

The use of Orchid for medicinal purposes

In Europe, according to the Greek mythology, Satyrs were consuming large quantities of orchids, as an aphrodisiac.

Towards the 1st century, the Greek physician and pharmacologist Dioscorides, suggested the use of plants for medicinal purposes according to their resemblance to parts of the human body “Doctrine of Signatures”. Terrestrial Orchid tubers, for example, that resemble “testicles” were suitable to heal male diseases related to testicles, such as venereal diseases, impotency, produce male progeny, and were used as an aphrodisiac.

In the following centuries, there were many other theories and suggestions but all lead to the conclusion that orchids were a good aphrodisiac.

In East Asia, species from other genera were used for other medicinal purposes for thousands of years, as anti-inflammatory, against fever, for pain relief, fertility and rarely as an aphrodisiac.

In China, there are drugs known as Shi-Hu (based on *Dendrobium* spp.), Tian-Ma (based on *Gastrodium* spp.) and Bai-Ji (based on *Bletilla* spp.) that are still produced today.

In America, Africa, Australia and India orchids were also used for various medicinal purposes.

In most cases, proper tests were never done and therefore nobody really knew if the use of orchids for medicinal purposes did help or not. Today, laboratories investigate old beliefs and slowly we start to learn more about the pharmaceutical properties of certain orchids. AND yes, the results are encouraging.

Table 1: List of all the orchid Genera and species I know that have been used or are being used as medicine the last 3,000 years. Third column list the part of the orchid used (if I know it) and the last column, what it is used or may be used for in the future.

<i>Acampe</i>	<i>foraemorsa</i>		
<i>Aerides</i>	<i>multiflora</i>		
<i>Aerides</i>	<i>odoata</i>		
<i>Angraecum</i>	<i>fragrans</i>	Plant	Sedative tea Diabetes, Hypertension, Impotence, Pain-relief, Anti-
<i>Anoectochilus</i>	<i>formosanus</i>	Plant	inflammatory, nephritis
<i>Anoectochilus</i>	<i>roxburghii</i>	Plant	Hypertension, Fever, snake bite.
<i>Anoectochilus</i>	<i>setaceus</i>		
<i>Ansiella</i>	<i>africana</i>		Oral contraceptive
<i>Arundina</i>	<i>graminifolia</i>		
<i>Bletilla</i>	<i>formosana</i>	Tubers	Stomach & liver
<i>Bletilla</i>	<i>striata</i>	Tubers	Sores, ulcers, wounds, swelling
<i>Bulbophyllum</i>	<i>careyanum</i>		

<i>Bulbophyllum kwangtungense</i>	Tubers	Fever, tuberculosis,
<i>Bulbophyllum leopardinum</i>		
<i>Bulbophyllum maximum</i>	Tubers	Protects against sorcery
<i>Bulbophyllum odoratissimum</i>	Plant	Tuberculosis, inflammation,
<i>Calanthe discolor</i>	Plant	Hair restoration
<i>Calanthe griffithii</i>		
<i>Calanthe liukuensis</i>	Plant	Hair restoration
<i>Calanthe plantaginea</i>		
<i>Calanthe sylvatica</i>		
<i>Catasetum barbatum</i>	Plant	Anti-inflammatory
<i>Cephalanceropsis gracilis</i>	Plant	Cancer
<i>Coeloglossum viride</i>	Rhizome	Memory loss
<i>Coelogyne corymbosa</i>		
<i>Coelogyne cristata</i>		
<i>Coelogyne flaccida</i>		
<i>Coelogyne fuscescens</i>		
<i>Coelogyne natida</i>		
<i>Coelogyne ovalis</i>		
<i>Coelogyne prolifera</i>		
<i>Coelogyne stricta</i>		
<i>Cremastra appendiculata</i>	Bulbs	Tumours, breast cancer, cervix cancer, skin lesions.
<i>Cymbidium canaliculatum</i>		Dysentery
<i>Cymbidium ensifolium</i>		
<i>Cymbidium goeringii</i>	Plant	Diuretic, hypertension
<i>Cymbidium madidum</i>		Oral contraceptive
<i>Cypripedium macranthos</i>	Rhizome	Skin
<i>Cyrtorchis arcuata</i>		Diabetes, Skin infections
<i>Dactylorhiza hatagirea</i>		
<i>Dendrobium amoenum</i>	Leaves	Skin
<i>Dendrobium aurantiacum</i>	Leaves	Diabetes
<i>Dendrobium candidum</i>	Leaves	Diabetes

