

~ Ask Granny Earth ~

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Schizandra (berries)

ASK GRANNY EARTH

What do you know about an herb called Schizandra? I heard that it would be good to take for depression and mental clarity. Does it grow around here?

Oh yes, wonderful Schizandra! I do believe that as time goes by, this herb will become as popular as Echinacea or Ginseng. Native to Tibet and Siberia, Schizandra has been used medicinally in these regions for thousands of years. As far back as 2697 B.C. it was classified as a superior herb in the classic '*Yellow Emperor's Study of Inner Medicine*'- *an encyclopedia of healing plants*. It was recommended to improve vision, increase energy, nourish abdominal organs such as intestines and lungs, to boost muscular activity and to sooth coughs and digestive upsets.

Schizandra chinensis - is a creeping vine/bush, related to the Magnolia tree and having clusters of small reddish/brown berries. These berries have a sweet taste similar to that of cloves and their tiny 'pips' (small seeds taken from the fleshy fruit portion) leave a bittersweet after-taste in the mouth. Schisandra is also known as the Magnolia Vine, or Fruit of 5 Flavors. It is the berries that have the 5 flavors; sweet, sour, salty, hot and bitter. In China it is called, Wu-Wei-Zi (meaning 5 taste fruit) and it is listed among China's most important herbs, being used for a kidney tonic, lung astringent, coughs,

night sweats, insomnia, thirst, physical exhaustion, calming the heart, quieting the spirit, balancing fluids in the system and a liver tonic.

At the current time, Schizandra is popular worldwide as a tonic and in Asia as a food source. Taken medicinally, it is an adaptogen tonic that helps the body adapt to stress as it nourishes the entire nervous system. Modern Chinese research shows that the 'lignans' in Schizandra regenerate liver tissue, which has been damaged by hepatitis and alcohol. It has demonstrated with a 76% success rate in the treatment of hepatitis. The berries are also used to assist the body's detoxification process after the use of alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs. They are being used to help prevent the adverse side effects of chemo-therapy and radiation treatments and to promote recovery after surgery (www.herbalive.com/schisandra.html).

Being an Adaptogen herb, Schizandra brings about these benefits: improves regulation of energy supplies to all of the body's cells, stimulates the body's immune defenses, counteracts harmful effects of eating too much sugar, increases strength and stamina, protects the body against radioactive toxins and X-ray radiation, normalizes blood pressure, helps reduce high blood cholesterol, relieves general tiredness, protects against infections and provides insulation against the age-causing ravages of the environment (www.viable-herbal.com).

If the health benefits of Schizandra Berries seem too good to be true, perhaps a better understanding of the word *adaptogen* will help. When an herb is considered to be an *adaptogen*, it will have a vast array of healing abilities, such as: treatment of diabetes, digestive tract inflammations, lung infections, asthma, chronic diarrhea, upset stomach, insomnia, kidney problems, night sweats, anxiety, hepatitis, chronic fatigue, nervous exhaustion, lack of energy, immune stimulator, cancer, infections, anti-inflammatory, increases energy to brain, liver, nerves, muscles, glands and kidneys.

How, you might ask can one herb be good for all these conditions? Because as an adaptogen it helps the body to adapt to unfavorable and stressful conditions by enhancing the energy supply of the cells in our brain, muscles, liver, kidneys, glands, nerves and throughout the entire body. It energizes every cell in the body and aids them in achieving proper function - away from dis-ease and toward health or homeostasis.

For Schizandra, as with most adaptogen and tonic herbs, healing takes time. Nature works slow and thorough. It would help in any healing process to also make healthy changes in one's diet, such as; eliminating caffeine, white sugar, white flour and city water (chlorine is not a vitamin). Since Schizandra is native to China and Russia, I think that it should grow quite well in this part of the country as a perennial. However, you might have to go on-line to order your seeds.