

Secret Life Of Plants

Seaweed



Think of a perfectly balanced natural food that grows in prolific quantities in the wild; a vegetable that helps to balance hormones and has been recommended for use in cancer treatment. A weed stepped in lore and legend that has been used by cultures all over the world for thousands of years. This same plant can awaken sexual desire, renew energy levels and leave hair glossier and more luscious. Although once very popular as food, medicine and even as a fertilizer, its use in Britain has declined over the last hundred years. This super weed is seaweed.

Awareness of seaweed's health benefits is starting to grow and it is becoming popular in Britain once more. The Japanese have always been aware of its health giving properties and sea vegetables are used widely in food and as medicine in Asia. Wrack, which grows along the coasts of Northern Europe, is considered to be even richer in nutrients and minerals than its Asian counterparts. So much so that this sea vegetable is considered the most well balanced food for our bodies.

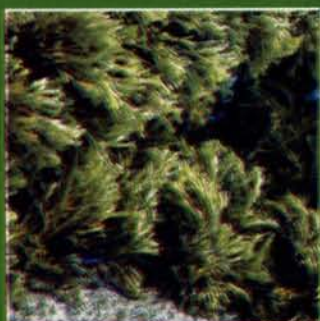
Seaweeds are very versatile and can be used in various culinary ways. They can be grilled, stir-fried or chopped and added to soups, stews, salads and many other dishes. It is possible to eat a large quantity of seaweed every day without realizing, as it is used as a thickener in some foods such as ice cream, jams, soups and sauces. It is also used as a binding agent in toothpaste and cosmetics.

However, to reap the many health benefits

that seaweeds offer you will need to use unprocessed fresh plants. Seagreens have a range of products that can be used for culinary or health purposes and these can be found at www.seagreens.com. The medicinal properties of seaweed are potent and vast. Human blood contains all one hundred or so minerals and trace elements found in the ocean. Seaweed contains these elements in the most assimilable form because their minerals are integrated into living plant tissue. This makes them an excellent source for food and medicine. Indications include strengthening circulation, balancing blood pressure, lowering cholesterol and nourishing the heart.

But how can a weed packed with sodium be good for the heart? Or be responsible for lowering blood pressure when a sodium-heavy diet usually has the opposite effect? Experts in the seaweed industry believe that sodium itself is not actually bad for us. In fact we need sodium to keep our bodies functioning properly. What this does not include however is sodium chloride or table salt, both of which contain many other additives thought to be responsible for the damage caused to the arteries from a diet heavy in salt and processed foods.

The sodium in seaweeds (and garden weeds) is naturally occurring and nourishes the body, providing us with a vital nutrient. It is akin to the salty amniotic fluid in the womb, which provides perfect nourishment for the growing foetus. It is thought that seaweeds are up to 30 times higher in



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minerals, as land weeds are affected by depleted nutrient levels in our soil. Our hormonal system is reliant on many of the nutrients found in seaweeds. Hence seaweed is said to repair body tissue, build new cells and increase fertility and sexuality.

Sea vegetables have antibiotic properties and are credited with anti-ageing characteristics. They are one of the few good sources of organic fluorine that boosts the body's defences and strengthens the teeth and bones. The iodine content of these weeds is indispensable to thyroid function; the thyroid influences digestive efficiency and a deficiency in iodine can cause a lack of energy, an inability to metabolise foods and causes weight gain.

Seaweed's therapeutic indications for women include easing premenstrual symptoms, balancing the hormonal system and helping the body cope with the changes in the body during menopause. Wise women (and men) recommend a regular dose of this plant and if increased sex drive, silky hair and higher energy levels are and this is one weed I'm going to be eating more of.

TO HARVEST YOUR OWN:

If you fancy gathering your own seaweed, choose an unpolluted stretch of coast away from any sewage outlets and avoid smelly or oily shores. Spring and early summer are the best times to harvest fresh seaweed but you can still collect it in winter, though it may have a stronger flavour.



If you can time your visit an hour or so before low tide, you can follow the tide out and search for specimens that are still growing and attached to the rocks. Leave those pieces that have been washed up on the shore or any discoloured or dried up bits. You can cut through the stem to allow regrowth but only take a few plants from each area.

WRACK TEA:

Add a handful of dried bladder wrack to a jar. Steep in enough water to cover overnight. In the morning strain the liquid, warm it through and drink. The discarded seaweed makes good instant compost for the garden.

devoted customers. The products are certified organic and the harvesting and processing is environmentally benign. Simon Ranger, Director of Seagreens, explains:

"I believe that businesses can do more than create wealth which may or may not contribute back into society. We believe that business is integral in human community; a source of wealth and well-being in the most profound sense, a place of integrity where working will no longer mean separation from individual and public good"

In the search for a truly ethical business, seaweed merchants may not be your first port of call but a company in West Sussex is well worth a look. Seagreens have strived to create a structure that equally supports each person involved in the business, from the seaweed harvesters in the remote conservation islands off the coast of Norway to their

