

Artemisia also has other medicinal uses:

For eye infections: Boil two teaspoonfuls of dried leaves (without flowers) in half a litre of water for about ten minutes. Filter carefully, like you filter coffee, through paper. Boil a clean cloth in water to kill any germs. Soak the cloth in the artemisia mixture, and use it to wash the eyes.

For abscesses: Wash a few leaves and boil them in a little water. Pound the leaves and lay them on the abscess or closed boil.

THE NEED FOR A CUSTODIAN

Since Artemisia plants grown from seed are sensitive and need careful care, they are not easy to introduce and maintain in a community. Although it is easy to grow from cutting, farmers may easily lose their planting material. Artemisia is such a useful medicinal plant that it is worth the effort to make sure plants are available at as many homes as possible. Institutions, such as NGOs, schools, clinics, churches etc. can take the role of custodian of planting materials. When plants are available, cuttings can be taken and distributed within the community.



ARTEMISIA

also called Sweet Annie
Wormwood

(*Artemisia annua*)



Artemisia is a Natural medicine that can be grown at home for producing an effective treatment for malaria. Wild species of Artemisia grow all over the world. The plants grown for treating malaria have been developed from plants native to China and Vietnam.

Artemisia is a large herb that grows to about 2 metres tall. It cannot tolerate drought and requires much care in cultivation. Good plants produce abundant small leaves, which are rich in the substance called *artemisinin*, which is very effective in treating malaria. Artemisia has been used for many years by the Chinese to treat fever, and more recently for treating malaria.

GROWING ARTEMISIA

Once there are some plants in an area, Artemisia can most easily be grown from cuttings. The small side branches root easily. Carefully pull off a side branch, remove the bottom few leaves and push it into the soil. Keep cuttings from drying out by watering regularly. The cuttings root easily and when they are growing well can be transplanted to a

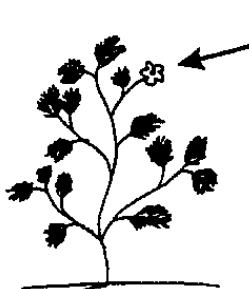
suitable place in the garden. Rooted cuttings start to grow fast and turn to a lighter green which is a sign they have taken.

If cuttings are taken every month and new plants established in different places in the garden, more plants will be kept from flowering and the yield of leaves will be greater.

The cuttings produce plenty of fibrous roots and are easy to transplant. Plant the plants about 60 cm apart. Keep the plants well watered and do not let them dry out as this makes them flower too soon.



When the plants are old enough or under stress, such as in the dry season, they begin to flower. This is the time to harvest the leaves immediately. Care of the plants should aim to prevent them from flowering for as long as possible. As soon as the first flowers appear, strip the leaves from the stems of the entire plant and dry them. The amount of the medicine *artemisinin* is highest just before the plant flowers.



Harvest starts with the first flowers.

Artemisia can also be grown from seed, but the seeds of artemisia are very small and the seedlings very sensitive, so require a lot of attention.

Use a well-prepared seedbed, with fine soil. This can be made with well-rotted compost and sand. Spread the seeds on top of the soil. Do

not cover them with soil as they germinate in light. Since the seeds are so small they are easily washed away, so water them if possible with a fine spray. Do not let the seedbed dry out. Water it at least twice a day.

Very delicate shoots germinate after 4-6 days. When the seedlings are about 3 cm high, which normally takes about 6 weeks, transplant them into plastic bags or pots, as with tree seedlings. When they are about 15 cm tall, which is about ten weeks after sowing, the seedlings are ready to transplant into open ground.

USING ARTEMISIA TO TREAT MALARIA

Artemisia contains a drug called *artemisinin* that is used for treating malaria. It not only treats the symptoms but kills the parasites in the blood that cause malaria.

For adults: Pour one litre of water over 5 g of dried leaves. 5 g is the amount that just fits into a plastic 35 mm film container. Leave the mixture to cool for 15 minutes and filter it through a clean cloth or tea sieve. Divide the liquid into 4 equal amounts (a litre is about four medium sized glasses) and drink one dose every six hours. Make a new batch of tea every day and drink the same amount for seven days. The tea is very bitter and can be sweetened with sugar or honey. If the fever returns within three weeks, make and use the tea in the same way for a further 12 days.

For children of 30 kg: - Use half the amount of water and half the amount of leaves. For small children of 15 kg, use only a quarter of the amount of water and leaves used for an adult.