



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

Single Plants: A PDF file

David Bruce Leonard, L.Ac.

Medicine at your Feet:
Healing Plants of the Hawaiian Kingdom
***Siegesbeckia orientalis* (Xi Xian Cao)**

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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Dear Reader,

E kala mai, please do not pirate (copy or give away) this PDF file. It has taken eight years to research and write the book from which this material is taken. Your purchase allows us to continue research on the healing properties of medicinal plants and the restoration of our native Hawaiian ecosystems. Ten percent of the profits from this work are given to Hawaiian cultural and environmental restoration groups.

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.



Siegesbeckia orientalis (Xi Xian Cao)

PLANT NAME: *Siegesbeckia orientalis* L.

SIMILARLY USED SPECIES: *S. pubescens* Mak., *S. glabrescens* Mak.

COMMON NAMES: Xi xian cao [China]; small yellow crown beard [English]; colle colle ("stick stick") [Creole]; hay lim cho [Canton]; kakamika [Tonga]; kirenso [Japan]; oech'umch'o [Korea]; st. paulswort [English]; trompetilla (*S. cordifolia*) [Colombia].

NOMENCLATURE: Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was the "father" of modern plant nomenclature, having invented the basis for the system we currently use today. He was a controversial character who insisted on using an organizational system based on plant sexuality. Among his critics was a botanist named Johann Siegesbeck (1686–1755). Objecting to Linnaeus' system of sexual classification, Siegesbeck referred to Linnaeus' work as "loathsome harlotry." Undisturbed, Linnaeus had the last laugh. He selected the ugliest little weed he could find and named it *Siegesbeckia*. I don't know anything about Mr. Siegesbeck, but I find the plant quite lovely.

FAMILY: Asteraceae.

CATEGORY: Expel wind dampness.

PROPERTIES: Bitter, cold, slightly toxic.

PLANT PART USED: Aerial parts.

TOXICITY: Some Chinese sources list *Siegesbeckia* as slightly toxic.

CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS: Not in pregnancy.

ENERGETIC CAUTIONS: Caution in blood or yin deficiency.

PREPARATION OF MEDICINE: Decocted or juiced fresh. I use it fresh or dried. In China it is sometimes prepared with wine.

DOSAGE: 6 to 15 grams. Up to 60 grams for malaria.

STATUS IN HAWAII: Alien. Moderate pest potential.

MERIDIAN AFFINITIES: Liver, kidneys.

WESTERN FUNCTIONS REPORTED: Anti-inflammatory; antioxidant; parasiticide.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE ENERGETIC FUNCTIONS (~ = extrapolated):

1) Dispels wind damp.

- 2) Strengthens the tendons, clears the channels.
- 3) Calms the spirit.
- 4) Clears damp heat.
- 5) Cleans heat and dispels toxins.
- 6) Clears liver heat.
- 7) Invigorates blood and stops pain.
- 8) Dispels gas and opens the luo channels.

OTHER ENERGETIC FUNCTIONS: Sedates kapha.

Xi Xian Cao Common Medicinal Uses

- **Joint pain**
- **Hypertension**
- **Insomnia**
- **Skin disorders**

Xi Xian Cao Cross Cultural Medicinal Uses

COSMETIC

- **Used in cosmetic moisturizers for its anti-oxidant properties.**

CARDIOVASCULAR

- **Cerebral thrombosis** [China (decocted)].
- **High blood pressure** [China (internal)].

DERMATOLOGICAL

- **Skin disease and inflammation** [China, Mauritius Islands, Tonga (infusion topical)].
- **Boils, carbuncles, furuncles** [China (decocted)].
- **Itching and eczema, oozing dermatitis** [China (decocted)].
- **Ringworm** [19th Century England (juice internal)].
- **Wounds, burns** [Creole (juice topical)].

HEAD AND THROAT

- **Headache from high blood pressure** [China (internal)].

HEPATIC

- **Acute infectious hepatitis** [China (whole plant)].

INFECTION

- **Leprosy** [Mauritius Islands].

MUSCULOSKELETAL / TRAUMA

- **Arthritis, including acute & chronic rheumatoid arthritis (esp. of knees), weakness & pain in the low back & legs, sciatica** [China (decocted, internal)].

NEUROLOGICAL

- **Dizziness** [China (internal)].
- **Hemiplegia and facial paralysis** [China (decocted, internal)].

PARASITES

- **Malaria** [China (whole plant decocted)].

PEDIATRIC

- **Measles** [China (decocted)].

PSYCHOSPIRITUAL

- **Forgetfulness, insomnia, irritability, "neurasthenia"** [China (whole plant decocted)].

REPRODUCTIVE

- **Antifertility.**
- **Syphilis** [Mauritius Islands].
- **Mastitis** [China].

RESPIRATORY

- **Allergies.**
- **Asthma.**

URINARY

- **Painful urination** [19th Century England].
- **Kidney pain** [China].

Xi Xian Cao Local Combinations

Neck pain: Add *Xanthium strumarium* (cang er zi), *Piper methysticum* ('awa).

High blood pressure: Add *Cymbopogon refractus* (wāpine), *Prunella vulgaris* (xia ku cao).

Mild insomnia: Add *Oxalis* spp. ('ihi mākole / 'ihi), *Pipturus albidus* (māmake).

Moderate insomnia: Add *Piper methysticum* ('awa), *Mimosa pudica* (hilahila).

Acute Hepatitis: Add *Desmodium* spp. (pua pilipili), *Bidens pilosa* (kīnehi), *Plantago major* (laukahi).

CROSS-CULTURAL COMBINATIONS:

Ringworm topical with

- Glycerine [19th Century England].

Sinusitis with

- *Magnolia liliflora* (xin yi hua), *Xanthium strumarium* (cang er zi), *Angelica dahurica* (bai zhi), *Chrysanthemum morifolium* (bai ju hua), *Mentha arvensis* (bo he) [China].

Joint pain with

- *Clerodendron trichotomum* (chou wu tong) [China].

- *Clematis chinensis* (wei ling xian) [China].

High blood pressure with

- *Clerodendron trichotomum* (chou wu tong), *Uncaria* (gou teng) [China].
- *Alisma plantago-aquatica* (ze xie); *Salvia miltiorrhiza* (dan shen); *Paeonia rubra* (chi shao); *Ligusticum chuanxiong* (chuan xiong), *Carthamus tinctorius* (hong hua) [China].

To prevent cerebral thrombosis with

- *Angelica sinensis* (dang gui), *Borneolum*, *Carthamus tinctorius* (hong hua), *Hirudo nipponica* (shui zhi), *Ligusticum wallichii* (gao ben), *Moschus moschiferus* (she xiang), *Panax notoginseng* (tien qi), *Prunus persica* (tao ren) [China].

RANGE: Native to tropical areas of North and South America.

HABITAT: Likes disturbed areas up to 3600'

GATHERING: Any time in Hawai'i, but it's best just before flowering

RESEARCH:

Shows strong anti-anaphylactic activity as an antihistamine (presumably in lab animals) in a dose-related manner [Kang 1997]. This appears to be through the suppression of immunoglobulin (Ig)E [Kim 2001, Hwang WJ].

A constituent (darutoside) in *Siegesbeckia glabrescens* is abortifacient in lab animals [Dong 1989].

NOTES 'N QUOTES

- The uses of xi xian cao were first recorded in China in 659 A.D.
- The flowers are sticky, as are the seeds, which spread via animal contact.
- There are six species in the genus *Siegesbeckia*.
- Xi xian cao treats an unusual constellation of symptoms, giving it uncommon flexibility as a medicinal. It is a common roadside weed on windward sides.

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