

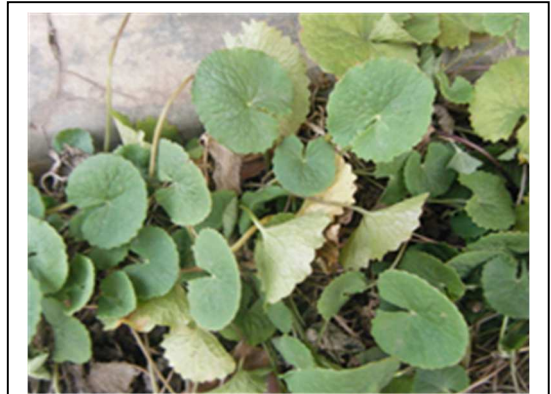
Centella asiatica (L.) Urban (Centella, Indian Pennywort, Gotu kola)

Botanical description: Family: Apiaceae. Native to India and the south of the United States. It is now found extensively in Africa. It is a creeping, sparsely haired, creeping, perennial plant with kidney shaped or near circular leaves, 2 to 7 cm across with U-shaped notches at the stalks. Grows in moist places.

Parts used: Mainly the leaves

Main areas of use which have been confirmed with clinical trials:

1. Improving blood circulation throughout the body. This is particularly helpful for diabetes patients.
2. Wound healing, both internally and externally.



Centella asiatica growing by a house wall in Arua, Uganda

Rehema Namyalo in Kirimya, Masaka, Uganda uses centella for the following complaints:

Internally

Prepare centella tea as either

- a) a decoction by boiling one handful of fresh, washed leaves in one litre of water for 5 minutes, or
- b) an infusion, by pouring boiling water over one teaspoonful of dried centella leaf powder in one large cup. Allow to stand for 15 minutes.

1. Brain boosting, memory boosting and improving concentration.
2. Stress, anxiety, fatigue and depression.
3. Detoxifying the body: Centella supports the function of the liver. Take centella tea throughout the day. It may help if a patient has taken an overdose of tablets.
4. Activating the vocal cords: When speaking becomes difficult following a serious illness or coma, take one cup times three daily until the voice is clear again.
5. Strengthening the nervous system, especially when there are signs of tremors or shaking, or where balance, coordination or speech are affected, or following a stroke. Centella also helps with Parkinson's disease. Drink a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening just before going to bed. After the morning cup have a rest for not less than 15 minutes.

For such complaints you can take centella alone or you can mix it with rosemary.

6. Allergic reactions, especially skin allergies: for example, when one has a reaction to meat, either from smelling or eating it. Centella tea stops this allergic reaction and boosts the immunity to prevent further reactions.

Externally

1. Chronic skin infections, including fungal infections and leprosy: Drink centella tea 3 times daily. Squeeze fresh centella leaves and rub the leaf juice extract on the affected areas.

2. Fresh wounds: Squeeze juice from centella leaves onto the wound, even if the wound is still bleeding. You may also prepare a tincture with centella leaves and apply the tincture to the wound.

For large wounds, dress the wound with crushed, fresh centella leaves as a poultice. Secure the poultice to the wound with a bandage. Repeat every 12 hours until the wound has healed.

3. Rectal prolapse: Occasionally part of the rectal wall of the large intestine slips out through the anus. This usually happens when defecating. It is almost always caused by constipation. Collect 4 handfuls of fresh centella leaves, wash them and pound them. Add 2 litres of cold water and allow to stand for some hours. Filter through cloth and keep this cold extract cold. If possible in a (charcoal) fridge. When the rectum is out, let the patient sit in the cold centella solution (sit bath). The moment rectum touches that cold solution, it will pull back immediately and in this case centella works as a disinfectant, protecting the rectum from infections and germs.

Agricultural benefits

Centella asiatica provides very good soil cover, thus preventing soil erosion.

The leaves of centella dry out in strong droughts and decompose, thus adding fertility to the soil. The nodes on the stems of centella plants survive and, with a little water, sprout again, producing many leaves and roots.

It is a perennial plant and spreads vegetatively with heavy rains. It grows in a variety of different soils. The leaves contain a high percentage of nitrogen. After standing in water for a few days a very rich plant tea is produced.

Joseph Ogwal in Lira, Uganda, also recommends *Centella asiatica* for the following:

- General tonic.
- Blood purifier.
- Better blood circulation and strengthening of veins (thus helping varicose veins).
- Natural treatment for the liver and kidneys.
- Removal of toxins of heavy metals from the body.
- Respiratory ailments.
- Together with *Artemisia annua* tea, supportive treatment for hepatitis B.
- As salad in any meal, it helps digestion and gives vitality.
- Cancer.

Main constituents (according to Dharani N and Yenesew A, "Medicinal Plants of East Africa", 2010.)

The essential volatile oil contains many monoterpenoids and some sesquiterpenoids, such as β -acoradiene. The wound healing properties are linked to triterpenoid saponins, principally asiaticoside, and to sapogenins, e.g. asiatic acid. Triterpenoids, such as madecassic acid, may be responsible for the plant's antitumour properties.

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