

# CAYENNE

**COMMON NAME: CAYENNE PEPPER, CHILIPEPPER, HOT PEPPER**

**LATIN NAME:** *Capsicum sp.*

**FAMILY:** *Solanaceae*

**HISTORY:** About 10 wild species and four or five domesticated species of shrubby, annuals, biennials and perennials are included in this tropical American genus. Capsicum peppers were first described in 1493 by Dr. Chauca, physician on Columbus's voyages. Cayenne peppers were introduced from South America to India and Africa by the Portuguese. African bird pepper (*Capsicum fastigiatum*) is the nearest thing to the original wild plant and is considered the most important medicinally.

**BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION:** Annual, biennial, perennial. Fruit varies in size, colour and pungency. Pods are conical shaped and up to 10cm long, green, yellow to red in colour. Grow to 1 metre or more in height and have a woody stem at base. Leaves ovate to lanceolate in shape, with drooping flowers that are white to yellow in colour and appear singularly, in pairs or triplets and are attached where the branches fork.

**TYPE: HEIGHT: SPREAD: HARDINESS ZONES: ALL CONSIDERED ANNUAL IN CANADA**

**HABITAT:** Tropical South America, Southern India and Africa. Traditionally from Cayenne in French Guyana. Cultivated around the world. Prefer rich, well-drained soil in the sun. Several insects may damage growing points and leaves, plants under cover may be affected by spider mites, whitefly, and aphids.

**PROPAGATION:** By seed sown early in spring.

**PARTS USED:** fruits (peppers)

**HARVEST:** Unripe fruits are picked as required and used raw, pickled, or cooked. Ripe fruits are picked in summer and used fresh, pickled or dried in the shade for condiments, decoctions, ointments, powders, tinctures, tablets, liniments, and oleoresin. **CAUTION: ALWAYS WEAR GLOVES WHEN HANDLING AND AVOID CONTACT WITH EYES AND BROKEN SKIN.**

**CONSTITUENTS:** capsaicins-pungent phenol compounds  
carotenoids-capsanthin, capsorubin, carotene and red pigment capsanthin  
steroidal saponins known as capsicidins, in seed and root  
ascorbic acid (vit c)

**properties:** stimulant, carminative, anti-catarrhal, sialagogue, rubifacient, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory circulatory stimulant and alterative: cardiac tonic, diaphoretic and reduces the following factors significant for cardiovascular health: lowers plasma cholesterol and triglycerides, lowers ldl/hdl ratio, lowers platelet aggregation, lowers thromboxane b2 formations, lowers red blood cell haemolysis, lowers blood pressure by dilating arteries (via p substance-rutin)  
Has been referred to as "THE PUREST AND MOST CERTAIN STIMULANT IN THE HERBAL MATERIA MEDICA"

**INDICATIONS:** 1. cardiovascular problems  
2. pain control-counterirritant-topically as "hot-pot" application or capsaicin cream or ointment- in concentrations of 0.025-0.075% applied topically for arthritis, post surgical, amputation, neuralgic pain, cluster headaches, and diabetic neuropathy. May cause burning sensation and reddened skin during first few applications.  
3. digestive stimulant, poor digestion  
4. colds-at first sign of cold sip tea, 1/4 to 1/2 tsp. /cup hot water or in a foot bath-1-3 tablespoons in hot water over ankles for 5-20 minutes. **use caution due to extreme heat sensation**  
5. antioxidant-as a food it is a powerful antioxidant due to its carotene content.  
6. psoriasis-topically as a cream or ointment, reduces and eliminates lesions.  
7. temperature control-stimulates cooling centre of hypothalamus to produce cooling. Use in food.

**DOSAGE:** INFUSION- 1/4-1/2 tsp. dried herb per cup hot water

CREAMS AND OINTMENTS- .025 TO .075% W/V

FOOT BATHS- 1-3 tablespoon in hot water over ankles

HOT POT- 1 POD / 250 g pure melted beeswax (see methods and procedures section for specific instructions)

**\*ALWAYS WEAR GLOVES WHEN HANDLING PEPPERS, AVOID CONTACT WITH EYES AND BROKEN SKIN.**

**COMBINATIONS:** for poor circulation- ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*), ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*), bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*).

**CONTRAINDICATIONS/WARNINGS:** *Children and persons not able to tolerate burning sensations. Excessive doses may cause severe irritation of the mucosae, with nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Tolerance very variable. Very irritating without redness, i.e. Affects nerve endings producing pain but does not cause blistering.*

## **HERBS FOR YOUR HEART**

HERE IS A CHART SHOWING THE EFFECTS OF CAYENNE, GINGER AND GARLIC ON THE CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM:

	CAYENNE	GINGER	GARLIC
lowers cholesterol	X	X	X
Inhibits platelet aggregation	X	X	X
antithrombotic		X	
lowers plasma cholesterol/triglycerides	X		X
lowers/improves ldl/hdl ratio	X		
lowers thromboxane production	X		
lowers red cell hemolysis	X		
cardiotonic	X	X	
lowers blood pressure, dilates arteries	X		X
activates fibrinolysis			X
lowers blood viscosity	X		X
increases circulation, helps arthritis etc.	X	X	X
stimulant	X		
anti-nausea		X	
anti-microbial			X
anti-inflammatory	X		X