane juice is added to treat fever, sore throat, cough, congestion, bladder infections, urinary tract infections, low energy, low immunity, chronic disease, chronic fatigue, and emaciation. Raw, unrefined sugar is added to herbal teas that treat fever and lymph problems. Rock sugar is added to treatments for fevers, colds, and sore throat. Juice of the black sugar cane (*Saccharum sinense*) is a diuretic used in remedies for kidney disorders and venereal diseases.

*Preparation:* Sugar cane juice can be extracted with a press specifically made for that purpose or can be bought in cans or bottles at Asian groceries. If using granulated sugar, only use raw, unrefined sugar (such as Turbinado or "Sugar in the Raw"). Never use common white or brown sugar, which have no medicinal qualities. For medicinal use of black sugar cane, take juice of 70–90 g fresh cane or 30–40 g dried, 3 times daily before meals.

***Sugar Palm, Jaggen, Arenga spp.***  
Dtao

**Action:** Adjuvant, Demulcent

**Taste:** Sweet **Part Used:** Sap

**Internal Application:** Palm sugar is added as an adjuvant to herbal teas that treat colds, sore throat, and congestion.

***Sulfur***  
Gum Matun

**Action:** Antiparasitic

**Taste:** Toxic

**Topical Application:** Sulfur paste is applied topically to fungal infections, acne, ringworm, scabies, and other skin parasites. It is also commonly used in Thailand to treat mange on dogs.

*Preparation:* Apply paste topically on affected areas. Powder may be applied dry or with petroleum jelly.

**Tako Naa**  
*Diospyros rhodocalyx*

**Action:** Antiseptic, Tonic **Part Used:** Stem

**Internal Application:** A relative of the ebony tree, tako naa is used to balance the four elements, as a longevity tonic, a mouthwash for toothache and gum disease, and a treatment for vaginal discharge.

*Preparation:* Decoction, with a pinch of salt.

***Tamarind, Tamaridus indica***  
Ma Khaam

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Blood Tonic, Carminative, Digestive, Expectorant, Female Tonic, Laxative, Nutritive Tonic, Purgative, Refrigerant, Stimulant, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Sour (fruit, leaf, bark), Oily (seed) **Part Used:** Whole plant

**Internal Application:** Tamarind is a common ingredient in Thai cuisine. The pulp of the fruit is cooked and added to soups and curries for flavor. The flowers, fruit, and young leaves are eaten in soups and curries. Unripe fruit is also candied and sold by street vendors coated with sugar, salt, and red chili flakes.

The fresh juice of the tamarind is the Thai equivalent of our prune juice and is a favorite remedy for constipation and fever. It is considered to be a blood purifier and is recommended for pregnancy and post-partum. Tea made from the young leaves and pods of the tamarind is a laxative and is used to treat colds and fevers. The flowers are held to lower blood pressure, and the bark is an astringent remedy for diarrhea and fever. The seeds of the

tamarind are used as a purgative to expel tapeworms and other intestinal parasites, and are also recommended as a tonic for health, strength, and vigor.

*Preparation:* Eat 70–150 grams of fruit-pulp raw, or prepare juice by boiling pulp in water with a pinch of salt for 10–20 minutes. May be drunk hot or iced as needed. For purgative effect, dry-roast 30 seeds; soak in water until soft; eat. For colds and fevers, tea is made by steeping leaves.

**Topical Application:** The leaves of the tamarind are also frequently used topically to treat skin ulcers and sores. The juice and decoction of the bark are both useful astringents for general antiseptic treatment of the skin and are frequently applied directly to oily or infected skin before sauna or steam bath. (See *Chapter IV* for more information.)

*Preparation:* Mash leaves with mortar and pestle. Apply as poultice to affected areas.

***Thai Caper, Capparis micracantha***  
Ching-chee

**Action:** Antipyretic, Bronchodilator, Carminative, Stomachic

**Taste:** Bitter **Part Used:** Root, Stem, Leaf

**Internal Application:** The root of the Thai caper is used as a carminative, a stomachic, and a bronchodilator. The root and leaf are used to treat asthma, chest pain, skin disease and chicken pox, measles, and other fevers with symptoms on the skin. The Wat Po texts mention the Thai caper as a remedy for smallpox, delirium, poisoning, and eye diseases.

