

HOLISTIC HERBALISM ADVANCED CLINICAL PROGRAM MATERIA MEDICA

Common Name	Wild Yam
Latin	Dioscorea villosa
Family	Dioscoriaceae
Other Known Names	Colic Root
Energy	Cool, neutral
Taste	Acrid (fresh), pungent, a bit sweet
Part Used	Rhizome
Location	It grows in deciduous forests in the eastern and central U.S. and Ontario.
Gathering	In the autumn.
Cultivation	It requires full shade and rich soil.

HERBAL ACTION	TISSUE AFFINITY	MAJOR CONSTITUENTS
Analgesic (mild)	Female Reproductive System	Steroidal saponins:
Antiinflammatory	Nervous System	Dioscin
Antispasmodic	Large Intestine	Dioscorin-antioxidant
Cholagogue	Liver/Gallbladder	Diosgenin-antiinflammatory
	Small Intestine	Parvifloside
	Musculoskeletal System	Protodeltonin
	Chinese Stomach/Spleen	Deltonin
	Digestion	Steroidal glycosides:
		Dioscoreavillosides A & B

SPECIFIC INDICATIONS

Calms rebellious qi/GI antispasmodic

Bilious colic with gas, pain or spasms, the tongue has a yellow coating and the intestines are painful to the touch.

Gallbladder spasms.

PRIMARY USES

- Wild Yam was a popular Eclectic remedy that has come to be used in many inappropriate and ineffective ways in today's herbal medicine approach and marketplace.
- The specific indications for Dioscorea are bilious colic with gas, pain or GI spasms, the person's tongue has a yellow coating and the abdominal area over the intestines is painful to the touch.
- Wild Yam is useful for treating IBS (spastic colon) and pain caused by IBD (Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis).
- Wild Yam is useful for motion sickness, hiccups and hepatic colic.
- Wild Yam is very helpful for gallbladder spasms and to help pass small gallstones.
- Wild Yam has modest analgesic activity for muscular pain including fibromyalgia and rheumatic pain both considered liver wind conditions.
- Contrary to hype and common misinterpretation Wild Yam has very little effect on the female reproductive system. It does not contain, nor does it enhance levels of progesterone or DHEA and it cannot be used as 'natural birth control'. Additionally it is not effective for relieving menopausal systems.
- Wild Yam can be useful for dysmenorrhea with nausea, diarrhea, gas or vomiting, ovarian neuralgia or mittelschmerz pain.
- Wild Yam can also be supportive for renal colic.

FORMULA COMBINATIONS

- For spasmodic IBS combine Wild Yam with Kudzu/Ge Gen, Cyperus/Xiang Fu, Chamomile, Peach Tree leaf
- balancers Shatavari, Chaste Tree, Damiana and/or Peony root.
- For motion sickness, hiccups and hepatic colic combine with Ginger and Artichoke.
- Combine Wild Yam with Angelica and Ginger to address lower abdominal pain.
- Combine Wild Yarm with Peppermint and Ginger for liver pain with vomiting.
- To address gallstones, within a larger protocol, combine Wild Yarm with Fringe Tree and Celandine.
- Wild Yam can be combined with Black Cohosh, White Peony, Kava and Ashwagandha for liver wind conditions (fibromyalgia / rheumatic pain)
- For dysmenorrhea symptoms of nausea combine with Cyperus and Ginger, for mittelschmerz pain or ovarian neuralgia combine with Blue Cohosh and Jamaica Dogwood.
- To address renal colic combine with Hydrangea and Kava.

DOSAGE

Tea (Decoction): 5 – 7 grams. dried c/s root, 1 litre water, decoct 15-20 minutes, steep for 1 hour, take 2-3 cups/day
Tincture (1:5 or 1:2), 60% ETOH Dose: 1.5-2 mL (30-40 gtt.) TID/QID
Wild Yam accounts for 2 parts in formulation.

PREPARATIONS

The cut/sifted dried root has a 3-4 year shelf life.

Wild Yam creams are popular as "a natural alternative" to HRT, for treating menopausal symptoms.

Some of these preparations work and others are inactive. The difference is that some of these products have small amounts of pharmaceutical progesterone added. They work because of the progesterone, not because of the Wild Yam.

CONTRAINDICATIONS & DRUG INTERACTIONS

None known.

SPECIAL NOTES OF CONSIDERATION

Another Dioscorea species, *D. quaternalia*, is commonly sold in the marketplace as *D. villosa*.

According to J.U. Lloyd, the *D. quaternalia* is less active than the official species.

According to United Plant Savers:

Wild Yam has a large native range encompassing most of the eastern United States, ending at the edge of the Great Plains. It is specifically found in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. It is also found in southern portions of the Canadian province Ontario.

UPS lists Wild Yam on the At Watch List.

Wild Yam has been reported to be used by Meskwaki people of the Fox Tribe of southern ON to relieve pains of childbirth. Various Mexican species of *Dioscorea* were used medicinally by the Mayas and Aztecs.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

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