

Chinese Herbal Medicine

Single Herbs

An Introduction to Chinese Herbs

Preparatory Course

- Most commonly used herbs
- Key herbs for each category
- Actions of the herbs
- Toxicity, CI, etc.

Classification

Categories:

- Functional
- Tastes: Pungent, Sweet, Sour, Bitter, Salty, Bland, Astringent
- Meridians

Warm Pungent Herbs to Relieve the Exterior

Used to treat Wind-Cold Patterns.

Symptoms include:

- Feeling cold
- Slight fever
- Chest congestion, sneezing, cough
- Runny nose with clear mucus
- Body aches
- Sore throat
- Thin white tongue coating
- Floating tight pulse

Ma Huang



Channels: LU, BL

Properties: Pungent, Slightly Bitter,
Warm

Latin: Ephedrae

Chinese: 麻黄 má huáng

Translation: Hemp Yellow

Actions

- **Releases the Exterior and Disperses Wind-Cold**
For Wind-Cold excess patterns with fever, chills, headache, lack of sweating, and a tight, floating pulse. Opens the pores and induces sweating.
- **Stops Wheezing and Asthma**
Obstruction of Lung Qi due to exterior Wind-Cold or wheezing from an internal condition.
- **Reduces Edema and Promotes Urination**
Especially due to obstruction from external Wind-Cold pathogen.

Sheng Jiang / Fresh Ginger



Channels: LU, SP, ST

Properties: Spicy, Warm

Latin: Rhizoma Zingiberis

Chinese: 生姜 shēng jiāng

Actions

- **Releases the Exterior and Warms the Middle Jiao**
For exterior Wind-Cold, cold in the stomach causing vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal fullness with pain.
- **Disperses Lung Cold and Stops Cough**
For Wind-Cold cough or chronic Lung problems with thin, white phlegm.
- **Reduces Toxicity From Other Herbs**
For detoxifying or treating over dosage from other herbs, such as Radix Lateralis Aconiti Carmichaeli Praeparata (Fu Zi) and Rhizoma Pinelliae Ternatae (Ban Xia).

Gui Zhi / Cinammon



Channels: HT, LU, BL

Properties: Spicy, Sweet, Warm

Latin: Cinnamomi Cassiae

Chinese: 桂枝 guì zhī

Actions

- **Adjusts the Ying and Wei Levels**
For Wind-Cold from deficiency when sweating does not relieve the condition.
- **Warms the Channels and Collaterals**
For Wind-Cold damp bi pain, arthritic complaints, especially in the shoulders. For cold obstructing the flow of Blood in dysmenorrhea and other gynecological conditions.
- **Unblocks the Yang Qi of the Chest**
For chest pain, palpitations, edema, dysuria, and abdominal fullness.
- **Promotes Blood Circulation**
For amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, angina pectoris, and abdominal masses.

Bai Zhi



Channels: LU, ST

Properties: Spicy, Warm

Latin: Radix Angelicae Dahuricae

Chinese: 白芷 bái zhǐ

Actions

- **Dispels Wind and Stops Pain**
For external Wind-Cold, especially with sinus or yang Ming headache, supra-orbital pain and sinus congestion.
- **Reduces Pus and Swelling**
For early stages of surface level sores. This herb can reduce swelling and/or help to discharge pus.
- Also used for damp and discharge in the Lower Jiao.

Cool Pungent Herbs to Release the Exterior

Used to treat wind-heat patterns.

Symptoms include:

- Fever with chills, fever predominates
- Sore throat
- Stuffy nose with thick yellow phlegm
- Headache
- Slight sweating
- Thirst
- Yellow tongue coating
- Floating rapid pulse

Bo He / Mint



Channels: LU, LIV

Properties: Spicy, Aromatic, Cool

Latin: Herba Menthae Haplocalycis

Chinese: 薄荷 bò he

Actions

- **Dispels Wind-Heat, Clears the Eyes, Head, and Throat**
For common cold due to wind and heat with symptoms of fever, headache, cough, sore throat, and red eyes.
- **Vents Rashes**
For incomplete expression of rashes, especially useful for measles.
- **Disperses Liver Qi**
For constrained Liver Qi patterns with pressure in chest and flanks, gynecological problems, and unstable emotions.

