

## Schizandra – the Chinese herb that’s good for almost everything

Schizandra develops the primary energies of life and is thus universally useful. Consume schizandra regularly to generate vitality and radiant beauty. It is a safe and powerful tonic herb which is mildly calming and possesses pain-alleviating properties.



If used for 100 days successively, schizandra is said to purify the blood, sharpen the mind, improve memory, rejuvenate the kidney energy (especially sexual energy and functions for men and women) and causes the skin to become radiantly beautiful. It doesn't get any better than this.

In traditional Chinese medicine, schizandra is highly esteemed because it tonifies all three treasures (Jing, Qi and Shen, which sustain the essential energies for human life). It also tonifies and regulates all five elements and tonifies and regulates all twelve organ-meridian systems.

### **Schizandra for sexual health and function**

Though Schizandra is believed to benefit all the functions of the body, it has historically been considered to most influence the kidney, lung and liver functions. Schizandra is said to increase the Water Qi in the kidney. In particular, it is said to vastly increase the "water of the genital organs," referring to the sexual fluids. Schizandra is said to promote the production of semen and is famous for its ability to relieve sexual fatigue and increase the sexual staying-power in men. Because of that, it is included in the vast majority of men's sexual tonics in Asian herbalism. Women benefit from the same capacity to increase Water Qi of the kidney.

It is understood that schizandra increases circulation and sensitivity in the female genitals. Many women claim increased genital warmth and sensation after using schizandra for a period of time. The Chinese sexual classics claim that ongoing use by a woman will increase the amount of

"female elixir," or vaginal secretions, during intercourse. On the other hand, schizandra is used clinically to help counteract vaginal discharge.

For both men and women, schizandra is considered an aphrodisiac. An astringent herb conserves fluids, and in the case of schizandra, it tends to contain sexual fluids until the appropriate time of release. Thus, consuming schizandra for a period of time, one tends to build up sexual fluids. Schizandra is used in sexual formulations to prevent premature ejaculation and to help promote incredible endurance.

### **Why schizandra is the beauty herb**

Schizandra is widely used to beautify the skin and to protect it from the damaging effects of sun and wind. Due to the astringent quality of schizandra, the skin tends to hold its moisture and becomes full and beautiful. It has long been very popular with the wealthy men and women of China because of its youth preserving and rejuvenating effects. It is said that those who use schizandra consistently will remain youthful in both appearance and physiology.

People who start taking schizandra regularly see improvements in their skin – it virtually glows and becomes clear and fine after several months.

### **Sharpen concentration, improve memory**

Schizandra is considered one of the premium mind tonics of herbalism. It is used to sharpen concentration, improve memory and increase alertness. Yet unlike caffeine and similar stimulants, schizandra does not produce nervousness. In fact, some people consider schizandra mildly "calming," while producing wakefulness and improved focus.

### **Liver cleansing tonic herb**

Schizandra is one of the primary cleansing tonic herbs used in Chinese herbalism. Schizandra stands along with reishi as the primary liver cleansing agents used in tonic programs. Schizandra does not have the side effects that are associated with many of the "medicinal," or "inferior" liver cleansing herbs.

By taking schizandra regularly, it is said to be possible to rid the body of toxins before they have a chance to do serious damage. Schizandra, especially alcohol extracts, are widely believed to protect the liver from damage due to poisons, as well as the by-products of living.

Schizandra is among the most popular tonic herbs in Asia and is frequently pictured in ancient art as a symbol of longevity, and even the ability to attain "immortality."

### **Schizandra origins and appearance**

Northern schizandra is generally considered to be superior to the southern variety. It is stronger tasting and more potent. At Green Dragon Superfoods, we offer only northern schizandra collected in the pristine Changbai Mountains of northeastern China. The fruit, which is mature in the fall, is a beautiful, radiant violet-red. The plant grows by entwining itself around short trees in dense areas where forest and grassland meet.

Virtually all schizandra is collected wild in the mountains and hills away from cities and industrial areas. It is almost impossible to cultivate schizandra and very few farmers try. However, wild schizandra is not overly abundant and its users should appreciate the difficulty that collectors experience in harvesting it.

