

Acorus calamus Linn.



Family: Araceae

Common names: Sweet flag.

Local names: Bach, Gobrach (Hindi)

Ayurvedic name: Vacha, Uragandha, Shadgrantha, Golomi

Plant profile:

Acorus calamus is a semi-aquatic perennial cultivated in damp marshy places in India. The plant has 3-5 feet long rhizomes similar to ginger. The rhizomes also have a characteristic smell that are and have 5-6 nodes. The plant occurs in damp marshy habitat particularly near ponds and springs. In India it occurs up to a height of 2000 m particularly in Kashmir, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. For cultivation purposes, the plant is propagated through the rhizome.

Medicinal uses:

- **Part used:** Rhizome
- **Active principles:** A volatile essential oil, acorin, a bitter principle acoretin (choline), calamine, starch, mucilage, a little of tannin can be extracted from the plant. The dried rhizome yields 1.5% to 2.7% of a neutral yellow aromatic essential oil having an agreeable odour. The fresh aerial parts yield about 0.123% of the volatile oil, the unpeeled roots give a higher yield from 1.5 to 3.5%. Acorin is a glucoside which is a honey like liquid that is very bitter and aromatic.
- **Disease cured and dosage:**
 - **Ethnomedicinal:** It is used as a remedy for chronic diarrhoea. The rhizome is also used as an appetite stimulator and is useful in the treatment of epilepsy, hysteria and memory loss. The dried rhizome of the plant constitutes the drug called 'calamus of commerce'.
 - **Ethnoveterinary:** Data not sufficient
- **Ayurveda:** Saraswat churna, medhya rasayana. Prescribed dose: churna: 125-500 mg. (for shaman), 1-2 g (for shodhan)
- **Ayurvedic properties and actions:**
 - Guna (qualities): Laghu (light), tikshna (sharp)
 - Rasa (taste): Tikta (bitter), katu (pungent)
 - Vipaka (post digestive taste): Katu (pungent)
 - Virya (potency): Ushna (hot)
 - Prabhava (effect): Medhya (nervine tonic)

As per Charaka Samhita: It is considered as virechan (purgative), lekhaniya (corpulence reducing agent), arshoghna (anti haemorrhoidal), triptighna, aasthapanog, sheetprashman, sangyasthapan, sirovirechan and tiktaskandh.

- **Therapeutic description:**
 - Effect on humours: Alleviates vata, kapha
 - External Application: Used to treat osteo-arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, paralysis (paste), tinnitus, otalgia (expressed juice) and piles (smoke).

- Nervous system: Treats psychosomatic disorders, epilepsy, vataj diseases, tetanus, paresis and convulsions.
 - Digestive system: It is used in the treatment of dyspepsia, indigestion, constipation, flatulence, abdominal colic, piles and worm-infestation.
 - Respiratory system: Used against vata-kafaj cough, catarrh, laryngitis, hoarseness of voice and dyspnoea.
 - Urino-genital system: It is used to treat renal calculous, dysurea, painful delivery and dysmenorrhoea.
 - Temperature: Also treats pyrexia and post febrile effects.
- **Drug preparation:**
 - The drug is externally applied as a paste and taken internally in the form of a powder.