*Preparation:* Decoction

**Topical Application:** Decoction of the root may be used topically as an antibacterial. The leaf relieves muscle cramps.

*Preparation:* Poultice

**Thao Yaanaang**  
*Tiliacora triandra*

**Action:** Analgesic, Antipyretic **Part Used:** Root, Leaf

**Internal Application:** This herb is used in the Thai tradition to treat fevers. It is used by Hill-Tribes for sprains, bruises, sore muscles, and post-delivery to lessen pain and promote healing.

*Preparation:* Decoction. Drink 3 times daily

**Thong Phan Chang**  
*Rhinacanthus nasutus*

**Action:** Anthelmintic, Antiparasitic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Blood Tonic, Diuretic, Laxative

**Taste:** Toxic **Part Used:** Root, Leaf, Stem

**Internal Application:** Thong phan chang (pronounced “tong pan chang”) is used to treat fevers, sore throat, colds, and lung diseases such as bronchitis and tuberculosis. It lowers

blood pressure and is therefore effective treatment for hypertension. Tea made from this herb has a laxative effect, is held to help back pain, and is useful to encourage passing of gallstones. The Wat Po texts recommend the leaf as a diuretic, laxative, and anthelmintic, and as a detoxifying remedy for fever, blood poisoning, skin disease, and cancer. It is said that thong phan chang must be collected between sunset and sunrise because sunlight destroys the potency of the plant.

*Preparation:* Tea or decoction.

**Topical Application:** A tincture made of thong pan chang leaves is used topically as a treatment for bacterial and fungal skin infections, rashes, ringworm, and other skin parasites.

*Preparation:* Pound leaves with mortar and pestle. Soak in alcohol for 7 days. Apply tincture topically to affected areas 3–4 times daily. Continue application for 1 week after ringworm has disappeared.

***Ti Plant, Cordyline, Cordyline fruticosa***  
Maak phu maak mia

**Action:** Antirheumatic, Astringent

**Taste:** Bland

**Part Used:** Leaf, Bud, Young Shoot

**Internal Application:** The ti plant is an astringent with a wide range of applications. It is a hemostatic, used traditionally to stop bleeding in cases of bloody vomit, stool, or urine. It is also employed to stop the coughing of blood associated with tuberculosis, to halt excessive menstruation, and to curtail internal bleeding of the organs, bruises, contusions, and hematoma. The ti plant may also be used for treatment of diarrhea, dysentery, arthritis, fever, and measles. As a gargle, it is effective against tooth and gum disease, bleeding gums, and halitosis.

*Preparation:* Tea

***Tongkat Ali, Eurycoma longifolia***  
Plaa Lai Phueak

**Action:** Antiparasitic, Antipyretic, Antitussive, Aphrodisiac, Bitter Tonic, Male Tonic, Stimulant

**Taste:** Bitter

**Part Used:** Root

**Internal Application:** Traditionally, tongkat ali is used in Thai herbalism for treatment of colds, cough, fever, and low immunity. In other areas of Southeast Asia, it is used in a manner similar to ginseng as a male potency enhancer and aphrodisiac. The Wat Po texts mention the root as a remedy for poisoning, fever, dysentery, sunstroke, internal infections, tuberculosis, and as a topical application for skin parasites.

*Preparation:* Decoction. Drink morning and evening.

***Toothbrush Tree, Siamese Rough Bush,***  
*Streblus asper*  
Khoi

**Action:** Analgesic, Antiparasitic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Antitumor, Appetizer, Astringent, Carminative, Digestive, Laxative, Tonic

**Taste:** Toxic

**Part Used:** Leaf, Stem, Wood

**Internal Application:** The toothbrush tree seed is a longevity tonic for the four elements. It is also a carminative and appetizer, used to stimulate digestion and combat flatulence. The bark of the stem has antidiarrheal and antipyretic properties, and is often used to combat dysentery and other cases of diarrhea accompanied by fever. Infusion of the toothbrush tree leaf is a laxative and is also taken to treat all varieties of bone disease. The heartwood is traditionally dried, cut into small pieces, wrapped in dried banana leaves, and smoked for treatment of inflamed nasal passages.

