

The East London Garden Society

Plant Facts

Horny Goat Weed



The heart-shaped herb Horny Goat Weed, is found in the wild in China, Asia and Europe. First mentioned in traditional Chinese medicine texts 2,000 years ago, horny goat weed was given the botanical moniker Epimedium and the ancient Chinese name of Yin Yang Huo after a sexually active mythical creature. Uses include reduction of nerve pain, fatigue, osteoporosis, atherosclerosis, hay fever, premenstrual symptoms and the traditional distinction of increasing libido in both men and women and solving erectile dysfunction. It may even rival Viagra, with fewer side effects, vision problems being one of them.

The New Scientist reported a privately funded research study, conducted ten years ago, that Viagra's active compound, sildenafil, works by inhibiting an enzyme called phosphodiesterase-5 which helps control blood flow to the penis and promotes an erection. Mario Dell' Agli and colleagues from the University of Milan, tested four naturally known aphrodisiacs to compare to Viagra as potential alternatives, and horny goat weed was the only one with any impact.

Clinical Studies Show that Horny Goat Weed has genuine, health-related properties. Medicine Hunter, an organization run by individuals who seek out traditional medicines to test scientifically, noted that the plant has long been employed to restore sexual fire, boost erectile function, allay fatigue and alleviate menopausal discomfort.

Clinicians at China's famous Longhua hospital said that horny goat weed is unsurpassed in TCM both for sex enhancement and for relieving PMS and menopause-related symptoms. Each described a long and successful history of use of this plant, especially for women.

Not surprisingly, you won't find clinical evidence that this herb has any beneficial effects, but from the science available it does contain medical properties. Medical News Today reports that horny goat weed also protects your immune system, strengthens your bones and protects your nerves. There's also research that indicates horny goat weed may:

- Have anti-cancer benefits
- Exert anti-HIV activity
- Have radio-sensitizing effects (for cancer patients)
- Prevent postmenopausal bone loss
- The studies are persuasive, because the value of this little-known herb has amazing implications since the functions of your body are all-encompassing, so when you pay attention to one aspect of your health, you involve all of them. Taking care of one aspect of your health nearly always affects everything else. Erectile dysfunction generally falls into two categories:
 - Primary ED, a rare condition in which a subject may never have been able to have or sustain penile erection, usually either due to a physical abnormality or psychological reasons.
 - Secondary ED which is typically caused by a physical condition, such as stroke, diabetes, multiple sclerosis or a physical injury. Most men in this category have had erections in the past.

Exacerbating these problems is one that many individuals, including doctors, overlook and that's the prevalence of certain medications, such as those prescribed for high blood pressure, depression, high cholesterol, cancer or long-term pain, that either cause ED or greatly contribute to it. Consequently, scientists at the University of Michigan recommend taking 5 grams, or the equivalent of a teaspoon, three times a day, for both ED and atherosclerosis.

For hay fever symptoms, the recommendation is to simmer 500 milligrams in just over a cup (250 mls) of water for 10 to 15 minutes and consume three times a day. Because traditional Chinese medicine is basically 'teapot medicine,' a supplementary dosage for horny goat weed is hard to establish.

The recommended intake of 6 to 12 grams of the herb boiled as tea probably translates roughly into 250 to 500 milligrams of extract standardized to 10 percent icariin but let your experience be your guide.

Side effects are always something to consider with supplements which may interact with other medications you are taking. One report noted one man's symptoms of rash, pain and a burning sensation after taking horny goat weed with ginkgo. Another man with congestive heart failure was hospitalised with symptoms of shortness of breath, chest pain and arrhythmia.

Side effects associated with this interesting herb when taken in large amounts include spasms and breathing problems as well as sweating, increased energy,

decreased thyroid function, irritability and aggression, nausea, a racing heart and feelings of being hot.