



**Medicine at Your Feet:  
Healing Plants of the  
Hawaiian Kingdom**

**Single Plants: A PDF file**

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**Medicine at your Feet:**  
**Healing Plants of the Hawaiian Kingdom**  
***Chamaesyce hirta* (Koko kahiki)**

**By David Bruce Leonard, L.Ac.**

*"A weed is a plant whose virtues have not been discovered"*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Just what you need... another  
Roast Duck Production



*"A peasant must stand a long time on a hillside with his  
mouth open before a roast duck flies in."*

-- Chinese proverb

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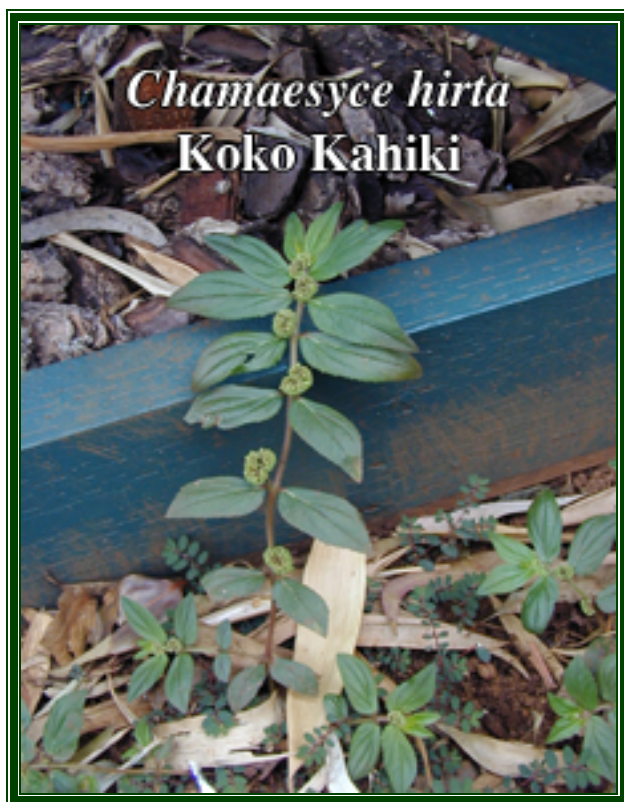
Thank you for your kind support of this work and our 'Āina. Aloha no kākou.

Mahalo,

David Bruce Leonard

## **WARNING**

**Caution: Many plants used as medicine are poisonous! They can kill you. Never attempt to use herbal medicine without the guidance of a traditional elder or a licensed healthcare provider. If you wish to act on some of the information in this book, you must consult with a professional. Do not try to be your own doctor.**



## ***Chamaesyce hirta* (Koko kahiki)**

**PLANT NAME:** *Chamaesyce hirta* (L.) Millsp.

**OTHER NAMES:** *Euphorbia hirta*, *Euphorbia pilulifera*, *Euphorbia capitata*

**SIMILARLY USED SPECIES:** *Euphorbia parviflora*

**COMMON NAMES:** **Koko kahiki** [Hawai'i]; pill bearing spurge [USA]; lal dudhi, paala, ariki thala [India]; amampatchaiarisi [Tamil]; boro-keruie [Bengali]; chara [Sanskrit].

**NOMENCLATURE:** *Chamaesyce* is from the Greek *chamai*, meaning "on the ground," and *sykon*, which means "fig" (an oblique reference to the shape of the capsules).

Koko is a Hawaiian word for numerous euphorbiaceae family plants, and koko kahiki means "foreign koko."

**FAMILY:** Euphorbiaceae.

**CATEGORY:** Clear damp heat.

**PROPERTIES:** Acrid, bitter [Great Britain]. Bitter, sour, cool, slightly toxic [China].

**PLANT PART USED:** All of it.

**TOXICITY:** Reports of toxicity have been conflicting. Until more definitive research has been done: ***I do not recommend using this plant.***

Some sources list it as toxic [Huxley 1992] and possibly carcinogenic [Matthews 1994]. One animal study [Lanhers 1990] reported no toxic effects when the water extract was given either i.p. or orally.

