

Herb of the Month: Siberian Ginseng



Siberian ginseng (*eleutherococcus senticosus*), or just simply Eleuthero as it is commonly called today, is an herb that has many benefits for today's high-paced lifestyle. Originally found growing wild throughout southeastern Russia, China, Korea and Japan, Eleuthero is a shrub that grows 3-10 feet high. Its leaves are attached to a main stem by long branches and both the branches and stem are covered with thorns; thus the common name of "spiny" ginseng. In the spring lovely yellow or violet flowers bloom in umbrella-shaped clusters and yield round, black berries by late summer. Eleuthero grows abundantly in and around the forest and like other ginsengs has a relatively large root system.

The brownish, woody, wrinkled and twisted root is the prized component of this plant. The root is not harvested until it is two or more years old; the older the root, the higher its value. The main constituent, eleutherosides, consists of long-chain sugars known as polysaccharides and glycosides, which have tonifying properties for our metabolic system. Other biochemical constituents include: niacin, amino acids, carbohydrates, essential oils, resin, vitamin A and other vitamins and minerals.

Ci-wu-jia, as it is known in China, is botanically not a "true" ginseng. The true ginsengs belong to the genus *Panax* and include American ginseng, Chinese and Korean ginseng. Eleuthero is more nourishing and less stimulating than the true ginsengs. Dr. I.I. Brekhman, a noted Russian scientist, coined the term "adaptogen" to describe the ability of Eleuthero to increase the body's resistance to stress and provide a normalizing action regardless of the imbalanced state. Along with the ability to increase resistance to stress, both mental and physical, Dr. Brekhman also demonstrated that Eleuthero could increase stamina and performance in athletes without the side effects common to stimulants. After thousands of studies, Siberian ginseng was found to nutritionally support the glandular system. Among the 15,350 factory workers studied, incidence of disease was lowered on the average some 37.1%. Among athletes and other individuals whose work requires high levels of endurance and stamina, better running times, higher work-load and quicker recovery rates after exertion were noted. This nourishing herb has been shown to act on the adrenal glands, helping to prevent adrenal hypertrophy and excess corticosteroid production in response to stress. The eleutherosides additionally help reduce the exhaustion phase of the stress response, helping the adrenals return to normal function more quickly. Siberian ginseng has also beneficial effects on the heart and circulation. It has been shown to help the body resist viral infections, environmental toxins, radiation and chemotherapy. It is a folk remedy in China for preventing respiratory infections and well as viral infections. The Chinese use the root to provide energy and vitality, to increase resistance to stress and in the treatment of rheumatic diseases and heart ailments.

Additionally, Eleuthero has been used in neuro-vascular conditions to help restore memory, concentration, and cognitive abilities that may be impaired from poor blood supply to the brain. With all these restorative properties, it is clearly an herb for today's high-stressed lifestyle. Here at the Good Earth we have the root powder in bulk, liquid extracts, capsules, paste and in combination with other herbs.