



## Gotu Kola *Centella asiatica*

Gotu Kola, belongs to the Apiaceae family and is commonly known as pennywort or the arthritis herb, is often called Brahmi, but differs from other Brahmi, *Bacopa monnieri* – both these herbs are used and respected in the Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine systems. This herb is both a food and a medicine, though it has quite a strong and bitter taste.

(Image: <http://www.goldenpoppyherbs.com/media/wysiwyg/Gotu-Kola-Extract.jpg>)



**Identification & Cultivation:** Gotu Kola is a water loving, creeping, ground covering, herbaceous perennial, which is frost tender, needs to be grown as an indoor plant in colder climates, or heavy mulched to protect it from frosts. The stolons (stems above ground) are green to pinkish red, they spread out and at each leaf node, roots grow and gives rise to new plants. Its bright green veined leaves are kidney shaped - a single leaf per stem. The flowers, umbel form, are white, to pinkish in colour and arising from the nodes, these develop into small ribbed seeds. It is indigenous to the Indian continent, South East Asia and the wetlands of the South Eastern US states, though it has happily spread around the globe.

**Part Used:** Leaves, although the flowers are edible.

**Harvesting:** Fresh is best, pick the leaves of this herb as you need it. This herb can be harvested all year, optimal harvest time for drying or tincturing is in summer, when in optimal growth.

**Energetic Character:** Bitter-sweet, astringent and acrid.



(Image of leaves & flowers: <http://www.suppreviewers.com/gotu-kola-benefits/>)

**Constituents:** A herb of complex chemical components; containing a number of pentacyclic triterpenoids, triterpene saponins, (including asiaticoside & madecassoside) glycosides, free aglycones (including madecassic/brahmic acid & asiatic acid), bitters, alkaloids, antioxidants, flavonoids, mucilage, fatty acids, tannins, amino acids, sterols, resins, acids, pectin, vitamins; pro-vitamin A - beta-carotene, B, & C and minerals; magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, copper, calcium, iron, zinc and sodium.

**Therapeutic Actions:** Alterative, wound repair, skin tonic, stimulates skin and collagen development, depurative, assists immune stimulation, anti-rheumatic, connective tissue restorative, digestive stimulant and restorative, liver tonic, cardiovascular tonic, specifically effective venous tonic, neuro-protective and tonifying, mental stimulant and brain tonic, anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-neoplastic, febrifuge, mild diuretic, anti-anxiety, 'woman's tonic'.

**Medicinal Uses:** Gotu Kola has an ancient history as a 'healing herb', a 'cure-all'; these therapeutic actions indicate this is indeed a wonderful and useful herb. For the cardiovascular system, it can strengthen function and can be useful to treat poor circulation, which can lead to chronic venous insufficiency and varicose veins. Its ability to improve collagen synthesis and connective

tissue would assist with this. It is considered to be a 'brain tonic', assisting with cognitive function and reduces anxiety. A traditional treatment for fevers, diarrhea, leprosy, for 'disorders' of the female urogenital system. With modern research, also, it is showing promise for treating autoimmune diseases including lupus and psoriasis, some anticancer activity and for rejuvenating damaged skin.

This herb has been used for a wide range of skin conditions, both internally and topically, including psoriasis. It has been shown to stimulate the production of new skin cells, so may assist to heal wounds and burns. This herb is being used in cosmetics, with claims of being 'anti-wrinkle and anti-aging'.

Infused in oil, Gotu Kola can be used a skin treatment and rubbed into the scalp as a hair tonic.

(Image from: <http://www.altmedicine101.com/gotu-kola-evidence-based->



benefits-and-side-effects)

**Cautions & Contraindications:** Some known adverse reactions; for some, large doses can cause irritations, drowsiness, nausea, vertigo, headaches, if experienced reduce dose or stop. If hyperthyroid avoid.

**Dosages:** It is commonly suggested that two fresh leaves each day could assist with improved health or up to 50-60 grams of dried leaves as an infusion up to 3 times daily.

Tincture; 50-100mls per week

**Culinary Uses:** Throughout the lands it originates, this herb has been used as a food, as well as a medicine; Throughout Asia, it is commonly served; in salads, curries, rice dishes and beverages. Here's a recipe to try:

### **Traditional Sri Lankan Sambola**

3 cups Gotu kola, cleaned (you can use other greens as part of this amount if preferred)

3 tbsp fresh grated coconut (use rehydrated desiccated coconut if fresh unavailable)

1 green chilli, ½ red onion, 1 tsp Maldivian fish powder (optional), juice of ½ a lime

Salt to taste

Finely shred the Gotu kola, onions and chilli. Mix together, squeeze over the lime juice and season to taste with salt. Serve & enjoy this deliciousness!

**Other Uses:** It has been discovered that Gotu Kola can absorb heavy metals from contaminated soils and translocates them to the growing tips, therefore assisting to remediate toxic soils.

**History & Mystery:** Other names for this herb are brahmi, centella, pennywort, Asiatic pennywort, Indian pennywort, Indian water navelwort, wild violet, and tiger herb and a wide diversity of names; specific to the regions it is indigenous.

Gotu kola has an ancient history as a well respected herbal medicine in the medical traditions in its lands of origin, especially the Ayurvedic, Indonesian and Chinese practices, being recorded in their early medical texts, including being called 'an elixir of life'.

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**\*Advisory Note:** This text is given a general guidance. If any adverse reactions occur or symptoms persist, please contact a qualified Medical Herbalist or Doctor immediately