Ju Hua / Chrysanthemum



Channels: LIV, LU

Properties: Sweet, Bitter, Slightly Cold

Latin: Flos Chrysanthemi Morifolii

Chinese: 菊花 jú huā

Actions

- **Releases Wind and Heat**
For Wind-Heat syndromes with fever, headache, and red, painful, dry eyes.
- **Clears Heat in the Liver Channel**
Used for Wind-Heat affecting the eyes, or Yin Deficiency of the Liver and kidneys causing blurry vision, dizziness, and spots in front of the eyes.
- **Stops Wind**
Used to calm the Liver and relieve symptoms of ascending Liver yang.

Chai Hu / Bupleureum



Channels: GB, LIV, PER, TB

Properties: Bitter, Spicy, Cool

Latin: Radix Bupleuri

Chinese: 柴胡 chái hú

Actions

- **Resolves Shao Yang Disorders and Lowers Fever**
For alternating chills and fever, bitter taste in the mouth, flank pain, vomiting, irritability, and chest constriction.
- **Relieves Liver Qi Constraint**
For dizziness, vertigo, chest pain, menstrual disorders, and emotional instability. Also used to treat wood attacking earth symptoms.
- **Raises the Yang Qi in cases of Middle Jiao Deficiency**
For hemorrhoids, anal and uterine prolapse, and diarrhea.

Herbs that Clear Heat and Drain Fire

Symptoms of too much heat include:

- Fever
- Thirst
- Red complexion
- Swelling
- Sweating
- Rashes
- Restlessness, irritability, insomnia
- Tongue, mouth sores, swollen gums
- Red tongue may also have raised red spots
- Fast, forceful pulse

Dan Zhu Ye / Bamboo Leaves



Channels: HT, SI, ST

Properties: Sweet, Bland, Cold

Latin: Herba Lophatheri Gracilis

Chinese: 淡竹叶 dàn zhú yè

Actions

- **Clears Heat, Calms the Spirit, and Relieves Thirst**
For heat conditions with irritability. Also used for stomach heat causing thirst, and for heat in the Heart and stomach channels causing mouth sores and swollen gums.
- **Clears Damp-Heat and Promotes Urination**
For acute, scanty, and painful urination. Also used for heat in the small intestine channel giving rise to dysuria, irritability, and a dark red tip on the tongue.

Lian Zi / Lotus Plumule



Channels: HT, PER

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Plumula Nelumbinis

Chinese: 莲子心 lián zǐ xīn

Actions

- **Sedates Heart Fire and Calms the Spirit**
For heat transferring into the pericardium channel causing delirium, restlessness, confusion, and irritability. Also used to alleviate thirst, temporarily lower Blood pressure, and help insomnia.
- **Stops Bleeding and Astringes the Essence**
Used as a powder for vomiting Blood, tongue ulcerations, and spermatorrhea.

Zhi Zi



Channels: HT, LIV, LU, ST, TB

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Fructus Gardeniae Jasminoidis

Chinese: 梔子 zhī zi

Actions

- **Clears Heat and Calms the Spirit**
For high fever, irritability, restlessness, insomnia, delirium, or chest constriction.
- **Drains Damp-Heat**
For dysuria from damp-heat in the lower jiao, jaundice from damp-heat in the liver and gallbladder, and damp-heat in the san jiao and gallbladder channels affecting the face, nose, and eyes.
- **Cools the Blood, Reduces Toxins, and Stops Bleeding**
For epistaxis, vomiting blood, or blood in the stool or urine.

Zhi Mu



Channels: LU, ST, KI

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Rhizoma Anemarrhenae

Chinese: 知母 zhī mǔ

Actions

- **Clears Heat in the Qi Level**
For high fever, irritability, and a rapid and flooding pulse. Very effective at clearing heat in the stomach and Lungs, with intense thirst and thick yellow sputum.
- **Moistens Dryness and Nourishes Yin**
For Lung and Kidney Yin deficiency with night sweats, five centers heat, afternoon fevers, steaming bone fever, or irritability. Also for spermatorrhea and leakage of vital essence.
- **Generates Fluids**
For thirst, dry and ulcerated mouth, dry throat, and for wasting and thirsting disorder.