*Preparation:* Decoction

**Topical Application:** The toothbrush tree, as its name would suggest, is a popular traditional remedy for tooth and gum disease. It is also applied topically to kill ringworm and other skin parasites. Another common usage is to treat hemorrhoids.

*Preparation:* For application to the mouth, make decoction by boiling a handful of bark with water and a pinch of salt; gargle 3–4 times daily. Or, make powder from dried bark; brush teeth and gums with powder. For application to the skin, mash fresh or dried bark with mortar and pestle. Mix with hot water to make paste; apply to affected areas. For hemorrhoids, mix paste with oil, cook. Let cool, and apply to affected area.

**Note:** This plant has recently been shown to have antitumor properties. Although it is not traditionally used to treat this disease, toothbrush tree is currently being studied as a treatment of cancer.

***Turmeric, Curcuma longa***  
Khamin

**Action:** Alterative, Analgesic, Anthelmintic, Anti-inflammatory, Antipruritic, Antirheumatic, Antiseptic, Antitussive, Astringent, Blood Tonic, Carminative, Cholagogue, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Stomachic, Tonic, Vulnerary

**Taste:** Hot

**Part Used:** Rhizome, Leaf

**Internal Application:** Turmeric is related to ginger and galangal, and shares some of the properties of these plants. Turmeric is used as a digestive stimulant and is often used as an adjuvant with preparations for gastrointestinal complaints, as it aids in treatment of flatulence, peptic ulcers, indigestion, irritable bowel, and gastritis. It is said to lower blood sugar and is therefore used for diabetes and hypoglycemia. Turmeric is also a remedy for cough, arthritis, chronic back pain, and painful or blocked menstruation. Turmeric leaves may be used as an antidote for food poisoning and for treatment of hepatitis, as it has a detoxifying effect on the blood, digestive tract, and liver, and regulates the body's secretion of hormones.



***Ylang-Ylang, Perfume Tree, Canaga odorata***  
Magrut

**Action:** Blood Tonic, Cardiac, Diuretic

**Taste:** Aromatic                      **Part Used:** Flower, Leaf, Wood

**Internal Application:** Ylang-ylang flower is a tonic for the heart and is used traditionally to treat dizziness and fainting spells. It is a tonic for the blood, and it balances the four elements. The leaf and wood are diuretic.

*Preparation:* Make tea from fresh or dried flowers, or add flowers to sauna or steam bath. (See *Chapter IV*).

***Zedoary, Curcumin zedoaria***  
Khamin Oi

**Action:** Antiemetic, Antipyretic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot **Part Used:** Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Related to turmeric, zedoary is used for similar purposes. It is effective against nausea, vomiting, intestinal cramps, irritable bowel, gastritis, and diarrhea, and is often added as an adjuvant to laxative herbs due to its soothing effect on the stomach. It is also effective against fever and is used by Hill-Tribes for dysentery.

*Preparation:* Decoction

**Topical Application:** Zedoary is a topical antiseptic used in the Thai tradition and by Hill-Tribes on cuts, wounds, and insect bites.

*Preparation:* Mash with mortar and pestle; make poultice.

***Zerumbet Ginger Zingiber zerumbet***  
Ka Thue

**Action:** Analgesic, Antiemetic, Antirheumatic, Stomachic

**Taste:** Hot                                      **Part Used:** Rhizome

**Internal Application:** Zerumbet ginger has many of the same properties as common ginger, but to a lesser degree. It is used traditionally to treat stomach pain and cramping, as well as food poisoning or allergy, nausea, and vomiting. It can be used successfully to treat irritable bowel, gastritis, and indigestion.

*Preparation:* Decoction from fresh fire-roasted rhizome. Young shoots and flowers also may be eaten raw or steamed with chili sauce.

**Topical Application:** A tincture of Zerumbet ginger is applied topically to soothe arthritis pains. With massage, it is said to give especially good results.

*Preparation:* Soak 2 handfuls of the chopped rhizome in alcohol. Apply as needed with massage.