### Ayurvedic Materia Medica

**Asparagus racemosus**

**Latin**  
Sweet, bitter

**Family**  
Liliaceae

**Ayurvedic Name**  
Shatamuli

**Energy**  
Warm, moist

**Taste**  
Sweet, bitter

**Part Used**  
Root

**Category**  
Yin tonic/female reproductive amphoteric

**Location**  
It is native to sub-temperate and sub-tropical India, southeast Asia and Africa.

**Gathering**  
It is harvested in the winter, 40 months after planting. The skin is immediately peeled off and the root is dried.

**Cultivation**  
It is native to lowland jungles; it is easily cultivated as a house plant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Western Classification</th>
<th>Triune Classification</th>
<th>Major Constituents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptogen</td>
<td>Female Reproductive System +</td>
<td>Steroidal saponins:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antimicrobial</td>
<td>Kidney/Bladder 0</td>
<td>Diosgenin-antiinflammatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antispasmodic</td>
<td>Mucous Membranes +</td>
<td>Shatavarins 1-IV-antitumor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antitussive</td>
<td>Mucous Membranes 0</td>
<td>Sarasapogenin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiulcerogenic</td>
<td>Nervous System 0</td>
<td>Shatavaroside A &amp; B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aphrodisiac</td>
<td>Stomach +</td>
<td>Mucilage-demulcent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demulcent</td>
<td>Lung +</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diuretic</td>
<td>Immune System 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galactagogue</td>
<td>HPA/Endocrine System + (mild)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immune tonic</td>
<td>HPA/Endocrine System 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritive</td>
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</table>

**Specific Indications**

* Female reproductive tonic for menopausal symptoms (vaginal dryness and dry skin) and infertility.

**Primary Uses**

Shatavari is a Rasayana and a major women’s tonic in Ayurvedic medicine. It is a yin tonic used to increase fertility and libido to decrease menopausal symptoms including vaginal dryness and dry skin. I use this herb along with Helonias for women who cannot get pregnant due to minor hormonal imbalances or women who stop taking contraceptive pills and their menstrual cycle does not re-regulate itself. It can be used along with Amla, Ashwagandha, Codonopsis, and processed Rehmannia for tired, deficient or anemic women. For women with a low sex drive, I use a combination of 2 parts Shatavari, 1 part Cordyceps, 2 parts Dang Gui, 1 part Chaste Tree, 1/2 part Celery seed, 1 p Cotton Root bark and 1 part Damiana.

It is a galactagogue, it increases milk flow (Goyal, et al, 2003). It is probable that is has some effect on the pituitary, increasing prolactin levels.

The root is a nutritive tonic and can be used by itself or combined with Fenugreek seed, Amla fruit, American Ginseng or Cordyceps for anorexia, poor appetite, fatigue and cachexia. It is a mild adaptogen and immune tonic (Rege, et al, 1999) useful for CFIDS. In animal studies, Shatavari enhanced HPA axis function (Krishnamurthy, et al, 2013) and it reduced stress-induced oxidative damage (Joshi, et al, 2012).

Asparagus racemosus helps to heal gastric ulcers and prevents aspirin-induced gastric irritation (Mangal, et al, 2006; Goel & Sairam, 2002). It can be combined with Turmeric, Calendula, fresh Aloe gel and Goldenseal for gastric or duodenal ulcers.

It is a demulcent and antitussive and relieves dry, ticklish coughs, use it with Licorice, Prince Seng, Red Clover or Glehnia/Bei Sha Shen.

**Secondary Uses**

The root is a soothing antiseptic diuretic and can be of some benefit for urethritis and cystitis. In an animal study it helped prevent diabetic nephropathy (Somenia, et al, 2012)
Animal studies using Shatavari have shown it prevents post-surgical adhesions, is antidepressant (Singh, et al, 2009), anxiolytic (Gasabadu & Krishnamurthy, 2014) inhibits breast cancer, lowers LDL cholesterol levels, enhances immune function, improves memory (Ojha, et al, 2010) and female reproductive activity (Pandey, et al 2005), as well as inhibiting carbohydrate absorption and enhancing insulin secretion (Hennan, et al, 2011).

**Dosage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tea (Decoction)</td>
<td>1 tsp. dried, powdered root, 8 oz. water, decoct 10 minutes, steep 40 minutes, take 2 cups/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tincture (1:5)</td>
<td>30% ETOH Dose: 2-4 mL (40-80 gtt.) TID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triune</td>
<td>1/6 part</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preparations**

Stir-fried with honey increases the moistening effects on the lung.

It is used in India in a formula known as Shatavari ghrita which combines Shatavari juice, ghee, milk, honey, sugar and Pipalli Long Pepper. It is used to treat gastritis, asthma and cachexia.

**Contraindications & Drug Interactions**

Shatavari is contraindicated in TCM for damp spleen conditions. It prevents aspirin-induced gastric irritation and it normalizes Cisplatin-induced intestinal hypermotility.

**Special Notes**

It is similar in many ways to its Chinese relative Tian Men Dong (Asparagus cochinchenensis). Shatavari has been over-harvested in the wild and large scale cultivation is needed. Due to its scarcity, adulteration is a very real concern.

**Additional Resources & References**

- Goel, R.K., Sairam, K., Anti-Ulcer Drugs From Indigenous Sources With Emphasis on Musa sapientum, Tamrabhasma, Asparagus racemosus and Zingiber officinalis, Ind J Pharmacol, 2002;34:100-10