



Malaysian Herbs Series 4

By Indu Bala Jaganath and Ng Lean Teik, in collaboration with the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI), in the book "Herbs – The Green Pharmacy of Malaysia"

Malaysia has a living heritage of various herbal species. Out of this diversity, many have been scientifically proven to contain medicinal and healing properties.



SEED ON THE LEAF

Local name: *Dukung anak*

Dukung anak has gained world attention in the late 1980s due to the plant's antiviral activity against Hepatitis B and was found to contain the same beneficial phytochemical as in green tea, which helps to protect cells from stress and pollutants in the environment.

The plant is used as an *emmenagogue, diuretic, tonic, and used after a miscarriage or childbirth. It is also used for treating diarrhoea, kidney trouble, gonorrhoea and syphilis. Juice or extract prepared from the roots and young leaves is taken for strengthening the kidneys. Young leaves are used for treating coughs, especially in children. The pounded leaves and stems are used as poultices for skin complaints including caterpillar itch.

HOLY BASIL / SACRED BASIL

Local name: *Kemangi*

It is considered the most sacred plant of the Hindus. All parts of the plant are used; even the roots have been used to relieve pain from scorpion bites. This plant is believed to be a powerful aid to the immune system and eating two to a few leaves a day is said to keep the body healthy and fit. *Kemangi* is also believed to be a good source of dietary fibre.

An infusion of the leaves is used for gastric disorders while a decoction of the roots is taken orally to treat fevers. The juice of the leaves is given as a laxative and used externally as an *embrocation for rheumatism. The flowers are given with honey for bronchitis. Seeds are mucilaginous and demulcent and given for disorders of the urino-genital system. The bruised fresh leaves and roots are applied to stings of bees and wasps, and bites of mosquitoes and leeches. *Kemangi* can also stimulate appetite and improve digestion.



JAVA TEA

Local name: *Misai kucing*

This medicinal herb has been used for many centuries in Southeast Asian countries. It is appreciated for treating ailments of the bladder and kidney.

The plant is believed to have antiallergic, antihypertensive, antiinflammatory and diuretic properties. It is used as a remedy for arteriosclerosis (capillary and circulatory disorders), kidney stones and nephritis. It is also used for treating gout, diabetes and rheumatism. In Malaysia, the leaves are used as a diuretic and for treating catarrh of the bladder. A decoction prepared from the plant is used to eliminate stones in the bladder.





SWEET BASIL

Local name: *Selasih*

Basil, native to India, is considered the King of Herbs. It can play many roles such as a landscape plant and for culinary purposes especially for flavouring food. As a traditional medicine, basil is popularly used for treating respiratory ailments and headaches.

The juice of the leaves is a common domestic remedy for coughs. The juice is also used as a nasal douche in myosis and for treating irregular menstrual cycles. A decoction of the leaves is taken after childbirth and also used in treating high fever. It is prescribed together with *pegaga* for treating asthma. The flowers are also used to treat coughs in children. The jelly obtained by soaking the seeds in water is demulcent, stimulant, diuretic, diaphoretic and is used to treat headaches. It is also believed to possess narcotic effects which help ease itchiness in the throat, soothe the stomach and stimulate bowel movement.

HORSE RADISH TREE / DRUMSTICK TREE

Local name: *Kacang kelor*

The horse radish tree is one of the most useful crops to mankind as all parts of the plant are used extensively and are said to be of value. *Kacang kelor* has been used extensively in folk medicine in curing various diseases right from tumour to ailments such as cough, headaches and digestive problems. It is also used as a tonic.

The leaves are eaten as a vegetable to stimulate lactation in mothers. The fruit and leaves also act as laxatives. The root is used to stimulate digestion. Poultice of the leaves are applied to the abdomen to expel intestinal worms and rubbed over the breasts to prevent milk flow. The extract of the bark is prescribed for headaches. The leaves and roots are used for treating feminine diseases. Leaves are taken orally to treat gonorrhoea whilst oil from the seeds is applied to the joints in treating rheumatism.



BETELVINE

Local name: *Sirih*

The medicinal use of betelvine ranges from treatments of ulcers and respiratory ailments to afterbirth tonics. They are popularly used fresh by the Indian communities in 'betel chew' and grown in home gardens.

The leaves are eaten as a stimulant. Juice prepared from the leaves is used externally for treating gonorrhoea. Lotions and pastes prepared from young leaves are used to treat ulcers and wounds. Heated leaves are placed on the chest to relieve cough and asthma, and to the breast to arrest the secretion of milk. The leaves are also used to relieve constipation in children. Leaves are used for poulticing ulcerated noses and applied to the body after childbirth. The juice of the leaves is dropped into ears for wounds, an infusion into the eyes, and a decoction as a lotion after childbirth. 😊

(*) Notes:

Embrocation: Liniment of medicine for external application

Emmenagogue: An agent that promotes menstruation