



PARAY MISSION HOSPITAL AND SCHOOL OF NURSING

Physiotherapy Departement

LENGANA, *Artemisia afra*

Some useful information of a common herb:

Common name: African wormwood

Proper name: *Artemisia afra*

Sesotho name: Lengana

Description

This highly aromatic plant is an erect multi-stemmed perennial shrub of up to 80 cm in Lesotho. The leaves are dark green above, grey-white hairy beneath, of soft texture and similar in shape to fern leaves. *Artemisia afra* blossoms in late summer, producing butter-colored flowers at the branch ends, each flower approximately 3 to 5 mm in diameter. *Artemisia afra* exudes a pungent, sweet smell when any part of the flower is bruised. In cold regions the branches die back in winter but rapidly regenerate from the base in spring. In gardens you can find the domestic type of *Artemisia afra* with bigger and softer leaves and they taste less bitter than the wild one.

Distribution

Artemisia afra is a very common species in South Africa and Lesotho and its natural distribution extends northwards into tropical east Africa as far as Ethiopia. It likes dry, stony territory, grows as little single or on ideal positions also as a gathering of bushes.

Medicinal Uses

Artemisia afra is a well known medicinal plant in Africa and is still used effectively by people of many cultures. Uses range from treating cough, fever, colic, headache to intestinal parasites and malaria. In addition the plant is frequently used as a moth repellent, for infusions, lotions, essential oils, it can be inhaled and its extracts can be used in full body wash.

Attention: The regular use of *Artemisia afra* tea is limited to 2 weeks because of strong side effects.

Here some applications:

Steam Inhalation

1 teaspoon of dried leaves boiled in 2 litres of water, 5-10 min. allow to draw, inhale about 10 min. It helps when you have a stuffy, running nose and is against chronic upper respiratory infections. To treat a blocked nose plugs of fresh leaves may be inserted in the nostrils.

Full Body Wash and Sitting Bath

Boil 1 tablespoon of dried leaves in 5 litres of water. Wash the whole body as hot as possible, do rinse and put the patient to bed with a hot water bottle. You could add 2 tablespoons of Koena (wild mint) to the washing water. It helps in times of a common cold, of flu and of harmless, feverish conditions and of haemorrhoids.

Partial Body Wash

Face, acne, pimples.

Ointment

Mix 10 gr of dried powderized Artemisia leaves with 100 gr of sunflower oil, warm it without boiling for 1 hour, always stirring (without any lid). Filter it and mix it with 20 gr of melted beewax or melted paraffin and fill the ointment into little containers. It is good against infections, inflammations or fungal and bacterial skin infections and haemorrhoids and relaxes painful joints.

Enema

Only nurses should prepare enemas!!! Ground, dry leaves are suspended in milk and used against intestinal worms and against constipation.

Growing, harvesting and drying Lengana leaves

As Lengana grows all over the country you don't need to plant it in your garden. When you harvest the leaves, pay attention that you don't collect them on a field where animals graze. Only if there are too many animals around plant some Lengana in your garden. Pick the leaves before the plant blossoms. put them in a box that the wind can't blow them away and that they will be protected from dust. The box must be always open, without any lid. Leave the box in a warm and sunny place for the first 2-3 days and only then bring it into the shadow. Once the leaves are 100% dry, grind them to powder and fill the powder in very well closing tins.

Attention

Prolonged and regular use of Lengana tea creates nausea, abdominal pain and stresses the nervous system.

The tea tastes very bitter, even loathsome and has an ugly smell. In order to be on the safe side prepare for internal use a tea with the domestic *Artemisia afra* and use the wild growing one for external treatments only.

As the medicinal use of the leaves of *Artemisia afra* is already very powerful, leave the use of the roots to the expert!