

Gentle Giant

Mirabilis jalapa extract can offer big relief for sensitive skin

by Kris Campbell

Mirabilis jalapa, a tropical flowering herb once used by the Aztecs as medicine, is gaining momentum as an active skin care ingredient, especially for products developed for sensitive skin. More commonly known as the “marvel of Peru” or the “four o’clock flower” (because its flowers open in the late afternoon), it is the most common species of the Mirabilis plant.

A PRACTICAL PLAN

Mirabilis jalapa has an amazing variety of uses:

- The edible crimson flowers of the plant are used as dye and food coloring.
- Research shows the plant can be used to help with bioremediation of soils with heavy metals.
- Indigenous peoples in Brazil use the dried flowers to cure headaches and the root to treat skin conditions like leprosy.
- Peruvians use the juice extracted from the flowers to treat maladies like herpes and earaches. Juice from the roots may also treat diarrhea, syphilis, and even liver infections.
- Decoctions (the liquor resulting from concentrating the essence of a substance by heating or boiling, especially a medicinal preparation made from a plant) of the whole plant are used to treat bee stings, scorpion stings, and infected wounds.
- The field of herbal medicine uses parts of the plant for wound healing and laxative and diuretic purposes. The root is also thought to be an aphrodisiac.
- The leaves are primarily used for the reduction of inflammation.
- The flowers have a strong and sweet fragrance, making them a popular ingredient for candles and perfumes.



HELP FOR SENSITIVE SKIN

The extract source commonly used in the skin care industry comes from the aerial (above ground) parts of the Mirabilis jalapa plant. The extract is known as a calming and protecting ingredient, especially for sensitive skin and reactive skin. Sensitive skin seems to be on the rise, with as many as 50 percent of women and 30 percent of men claiming to have sensitive skin for a variety of reasons.



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The extract is known to reduce inflammation and redness, along with lessening skin discomfort. Many people with skin sensitivities have issues with any touch or pressure on their skin because of inflammation. Mirabilis jalapa can help with irritation in the nerve endings that occurs due to inflammation. If the nerves are damaged, they may no longer supply the skin adequately, which can cause a change in color or texture. It also can alter the way certain sensations, such as light, touch, and temperature, are felt.

EVEN MORE BENEFITS

Another benefit of Mirabilis jalapa is the effect it has on barrier function. When a client has a compromised barrier, it can lead to dryness and susceptibility to bacteria and, in turn, infections and a variety of skin irritations. Factors that may contribute to a compromised barrier may include the overuse of skin products, too-harsh ingredients for skin conditions, allergies, medications, environmental concerns, and even autoimmune disorders. When the skin's moisture barrier is disrupted, it cannot properly protect itself from external stressors.

Hydration of the skin is key, and an added benefit of Mirabilis jalapa extract is improved hydration. Dehydrated skin can be characterized as a lack of water, not oil, and even oily and acne-prone skin can be dehydrated. Improving hydration issues by adding Mirabilis jalapa to a skin care protocol will help the other issues discussed, including both the complications of inflammation and barrier function.

Mirabilis jalapa is also antibacterial and antimicrobial. These are also key to helping clients with sensitive or compromised skin. These benefits will be very helpful in repairing a compromised barrier function and protecting the skin from further damage. ☺