

Herb of the Month: Imperata (bai mao gen)

Imperata is a type of grass native to southeast Asia. It grows up to four feet in height, with leaves that taper off to a sharp tip. The surface of the plant is yellow-white in color; when it dies, however, it turns dark red, which has given imperata the nickname "blood grass." The rhizome of the plant is used medicinally; it is harvested in the spring or autumn, cleaned, dried and then cut into small pieces.



In traditional Chinese medicine precepts, imperata has a cold property, and works on the Lung, Stomach and Urinary Bladder channels. It functions to cool the blood and stop bleeding, and to clear heat from the lung and stomach. Among the conditions it treats are vomiting; febrile diseases that cause excessive thirst; edema; dysuria; and bleeding. Imperata also has antibacterial properties.

The typical recommended dosage of imperata is 15-30 grams taken as a decoction, or 30-60 grams of fresh herb. The dosage may be adjusted depending on the condition(s) being treated. The American Herbal Products Association has given imperata a class one rating, meaning that it can be safely consumed when used appropriately. As of this writing, there are no known adverse drug interactions with imperata. Make sure to consult with a qualified health care provider before taking imperata or any other herbal remedy or dietary supplement.

To learn more about the benefits of herbal medicine, visit www.acupuncturetoday.com/herbcentral.

Reference:

1. Becker S. A Handbook of Chinese Hematology. Boulder, CO: Blue Poppy Press, 2000, pp. 160-174.
2. Gaffney JF. Ecophysiological and technological factors influencing the management of cogon grass (*imperata cylindrica*). Dissertation. Agronomy Department, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, 1996.
3. McGuffin M, Hobbs C, Upton R, Goldberg A (eds.) American Herbal Products Association's Botanical Safety Handbook. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 1997, p. 63.