

Herb of the Year 2016
Capsicum Spp



Peppers, Peppers, Peppers! In all colors, sizes, sweetness levels and spiciness! This ever-popular plant species has joined the ranks to become Herb of the Year for 2016! Congratulations Capsicum!

As Hippocrates once said, "Let your foods be your medicines. Let your medicines be your foods" The Pepper species are an excellent example of a

food that is eaten and grown in countries worldwide that improves the flavors of the dishes it is in and also promotes health, at the same time as being a healing plant for various health conditions.

The genus *Capsicum* belongs to the Nightshade family, which comprises of many other edible plants, such as potatoes, tomatoes and eggplants. There are about 25 known wild varieties; though most cultivated Chili pepper are varieties of the *annuum* species. The hottest chili peppers are *C. chinensis* varieties, popularly known as Habaneros.

Chili Peppers originate in tropical South America, where according to some archeoethnobotanists they have been cultivated for over 7000 years. They spread to Central American regions in pre-Columbian times.

Magical Herbalism appropriately assigns Chilli peppers to Mars, the god of war. In Central and South America they were traditionally used in counter magic and protection rituals. Sprinkled around the house they were expected to ward off evil demons and vampires, while burning them along with garlic and other pungent spices was intended to fumigate and purify the house.

Chilies have also enjoyed a reputation as an aphrodisiac spice, as their fiery nature was thought to ignite the flames of passion. The Aztecs were known to use chilies for this purpose, often mixing them with other aphrodisiac plants such as cocoa and vanilla.

Capsicum officinalis is the main species of Pepper used in Herbal medicine for conditions such as sore throats, helping to improve natural immune function, resistance at the beginning of a cold, tonsillitis, laryngitis, hoarseness, shingles and swollen lymph glands. It has been used as an aid in increasing circulation, a natural fat burner, digestive aid, for nausea, herpes, shingles, rheumatism, arthritis, Raynauds disease, psoriasis and pericarditis. It has been used as a tonic for the heart, kidneys, lungs, pancreas, spleen and stomach and has been indicated for preventing heart disease. Cayenne works as a catalyst for all herbs.

Cayenne may be used internally or externally to treat arthritis, rheumatism, bunions, muscle and joint pain as well. Cayenne liniments externally work well to help soothe the stiffness and pain associated with these conditions. Alternatively Cayenne infused oils work well to massage onto the skin as well for these conditions.

Cayenne can also be taken internally in a capsule as well as a tincture, and also added fresh or dried to food. As an infusion it had been used for stomach, bowel pains and cramps. Taken in small doses the fresh fruit or the powder may stimulate appetite and expel parasites. Capsicum is a stimulating stomachic, that aids digestion by stimulating gastric juices, stimulates the appetite, reducing inflammation, as a mild stimulant or tonic, improving metabolism, relieves gas, colds, chills, and stops bleeding from ulcers. Cayenne also has styptic actions and should never be left out of the Herbal First Aid Kit.

Cayenne peppers contain a fair amount of alkaloids, capsaicin, capsacutin, capsanthine, capsico PABA, fatty acids, flavonoids, sugars, carotene, volatile oil, and Vitamins, A, B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B9, and C and fiber!

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