

Native American Botanics

Yellow Dock - Traditional Medicine, Food and Dye

Scientific Name

Rumex crispus

Botanical Family

Polygonaceae

Common Names

Curled dock, curly dock.

Plant Part

Root

Overview

Yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*) is indigenous to Europe and Africa, but it has been naturalized throughout North America. In European folk medicine, the root was valued as a general tonic and blood cleanser. It was used to treat skin disorders such as psoriasis, rheumatism, jaundice, scurvy, constipation, bleeding of lungs, inflammation of nasal passages and respiratory tract. Once yellow dock was introduced to North America from Europe, it was quickly adopted by Native Americans as a traditional medicine and food.

Yellow dock is favored as a laxative because of its gentle cathartic action on the bowel. Anthraquinones in the plant not only stimulate the gut muscles, but also promote bile flow to help relieve constipation. Today, some herbalists use yellow dock as an immune cleanser and adjunct treatment to conventional therapy for fibrocystic breast growths and breast cancer. The root contains rhein and emodine, two phytochemicals that have anti-tumor activity in laboratory studies

Botanical Description

Yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*) is a low-growing perennial with lance-shaped leaves that have wavy or "curly" edges. Throughout the summer, small greenish or reddish flowers bloom in whorls along the flower spike. The name "yellow dock" comes from the roots, which are brownish on the outside but distinctly yellow inside. The name "dock" is Old English for plants with bitter tasting leaves.

Chemical Constituents

Root: anthraquinones/antracene derivatives (aglycones of chrysophanol, emodin, aloë-emodin, rhein,), naphthalene derivatives (including neopodin, lapodin), tannins (catechol); other plant parts contain oxalic acid, oxalates, chrysophanic acid, emodin, tannin, rumicin, complex essential oil.

Medicinal Uses

Traditional Uses: Chronic skin disease, obstructive jaundice, constipation, psoriasis with constipation, eczema, urticaria, prurigo (itching papules), itching hemorrhoids, blood cleanser for jaundice.

Clinical Applications: Acute and chronic inflammation of nasal passages and respiratory tract. Adjunctive in antibacterial therapy.

Pharmacological and Clinical Findings

In in vitro studies, extracts of the leaves and seeds had antimicrobial activity against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Bacillus subtilis*. Rhein, one of the active compounds in *Rumex crispus*, has shown anti-tumor activity in mice. In other animal studies, leaf extracts of yellow dock had antibacterial activity against Gram-positive and Gram-negative organisms.).

Dosage Range

Dried root: 2 - 4 g

Safety

Yellow dock is considered safe when used at the recommended daily dose



Side Effects

Side effects are rare when taken as directed. Excessive use of yellow dock may cause laxative-like side effects such as stomach cramping and diarrhea.

Warnings/Contraindications/Precautions

Prolonged use may cause abdominal cramps, diarrhea, intestinal atrophy, and potassium deficiency. Individuals with intestinal complaints such as intestinal obstruction should take only take only small doses of yellow dock. Pregnant and lactating women should not take yellow dock.

Interactions

Persons taking any medications that affect blood coagulation should consult a qualified healthcare practitioner before taking yellow dock. Yellow dock contains oxalic acid, an acidic phytochemical that can interfere with normal calcium levels in the blood and lead to complications with blood coagulation.

References

Dickie CW; Hamann MH; Carroll WD; Chow F. Oxalate (*Rumex venosus*) poisoning in cattle. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 1978. 173(1):73-4.

Gladstar R. *Herbal Healing for Women.* 1993. New York: Fireside.

Grieve. M. *A Modern Herbal. Vol. I.* New York: Dover 1971

Gruenwald, J; Brendler, T; Christof, J. *PDR for Herbal Medicines.* Montvale, NJ:Medical Economics Company 1998

Hoffmann D. Herbal Materia Medica -Yellow Dock. Retrieved January 29, 2004 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.healthy.net/library/books/hoffman/materiamedica/yellowdock.htm>

Newall, C; Anderson, L; Phillipson, J. *Herbal Medicines: A Guide for Health-care Professionals.* London: Pharmaceutical Press 1996

Pancieria RJ; Martin T; Burrows GE; Taylor DS; Rice LE. Acute oxalate poisoning attributable to ingestion of curly dock (*Rumex crispus*) in sheep. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 1990. 196(12):1981-4.

Yildirim A, Mavi A, Kara AA.Kazim Karabekir Egitim Fakultesi, Kimya Egitimi Anabilim Dali, and Fen-Edebiyat Fakultesi. Determination of antioxidant and antimicrobial activities of *Rumex crispus* L. extracts. *J Agric Food Chem.* 2001 Aug;49(8):4083-9.

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. The information presented here is for educational purposes only. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any illness or disease.

Native American Botanicals, Inc. follows Good Manufacturing Practices and guarantees that all of our products meet the highest standards of purity and potency. Our products do not contain preservatives artificial colors, artificial flavors, wheat, yeast, corn, or added salt or starch. Our botanicals are made from carefully selected plant populations that are harvested at times when the active compounds are at peak concentration. We practice sustainable cultivation and conservation guidelines to help protect the delicate balance of our natural ecosystems.

Native American Botanicals
4721 West Calle Torim
Tucson, Arizona 85746-9746
Toll Free: 1-800-915-8742
Voice: (520) 883-8300
Fax: (520) 292-1584