



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

Single Plants: A PDF file

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Healing Plants of the Hawaiian Kingdom
***Tropaeolum majus* (Pohe Haole)**

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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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.



Tropaeolum majus (Pohe Haole)

PLANT NAME: *Tropaeolum majus* L.

COMMON NAMES: **Pohe haole** [Hawai'i]; **nasturtium**, [USA]; **han lian hua**, Jin Lian Hua, Chin-lien-hua [China]; blomkarse, blomsterkarse [Norway]; blomsterkarse, landløber, tallerkensmækker, tropæolum [Denmark]; kapuzinerkresse [Germany]; masteruerzo, capuchina, pajarilla, pajarito [Bolivia]; nasturcja, nasturcja wieksza [Poland]; taxsawl, alpincu, thejsau yuyu, mallau [Aymara]; tjsaw thejsawi, chiri chiri [Quechua]; indian cress [England].

NOMENCLATURE: The name *Tropaeolum* comes from the Greek tropaion, which means trophy. Tropaeolum is said to have sprouted from the spilled blood of a Trojan warrior. The round leaf was his shield and the flower was his helmet.

The English common name "nasturtium" comes from "nasmus tortus" (a twisted nose) and is given because of its pungent odor.

FAMILY: Tropaeolaceae.

CATEGORY: Clear heat and toxins ~.

PROPERTIES: Bitter, pungent. Cool.

PLANT PART USED: Aerial parts.

TOXICITY: Acute toxic effects in mice were observed at 200 mg / kg i.p. [Pintao 1995]

CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS:

Sensitive stomachs may be irritated. Eating too much may cause vomiting. Not with GI ulcers or kidney disease. Not for infants or small children. Care should be taken in handling: may cause blisters.

PREPARATION OF MEDICINE: Leaves infused.

DOSAGE:

Internal:

- 10-15 grams fresh in combination.
- As a single herb use 2 tsp. of fresh leaves in 1 cup boiling water. Steep 10-15 minutes. Take 2-3x a day.

Topical:

- For athlete's foot, infuse 2 cups of leaves in 4 cups of boiling water for 15 minutes. Strain. Add 2 gallons of warm water. Soak feet for 2 weeks, 1 / 2 hour a day.
- For bacterial infections infuse 1 cup of leaves to 2 cups of boiling water.

STATUS IN HAWAII: Alien. Marginal pest factor.

MERIDIAN AFFINITIES: Lung, stomach, spleen ~.

WESTERN FUNCTIONS REPORTED: Seeds are purgative. **Antibacterial** (essential oil); **antibiotic** [Portugal, also essential oil]; **anti-microbial**; **antimycotic** (essential oil); **antineoplastic**; **antiseptic**; **antiscorbutic** [Portugal]; **antispasmodic** [Portugal]; **antiviral** (essential oil); **aphrodisiac**; **bactericide**; **bacteriostatic**; **blood cleanser**; **clears phlegm**; **demulcent**; **depurative** [Turkey]; **digestive problems**; **diuretic** [Turkey]; **emmenagogue** [Haiti, Turkey]; **expectorant** [Turkey]; **fungicide**; **improving appetite**; **internal or external disinfectant**; **invigorates digestion**; **laxative** [Iraq, Turkey]; **promotes blood cells**; **promotes digestion**; **purgative**; **reduces mucus**; **rejuvenative**; **removes respiratory congestion**; **respiratory infections**; **rubifacient**; **seeds eliminate toxins through the bowels and kidneys**; **stimulant for hair growth** [Portugal]; **stimulates secretion of digestive enzymes**; **stimulates the appetite**; **tonic for weak digestion**; **urinary tract infections**; **very antimycotic** (topically); **viostatic**; **vulnerary**.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE ENERGETIC FUNCTIONS (~ = extrapolated):

- 1) Clears heat and toxins.
- 2) Cools blood and stops bleeding.

Pohe Haole Common Medicinal Uses

- **Bronchitis with irritation, yellow phlegm**
- **Urinary infections**
- **Topical for bacterial and fungal infections**

Pohe Haole Cross-Cultural Medicinal Uses

COSMETIC

- **Hair rinse.**

DERMATOLOGICAL

- **Itching, skin fungi (topically), ringworm, tinea, fungus in fingernails** [Mexico].
- **Skin infections** with "fierce toxins," **sores** [China, General]; **skin wounds** [Peru]; used as an **antiseptic wash**.

