

Ocimum sanctum Linn. Medicinal Uses & Benefits

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The plant Tulsi or Holy Basil (Botanical name *Ocimum Sanctum* Linn.) belongs to family Lamiaceae. An annual delicate herb cultivated extensively in tropical climate of the country. It is also planted in kitchen garden and as an indoor plant since it is kept sacred in Hindu philosophy. The beneficial medicinal effects of plant materials typically result from the combinations of secondary products present in the plant. India is the largest producer of medicinal plants and is rightly called the "Botanical garden of the World". In India, 45,000 plant species have been identified, out of which about 15-20 thousand plants are of good medicinal value. However, traditional communities use only about 7000-7500 plants for medicinal purposes. The Siddha system of medicine uses about 600, Ayurveda 700, Unani 700 and modern medicine about 30 medicinal plants for treating a variety of diseases in man and animal. Only few medicinal plants have attracted the interest of scientists, to investigate them for a remedy for tumour (Jarald *et al.*,2006).The medicinal actions of plants are unique to particular plant species or groups are consistent with this concept as the combination of secondary products in a particular plant is taxonomically distinct. The herbal preparations are considered moderate in efficacy and are less toxic than the most commonly used pharmaceutical drugs. It is mentioned by Charaka in the Charaka Samhita; an Ayurvedic text. Tulsi is considered to be an adaptogen, balancing different processes in the body, and helpful for adapting to stress. Marked by its strong aroma and astringent taste, it is regarded in Ayurveda as a kind of 'elixir of life' and believed to promote longevity.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS

Different part of plant containing various amounts of constituents. Leaves contain 0.7% volatile oil comprising about 71% eugenol and 20% methyleugenol. In oil carvaxrol and



sesquiterpene hydrocarbon caryophyllene Ursolic acid has been isolated from the leaves. So main constituents can be counted as o-leanolic acid, ursolic acid, rosmarinic acid, eugenol, carvacrol, Linalool and β -caryophyllene.

Medicinal uses and benefits

Promotes Healthy Heart

Holy basil contains vitamin C and antioxidants such as eugenol, which protects the heart from the harmful effects of free radicals. Eugenol also proves useful in reducing cholesterol levels in the blood.

Anti-aging

Vitamin C and A, phytonutrients, in Holy Basil are great antioxidants and protect the skin from almost all the damages caused by free radicals.

Treats Kidney Stones

Tulsi acts as a mild diuretic & detoxifying agent which helps in lowering the uric acid levels in the body. Acetic acid present in holy basil helps in the breakdown of the stones.

Relieves Headaches

Tulsi is a natural headache reliever which can also relieve migraine pain.

Fights Acne

Holy basil helps kill bacteria and infections. The primary active compound of holy basil oil is eugenol which helps fight skin related disorders. Ocimum Sanctum helps treat skin infections both internally and externally.

Relieves Fever

Tulsi is an age-old ingredient for treating fever. It is one of the prime ingredients in the formulation of various ayurvedic medicines & home remedies.



Eye Health

Tulsi's anti-inflammatory properties help promote eye health by preventing viral, bacterial and fungal infections. It also soothes eye inflammation and reduces stress.

Oral Health

Tulsi is a natural mouth freshener and an oral disinfectant. Ocimum Sanctum can also cure mouth ulcers. Holy basil destroys the bacteria that are responsible for dental cavities, plaque, tartar, and bad breath, while also protecting the teeth.

Cures Respiratory Disorders

Due to the presence of compounds like camphene, eugenol, and cineole, tulsi cures viral, bacterial, and fungal infections of the respiratory system. It can cure various respiratory disorders like bronchitis & tuberculosis.

Rich Source of Vitamin K

Vitamin K is an essential fat-soluble vitamin that plays an important role in bone health and heart health.

Conclusion

Keeping in view the tremendous medicinal uses and a wealth of available literature of Ocimum sanctum may be utilized to alleviate the symptoms of variety of diseases as evident from pre-clinical data. The wide spread availability of this herb in India and other countries make it an attractive for further clinical and pre-clinical research and hence studies are in progress throughout the globe.