



# passionflower.

This herb offers a safe, effective alternative to conventional anti-anxiety drugs, says **Tamara Skok**.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) and menopausal symptoms respond well to passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*), as does period pain. A calming remedy which gently 'takes the edge off', it works by increasing levels of a chemical called gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) in the brain, which makes you feel more relaxed. It is suitable for children and teens, and useful for anxiety - one study of people with generalised anxiety disorder found that passionflower was just as effective as the drug oxazepam (Serax) - restlessness and insomnia (especially when caused by nightmares, an overactive imagination, or paranoia), muscle spasms, leg cramps, and digestive problems. It is a vasodilatory, making it beneficial for palpitations and hypertension. Its effects are not as pronounced as other anti-anxiety herbs, such as kava; it may be combined with valerian, lemon balm or

other sedative, calmativ e herbs in both over-the-counter and prescribed blends. The flowers, leaves and stems are used medicinally. Recommended dosages are: **Tea:** Steep 0.5-2g (about 1 teaspoon) of dried herb in 1 cup boiling water for 10 minutes. Strain and cool. For anxiety, drink 3-4 cups daily. For insomnia, drink 1 cup before bed.

**Fluid extract (1:1 in 25% alcohol):** 10-30 drops, three times daily.

**Tincture (1:5 in 45% alcohol):** 10-60 drops, three times daily.

**Caution:** If you are taking sedatives or blood-thinners, consult your health practitioner before taking passionflower. Avoid if pregnant or breastfeeding.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Passionflower was first brought to Europe from Brazil by Jesuit priests. It is said to be named in honour of the Passion of Christ: the flower's three styles symbolise the three nails used in the crucifixion, and the five hammer-like anthers on the stamens represent the five hammers used to drive in the nails.



**TAMARA SKOK** is a herbalist on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Contact Tamara at caloundranatclinic@bigpond.com

# green business.

In a gloomy economy, it's good for the soul to know that there are companies championing sustainable and ethical business practices. **Jayne Tancred** reports.



When researchers compared the antioxidant activity of 55 medicinal herbs, olive leaf came out ahead of green tea.

As I make my way up the driveway of Olive Leaf Australia, I spy a row of tents which I assume is where farm workers are camped. Instead, the 'campsite' turns out to be home to thousands of worms which feed on the olive leaves after the world-famous medicine is extracted from them, creating a liquid fertiliser that's placed back onto the trees so that they can source their nutrients as nature intended - from the composting of their own leaf fall. This grand-daddy of all worm farms produces enough worm wee to feed half a million olive trees, spread out over 400 acres - it's also the first of many examples of 'giving back' that I encounter on my visit.

## Success story

Since selling its first bottle of olive leaf extract (OLE) in 2001, Olive Leaf Australia now sells over 1,000 bottles a day in Australia and exports to 20-plus countries. Like most 'overnight

