**CURCUMA LONGA - TURMERIC**



# Compiled by Jehanne-Marie Gavarini – GavHerbs Botanical Name*:* Curcuma longa

**Family:** Zingiberaceae

# A.K.A.:

Turmeric, Curcuma domestica, Curcuma rotunda. Amomum curcuma, Haldi (Hindi), Jiang Huang (Chinese).

**Description: “**A perennial plant with roots or tubers oblong, palmate, and deep orange inside; root-leaves about 2 feet long, lanceolate, long, petioled, tapering at each end, smooth, of a uniform green; petioles sheathing spike, erect, central, oblong, green; flowers dull yellow, three or five together surrounded by bracteolae. It is propagated by cuttings from the root, which when dry is in curved cylindrical or oblong tubers 2 or 3 inches in length, and an inch in diameter, pointed or tapering at one end, yellowish externally, with transverse, parallel rings internally deep orange or reddish brown, marked with shining points, dense, solid, short, granular fracture, forming a lemon yellow powder. It has a peculiar fragrant odour and a bitterish, slightly acrid taste, like ginger, exciting warmth in the mouth and colouring the saliva yellow. It yields its properties to water or alcohol” (Botanical.com: A Modern Herbal).

**Parts used:** Dried rhizome

**Habitat:** Southern Asia. Cultivated in China, Bengal and Java. It needs well-drained soil and a humid climate.

**History**: Turmeric is probably the κυπειρος ινδικος (*Cyperus indicus*) of Dioscorides. [Lib. i. cap. iv.] Both he and Pliny [*Hist. Nat*, lib. xxi. cap. lxx. ed. Valp.] state that this Indian Cyperus has the form of ginger, and that, when chewed, it colours the saliva yellow like saffron. The word *curcuma* is derived from *kurkum*, the Persian name for saffron. [Royle, *Essay on the Antiquity of Hindoo Medicine*, p. 87.] (Henriette’s Herbal Homepage).

# Constituents:

* Volatile oil
* Curcumin
* Bitter principles
* Resin

# Key actions:

* Powerful anti-inflammatory (curcumin lowers the levels of two enzymes in the body that cause inflammation)
* Stimulates secretion of bile
* Eases stomach pain/Protects stomach and liver1
* Antibacterial
* Helps lower cholesterol
* Anti-coagulant: Inhibits blood clotting
* Helps skin disorders such as psoriasis and fungal infections
* “There has been a great deal of research on turmeric's anti-cancer properties, but results are still very preliminary. Evidence from test tube and animal studies suggests that curcumin may help prevent or treat several types of cancers, including prostate, breast, skin, and colon cancer. Tumeric's preventive effects may relate to its antioxidant properties, which protect cells from damage. More research is needed” (University of Maryland Medical Center).
* “Tumeric's powerful antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and circulatory effects may help prevent and treat neurodegenerative diseases, including Alzheimer disease, Parkinson disease, multiple sclerosis, and other conditions” (University of Maryland Medical Center).

# References:

Botanical.com: A Modern Herbal: [http://www.botanical.com](http://www.botanical.com/) (Accessed July 6, 2016)

Andrew Chevalier, *Encyclopedia of Herbal Medicine*. London, New York: Dorling Kindersley, Second American Edition, 2000.

Henriette’s Herbal Homepage: <http://www.henriettes-herb.com/eclectic/pereira/curcuma-> long.html (Accessed July 6, 2016)

The University of Maryland Medical Center:

<http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/herb/turmeric>(Accessed July 6, 2016)

1 However, the University of Maryland Medical Center states: “Turmeric does not seem to help treat stomach ulcers. In fact, there is some evidence that it may increase stomach acid, making existing ulcers worse”.