



Calamus-Sweet Flag Root

Ease digestive disorders, especially relieving flatulence and stomach cramps. An effective expectorant that clears nasal and respiratory passages and some herbal practitioners claim it even clears the mind.

Information: Herbals/Nutritionals/Medicinals can be very strong. Consequently, if they are not tailored to your specific needs, they can do more harm than good. This information is meant to be used by your VHC Medical Team and personal Physician as they build your Total Health Plan. Never attempt to adjust your prescribed medications and/or Natural Treatments without your physician's and Medical Team's knowledge and guidance. Since herbals/nutritionals and medications can interact with each other, it is always advisable to consult with your health care provider and The Vibrant Health Community at www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

Botanical: *Acorus americanus*

Family: *Arecaceae* (arum/palm) - *Acoraceae* (sweet flag)

Other common names: Sweet Sedge, Sweet Grass, Sweet Root, Sweet Rush, Sweet Calomel, Sweet Flag, Sweet Cane, Sweet Myrtle, Myrtle Grass, Myrtle Sedge, Cinnamon Sedge, Muskrat Root, Rat Root, Pine Root, Gladdon, Flagroot, Beewort

***Note:** *The B-asarone content in the essential oil of an Asian variety of the species is thought to be carcinogenic and excluded from the American species, but because the USFDA labeled all varieties of Acorus calamus (sometimes also called Sweet Flag and Rat Root) as unsafe in 1968, further research has been discouraged with regard to the herb's many historic applications. Thus, it is always recommended that any use of Calamus be conducted only under the care of a qualified health care provider.*

History: Calamus is a vigorous, reed-like, aquatic plant with somewhat vague origins. Some say that it is a native of Europe; others claim Asia, and it is distributed widely in the temperate regions of the United States, Europe, Eurasia, northern Asia Minor and throughout the Far East (including India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka). The derivation of Calamus's botanical name, *Acorus*, is also vague: Some say it is derived from the Greek word, *coreon*, meaning "pupil of the eye," referring to the plant's use to cure eye diseases; others say it is derived from an old Latin word meaning "aromatic plant," referring to the pleasant fragrance emitted from the reeds. The herb's English name and botanical specific, *calamus*, is a translation of the Greek word meaning "reed,"

and its use in herbal medicine may be traced back to the ancients. Dioscorides prescribed it for eye problems, and in ancient India, practitioners employed it as a candied chewing medicine for coughs and bronchitis. In Europe and England, Calamus was utilized as a popular "strewing herb" to ward off disease and to add a pleasant fragrance to churches; and the esteemed seventeenth-century English herbalist, Nicholas Culpeper, recommended Calamus as a "strengtheners of the stomach and head." Native Americans had so many medicinal uses for Calamus that it was actually considered a commodity and medium of exchange. Plains Indians chewed it for toothache, and the Meskwakis applied the boiled root to treat burns. Some of the Native

Americans utilized the herb to increase strength and endurance, while other, more northerly tribes used it to help improve digestion and mental sharpness (echoing Culpeper's earlier recommendations), and the herb was included in the *United States Pharmacopoeia* from 1820 through 1916 and the *National Formulary* from 1936 through 1950. The sweet scented roots and leaves are used in perfumes, and its pungent, cinnamon-spicy qualities add flavor to candies, medicines, beers and gins, while the same aromatic, bitter roots and leaves are used in herbal medicines. Some of the constituents included in Calamus are essential oil, choline, soft resin, gum, starch and the bitter glucoside, acorin. The oil from North American Calamus is beta-asarone-free.

Beneficial Uses: Calamus Root is an aromatic stimulant that has been used for centuries in many cultures mainly for digestive complaints. It is considered a "stomachic," or substance that stimulates and strengthens stomach function, and is said to benefit digestion, increase the appetite and ease dyspepsia and stomach cramps. The herb is thought to relieve the discomfort of flatulence, as well as check the growth of the bacteria which gives rise to it.

As an expectorant, Calamus has been used to loosen and expel phlegm from the respiratory tract and is said to be useful in cases of bronchitis and sinusitis. The powdered root was included in snuff to relieve nasal congestion and shock, and in European countries the root was included in lozenges to clear the voice and ease coughs.

Calamus is considered a parasiticide that has been used to destroy and expel parasites from the intestines (an insecticide is also produced from the essential oil).

As an emmenagogue, Calamus has been used to stimulate and regulate menstrual flow.

The powdered root of Calamus was once smoked or chewed, because it was thought to destroy the taste for tobacco and thus discourage and break the smoking habit.

Calamus has been used to calm the nerves and act as a mild tonic that restores and nourishes the entire body by exerting a gentle strengthening effect. It was a very important herb in Ayurvedic medicine and was used as a restorative for the brain and nervous system, especially after a stroke.

Used externally, Calamus has been used to relieve burns, skin problems, eruptions, rheumatic pains and neuralgia.

Contraindications: Pregnant and nursing women should not use Calamus Root, as it is considered a uterine stimulant. Overuse (many times the recommended dosage) should be avoided, as it may cause vomiting and further serious problems. Also, it may be harmful if consumed for an extended time period. Great caution should be exercised with the use of this herb, as it is not recommended for internal use according to FDA Guidelines. The B-asarone content in the essential oil of an Asian variety of the species is thought to be carcinogenic and excluded from the American species, but because the FDA labeled all varieties of *Acorus calamus* as unsafe in 1968, further research has been discouraged with regard to the herb's many historic applications. Thus, it is highly recommended that *any use of Calamus be conducted only under the care of a qualified health care provider.*

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