

Costus pictus (Costaceae)



English name: Insulin plant or spiral flag

Botany: *Costus pictus* originates from South and Central America. It is a perennial, upright, spreading plant and can grow up to 180 cm tall. The leaves are spirally arranged and because of its attractive flowers it is sometimes grown as an ornamental plant.

It is propagated by dividing clumps, by taking cuttings or by separating the offsets or plantlets that form below the flower heads.

It needs fertile soil and ample moisture. It is often planted near water.

Parts used: Leaves and roots (rhizomes)

Active ingredients: It is rich in protein, iron, and antioxidant components such as ascorbic acid, α -tocopherol, β -carotene, terpenoids, steroids, and flavonoids.



Uses

1. It treats mouth ulcers and tonsillitis.
2. Used as a dietary supplement, the leaf powder boosts the immune system and gives energy, and helps with diabetes mellitus and indigestion.
3. It has anti-inflammatory properties, and as such treats asthma, oedema, mouth sores and joint pains (arthritis).
4. It helps to keep kidney, liver, heart and lungs in good shape.
5. It helps with skin infections such as eczema and itching skin. Leaves or rhizome powder sprinkled on wounds stops them from going septic.
6. It is an anti-oxidant and removes toxins in the body. It reduces excessive fats and cholesterols in the body.

How to use the leaves:

1. Chew one fresh leaf in the morning and one in evening.
2. Blend fresh leaves and drink the juice produced.
3. Make leaf powder from dried leaves; take one teaspoonful in one cup of hot water as tea twice a day, morning and evening.

How to use the rhizomes

1. Boil one handful of pounded rhizomes in one litre of water for 5 minutes. For internal problems, drink half a cup of this decoction twice a day. Externally, use it to wash skin problems and wounds.
2. Chop and pound rhizomes to a powder. Drink one teaspoonful in a cup of hot water twice a day.

NB: Pregnant women and breast-feeding mothers are advised not to use *Costus pictus*.

Disclaimer: Discover has compiled this information with the best possible interests of its readership at heart. Discover cannot be held responsible for any negative consequence of following the procedures described in this paper.



Costus pictus rhizomes