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Chinese Ginseng

Panax ginseng

The most precious medicinal plant in Chinese Medicine

Worth Knowing: In the Chinese Medicin, Ginseng is considered one of the most precious medicinal plants. Most commonly used are its sometimes human-shaped roots, but also the leaves and stalks are useful. It is said that the saponins in the plant can support and strengthen cardiac output, respiration and the immune defence. They also have a positive effect on blood sugar, fat and cholesterol levels. The botanical name of the plant echoes this effects: Panax is Greek for panacea and Ginseng in Chinese (jen shen) means human root. Some human-shaped Ginseng roots, especially the ones resembling a man-like figure, are worth up to 25.000 \$. The high market price lead to near extinction of the wild Ginseng plant, which is why it is partly protected under the Washington Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Natural Location: The natural habitat of the Ginseng is in the northeastern Chinese Provinces, in northern Korea and in the southern Russian region of Primorje.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year and ideally done in a bowl. Ginseng is a cold germinator, and the seeds need only gently be pressed into loose and moderate moist potting compost. Place your seeding bowl somewhere bright with a temperature around 20° Celsius and keep the earth moist, but not wet. After two to four weeks, a cool period of another two to four weeks is necessary, where the seeding bowl has to be moved to a colder place with a temperature around 5° Celsius. At the end of this cool period the germination will start.

Place: In its natural habitat, the Ginseng grows in light shaded mixed woodlands and should, therefore, never be exposed to direct sunlight. Otherwise, the leaves will get burned and the whole plant dies.

Care: Best for your Ginseng is a lime-free and humus-rich, permeable planting substrate. Ginseng can easily be cultivated indoors, but is also suitable for garden since the plant is frost-resistant. In August you may give organic fertilizer to support a strong root formation. With its third year the plant will produce red coloured inflorescences, and after four to six years you can dig up the human-shaped roots and let them dry. The best time for that would be during autumn, when the aerial parts of the plant fall back.

During the winter: Ginseng likes to be placed in a cool room during hibernation with a temperature around 8° Celsius. The earth should be kept moist. The roots of outdoor plants can be protected with a thick layer of mulch and straw during winter.