

HERB OF THE MONTH: REISHI

Reishi Mushroom (*Ganoderma Lucidum*) is one of the most highly esteemed fungi that grows in our beautiful world. It grows in the wild on live trees and decaying logs on the forest floor in densely wooded mountains with high humidity and dim lighting. This mushroom has been used in the folk medicine of China and Japan for over 4,000 years. Reishi is a large, dark, very tough, woody/corky mushroom. Most mushrooms are around 90% water, while reishi is 75% water. Dry or wet it is inedible; therefore it must be made into an extract or tea.

There are many names for this revered mushroom: Ling Zhi which means “spirit plant” in Chinese and simply Reishi in Japanese and is also commonly known as “Plant of Immortality”, “Herb of Spiritual Potency”, and “Ten Thousand Year Mushroom” for its reputation in fortifying the mind and body, and promoting longevity, wisdom, and happiness. Gan means shiny, Derma means skin and Lucidum means shining or brilliant and refers in Latin to the appearance of the fruiting body. Reishi has six different varieties and colors, but the red variety is most commonly used and commercially cultivated in North America, China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. In the past reishi grew only in small quantities in the wild, so it was very expensive. In the last 20 years, however, successful cultivation of *G. lucidum* has made it more accessible and affordable. Shigeaki Mori, a Japanese man who spent 15 years developing a method of cultivating the wild grown spores or seeds from reishi, pioneered the cultivation of reishi. Paul Stamets, one of the worlds leading mushroom experts, selects reishi mushroom from the rainforest and cultures the spores in rigorously controlled conditions here in the United States. His mushrooms are touted as being very potent and vital and have a following worldwide.

In traditional Chinese Medicine, Reishi is the most highly rated herb in terms of multiple benefits and absence of side effects. It is the only known source of a group of triterpenes known as ganoderic acids, which have a molecular structure similar to steroid hormones. The fruiting body has the most active polysaccharides (long “chains” of sugars) among medicinal plant sources including Beta-D-Glucans. Reishi also contains ergosterols, complete proteins, unsaturated fatty acids, vitamins and minerals including riboflavin (B2), magnesium, calcium, and zinc. *G. lucidum's* pharmacological uses are as a tonic, immune booster, for bronchitis, for allergies, blood pressure stabilizer, altitude sickness, chemotherapy support, HIV support, fatigue, high blood pressure, high triglycerides, hepatitis and has analgesic properties. For general fatigue due to a hectic life style the usual dosage is 2-3 capsules 3 times a day for 2-3 weeks reducing to 1 capsule 3 times a day for maintenance. There has been evidence of reishi extract being highly effective in improving and also curing Hepatitis A, B, and C. Its main properties are the cleansing of the blood, enhancement of the immune system and the lessening of nervous tension. These properties are conducive to normalizing and balancing the multitude of diseases from within. At the beginning of use, some people may feel dizzy, itching, thirsty or even increase of bowel and bladder function. These demonstrate the effectiveness of Ling Zhi to the body. The toxins are dissolved, mobilized, and excreted by the body. Therefore these reactions may be normal and necessary for healing. Good Earth sells Reishi in liquid extract and in capsulated form, as a single herb and also in a few combinations.

