

BRAHMI - *Bacopa monnieri*

DESCRIPTION

- Perennial ground cover to 10cm high, with sprawling stems that put down roots as they trail along the soil.
- Fleshy, oval shaped leaves up to 2cm long, form opposite along the stems.
- Small, tubular, five-petalled, white flowers develop in leaf terminals and can blossom over many months of the year.
- Small, dark seed set in a flat, oval capsule.
- The edible leaves and stems have a strong bitter taste.

GROWING

- propagate by seed, cuttings and by root division.
- considered a bog plant that likes wet spots, but will grow in pots, or in the garden in shade, or even full sun (provided ample water is provided in dry spells as it is a shallow rooting plant). Make sure you keep it moist – put pot in a tray of water.
- fertilise regularly with seaweed or other organic fertiliser.
- grow in hanging pots and as the stems cascade over the sides, they are easily nipped off for use.
- is frost tender - in cold climates, grow in a large pot or styrofoam box and move to a warm, sheltered position in winter.

Note: **brahmi is not Gotu Kola** (*Centella asiatica*) Some reference books say that gotu kola is called brahmi in Sanskrit. Both are esteemed Ayurvedic herbs. They look nothing alike!

MEDICINAL USES

- Brahmi has been used in traditional Indian medicine for over 3000 years
- In 1993, the Central Drug Research of India (CDRI) started clinical trials with brahmi on human volunteers. They presented their research findings to numerous international brain research conferences. The research identified 2 active molecules: **Bacoside A that assists in the release of nitric oxide allowing relaxation of the aorta and veins and blood to flow more smoothly through the body and aids circulation; and Bacoside B, a protein valued for nourishing nerve cells in the brain.**
- In May 1996 the Royal Society of British Science called nitric oxide ‘the marvel of the decade’. They found that the nitric oxide in brahmi has an extremely positive effect on **learning and memory recall, as well as on blood circulation and the function of the liver, lungs and kidneys.**
- Research is also being done on the use of nitric oxide to treat **stroke and Alzheimer’s sufferers.**
- A recent scientific study showed that brahmi has **potent antioxidant properties**, which is, no doubt, why it was also revered in India for strengthening the immune system, improving vitality and performance and promoting longevity.
- Along with the more familiar antioxidants, **beta sitosterol**, a powerful fatty acid in brahmi, acts to relieve many degenerative conditions.
- Isabell Shipard attended a Brain Tonics seminar in Brisbane tutored by Dr. S. Ajit, an Indian holistic physician, who shared his rich background of traditional herbal medicine, including the uses of brahmi, revered to promote intellect, rejuvenate the brain and improve memory.



- Dr. Ajit stressed the point that rejuvenation must start with the consumption of herbs well before old age. **Dose: 3-4g daily. 3g are approximately six sprigs 8-10cm long.** It needs to be taken over a period of time, as results take a while – about 12 weeks. The herb can be prepared as a tea infusion, or decoction, and sweetened with honey, sugar or stevia leaves if desired. (unless you have it growing and you can just nibble it)
- Over the last few years Isabell has had some remarkable feedback from people using this plant. People report improved memory, increased levels of energy and an ability to cope better with the stresses of life.
- Anecdote from Isabell - an inspiring example of the use of brahmi was shown on TV. A well-known rugby player had suffered severe nerve damage. After eight weeks in intensive care and 14 operations, followed by complications and seven and a half months in rehab, he could not walk or talk properly and had no memory retention. The medical verdict was that nothing more could be done. His family would not accept this, and an aunt searched for a cure, which led her to Dr Ajit. He told her brahmi was used for memory enhancement, but had never been used to repair brain damage, and could not promise results. Her nephew was given brahmi in concentrated extract, and before long his short term memory was back. The TV segment reported he now lives a normal life.

SIDE EFFECTS:

Brahmi is **POSSIBLY SAFE** for adults when used appropriately and short-term, up to 12 weeks. (Mind you, it's been used for over 3 000 years in India)

- Common side effects include increased bowel movements, stomach cramps, nausea, dry mouth, and fatigue.
- No adverse effects were recorded in the 1993 Indian research.

SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS & WARNINGS:

- Pregnancy and breast-feeding: Not enough is known about the use of brahmi during pregnancy and breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.
- People with already-compromised health such as:
 - Slow heart rate: Brahmi might slow down the heart beat. This could be a problem in people who already have a slow heart rate.
 - Gastrointestinal tract blockage: Brahmi might cause “congestion” in the intestines. This might cause problems in people who have a blockage in their intestines.
 - Ulcers: Brahmi might increase secretions in the stomach and intestines. There is concern that this could worsen existing ulcers.
 - Lung conditions: Brahmi might increase fluid secretions in the lung. There is concern that this could worsen lung conditions such as asthma or emphysema.
 - Urinary tract obstruction: Brahmi might increase secretions in the urinary tract. There is concern that this could worsen urinary obstruction.

SUMMARY

Brahmi can help support and improve all aspects of mental function, including comprehension, memory and ready recall, by enhancing the crucial co-ordination of these three aspects of mental function.

Suggested dose is up to 6 ten centimetre stems a day – preferably in the morning. Build up gradually – don't start off with 6 a day.

