

~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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When I surrender, the Universe moves.
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Passion Flower vine

ASK GRANNY EARTH

Is there an herb that is a good remedy for nervous exhaustion, anxiety, heart palpitations, insomnia, high blood pressure, and general muscle aches and pains? I realize this is asking a lot from one herb, but I'm willing to experiment until I find one. I'd like it to be one that I can grow myself.

Actually, there is an herb that is reputed to have properties to address all of your concerns. I have long known about the wonderful properties of Passion Flower, and use it along with Chamomile and Lavender to make a relaxing tea. Last year I was lucky enough to have sprouted four Passion Flower seeds. They are now taking over the upstairs bedroom with their trailing vines. A glorious sight to behold! Last week, one of my customers, asked if he could have a piece of the vine. He's going to try to root it for planting this spring. I decided to try doing this too. If this method of propagation works, I should have enough Passion Flower plants to sell a few this summer.

Passion Flower (*Passiflora incarnata*): The name *Passiflora* is derived from Latin and means passion (resemblance of the blossoms to the Crown of Thorns and the Passion of Christ) and flower. *Incarnata* means flesh colored and alludes to part of the flower. Its common name is Maypop Passion Flower, which describes its edible fruit. Indigenous to tropical and semi-tropical zones, it is a perennial vine (in this area) with 3 lobed, finely serrated leaves and flesh-colored, sweet scented flowers, tinged with purple. At the base of each leaf there is a thin little, circular, curly vine, which reaches out to twine around anything it can, including other leaves. The ripe, orange-colored (many seeded) berry is about the size of a small apple and edible. The plant thrives in full sun and good drainage. For medicinal purposes, gather the aerial parts when the flowers are in bloom.

The medicinal powers of Passion Flower date back to early Central and North American Indians. There is documentation that the Algonquin First Nation People of North America used it as a herbal tranquilizer. When introduced into Europe in the 1500's, it was used as a calming and sedative tea. It was first used in North American medicine in the mid 1800's as a tea, and in salve form, as well as bruising the leaves for headache, bruises and pain.

In Europe, the U.S. and Canada, the use of Passion Flower to tranquilize and settle edgy nerves has been documented for over 200 years. It has been used for colic, diarrhea, dysmenorrhea (pain associated with menstruation), epilepsy, eruptions, insomnia, neuralgia, neurosis, piles and spasms.

Today, Passion Flower is widely employed by herbalists around the world as a sedative, hypnotic (inducing sleep), nervine, anti-spasmodic, high blood pressure treatment, and pain reliever. It is used to treat: insomnia, Parkinson's Disease, seizures and convulsions, muscle cramps, hysteria, high blood pressure, tetanus, shingles, neuralgia, menstrual cramps and PMS, epilepsy, and as a pain reliever in varied conditions. It has also been used to treat nervous disorders, neuralgia, alcoholism, hyperactivity in children, rapid heartbeat, headaches, and as a general all around pain reliever and antispasmodic.

Passion Flower has been the subject of much scientific research for the past 100 years. Its sedative, antispasmodic and analgesic (pain killing) effects have been firmly established, and yet these effects have not been correlated to any one chemical or group of chemicals found in the plant. It contains three major groups of phytochemicals: glycosides, flavonoids and alkaloids. When these chemicals are isolated & tested individually, they've demonstrated the opposite reactions for which the plant is commonly known. However, when these photochemical are combined as a whole herb, researchers observe the plant's sedative effect. This is just another example illustrating the role of the synergy of all the ingredients in a whole plant.

The analgesic effects of Passion Flower were first clinically documented in 1897, while the sedative effects were first recorded in 1902. Antispasmodic,

anxiolytic (minor tranquilizer used to treat anxiety), and hypertensive actions were clinically validated in the early 1980's.

In case you're interested, Passion Flower is classified as "Generally Regarded as Safe" by the FDA. It is reputed to help people to have a restful sleep without any narcotic effects. This might be largely due to its content of Serotonin-like properties. It also contains Tyrosine and Phenylalanine, two amino acids that have gained the reputation of aiding depression and alleviating pain, respectively.

Having all of the above capabilities, it is good to know that Passion Flower is non-addictive and safe.