***Gentiana macrophylla* Pall.**

Gentianaceae
Source of: qín jīao 秦艽
large gentian root

Summary Description

This gentian and its alternate species are found in the Cruciata subgenus. A herbaceous, shade tolerant perennial hardy to Zone 4, only 4-10 inches in height, with arching basal leaf blades to 6 inches, the plant is a desirable ornamental. Dark purple-blue flowers are borne on smooth erect stems in July to September. Seeds ripen thereafter in a light brown, ellipsoid capsule. In the wild, these plants grow in mountainous areas. Moist, cool conditions are ideal.

Propagation

The seeds are tiny but not dust-like. Dilute with clean sand. Sow very thinly on rich potting medium, do not cover but press down into the soil. Keep the surface moist. Seed less than 6 months old germinates in 4-6 weeks (40-70°F) but the plants grow very slowly. After germination, the pots may be kept cool at 40°F but should remain in moist conditions and bright indirect light. Prepare to keep the pots for many months, or until the second year. Full-grown plants may be divided for propagation.

Cultivation

Make sure the seedlings are well developed before planting. Plant at one-foot spacing in bright indirect light (high canopy) or full sun with early or late shade. Mulch well with shredded bark or chopped leaves. Mature plants will tolerate short periods of drought.

Harvest & Processing

Harvest plants at least 3 or 4 years old. The roots are fleshy, supple and stout, in a slightly twisted cylindrical shape, to 7 inches long and half an inch in diameter. Break off side roots, clean and slice in thin, uniform, oblique pieces, dry at temperatures below 110°F. The aromatic brown pieces will show a lighter yellow interior and a contrasting bark.

References

Flora of China: http://www.efloras.org/florataxon.aspx?flora_id=2&taxon_id=200018006
Bensky *Materia Medica* page: 353

Alternate species

G. straminea, G. crassicaulis, G. dahurica, G. gannanensis. **Note**: Another gentian used in Chinese medicine is *Gentiana manshurica* Kitag, source of lóng dǎn cǎo, northern gentian root. *G. manshurica* and its alternates *G. scabra, G. triflora, G. rigescens, and G. rhodanata* are classified in the Pneumonanthe subgenus, are taller (20 inches) and inhabit grasslands at lower altitudes.

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