

HERB STOP

January 10 Highlight



Which Ginseng Is Good For Me?

There are many superior tonic herbs growing wild throughout the world that are mistakenly named "ginseng". It seems as though every country has its "ginseng", but, the true ginseng species are botanically known as panax ginseng (Asian ginseng), panax quinquefolium (American ginseng) and tienchi ginseng (panax pseudoginseng). The name "panax" is derived from Greek *pan* (all) and *akos* (cure) or all-curing. Ginseng is also known in Asia as "man-plant", because the shape of the root resembles a man. The panax family is considered the emperor of all tonic herbs.

How about Siberian ginseng, Indian ginseng, Brazilian ginseng, etc.? Although these plants are not true ginsengs they are well-liked because they contain similar substances found in the panax family that build, create, and sustain energy, well-being, and overall health. They are renowned for restoring chi, our life-force, or our deeper sources of energy. They increase stamina and endurance. These herbs are exceptional when undergoing treatment for a disease or recovering from an illness. They are excellent for people who have reached their golden years, because they provide concentrated nutrients needed to support the body by creating healthy blood, a strong heart, and a quick mind. By their very nature, these herbs are nontoxic and have no side effects even when used over a long period of time.

Panax Ginseng *Panax Ginseng*

Asian ginseng is an extraordinary herb to rejuvenate the body, regenerate frayed or overtaxed nerves, and to discourage mood swings and depression. Although panax ginseng has a particular affinity for the male body to build strength and to nourish the reproductive and circulatory systems, it can also be used by women for a short time, about 6 weeks with a 6 months break in between. Women who need to build strength and energy greatly benefit from panax ginseng's grounding and yang (masculine) qualities. Panax ginseng is often available as "white" or "red" ginseng. White ginseng is unprocessed and helpful to assist digestion and when one is recovering from an illness. Red ginseng is actually white ginseng that has been cooked and dried. Processing ginseng roots in this way affects the ginsenosides, ginseng's active ingredients, which makes red ginseng more heating and stimulating, good for physical activities and as a sexual tonic.

American Ginseng *Panax quinquefolius*

American Ginseng has long been recognized as being the best in the world. Although it is similar to Asian ginseng, it differs in chemical structure. Asian ginseng is warming, builds energy and heat in the body, American ginseng is more neutral in its effects and tends to cool and calm the system. American ginseng reduces fatigue, strengthens adrenal response, enhances reproductive performance, improves liver metabolism and enhances immunity. The Chinese regard American Ginseng as a Yin Tonic reducing heat in the digestive and respiratory systems. For this reason it is considered more favorable for individuals with a hotter constitution. American Ginseng has also been used to strengthen the blood (not just for anemia), for exhaustion, especially when exhaustion is due to stress, as well as for sexual weakness.

Siberian Ginseng *Eleutherococcus senticosus*

For the longest time herbalist use to refer to this plant as Siberian ginseng, but today it is called by its botanical name eleuthero. While not a true ginseng, it has an impressive range of health benefits. Eleuthero builds stamina, enhances immunity, strengthens adrenal function, regulates blood sugar, benefits the musculoskeletal system, and is a superb adaptogen. Russian athletic coaches prescribed eleuthero for their Olympic contenders to combat stress, increase endurance and mental focus. When under mental or physical stress and exhaustion, this herb is very valuable. Eleuthero is of great support when one is experiencing chronic anxiety, depression and irritability. Although it is not a sedative, eleuthero is helpful for many nervous disorders, including insomnia, especially when insomnia is due to tension, worry, and stress. I have seen many times over how eleuthero greatly assisted those who were caught up in emotional suffering and just simply could not think themselves out of it. In a humorous way they would

tell me:”...this herb put my head back on top of my shoulder to enable me to think clearly again”. Eleuthero improves cerebral circulation, increasing mental focus and alertness. Dr. Jack Ritchason, N.D mentions in his book “The Little Herb Encyclopedia” that eleuthero was prescribed for military officers that were in senior levels of command, to offset the effects of aging. He also reveals that eleuthero, consumed on a daily basis, can give protection from every known viral infection known to man.

Tienchi Ginseng *Panax pseudoginseng*

This is a lesser known panax ginseng. It is mostly used for injuries and trauma due to its strong haemostatic action for acute conditions. It can be used internally and externally for bleeding, swelling and pain caused by traumatic injuries, even gunshot wounds. Tienchi ginseng is often preferred for younger people and those that are active in sports. It improves the flow of chi, strengthens the heart and improves athletic capacities. For people with heart conditions this is the preferred ginseng, as it does not over stimulate which can occur with the other ginsengs.

Suma – Brazilian Ginseng *Pfaffia paniculata*

Suma comes from Brazil, where it is also known as “para todo” meaning for everything. It is said that it is more powerful than ginseng. Much research has been done on this adaptogenic herb. Suma increases energy, strengthens the immune system, relieves stress, fortifies and balances hormones, regulates blood sugar, reduces tumors and cancers. Here in the United States, it has been used to overcoming chronic disorders resulting from a lowered immune system, such as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Epstein-Barr virus. It has also been used to lower cholesterol levels and to strengthen the heart. Suma is a wonderful antioxidant containing a high level of germanium to fight free radicals.

Ashwagandha – Indian Ginseng *Withania somnifera*

Native to India, ashwagandha enhances endocrine function by regulating the thyroid gland, testes and adrenal glands. It is effective for anxiety, fatigue, mental fog, and nervous exhaustion. Health practitioners have recommended this herb for cancer, chronic fatigue, and autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, as well as an anti-aging herb, to enhance vigor and sexual drive (ashwa, translated from Hindu means “horse” as it gives the user the strength and stamina of a stallion).

Maca – Amazon Ginseng *Lepidium meyenii*

Maca has been cultivated for more than 2,000 years at high altitudes in the Andean mountains. Maca is used for energy, longevity and fertility. Many athletes chose maca to enhance energy levels, build muscle mass and strength. Maca fuels the endocrine system and helps the glands produce vital hormones.

Ginseng Quick Reference

- ☼ All of the herbs mentioned are the best choices for promoting vitality, long life, and radiant well-being. With their adaptogenic properties they increase the body’s ability to adapt to stress, and therefore greatly enhance resistance to disease. All ginsengs improve energy levels and memory, fight against depression and nervous conditions, lower cholesterol, help diabetes, protect cells from radiation, support and rebuild the endocrine system, in particular the adrenal glands.
- ☼ Use red ginseng if you need energy before a physical workout, as it promotes testosterone production. Women should not use red ginseng for a long time.
- ☼ Use white ginseng to improve digestion, and to strengthen the body after a prolonged illness.
- ☼ Use American ginseng if you need energy, but do not want to be over-stimulated. Good for people who have heart conditions.
- ☼ Use Siberian ginseng for adrenal exhaustion and to regulate blood sugar.
- ☼ Use tienchi ginseng for bleeding and injuries.
- ☼ Use Brazilian ginseng to strengthen the immune and endocrine system.
- ☼ Use Indian ginseng to strengthen endocrine and nervous system.
- ☼ Use Amazon ginseng to help build muscle mass, strength, and fertility.

The Herb Stop
P.O. Box 673
Pine, AZ
85544

toll-free 877-345-Herb (4372)
w. 928-476-4144
f. 928-476-4806
www.HerbStopOnline.com

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