

GROW YOUR OWN BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICINE



If you have high blood pressure and run out of prescription medicine, in a survival situation you can grow your own substitute. A Medicinal Tea can be made from the (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) variety. It is both safe and very effective in lowering blood pressure.

Several additional studies have confirmed this effect, including two that tested Hibiscus head-to-head against standard blood pressure medications:

- “Scientists in Mexico gave 75 hypertensive adults either Captopril (Capoten; 25 milligrams twice a day) or Hibiscus tea (brewed from 10 grams of crushed dried flowers — about 5 teaspoons per 1 to 2 cups water — once a day). After four weeks, the herb had worked as well as the drug, with both groups showing an 11 percent drop in blood pressure.
- In another study, the same researchers gave 193 people either Lisinopril, (Zestril, Prinivil; 10 milligrams per day) or Hibiscus (250 milligrams in the form of a capsule). After four weeks, the herb had worked almost as well as the drug: Blood pressure decreased 15 percent among those on the drug, and 12 percent among those taking Hibiscus.

How does Hibiscus lower blood pressure? Recent research suggests a combination of reasons: It has diuretic properties, it opens the arteries, and it appears to act as a natural angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor, which means it slows the release of hormones that constrict blood vessels. In addition, Hibiscus boosts immune function and provides valuable antioxidants.

Dose recommendations vary from about 1 teaspoon of dried “flowers” (technically, the calyxes surrounding the flowers) per cup of boiling water up to the 5 teaspoons used in one of the Mexican studies. Steep five to 10 minutes. If you have high blood pressure, you should own a home blood pressure monitor. Take readings before different doses and retest an hour later to see what works best for you. Check with your doctor prior to taking Hibiscus if you’re currently on medication to lower blood pressure — often a combination of an herb and a lower dose of a pharmaceutical provides the same benefit.

As with all medications, allergic reactions or other side effects are possible. If you experience symptoms shortly after ingesting Hibiscus, stop taking it until you talk to your doctor”(Mother Earth News).

How to Grow Hibiscus August 3, 2011 by Ira Wallace



This hibiscus variety, 'Thai Red,' grows wonderfully on a farm in central Virginia.

Hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*), also called roselle, is a short-day plant usually grown in tropical and subtropical areas. In the United States, it has been grown commercially in Florida, California, Louisiana and Kentucky. Many home gardeners have figured out how to grow Hibiscus successfully as a warm weather annual in Oklahoma, New Jersey and even farther north.

In temperate Zones, start hibiscus in pots at the same time as you would tomatoes. When seedlings are 3 to 4 inches high, transplant them to a sunny spot in the garden. Space plants 3 feet apart in rows 5 feet apart. Hibiscus grows well in soil with a high level of organic matter, but too much nitrogen will delay flowering until too late in the season. Keep plants unmulched, evenly moist and well-weeded until they are 1 1/2 to 2 feet high. At that point, mulch the plants to keep weeds at bay for the rest of the season.

The small leaves and tender branch tips are a refreshing addition to fresh salads. You can also use them to make a tea or jam similar to the ones from calyxes. You don't need to add pectin because hibiscus leaves contain 3 percent pectin. Hibiscus tea needs to be boiled to get the deep red color and great flavor.

On our central Virginia farm, flowering of our preferred 'Thai Red' roselle variety begins in late July to mid-August, and continues until frost. We cover plants with Reemay or tarps during early light frosts to keep the harvest going well into October.

The hibiscus calyxes are most easily harvested when fully grown but still tender. At this stage, they can be snapped off by hand. Use clippers to harvest stems that have hardened. A second advantage of harvesting early and often is increased total production of calyxes. Although, picking a variety with less day length sensitivity may be the most important factor affecting yield in temperate areas.

Calyx production on our farm has ranged from 1 to 2 pounds per plant. (Expect less if you are waiting for the lower fruits to mature seeds before beginning the harvest, and expect more if harvesting while the calyx stems are still tender.) It takes 10 to 12 pounds of fresh calyxes to make 1 pound of dried calyx for refreshing hibiscus tea. For a home gardener, this means that three to six well-spaced plants would produce half a pound of dried calyxes, as well as delicious salad additions from young leaves and stem tips all summer.