

***Ephedra sinica***, Stapf

Common name: Ephedra  
Pinyin: ma huang  
Part used: Herb and root  
Family: Ephedraceae



*Ephedra monosperma*



Dry *Ephedra sinica*

Plant Description

This important Chinese perennial is a slow growing shrub to 15". The modified leaves are small and pointed to lessen water loss, giving the plant a look of being mostly branch material. Floral cones and mature red fruits grow at leaf axils or branch terminals. Traditional USDA zones 2-7 or 8.

Propagation

Favorable germination results have been achieved by lightly covering the seed with sand, utilizing a greenhouse with bottom heat. If seed is of good quality, high germination rates can be expected in one week. Average water is fine while plants are young. Water infrequently as the plants mature. Clonal propagating material can also be achieved through layering in situ as stems are adventitious.

Field Production

Drainage is of the utmost importance. Adhering to this detail Ephedra can be grown somewhat outside the native range of "waste and sandy places, plains, mountain slopes; 700-1600 meters."<sup>1</sup> The Flora of China makes further note that Ephedra is a native grower to the dry regions in the extreme northeast and northwest of China and into Mongolia, as well indicating that Ephedra is extremely cold hardy. Transplant Ephedra in the full sun on 2' centers. Unamended soil should be sandy and very well-drained. Ephedra is drought tolerant, do not overwater.

Pest

None.

Harvest

Pick the foliage/stem material in August through October and remove the nodes.<sup>2</sup> The branch material is cut into manageable lengths and dried. The root is also used; traditionally it is harvested in the fall or winter.<sup>3</sup> The roots are sliced lengthwise and dried.

Notes

Legal restrictions apply to this herb indicating it can only be sold to licensed acupuncturists. Several spp. are used in Chinese medicine.

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<sup>1</sup>*Flora of China*, [http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora\\_id=3&taxon\\_id=200005521](http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=3&taxon_id=200005521). Accessed September 20, 2008. Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, MO & Harvard University Herbaria, Cambridge, MA

<sup>2</sup> Dan Bensky and Andrew Gamble, *Chinese Herbal Medicine Materia Medica: Revised Edition* (Seattle: Eastland Press, Inc., 1993, 28.

<sup>3</sup>Bensky and Gamble, 391.