<i>Dendrobium chrysanthum</i>	Leaves	Skin, fever, eyes,
<i>Dendrobium crepidatum</i>		
<i>Dendrobium densiflorum</i>	Leaves	Increases the production of body fluids.
<i>Dendrobium discolor</i>	Leaves	Ringworm
<i>Dendrobium fibriatum</i>	Leaves	Increases the production of body fluids. Helps with bone fractures.
<i>Dendrobium loddigesii</i>	Leaves	Fever, Anti-Cancer agent, Tonic.
<i>Dendrobium longicornu</i>		
<i>Dendrobium moniliforme</i>	Stems	Aphrodisiac, analgesic, tonic, fevers.
<i>Dendrobium monticola</i>		
<i>Dendrobium moschatum</i>		
<i>Dendrobium nobile</i>	Stems	Increases the production of body fluids. Fever, tonic.
<i>Dendrobium speciosum</i>		
<i>Dendrobium teretifolium</i>		To relieve pain
<i>Dendrobium tosaense</i>	Leaves	Panic & anxiety.
<i>Dendrobium transparens</i>		
<i>Diuris maculata</i>		
<i>Ephemerantha lonchophyla</i>	Stems	Increases the production of body fluids. Fever, tonic.
<i>Epidendrum mosenii</i>	Stems	Analgesic
<i>Epidendrum rigidum</i>	Leaves	Increases the production of body fluids.
<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>	Rhizome	Aphrodisiac
<i>Eulophia comestrs</i>	Tubers	Epilepsy
<i>Eulophia cucullata</i>	Tubers	Epilepsy
<i>Eulophia dabia</i>	Tubers	Epilepsy
<i>Eulophia spectabilis</i>	Tubers	Epilepsy
<i>Galeola foliata</i>	Stems	Infections
<i>Gastrodia elata</i>	Plant	Epilepsy
<i>Gastrodia sesamoides</i>	Plant	
<i>Goodyera schlechtendaliana</i>	Plant	Improves blood circulation, tonic.
<i>Grammatophyllum scriptum</i>		
<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>	Tubers	Aphrodisiac
<i>Habenaria commelinifolia</i>	Tubers	Aphrodisiac

Habenaria	furcifera	Tubers	Aphrodisiac
Habenaria	intermedia	Tubers	Aphrodisiac
Habenaria	repens	Tubers	Aphrodisiac
Jumellea	fragrans		
Listera	ovata	Tubers	Skin
Maxilaria	densa	Plant	Relaxant Agent, pains
Neofinetia	falcata		
Nidema	boothii	Plant	Relaxant Agent
Orchis	latifolia		
Orchis	mascula	Tubers	
Orchis	morio	Tubers	
Pholidota	articulata	Bulbs	Bronchitis, stomach and tooth ache,
Pholidota	chinensis	Bulbs	Bronchitis, stomach and tooth ache,
Pholidota	imbricata	Bulbs	Bronchitis, stomach and tooth ache,
Rhynchostylis	retusa		
Satyrium	nepalense		
Scaphyglottis	livida	Plant	Anti-inflammatory, analgesic
Spiranthes	australis	Plant	Diabetes, cancer, bacterial diseases.
Spiranthes	mauritianum	Plant	Poisonous bites (snake, scorpion, etc),
Spiranthes	sinensis	Roots	Aphrodisiac, meningitis, dysentery, headache,
Thunia	alba		
Tridactyle	tricuspis		Prevents madness
Vanda	coerulea		
Vanda	cristata		
Vanda	roxburghii	Leaves, Roots	Fever, otitis, bronchitis, rheumatism.
Vanda	tessellata	Leaves, Roots,	Otitis, fever, bronchitis, rheumatism, laxative, aphrodisiac,
Vanda	testacea	Flowers	pregnancy
Vanilla	planifolia		Nausea, vomiting.
Vanilla	pompona		Nausea, vomiting