Photosensitivity, and severe inflammation have been reported from topical use. I have used it on myself topically many times with no untoward results, but everyone's skin and system are different.

**CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:** *DO NOT USE THIS PLANT.* See *Toxicity*. Do not use in pregnancy. Can irritate the digestive system and cause vomiting. Sap can cause dermatitis and may be carcinogenic in large doses.

**PREPARATION OF MEDICINE:** Tincture 1:5 60%. Infused.

**DOSAGE:** 15-30 gm in decoction. In China up to 300 grams is used for severe digestive conditions. Tincture 10 - 60 drops.

**STATUS IN HAWAII:** Alien. Moderate pest factor.

**WESTERN FUNCTIONS REPORTED:** Anodyne; anthelmintic for children; antiasthmatic; anti-bacterial; anti-cancer; anti-catarrhal; anti-emetic or emetic depending on dose; antipruritic; antiseptic; antispasmodic (leaves); anti-viral; aphrodisiac; bronchodilator; carminative; cyanogenetic; depurative; discutient; diuretic; emetic (large doses); expectorant; febrifuge; galactagogue; gastric irritant; heart depressant; lactagogue; laxative; promotes hair growth (sap topical); promotes lactation; purgative; purifies the blood; reduces gas; relaxes the bronchioles; respiration depressant; respiratory antispasmodic; sedate fever (leaves); soothes the skin and mucous membranes; stop bleeding (leaves); stops itching; vermifuge; vesicant.

**TRADITIONAL CHINESE ENERGETIC FUNCTIONS** (~ = extrapolated): Clears heat, drains fire.

**OTHER ENERGETIC FUNCTIONS:** Treats disharmonies of kapha or vata.

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### **Koko Kahiki Common Medicinal Uses**

- Asthma & bronchial asthma
- Skin disorders

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### **Koko Kahiki Cross-Cultural Medicinal Uses**

#### **BITES & STINGS**

- Snake bite and scorpion bite.

#### **CARDIOVASCULAR**

- Cardiac disharmonies [Eclectic].
- Hypertension [Trinidad].

#### **DERMATOLOGICAL**

- Skin diseases [China, Guatemala, India (sap topical) Samoa].
- Fungus [China]; athlete's-foot [China (herb decocted, topical)]; ringworm [India (poulticed), Java].
- Dermatitis, dermatosis [China (topical), Java]; eruptions [Samoa]; eczema [China (topical), India (poulticed)].
- Skin growths [Barbados]; warts [Africa, India (sap topical), Jamaica, Panama].
- Scabies itching [China, Guatemala].
- Skin ulcers [India (leaves)]; pyodermas [China (poulticed or wash topical)]; sores [Africa, Malaya, Mexico].

- **Herpes zoster** [China (poulticed or wash topical)].

### DIGESTIVE

- **Indigestion** [China (decocted), India (with molasses internal)]; **nausea** [Sudan]; **vomiting**.
- **Stomachache** [India (leaves and flower used as a "chew," once a day for four days), Mexico, Mozambique].
- **Amoebic and bacillary dysentery** [China (decocted), India (juice internal), Mozambique, New Caledonia, Upper Volta]. **Blood in the stools** [India (juiced or with milk)].
- **Diarrhea** [India (in combination), Panama].
- **Enteritis** [China (herb decocted)].

### HEAD AND THROAT

- **In Borneo, *Chamaesyce hirta* is a specific for eye diseases including cancer of the cornea and conjunctivitis.**
- **Eye pain and disease** [India (sap topical)]; **cornea problems** [Malaya]; **eyelid problems** [Guatemala]; **conjunctivitis** [Ghana (young leaves), India (sap topical), Malaya]; **ophthalmia** [Africa].
- **Boils of mouth; chapped lips or tongue** [India (sap topical)]; **upper laryngeal spasm; toothache.**
- **Headache** [Upper Volta].