DIGESTIVE

- **Low appetite, weak digestion.**

HEAD AND THROAT

- **Ophthalmic conditions; ophthalmologic infections** (internal). The Chinese use this topically for **red, swollen, and painful eyes**. (Do not try this at home!)

- In India, the leaves are used topically to **clean the gums**.
- **Chronic throat problems; thrush.**

INFECTION

- **Antiseptic wash** (leaves infused).
- **Any bacterial infection** (specific for lungs, leaves infused).
- **Candida; fungal infections** (infusion as foot bath).
- **Fever.**

LYMPHATIC

- **Scrofula** (lymph TB, juiced, internal)

MUSCULOSKELETAL / TRAUMA

- **Minor cuts and scratches** [Quechua (leaves poulticed)].
- **Wounds; wound healing.**

ONCOLOGY

- **Cancer** [Mexico].

PSYCHOSPIRITUAL

- **Stimulant** [Mexico].

REPRODUCTIVE

- **Infections of the female reproductive organs.**
- **Menstrual problems** [Quechua (leaves)].

RESPIRATORY

- **Bronchitis, chest plaster for coughs influenza, influenzal pneumonia. Respiratory problems** [Mexico, Quechua (leaves)].
- **Coughs, common cold and the flu** [Quechua (leaves)].
- **Nasal and bronchial congestion** (leaves infused).

URINARY

- **Urogenital problems, urinary tract infections, stones.**

OTHER MEDICINAL USES

- **Inflammation.**
 - **Scurvy** [Mexico, Spain, Turkey].
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USE AS FOOD:

- The fresh flowers are used in salads as a garnish and "stimulant." The ground seeds were used as a pepper substitute during World War II. Young leaves can also be added to salads.
- Pickle flower buds in white wine vinegar, sugar, and salt for 3 weeks as a substitute for capers.
- Plants grown in the shade have a milder taste.

ESSENTIAL OIL: Contains mustard oil. Disinfectant.

CONSTITUENTS: Spilanthol, myrosin (an enzyme), oxalic acid. Vitamin C (leaves) glucosinolates (a mustard-oil glycoside); glycotropeoline, iodine.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMBINATIONS: For thrush with *Tabebuia impetiginosa* (pau d'arco).

RANGE: Hawai'i, North and South America, Europe.

HABITAT: Native to Peru. Likes sunny built up areas.

GATHERING: Straight from the garden. Young plants are stronger. If gathering in large amounts use gloves.

RESEARCH:

- Extracts reduce blood clotting [de Medeiros 2000].
- *Tropaeolum tuberosum* is a related species with an edible tuber grown in the Andes. It is reported to be an anti-aphrodesiac, either through the reduction of testosterone, or through its estrogenic activity. Animal studies have failed to confirm any effect on male fertility, only on libido [Johns 1982].
- In vitro cytotoxicity has been reported against ovarian carcinoma, human lung tumor, and leukemia [Pintao 1995].

NOTES 'N QUOTES

*"Shield-like Nasturtium, too, confusedly spread,
with intermingling trefoil fills each bed-
once graceful youths, this last a Grecian swain,
The first an huntsman on the Trojan plain."*

- - PAUL DE RAPIN (1661-1725)

- Indigenous to Peru. The original nasturtiums grown by the Quechua Indians had yellow flowers. The Conquistadors brought *Tropaeolum majus* to Spain from Peru in the sixteenth century. It reached herbalist John Gerard by the 1590s, and was brought to central Europe by Bewerning in 1684 as food and medicine.
- Nasturtiums were grown at Thomas Jefferson's home, Monticello, and in the royal gardens of France.
- On hot summer days the Nasturtium flower can emit sparks. These may be caused by phosphoric acid.
- The Nasturtium flower represents patriotism.
- The classification Nasturtium is one of those interesting examples of Chinese pragmatism. Although pohe haole tastes "warm," because it clinically clears heat, it is classified as "cool."

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