

Lotus Leaf — Wonder Drug for the Summer?

In the hot summer, the lotus leaf's pleasant fragrance is, perhaps, its most notable feature. However, its fragrance is, in fact, but one of its properties that promises to make it the 'wonder' drug for the summer. The leaf is reported to be therapeutic, especially in the summer. When taken alone, it is refreshing and has a 'cooling' effect, and when administered in combination with other ingredients, it acts like a wonder drug, curing a wide range of illnesses.

The lotus leaf, mixed with common tea leaves, and made into tea, is a potent concoction for preventing heatstroke, lowering blood lipid levels and treating obesity. Tea made with lotus leaves in combination with peppermint, 'qinghao' (青蒿), 'huoxiang' (藿香) and glycyrrhiza forms a refreshing drink, and, soup of fresh lotus leaves and mung beans is a remedy for children's carbuncles.

Japonica rice gruel, cooked while being covered with a clean lotus leaf with its edges cut off, is a healthcare food with refreshing properties, and, heatstroke and diarrhea patients may gain much from eating glutinous rice added to water boiled with fresh lotus leaves.

Lest one may be led to think that these concoctions would be too unpalatable to be of any marketable value, it is notable that less healthy individuals, who often have reduced appetites during the hot summer, usually find meat steamed with lotus leaf a very palatable food during this period.

Equally promising, are the various parts of the lotus plant — the flower facilitates blood coagulation; the seedpod tassel is a nutrient that nourishes the kidneys; the seeds may act as tranquilizers; the root may eliminate haemostasis; the stalk has diuretic properties; and the base of the leaf is known to reduce fetal activities.

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Chinese Drug Industry Undergoes Industrialization

The Chinese drug industry is undergoing industrialization in China. According to statistics, China now has 12 870 sources of Chinese drugs, approximately 11 150 types of drug plants, 1580 animals with medicinal properties, and 80 types of mineral drugs.

In mid 1980s, China began construction of Chinese drug production bases. Currently, the total area cultivated with drug plants in China is 0.8 million mu with over 600 Chinese drug production bases planting some 200 types of drug plants. Research on artificial cultivation, and breeding and preservation of rare animals and drug plant resources is also developing rapidly. Drug plants from overseas have been well received and mass production of these has helped to reduce the country's drug imports.

China has over 1000 Chinese drug enterprises with a total industrial worth of RMB 71.2 billion (US\$8.5 billion) in 1996. The sale of Chinese patent drugs and drugs for decoction was RMB 32.6 billion (US\$3.9 billion), accounting for 44% of total sales in the market. Within five years the average annual increase of the production value of Chinese patent drugs in the industry was 20% and the increase in taxes and profits was 24% on average. The total export in the industry reached RMB 598 million (US\$72.2 million) — RMB 460 million (US\$55.6 million) from exports of Chinese drug materials and RMB 135 million (US\$16.3 million) from Chinese patent drugs.