

Jamaican Dogwood Tradition and Science

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Piscidia spp. aka: Jamaican Dogwood, has been one of my personal favorites in the herbal pain killing department. I use it quite regularly on myself and clients in a pain killing formula, and in my Extra-Strength Snoozalicious, for insomnia exacerbated by pain and restlessness.

Piscidia is indicated for variety types of pain, including in both skeletal and smooth muscle, while minimally impacting cognitive function. It works fairly quickly, which makes it perfect for first aid type situations. It is recommended for PMS, dysmenorrhea and endometriosis with an ability to increase blood flow to relieve uterine stagnation, deliver nutrients and remove debris.

The Eclectics recommended it with *Viburnum* for false labor pains and threatened abortion. *Piscidia* synergistically harmonizes and promotes the effectiveness of other herbal uterine remedies like *Cimicifuga*, *Viburnum*, *Senecio*, *Helonias*, *Pulsatilla* and *Dioscorea*. (Chimileski 2012) Its medicinal effects are increased and enhanced when combined with other herbs.

Herbalist 7Song often runs first aid tents at various events. He writes “I rarely see unwanted side effects from *Piscidia*, which makes it reasonably safe to use and larger doses can often be given. I have mainly used it with teens to older adults. This herb is actually well tolerated with unwanted side effects being uncommon.” (7song 2012)

Piscidia itself does not have anti-inflammatory effects, per se, so it is commonly combined with other anti-inflammatory herbs. 7Song recommends the following combinations and dosage:

- 1 For skeletal muscle pain; Skullcap, Pedicularis (Pedicularis spp.), Black cohosh (Actaea racemosa) and Willow (Salix spp.)
- 2 For insomnia due to body aches; Skullcap, Valerian (Valeriana officinalis), Wild lettuce (Lactuca spp.) and Hops.
- 3 For a recent injury; Valerian, Kava kava (Piper methysticum) and Wild lettuce.

While evaluating dosage by body size is helpful, individual responses seem even more important to take into consideration. Initially try smaller amounts before giving large doses, Start with approximately ½ dropper (.6 ml) to two droppers (2.5 ml.), and then continue giving more in these increments. If there are other herbs in the formula, you may have to adjust your dosage depending on their strength. (7song 2014)

Although *Piscidia* has been used as a poison to stun and catch fish, it contains a constituent called rotenone, which is believed to be nontoxic to warm blooded animals, including people when taken orally. (Ehrlich 2011)

Piscidia's rich phytochemistry of isoflavones, glycosides, tannins, resins, organic acids, volatile oils and β-sitosterol explain its versatile actions. *Piscidia* was popular in early 20th century America amongst the Eclectic doctors who opposed "conventional" medicine's use of

harsh modalities like bleeding, chemical purging and mercury-based medicines. (Chimileski 2012)

The isoflavones in *Piscidia* are antispasmodic, have been shown to “reduce cramping better than any other botanical and is reportedly 20x stronger than the closest competition, *Viburnum opulus*. Eclectics found it relieved the spasmodic element of pertussis, asthma, violent whooping coughs and bronchitis. It is a beneficial addition to cough syrups because it helps control nighttime coughing and promotes a restful sleep.” (Chimileski 2012)

References:

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