Shi Gao



Channels: LU, ST

Properties: Sweet, Spicy, Very Cold

Latin: Gypsum Fibrosum

Chinese: 石膏 shí gāo

Actions

- **Clears Heat in the Qi level**
For very high fever, intense thirst, profuse sweating, big and flooding pulse, and a red tongue with a yellow coating.
- **Clears Heat in the Lungs**
For cough and wheezing with thick yellow sputum.
- **Clears Stomach Fire**
For inflamed and painful gums, toothache, and thirst.
- **For Burns, Abscesses, and Eczema**
Can be taken internally or applied topically for these symptoms.

Xia Ku Cao



Channels: GB, LIV

Properties: Bitter, Spicy, Cold

Latin: Prunellae Vulgaris

Chinese: 夏枯草 xià kū cǎo

Actions

- **Clears Heat From the Liver and Brightens the Eyes**
For Liver Fire ascending, high Blood pressure, red, painful, and swollen eyes. Also for headache, dizziness, and eye pain due to Liver deficiency (eyes sensitive to light and tender).
- **Eliminates Nodules**
Treats swollen thyroid, swollen glands, or any neck swelling due to phlegm fire. Also used to treat nodules in the inguinal area and other parts of the body (mastitis, etc.)

Lu Gen



Channels: LU, ST

Properties: Sweet, Cold

Latin: Rhizoma Phragmitis Communis

Chinese: 芦根 lú gēn

Actions

- **Clears Heat and Promotes Fluids**
For high fever, irritability and thirst.
- **Clears Lung Heat**
Especially useful in acute stages with thick, yellow sputum.
- **Clears Stomach Heat**
For vomiting and belching.
- **Promotes Urination**
For dark and scanty urine (from heat), especially if symptoms include thirst and irritability.
- **Vents Rashes**
Encourages the expression of rashes during a febrile condition.

Herbs that Cool the Blood

Symptoms of blood-heat include:

- Fever
- Thirst
- Sweating
- Bleeding
- Coughing up blood
- Blood in the stools or urine
- Heavy periods
- Purple discoloration
- Deep reddish-purple tongue
- Pulse: Rapid

Chi Shao



Channels: LIV, SP

Properties: Sour, Bitter, Slightly Cold

Latin: Radix Rubrus Paeoniae Lactiflorae

Chinese: 赤芍 chì sháo

Actions

- **Clears Heat and Cools the Blood**
For heat in the Blood level causing fever, red-purple tongue, skin blotches, and bleeding. Also treats gynecological disorders from hot Blood (dysmenorrhea or menorrhagia).
- **Invigorates Blood, Removes, Stagnation and Swelling**
For amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, acute inflammations, abdominal pain and masses. Also used for swelling and stagnation from internal or external injury, rashes, and abscess.
- **Clears Liver Fire**
For ascending Liver Fire affecting the eyes, causing redness and swelling.

Mu Dan Pi



Channels: HT, LIV, KI

Properties: Spicy, Bitter, Cool

Latin: Cortex Radicis Moutan

Chinese: 牡丹皮 mǔ dān pí

Actions

- **Clears Heat and Cools the Blood**
For heat in the Blood causing nose bleed, vomiting with Blood, Bloody phlegm, subcutaneous bleeding, and heavy menstruation.
- **Clears Fire from Yin Deficiency**
For Yin deficiency symptoms, especially without sweating.
- **Invigorates the Blood and Removes Stagnation**
For abdominal tumors, bruises, lumps, and amenorrhea or dysmenorrhea.
- **Calms Liver Fire**
For headache, rib pain, or eye pain.

Sheng Di Huang



Channels: HT, KI, LIV

Properties: Sweet, Bitter, Cold

Latin: Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae

Chinese: 地黄 shēng dì huáng

Actions

- **Clears Heat and Cools the Blood**
For heat in the Ying level causing very high fever, thirst, and a dark red tongue. Also used for hemorrhage, epistaxis, spitting Blood, Bloody urine, and uterine bleeding.
- **Nourishes the Yin and Increases Fluids**
For injured Yin from heat causing dry mouth, throat pain, wasting and thirsting disorder, and constipation.
- **Clears Heart fire**
For irritability, restlessness, mouth and tongue sores, or insomnia.

Herbs for Damp Heat

Is a combination of damp and heat together.

Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Diarrhea
- Dysentery
- Jaundice
- Excess vaginal discharge
- Urinary tract infections
- Red and swollen joints
- Excessive thick and yellow mucus
- Tongue coating with be thick and yellow
- Pulse Rapid, rolling

Huang Bai



Channels: KI, BL

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Cortex Phellodendri

Chinese: 黄柏 huáng bǎi

Actions

- **Eliminates Heat and Dampness**
For Damp-Heat in the lower Jiao with symptoms of yellow vaginal discharge, diarrhea with strong odor, dysentery, jaundice, or acute urinary tract infections. Also used to treat Damp-Heat pouring downward causing red and swollen knees, legs, or feet.
- **Reduces Kidney Fire**
For rising Kidney Fire from Yin deficiency, with night sweats, afternoon fevers, steaming bone disorder, nocturnal emissions or spermatorrhea.
- **Drains Fire Toxicity**
For damp skin lesions, abscess, eczema, furuncles, or boils.

Huang Lian



Channels: HT, LI, LIV, ST

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Rhizoma Coptidis

Chinese: 黄连 huáng lián

Actions

- **Drains Fire and Relieves Toxins**
For fire symptoms such as high fever, irritability, delirium, red tongue, and full and rapid pulse. Also for heat with toxicity causing painful red eyes, sore throat, and for toxic skin lesions.
- **Drains Dampness and Clears Heat**
For Damp-Heat in the stomach with vomiting or acid regurgitation, or stomach fire with bad breath and belching with a foul smell, and for Damp-Heat in the intestines with diarrhea or dysentery.
- **Calms Heart Fire**
For insomnia due to the Heart and Kidneys miscommunication.
- **Clears Heat, Stops Bleeding**
For epistaxis, Blood in the stool, urine, or vomit.

Huang Qin



Channels: GB, LI, LU, ST

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Scutellariae Baicalensis

Chinese: 黄芩 huáng qín

Actions

- **Clears Heat, Fire, and Drains Dampness**
Especially for heat and damp in the Upper Jiao, symptoms include high fever, thirst, cough, irritability, and sputum that is thick and yellow.
- **Clears Damp-Heat in the Stomach and Intestines**
For diarrhea or dysentery with high fever, thirst with inability to drink, or painful urination. Also used with other herbs for Damp-Heat jaundice.
- **Clears Heat and Stops Bleeding**
For Blood in the stool, epistaxis, or vomiting with Blood.
- **Calms the Fetus**
- **Calms Liver Yang Rising**
For headache, red eyes, bitter taste in the mouth, irritability, or hypertension.

Long Dan Cao



Channels: GB, LIV, ST

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Gentianae Longdancao

Chinese: 龙胆草 lóng dǎn cǎo

Actions

- **Eliminates Heat and Damp from the Liver and Gallbladder Channels**

For Blood-shot eyes, conjunctivitis, sore throat, bitter taste in the mouth, jaundice, ear pain or sudden deafness, pain and swelling in the genital area, or strong smelling vaginal discharge and itching.

- **Sedates Liver Fire**

For hypertension, headache, red eyes, dizziness, tinnitus, fever, spasms, rib pain, or convulsions.

Herbs for Toxic Heat

Symptoms of toxic heat are similar to heat and fire, however it is more severe.

Symptoms include:

High fever

Red sores, lumps, swelling, or rashes

Pus filled sores, abscesses

Intense infections

Vomiting of blood

Nosebleeds

Jin Yin Hua



Channels: LI, LU, ST

Properties: Sweet, Cold

Latin: Lonicerae Japonicae

Chinese: 金银花 jīn yín huā

Actions

- **Clears Heat and Reduces Toxins**
For fever and any type of hot boils, sores, or swellings, especially in the breast, eyes, and throat.
- **Expels Pathogenic Wind-Heat**
For common cold with fever, sore throat and headache, also used in treating Summerheat.
- **Expels Damp-Heat in the Lower Jiao**
For diarrhea, dysentery, intestinal abscesses, or painful urination.

Lian Qiao



Channels: HT, LIV, GB

Properties: Bitter, Slightly
Spicy, Cool

Latin: Forsythiae Suspensae

Chinese: 连翘 lián qiáo

Actions

- **Clears Heat Toxins and Disperses Lumps and Nodules**

For all sores from heat including abscesses, neck lumps, scrofula, and carbuncles.

