

# Chinese Herbal Legends

## 50 Stories for Understanding Chinese Herbs

Compiled and Translated by Zhu Zhongbao & Zhu Liu

Edited by Chris Flanagan



中药传奇  
朱忠宝 号



人民卫生出版社  
PEOPLE'S MEDICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE



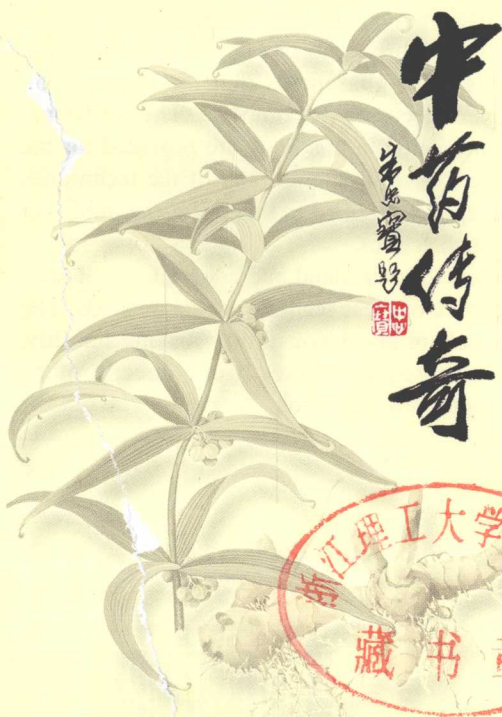
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1



## NAME

English name: Ephedra

Pharmaceutical name: *Herba Ephedrae*

## NATURE AND FLAVOR

Pungent, slightly bitter and warm

## CHANNELS ENTERED

Lung and Urinary Bladder

## ACTIONS

1. Induces sweating to relieve exterior syndrome
2. Diffuses the lung to calm asthma
3. Promotes urination to relieve edema

## INDICATIONS

1. Common cold due to wind cold
2. Cough and asthma
3. Edema due to wind

## DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

2-9g., decocted in water for oral use

麻黄

Má Huáng



here was an old herbalist who was childless. He had one disappointingly arrogant student, who had only a little knowledge, yet he looked down upon his teacher. Sometimes, instead of giving his teacher the money he earned by selling herbs, he secretly spent it himself. The teacher was completely broken-hearted.

"You don't need me any more. Please go work by yourself," said the teacher.

"All right!" said the student without hesitating.

"But there is one kind of herb that you can't thoughtlessly sell."

"Which one?"

"Leafless grass. Its roots and stems have different uses. To induce sweating, you use the stems; for other uses, you use the roots. If you make a mistake, you will make people die. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Repeat it."

The student repeated what his teacher told him at once, but he didn't really mean what he said. He wasn't thinking at all.

After they parted, the student and teacher sold herbs separately; and the student became bolder than before because his teacher was not with him. He dared to treat all kinds of disease though he only knew a few medicinal herbs. Not too long afterwards, he caused a patient's death with leafless grass. The dead man's relatives took him to the county official at once.

"From whom did you learn?" asked the county official. The student gave his teacher's name, and the county official ordered his teacher called for.

"How did you teach your student? He has made a patient die!" said the official.

"I am not to blame," said the teacher, "because I clearly gave him instructions about leafless grass."

"Do you remember this?" the official demanded of the student.

"To induce sweating, you use the stems; for other uses, you use the roots. If you make a mistake, you could make people die," said the student.

“Did the patient sweat or not?”

“He was sweating all over.”

“What medicine did you use?”

“The stems of the leafless grass.”

“You are reckless! No wonder you caused his death!” said the official angrily. He ordered that the student be beaten and sentenced to three years of imprisonment. Because the teacher had nothing to do with it, he was set free right away.

After three years of life in prison, the student became honest. He found his teacher and apologized, saying that he was determined to thoroughly rectify his life. When his teacher saw he had changed, he taught him his medical skills. Whenever the student used leafless grass, he was very careful, and since this kind of medicinal herb had given him much trouble, he named it “Trouble (*ma fan* in Chinese) Grass.” Later its name was changed to “*má huáng*” because its roots are yellow (*huáng*).





2



## NAME

English name: Perilla Leaf

Pharmaceutical name: *Folium Perillae*

## NATURE AND FLAVOR

Pungent and warm

## CHANNELS ENTERED

Lung and Spleen

## ACTIONS

1. Releases the exterior and disperses cold
2. Promotes the movement of qi and expands the chest
3. Used during pregnancy for slippery fetus or morning sickness
4. Resolves seafood poisoning

## INDICATIONS

1. Common cold due to wind cold
2. Vomiting due to oppression in the chest
3. Spleen and stomach qi stagnation

## DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

3-9g., decocted in water for oral use, don't overcook

# 紫苏叶

## Zǐ Sū Yè



On the Double Ninth Festival, a group of rich young men had a crab-eating contest in a wineshop. Because the crabs were delicious, they ate many. The empty crab shells piled up like a small tower on the table.

Hua Tuo also came there to have a drink with his student. When he saw the young men having their crab-eating contest and eating crazily, he kindly tried to persuade them to stop.

“Crabs are ‘cold’, so you’d better not eat too much. A crab-eating contest won’t be good for you young men.”

“We eat what we have paid for. Who wants to listen to you!” the young men rudely replied.

“If you eat more, you will suffer from diarrhea; it could endanger your lives.”

“Get away with you! Don’t try to frighten us! Even if we die of eating, what business is it of yours?”

Not listening to Hua Tuo’s advice, these young men



continued their extravagant eating and drinking.

“Crabs are delicious! Who says that people may die by eating them? Let’s eat as we like to make the old man die of jealousy!” one of them shouted.

As Hua Tuo saw that they acted so rashly, he went to see the shop owner.

“You mustn’t sell them more wine, or they will die of it,” said Hua Tuo.

As the shop owner wanted to earn money from these young men, why should he listen to Hua Tuo?

“Even if something happens, what business is it of yours? Mind your own business, and leave mine alone,” said the boss angrily.

Hua Tuo could only sit down with a sigh and drink his own wine.

At midnight, the young men suddenly cried out that they were suffering from stomachache. Some of them were even sweating all over and some rolled about under the table.

“What’s wrong with you?” the owner hurriedly asked.

“We are suffering from serious stomachaches. Please help us and send for a doctor at once.”