### INFECTION

- **Abscess.**
- **Fever** [China, Haiti, Trinidad].

### MUSCULOSKELETAL / TRAUMA

- **Wounds** [Ghana (sap topical), India (paste), Upper Volta]; **broken bones** [India (poulticed with salt)]; **bruises** [Malaya].
- **Pain in the joints; spasms** [Haiti].
- **Burns** [India (paste)].
- **Splinters** [Africa].

### ONCOLOGY

- **Tumors** [Indonesia].

### PARASITES

- **Enteric trichomoniasis** [China (decocted)]; **amoebas** [USA]; **intestinal worms** [Africa].

### PEDIATRIC

- **Children's digestive problems** [India (seeds and leaves)].
- **Colic** [India].
- **Worms in children** [India (juice, seeds, or leaves)].

- **Measles** [Trinidad].

### REPRODUCTIVE

- **Breast problems** [India]; **to increase lactation** [India (juice with molasses internal)]; **breast abscess** [China (poulticed or wash topical)]. **In Jamaica, the sap is put on the nipples of young girls to stimulate breast growth.**
- **Post-natal issues** [India].
- **Impotence** [India]; **premature ejaculation** [India].
- **Syphillis** (herb decocted); **gonorrhoea** [Africa, India].

### RESPIRATORY

- **Respiratory problems, spasms** [Eclectic, India]; **cough** [Africa, Australia, India (decocted), Panama].
- **Asthma** [Australian Aborigines, Eclectic, Ethiopia, Haiti, India (decocted), Samoa]; **paroxysmal asthma** [Eclectic (leaves smoked)].
- **Colds & flu** [Australia, India, Trinidad]; **hay fever**.
- **Bronchial infection** [Australia, Dominican Republic, Eclectic (in the elderly), India (decocted)]; **chronic bronchitis** [China (decocted)]; **phlegm** [Java].
- **Emphysema** [Eclectic].
- **Pain of pulmonary tuberculosis** [Eclectic].

### URINARY

- **Urogenital problems** [India].
- **Kidney disease; nephritis** [China (decocted)]; **inflammation of the kidney and pelvis** [China (decocted)].

### VETERINARY

- **Broken bones in cows** [India].

### OTHER MEDICINAL USES

- **Debility** [Bahamas].
- **Rickets**.
- **Poisonous conditions** [India].

**USE AS FOOD:** Young shoots cooked as famine food.

**CONSTITUENTS:** Alkaloids, beta-sterol, flavonoids, gallic acid, glycosides, quercitrin (antidiarrheal), sterols, tannin, triterpenoids

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMBINATIONS:**

**Chronic bronchitis:** With *Platycodon grandiflorum* (jie geng) [China].

**Urinary disorders:** With *Albizia lebeck*, *Cassia fistula*, and cow's milk [Malaya].

**Asthma and bronchitis:** With *Grindelia camporum*, *Grindelia robusta* or *Lobelia inflata*.

**Wounds:** Leaves fried with coconut oil topical [India].

**Malaria:** With *Cassia occidentalis*, *Cryptolepis sanguinolenta*, *Garcinia kola*, *Morinda lucida* leaves & *Phyllanthus niruri* [Congo].

**RANGE:** Pantropical. Native to Australia and India.

**HABITAT:** It likes sun and thrives on abusive pathways and roadsides.

**GATHERING:** If you have sensitive skin, wear gloves while gathering to avoid dermatitis. Gather when flowering. The aerial parts can be dried for later use.

**PROPAGATION & CULTIVATION:** No need.

**RESEARCH:**

- Antibacterial against *Shigella* spp. dysentery [Vijaya 1995]. Antiamoebic [Tona 1999, 2000]. Antimalarial [Tona 1999].
- Increases urination in rats. Diuretic function is similar to acetazolamide [Johnson 1999].
- Antispasmodic [Tona 1999].
- Analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic, CNS depressant in lab animals [Lanthers 1991].
- Sedative in lab animals [Lanthers 1990].

**NOTES 'N QUOTES**

Introduced into Europe in 1884

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