- **Clears Wind-Heat**

For Wind-Heat common cold. Also effective in treating high fever, thirst, and delirium.

Pu Gong Ying



Channels: LIV, ST

Properties: Bitter, Sweet, Cold

Latin: Taraxaci Mongolici

Chinese: 蒲公英 pú gōng Yīng

Actions

- **Eliminates Heat and Toxins in the Blood**
For any type of heat disorder, especially heat in the Liver channel with red and swollen eyes.
- **Removes Abscesses and Reduces Nodules**
For boils, sores, and furuncles especially if they are firm and hard as in mastitis and intestinal abscesses.
- **Resolves Dampness**
For jaundice, acute urinary tract infections, and hepatitis from Damp-Heat.
- **Promotes Lactation**
Treats insufficient milk secretion due to heat.

Da Qing Ye



Channels: HT, LU, ST

Properties: Bitter, Very Cold

Latin: Folium Daqingye

Chinese: 大青叶 dài qīng yè

Actions

- **Reduces Heat and Relieves Toxicity**
For any type of febrile disease, especially for epidemic and contagious diseases, such as influenza, meningitis, and pneumonia. This herb clears toxins in any part of the body, with an affinity for treating the Lungs and the throat.
- **Cools the Blood and Reduces Skin Macula**
For skin eruptions and blotches from severe heat in the Blood.

Herbs for Summer Heat

Summer heat symptoms happen in the summer or hot environments and result from excessive exposure to sun.

- Fever
- Excessive sweating
- Irritability
- Thirst with preference for cold drinks
- Shortness of breath
- Weakness
- Sun stroke: dizziness and vomiting for mild cases; sudden collapse, unconsciousness, profuse and cold sweating, cold extremities

Qing Hao



Channels: KI, LIV, GB

Properties: Bitter, Cold

Latin: Herba Artemisiae Apiaceae

Chinese: 青蒿 qīng hāo

Actions

- **Clears Summer-Heat**
Low fever, stifling sensation in chest, headache, dizziness, heavy limbs, with or without sweating
- **Treats Malaria and Resolves Heat**
Alternating fever and chills (use large fresh dose)
- **Clears Yin Xu Heat and Blood Xu Heat**
Steaming bone fever without sweating, afternoon fever, constant low grade fever, five palms heat. Its bitter coldness does not injure the stomach, the yin or the blood.
- **Cools Blood and Stops Bleeding**
Chronic febrile disorders where heat enters Ying level, nighttime fevers and chills in the morning, thirst, flushed face, irritability, no sweating, nosebleeds, purpuric rash
- **Clears Liver and Gall Bladder Heat and Brightens Eyes**
Red eyes, dizziness, photophobia due to Liver Yang rising, eye disorders

Xi Gua / Watermelon



Channels: BL, HT, ST

Properties: Sweet, Cold

Latin: Fructus Citrulli

Chinese: 西瓜 xī guā

Actions

- **Relieves Summerheat, Generates Fluids, and Promotes Urination**
For patterns associated with Summerheat, especially when there is excess thirst, dry heaves, or scanty urination.
- **Reduces Jaundice**
Used with other substances in treating icteric hepatitis.

Lu Dou / Mung Bean



- Channels: HT, ST
- Properties: Sweet, Cool
- Latin: Phaseoli Munginis
- Chinese: 绿豆 lù dòu
- Actions
- Relieves Summerheat
Especially in treating excess thirst from heat in the summer. Often taken as a tea to avoid the occurrence of Summerheat.
- Used as an antidote for toxic substances, pesticides, and especially for overdose of Radix Lateralis Aconiti Carmichaeli Praeparata (fu zi).

Bai Bian Dou



Channels: SP, ST

Properties: Sweet, Neutral

Latin: Semen Dolichoris Lablab

Chinese: 白扁豆 bái biǎn dòu

Actions

- **Clears Dampness and Summerheat**
For symptoms such as vomiting, nausea, and diarrhea often associated with Summerheat and dampness causing stagnation and disharmony.
- **Strengthens Spleen and Dissolves Damp without Drying**
For chronic diarrhea, loose stools, lethargy, fatigue, disinterest in food, or excess vaginal discharge.
- **Removes Toxins**
For treatment in alcohol or food poisoning.