High quality schizandra, as we see it in American herb shops, is dried and dark purple with some pinkish tone left. Freshly dried schizandra has a luster and the flesh is still plump and tender. If the fruit is dark black, brown or has white patches everywhere, it is probably too old (or moldy) to be fully useful. Freshly dried schizandra still has a very pleasant sweet-sour aroma. With experience you will be able to select premium schizandra with your eyes closed.

### **What does schizandra taste like?**

The very name schizandra in Chinese tells us a great deal about the qualities of this herb. Wu Wei Zi means "five taste fruit."

Because the schizandra berry possesses all five of the classical "tastes" (sour, bitter, sweet, spicy and salty) and the essence of all five of the elemental energies (wood, fire, earth, metal and water), the schizandra herb is respected as a health-providing tonic in the same class with ginseng, rehmannia and ganoderma (reishi). The Taoists especially revered schizandra for those properties and the fact that it contains all three treasures in abundance and enters all twelve meridians. Traditional Chinese medicine considers it the quintessential herbal substance.

The skin and meat of the schizandra fruit are sweet and sour, the core is pungent and bitter, the whole fruit salty. The fresh fruit has a wonderful flavor and a smoother, sweeter fragrance. Be careful to select good dried schizandra, as it is often stored for years before it is sold in herb shops. I have seen schizandra that is barely recognizable – shriveled, black and lifeless. This schizandra would be herbally useless.

Keep schizandra in a well-closed container in a dark closet, or better yet, refrigerate it. When you find great schizandra, stock up – it is the quintessence of everything good about tonic herbalism.

### **Scientific details on Schisandra Chinensis**

In Latin it's *Schisandra Chinensis*, and the fruit contains numerous lignins, schizandrins A, B and C, deoxyschizandrin, g-schizandrin, pseudo-g-schizandrin, schizandrol and schizandra esters. Fructus *Schisandra* contains approximately 3% volatile oil. It also contains vitamins C and E, citral, b-sitosterol and citric acid. Schizandra is considered to be one of the premier adaptogens.

Just like ginseng, acanthopanax and gynostemma, schizandra increases resistance of the body and mind against nonspecific stimuli. It can protect the body from damage due to extreme or chronic stress. In particular, it can protect the adrenals and prevent atrophy due to extreme stress. Schizandra has been demonstrated in laboratory animals and in humans to have a stimulant action on the central nervous system.

The herb works directly on the nervous tissue. Many studies now indicate that schizandra

actually has a powerful balancing, or regulating, action on the central nervous system. It can result in accurate and optimal balancing between the excitatory and inhibitory control functions of the cerebral cortex.

It has been demonstrated that human intellectual activity can be enhanced and work efficiency increased by consuming schizandra. Various tests have shown that moderate therapeutic doses of schizandra can improve various activities requiring concentration, fine coordination, sensitivity and endurance.

The tests in humans confirming schizandra's efficacy in these areas range from threading needles to running marathons. Human studies have also shown that schizandra can improve vision, even enlarging the field of vision, and can improve hearing.

It also improves the discrimination ability of the skin receptors. It has been determined that this increased sensitivity is due to improved function of the central nervous system's to analyze data flowing to it from the peripheral sensors. Schizandra has been shown to have significant respiratory strengthening capacity. It can cause the breathing to be both deeper and more powerful. Schizandra also has significant expectorant and antitussive action.

Fructus Schisandrae, or schizandra fruit, has been shown to have significant hepatic protective effects. It can promote the regeneration of liver tissue, and promotes protein synthesis, nucleic acid synthesis. It is believed that the protective action of schizandra is partly due to its ability to promote the regeneration of mitochondria in hepatic cells.

Also, it can improve the function of the cell membrane, lowering its permeability which in turn minimizes enzyme leakage into the blood stream. It can reduce elevated SGPT in patients with chronic hepatitis. In a clinical study conducted in China, more than 5000 people suffering from various types of hepatitis were given schizandra and the results were very good. The aggregate effective rate was 84 to 97.9%. SGPT was normalized in about 75% of the cases.

In another clinical study, schizandra was proved to be very effective in treating various neurotic symptoms, including insomnia, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, palpitations and nocturnal emission.

It has even been used in cases of psychosis, with symptoms of hallucination, paranoia and neurosis, with good results. Schizandra chinensis has been found to induce the production in human beings of g-interferon. It contains shizandrin, schizandrol, volatile oil, chamigrenal, malic acid citric acid, tartaric acid, vitamin C and more.

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