

SARIVA

Common name Indian sarsaparilla (E), Sugandhi (H)

Sanskrit Sariva, Anantmoola

Latin *Hemidismus indica – Radix (Asclepiadaceae)*

Sariva smells sweet and is also known as *sugandhi* 'the fragrant one' in Hindi. Its red colour relates to its affinity for the blood and it treats all conditions with heat or toxins in the blood; dermatological, musko skeletal, urogenital, gynaecological.

ENERGETICS

Rasa (taste) Sweet, bitter, astringent

Virya (action) Cooling

Vipaka (post-digestive effect) Sweet

Guna (quality) Light, unctuous

Dosha effect VPK-

Dhatu (tissue) Plasma, blood, muscle, reproductive

Srota (channel) Digestive, circulatory, nerve, female reproductive

CONSTITUENTS

Coumarins

Essential oil

Saponin¹

BIO-MEDICAL ACTION

Alterative, febrifuge, diuretic, anti-inflammatory, anti-miscarriage, vulnerary, fertility tonic

INDICATIONS

Skin Its cooling, sweet and bitter flavours and affinity for *rakta dhatu* clears inflammation from the skin; used in eczema, psoriasis, urticaria, acne rosacea and acne from aggravated *bhranjaka pitta*. It 'cleans' the blood, reduces lymphatic swellings, stops itching and reduces suppuration. The root powder is used to treat STDs that are damp and hot. It is a specific for acne. Also of great benefit in burning sensations (*daha*) anywhere around the body. It is used as an external paste or as a cream to benefit the above skin problems.²

Urinary Urinary infections with dark red, cloudy, painful urination; cystitis, urethritis, kidney infections, prostatitis. It stimulates the *mutravahasrotas* to clear excess water without straining the kidneys.

GIT Useful herb for stimulating the appetite in *pitta prakriti* without aggravating any acidity. It rectifies *agnimanda* and sluggish digestion. Used in inflammation of the mucus membranes throughout the body. Also used in hot, smelly and watery diarrhoea with excess *vata* drawing *pitta* downwards.³

Arthritis Its specific anti-inflammatory action is indicated when the joints are hot, red and inflamed. Also useful in acute and chronic gout.

Nerves Its sweet and cooling quality nourishes *sadhaka pitta* and the mind. Hence its use in disturbed, angry or irritated emotions from high *pitta* aggravating the equilibrium of the mind.

Gynaecology Traditional use for maintaining pregnancy and preventing habitual miscarriages. Also may be of benefit for menorrhagia caused by *pitta* overflowing from its channel in *arthavasrotas*

¹ Paranjpe

² Paranjpe

³ Bhavaprakasha

(uterine system). Its nourishing effect on *rasa dhatu* helps to increase the quantity and quality of breast milk.⁴

Male fertility Classified as *shukrakalam*, a sperm-increasing herb, it is of value in fertility problems and low libido. Its saponin content is considered to have a steroidal effect that enhances the production of testosterone.

AYURVEDIC ACTION

Kushtam Benefits skin problems

Amavishnashanam Destroys toxic poisons

Varnya Improves the complexion

Jwaram Used in fevers

Dahaprashamana Relieves burning sensations

Prameham Benefits urinary problems

Pittadaham Cools *pitta* and inflammations

Raktapittaghna Alleviates bleeding disorders from heat

Sugandhi Aromatic

Doshtrayanashanam Clears an excess of all three *doshas*

Shukrala Improves the quality of sperm

COMBINATIONS

+ Neem, Manjishta, Guduchi, Gotu kola, Sandalwood, Licorice for skin inflammation.

+ Coriander, Gokshura, Sandalwood for urinary infections.

+ Coriander, Fennel, Cumin for *pitta* digestion.

+ Haritaki, Bilva, Kutaja in diarrhoea.

+ Guduchi, Daruharidra and Turmeric for inflammatory arthritis.

+ Gotu kola, Rose, Brahmi for 'hot' emotions and disturbed *pitta*.

+ Ashoka, Manjishta, Shatavari, Roses for bleeding.

+ Gokshura, Ashwagandha, Safed Musali, Shatavari in male infertility.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

None known.

SAFETY

No drug herb interactions are known

DOSAGE

1–10g/day dried or 3–15ml of a 1:3 @ 45% tincture.

NOTES

* Sariva grows throughout central and south India and in Sri Lanka. It is a thin, creeping plant growing up to 3m. It spreads throughout the circulatory system and cools any area of excessive heat.

* Another name for it is *Anantmool* 'the eternal root' as its root spreads for a long way underground and it survives periods of climatic stress (eg droughts).

* *Svatasariva*, White sariva (*Hemidismus indicus*) and *Krsnasariva*, Black sariva (*Cryptolepis buchanani*) are mentioned in the texts.

* Its use is very similar to Jamaican sarsaparilla, *Smilax ornata* and Dwipautra, *Smilax china*.

⁴ Bhavaprakasha