

dogs naturally

July - August 2019

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Dan Shen

Botanical Name: *Salvia Miltiorrhiza*

Family: Lamiaceae

Parts Used: Root

Salvia literally translates to “healing plant” and *miltiorrhiza* comes from the ancient Greek *miltos*, which means red earth, and *rhiza*, meaning root. *Dan Shen* grows wild in China and flowers from late spring to early fall, hosting beautiful purple flowers. The roots are red and best harvested after the first frost (as are most roots).

Dan Shen has been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for well over 2,000 years, for health support and corrective issues. Its actions are anti-inflammatory, anti-thrombosis (reduces the formation of blood clots), it’s a potent anticoagulant, maintains healthy blood flow, is antibacterial, a broad-spectrum antimicrobial, antioxidant, analgesic, vasodilating, sedative, cardiogenic, organ protectant of the central nervous system, heart, bones, liver, spleen, lungs and red blood cells.

Dan Shen normalizes the vascular system and provides support to all of the organs in the body, especially the spleen and the liver, while working to reduce inflammation. It promotes blood circulation while clearing heat from the blood and removing stasis, is clearing for pancreatitis bruising, high fever, fibroids, and cysts.

Because *Dan Shen* is a broad spectrum antimicrobial, its use in anaplasmosis (a

tick-borne disease) is quite important, as it helps clear infections by removing microorganisms and stimulating bone marrow production, while increasing white blood cell count and supporting the kidneys. Anaplasmosis affects all these elements.

Dan Shen is an immune response adaptogen. That means the constituents of the herb can work at a critical time, which is highly indicated for immune-deficient dogs, especially if they’re weak and lack energy. Many rescue dogs have a weak immune system and constitution, so for them *Dan Shen* would be a great catalyst in a formula with amalaki, ashwagandha, nettle leaf, and maca root. This blend would be a highly nutritive body tonic and adaptogenic powerhouse to bring strength and balance to the immune and nutritionally insufficient dog.

Dan Shen tincture should only be made from the dried root (never the fresh root) with a 70 percent alcohol extraction. This assures bioavailability of its tanshinones, which have anti-cancer activities. Due to the plant’s alkaloid makeup, it needs an acidic liquid (like raw organic apple cider vinegar) added to the water part of the menstruum before making the tincture, to achieve an efficient extraction.

Dan Shen is available from reputable herb suppliers as Certified Organic. That’s the only way I’d recommend using it; it’s so widely used that the demand outweighs the supply, making it one of the most commonly adulterated herbs in Chinese medicine. As always, know your source for herbal medicinals before you buy them!

Cautions: Danshen has antiplatelet properties, which can cause excessive bleeding; discontinue use at least two weeks before surgery, and do not use with bleeding disorders. Safe use has not been determined in pregnancy or with puppies, so it’s best to avoid in either case. 🐾



Joyce Belcher is an herbalist and formulator of pet supplements and herbal medicinals for veterinarians and is the founder of Herbs for Life Inc and Sustenance Herbs. She lives in Kittery, Maine with her husband, Aja the Poodle and two cats; they are all rescues. Visit Joyce at sustenanceherbs.com