

# Herb of the Month: Amalaki

“Amalaki is the best among all the rejuvenative herbs” -Charaka Samhita (the most ancient ayurvedic text)

Amalaki, also known as Amla and Indian Gooseberry, is the richest known source of Vitamin C. A small fruit of the Myrobalum plum family, amalaki is native to India and South-east Asia and is one of the most revered rejuvenative tonics of ayurvedic medicine. Amalaki is full of powerful antioxidants that protect cells against free-radical damage, acting as an “anti-aging” tonic superfood. It is nicknamed dhatri, or “the nurse”, for its renowned ability to nurture us back to vibrant health.

According to Ayurveda, amalaki is cooling in energy, predominantly sour in taste and has a sweet “post-digestive effect” (acts as an overall tonic). Although it is said to regulate all three doshas (in Ayurvedic medicine, one of the three biological humors or energies [kapha, pitta, vata] which combine in various proportions to determine individual constitution and mental and physical disorders), it is especially recognized as a detoxifier and rejuvenative tonic for people suffering from excess heat conditions such as hyperacidity, heartburn, infections, inflammations, bleeding disorders, liver problems, skin disorders and biliousness. In addition, it is often recommended for colds and flus, to improve eyesight, strengthen the bones and for all signs of premature aging.

To bring out its immunity enhancing properties, fresh amalaki is mixed with several other ayurvedic herbs, along with ghee and honey, into a nutritive jam called chayavanprash. This powerful, great tasting jam is used to ward off colds and flus, strengthen the lungs and heart and act as an aphrodisiac. One classical ayurvedic text claims that amalaki (especially as prepared in chyavanprash), “gives one the vigor of an elephant and great strength, intelligence, wisdom, mental clarity and right attitude”.

Amalaki is also one of the 3 ingredients of the famous ayurvedic formula, triphala. Triphala, which means “three fruits”, also contains haritaki and bibhitaki (both of the same Myrobalum plum family as amalaki) and is the most commonly prescribed formula by ayurveda practitioners. This formula has an unmatched ability to gently cleanse, detoxify and regulate the digestive system, while acting as a strengthening tonic for the digestive, circulatory, respiratory and genitourinary systems. Triphala balances all three doshas and is often recommended as part of a long term health maintenance plan.

If that’s not enough, amalaki also happens to be the main herb used in ayurveda as a treatment for hair and scalp problems. Amla hair oil is likely the world’s oldest “conditioner”. Amla hair oil brings forth a rich, natural shine and vitalizes dull and damaged hair. It is also used to treat dandruff and prevent hair loss.



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Amalaki’s reputation is supported by thousands of years of use in traditional ayurvedic medicine and scientific studies have confirmed its immunity-boosting and digestive enhancing properties. Clinical studies were conducted to investigate the effect of Amalaki on gastritis and it was found effective in 85 percent of cases. Cases of hyperchlorhydria with burning sensation in abdominal and cardiac regions and epigastric pain were also greatly benefited.