

Gotu Kola

This increasingly popular herb packs an antiaging punch.

Gotu kola, also known as *Centella asiatica* and Asiatic pennywort, looks like a simple salad ingredient that you'd find in a grocery store.

But for centuries, people throughout its native China, Japan, India and Indonesia have been ingesting as well as applying the tiny—and potent—herb topically to heal ailments including anxiety, varicose veins and minor burns. In Sri Lanka it was observed that elephants, noted for their longevity, often ate the plant, and the French began using it to heal wounds on the skin in the late 1800s, notes Diana Ralys, founder and owner of Radiance Wellness Spa in Santa Monica, California.

It's these restorative benefits that have brought the powerhouse plant beyond the medical community and into the world of wellness, where its healing and antiaging properties have been promptly embraced and incorporated into spas' top rejuvenating services.



QUICK FACTS!

- Gotu kola is known as “Brahmi” in Ayurvedic medicine, meaning “Greatest of the Great.”
- The semi-circular leaves of the plant resemble a sideways view of the human brain.

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- When ingested, the herb can help relieve symptoms of anxiety (*Phytotherapy Research*, April 2016) and even depression (*Asian Journal of Research in Pharmaceutical Sciences*, April 2012).
- Gotu kola has been credited with contributing to enhanced mental performance and memory retention.
- According to a 2001 study published in *Angiology*, the plant's ability to improve circulation can help prevent ankle swelling and edema during long-distance flights.



Why it's a skincare all-star:

Gotu kola—found primarily in antiaging and sun-care products—helps encourage collagen production, reduce scarring and stretch marks, and increase antioxidant levels in newly formed tissue, says Ralys. “It can also keep skin cells ‘tough’ and boost their resistance to sagging,” she adds. Triterpenoids, which play a role in plants’ self-defense mechanisms, are part of why gotu kola is so beneficial to the skin. “Studies have shown that triterpenoids are responsible for stimulating collagen synthesis,” says Ralys. “Gotu kola is also known to contain vitamins B and C, as well as phytonutrients like flavonoids, volatile oils, tannins and polyphenol. These components help promote wound healing, and provide antimicrobial and antioxidant properties.”

The ingredient’s recent uptick in popularity can be traced to the natural skincare movement. “The green beauty boom is a top trend because today’s consumers expect results, but want alternatives to harsh ingredients,” reports Sophia Yost, assistant director of the Anara Spa at the Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort and Spa in Koloa, Hawaii. “The increased focus on preventive skin care that slows aging—especially among millennials—is also contributing to the growing interest in ingredients like gotu kola.”

In the treatment room:

Radiance Wellness Spa’s skin-firming face and eye creams feature gotu kola, and are applied at the end of the All Age Management MicroCurrent Facial (120 min./\$275) and Ultimate Facial Experience (150 min./\$345), which are aimed at reducing fine lines and wrinkles. “Our clients love how smooth their skin looks afterward,” notes Ralys.

The Anti-Aging Facial (50 min./\$190; 100 min./\$340) at Anara Spa features the professional Éminence Arctic Berry Peel and Peptide Illuminating System, formulated with gotu kola and designed to tighten skin and restore elasticity. “Clients say their complexions appear more firm, calm, luminous and plumped,” says Yost. “They also appreciate that results are immediate and there’s no downtime. They can go out and apply makeup right away!”

During the Gotu Kola Body Polish and Body Mask Hydrotherapy Treatment (55 min./\$100) at Spa Lux in Tulsa, Oklahoma, the guest is first scrubbed from neck to toe with the SUNDĀRI Gotu Kola and Walnut Body Exfoliator, in which finely ground walnut shells slough away dead skin while gotu kola, rosehip and cardamom firm and rejuvenate. Then, a gotu kola and oat body wrap is applied and the client rests in a steam pod for 20 minutes, which promotes circulation and allows the product to penetrate and tighten the skin. “Clients leave feeling totally relaxed and pampered!” boasts lead esthetician Lindsey Wertemberger. 🍵



GOTU KOLA PRODUCTS



DermaQuest
Essential B5
Hydrating Serum
dermaquestinc.com



Diana Ralys Skin Health
Peptide Firming Eye Cream
drskinhealth.com



Éminence
Arctic Berry Peel and Peptide
Illuminating System
eminenceorganics.com



Osmosis Pür Medical Skincare
Orange Zest Revitalizing Mask
osmosisskincare.com



SUNDĀRI
Gotu Kola and Oat
Body Wrap Treatment
sundari.com