

Andrographis paniculata

Sanskrit name: *Bhunimba / Kiratatikta / Kalamega*
 Botanical name: *Andrographis paniculata*
 Family: ACANTHACEAE
 Local name: *Bhuin nimo / Bhunimba / Nelabevu*
 Parts used in medicine: The whole plant, either fresh or dry

Andrographis paniculata is an annual plant with characteristic white-purple or spotted purple flowers that flourishes in South-East Asia, China and India. It has been valued for centuries by herbalists as a treatment for upper respiratory infections, fever, sore throat and herpes. Other reported applications include its use in cases of malaria, dysentery and even snakebites. The plant grows in waste grounds and prefers moist habitat. Due to increasing demand the plant is also cultivated.

The main active constituent in *Andrographis* is andrographolide, which in herbal medicine is referred to as a 'bitter' principle - so called because of its bitter taste. Bitter herbs generally have an affinity with the heart, liver and gall bladder. Most of them have a cooling effect on the body and can bring down a temperature.

Andrographis has been used in Ayurvedic medicine for hundreds of years. Today it is prominent in at least 26 different Ayurvedic formulations used to treat liver disorders. In the last 10 years or so, *Andrographis* has become popular in America and Scandinavia where it is used as a preventative and treatment for the common cold. The herb is becoming increasingly recognised in the West for its enormous potential in a far wider range of diseases. It boosts the immune system, protects against cancer, prevents blood clots and maintains efficient digestive functioning. Scientists today are focusing on the herb's application in treating the 'killer' diseases that blight modern life, such as heart disease, cancer and even Aids.

www.thehealthierlife.co.uk (October 2007) keyword: *andrographis*

