

# WILD YAM

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- **Colic Root, Devil's Bones,**
- **Rheumatism Root, Wild Mexican Yam, Chinese Yam**
- **Scientific/medical name(s):**
- *Dioscorea villosa, Dioscorea oppositifolia or Dioscorea opposita, Dioscorea batatas*



Wild yam plant vines

## Story

For two years I lived among a primitive tribal people in Papua New Guinea. One of their main food staples was Wild Yam. I noticed that the women in my village gave birth approximately every two to three years, without the spacing aid of birth control. They were lean and muscular, and worked harder than any women I've ever known, right up until the day of birth. I also discovered that there were many twins born to these people. Sadly, it was the custom of the Simbai to leave one twin in the jungle to die, as they believed there was only one soul, and the two bodies could not share it. They were afraid a demon spirit would possess the extra body. Many of these old ways changed as their understanding of truth increased.

But back to Wild Yam... This bland, almost bitter, potato-like root was eaten every day in my village. Recently I discovered that Wild Yam contains a compound called *diosgenin*, which is converted into the hormone *progesterone*. Progesterone is synthetically produced by drug companies to create most of our common birth control pills, and hormone balancing drugs. The root of the Wild Yam vine appears to offer a natural alternative to synthetic progesterone, and has many wonderful health benefits besides.

### Growing and Recognizing Wild Yam:

Wild Yam grows in moist thickets, trailing over adjacent shrubs and bushes, its range extending from Rhode Island to Minnesota and south to Florida and Texas. It is also very common in Asia and in Mexico. Wild Yam can be grown from root cuttings taken in the winter or late fall. Tubercles, or baby tubers, can be harvested in late summer and early autumn. They should be planted immediately in individual pots and kept inside till spring. Wild Yam prefers sandy to loamy medium, well-drained, moist soils and requires partial shade.

### Wild Yam properties and uses:

Wild Yam is both edible and medicinal, being somewhat bland in taste. It was used for centuries as a medicinal herb by the Aztec and Mayan peoples for a wide range of ailments, including many female problems, and to relieve the pain of child birth. Wild Yam can be found growing in most temperate climates in the world.



Wild yam root

The diosgenin contained in the root of the Wild Yam is a steroid-like substance that is believed to convert into the female hormone *progesterone*.



Tom Yam soup

### How to Use Wild Yam

Tea recipe for coughs, nausea, spasms, inflammation, hormone imbalance:

Place 8 oz. chopped fresh root (or 4 oz. of dried) in sauce pan, cover with water and bring to boil, reduce heat, simmer for 20 to 30 min. Strain and store in refrigerator. Take in 1/2 cup doses twice a day.

Visit WellTellMe.com for a Wild Yam Cream recipe to be used for balancing the hormones and contraceptive doses of Wild Yam capsules.

Big yam and small yams



However, most doctors and researchers do not believe the human body can convert diosgenin into progesterone; their research indicates that this process must be done in a lab. Most medical professionals agree that Wild Yam-derived progesterone is better absorbed as a cream applied topically, than as herbal capsules taken internally.

Wild Yam also contains phytosterols (beta-sitosterol), alkaloids and tannins which make this plant useful as an anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, cholagogue, diaphoretic and vasodilator.

A tea of the root is used to alleviate many of the symptoms of menopause and PMS such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood changes, and vaginal dryness by raising the progesterone levels in a woman's body. It is also used to treat irritable bowel syndrome, gastritis, gallbladder complaints by increasing bile production in the liver. It is also said to relieve spasmodic cramps, and in small doses is especially helpful in treating the nausea of pregnant women. Wild yam is commonly used in connection with symptoms associated with inflammation, spasms, and osteoporosis. Wild Yam has also been used in American folk medicine to treat coughs and to induce sweating and vomiting. Some believe that Native Americans and early settlers used it for its antispasmodic effects (relieves muscle tightness), which is how it got the name *Colic Root*.

One of the most popular modern uses of Wild Yam is as a natural contraceptive. I read one midwife who believes that Wild Yam root thickens the outer layer of the egg, making it difficult for the sperm to penetrate the egg. However, there has been no scientific research, that I could find, that documents what really happens in the female organs when Wild Yam is present. It does seem to "work" as a natural birth control without negative side effects. However, a few women report no lack of fertility at all when taking Wild Yam. Information on sisterzeus.com states that "antibiotics will negate the contraceptive effects of Wild Yam. This also includes herbal antibiotics like garlic, goldenseal and echinacea. There are many other herbs that have an anti-biotic effect, so if you use a variety of herbs, make sure you research them well, and know their effects." If a lady takes Wild Yam as a contraceptive and also takes garlic for a cold she might have a surprise pregnancy!

Many Wild Yam supporters say that using this herb as an alternative to HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) will significantly lower the risk of breast and endometrial cancer.

Some Wild Yam creams have added synthetic progesterone, not connected to Wild Yam, which is often derived from horse urine. This "fake" progesterone is said to have some negative side effects.

The American diet is extremely high in estrogen (another hormone which is synthetically available in most commercially produced meats and soy products), which can lead to many health problems. Some people have found relief from those health problems by taking natural progesterone (Wild Yam) to balance the high

estrogen levels. High estrogen levels manifest in symptoms like excessive weight gain, hair loss, migraine headaches, acne, depression, miscarriages or the inability to conceive, and high or low blood sugar levels. Of course, the best remedy to high estrogen levels is to eat range fed meats, and cut out the soy products which provide us with too much synthetic estrogen.

## Warning:

Large doses of Wild Yam may cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Although rare, allergic reactions to Wild Yam can occur, including rashes, asthma, and other symptoms.

In addition, high progesterone levels have side effects such as headache, breast tenderness, upset stomach, constipation, tiredness, and irritability. In rare cases there are serious side effects, such as dizziness, faintness, shortness of breath, blurred vision, seizures, and swelling of the lips, mouth, or throat.

## Wild Yam Quiz:

Is Wild Yam edible? \_\_\_\_\_

What countries does Wild Yam grow in? \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the other names for Wild Yam? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was it called *Colic Root*? \_\_\_\_\_

If Wild Yam is taken as a natural birth control, can antibiotic herbs be taken with it? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

Why does Wild Yam help relieve gallbladder attacks, irritable bowel syndrome, and gastritis?

Can Wild Yam give some relief to women suffering from menopause or PMS symptoms? \_\_\_\_\_

How might someone you know use Wild Yam? \_\_\_\_\_

### Resources and photos:

<http://www.nutrasanus.com/wild-yam.html>

<http://www.sisterzeus.com/wildyam.htm>

[http://www.cancer.org/docroot/ETO/content/ETO\\_5\\_3X\\_Wild\\_Yam.asp?sitearea=ETO](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/ETO/content/ETO_5_3X_Wild_Yam.asp?sitearea=ETO)

[http://www.altnature.com/gallery/wild\\_yam.htm](http://www.altnature.com/gallery/wild_yam.htm)

<http://flickr.com/photos/teretorre/186177157/in/photostream/> (wild yam plant vines teretorre's)

<http://flickr.com/photos/dinosaur/193393271/in/set-72157594204667136/> (the root by Little Foot)

<http://flickr.com/photos/neowy/44245445/> (Big yam, small Yam photo by Neowy)

<http://flickr.com/photos/andcherylwillwait/256914613/> (Tom Yam soup by Cheryl)