Herbs the Drain Fire

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Sources:

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Herbs that Drain Fire

These are among the coldest herbs in the materia medica.

- High fever
- Irritability
- Thirst
- Delirium
- Eye problems

These symptoms generally correspond to the **Qi level** in the four levels of Warm Disease Theory, or to the **Yang Ming** level in the six-stage Shang Han Lun theory.

The key symptoms associated with these levels are the **Four Bigs (四大):** big fever, big thirst, big sweat, big pulse.

Because they clear heat, these herbs tend to be bitter in flavor. Some, due to their ability to moisten dryness and generate fluids, are also sweet.

Because these herbs are so cold, caution must be taken not to damage the Spleen.

Herbs that Drain Fire

Taste:	• bitter • sometimes sweet (moistening)
Temperature:	• cold
Channels:	• LU, ST, HT, LV
Cautions & Contraindications:	• These herbs are cold and bitter; they may damage the Spleen
Main Action:	• Clear heat and drain fire
Other	• These herbs treat Qi level or Yangming level heat, characterized by the Four Bigs

Herbs that Drain Fire

- shí gāo
- zhī mǔ
- zhī zǐ
- dàn zhú yè
- xià kū cǎo
- xī guā
- tiān huā fēn
- lú gēn
- juē míng zǐ

shí gāo

gypsum fibrosum

石膏

Temp: very cold
Taste: sweet, acrid
Channels: LU, ST
Dosage: 15-60 grams

1. clears heat and drains fire
    - for qi-level or Yang Ming heat characterized by the “Four Great” symptoms: great fever (without chills), great sweat, great thirst, big pulse (rapid, surging)
2. clears excess heat from the Lung
    - for cough with thick, yellow, sticky sputum
3. clears blazing Stomach fire
    - for hunger, thirst, bad breath
    - for headache, toothache, painful gums, mouth sores

Prepared Shi Gao (called Shu Shi Gao) can be applied topically to treat skin conditions such as eczema, burns, and sores.

zhī mǔ

anemarrhenae rhizoma

知母

Temp: cold
Taste: bitter, sweet
Channels: LU, ST, KI
Dosage: 6-12 grams

1. clears heat and drains fire
    - for high fever, irritability, thirst, rapid flooding pulse (qi-level heat)
2. clears heat from deficiency
    - for heat signs due to Kidney yin deficiency
3. tonifies Kidney yin and moistens dryness

zhī zǐ
gardeniae fructus

栀子

Temp: cold
Taste: bitter
Channels: HT, LU, ST, LV, SJ
Dosage: 6-9 grams

1. clears heat and drains fire
    - clears heat from all three jiaos; for heat anywhere in the body
    - treats shen disorders due to heat (irritability, insomnia, delirious speech)
2. clears damp-heat
    - for lin syndrome due to damp-heat in the lower-jiao, jaundice
3. cools blood to stop bleeding
    - use charred (Zhi Zi Tan)
    - for nosebleed, vomiting blood, blood in the stool or urine
4. use topically for injury and trauma

dàn zhú yè
lophatheri herba

淡竹叶

Temp: cold
Taste: sweet, bland
Channels: HT, SI, ST
Dosage: 6-9 grams

1. clears Heart heat
    - for shen problems (anxiety, irritability, insomnia, palpitations), difficult urination, and mouth sores
2. promotes urination to treat Lin syndrome
    - for Heart heat pouring into Small Intestine

xià kū cǎo

prunellae spica

夏枯草

Temp: cold
Taste: bitter, acrid
Channels: LV, GB
Dosage: 9-15 grams

1. clears Liver heat and brightens eyes
    - for red, painful, swollen eyes; headache; dizziness
2. clears heat and dissipates nodules
    - for neck lumps, scrofula, goiter, lipoma, or swollen glands due to phlegm-heat
3. lowers high blood pressure

xī guā

citrulli fructus

西瓜

Temp: cold
Taste: sweet (bland)
Channels: UB, HT, ST
Dosage: 15-30 grams

1. clears heat and summerheat
    - for thirst, dark scanty urine, dry heaving
2. generates body fluids
3. promotes urination
    - for edema and jaundice

Xi Gua is watermelon. It is used as food therapy, not in decoction.
Watermelon rind is called Xi Gua Pi. The rind is not as cooling, but better at promoting urination.

tiān huā fēn

tricosanthis radix

天花分

Temp: cold
Taste: bitter, slightly sweet
Channels: LU, ST
Dosage: 10-15 grams

1. clears heat from Lung and Stomach
    - for thirst, irritability, cough with thick or blood-streaked phlegm
2. generates body fluids
    - a.k.a. tonifies Lung and Stomach yin
3. resolves toxicity and expels pus
    - for carbuncles and sores with yellow, sticky, foul-smelling pus
    - for breast abscess

lú gēn

phragmitis rhizoma

芦根

Temp: cold
Taste: sweet
Channels: LU, ST
Dosage: 15-30 grams

1. clears heat from Lung and Stomach
    - for thirst, irritability, cough with thick or blood-streaked phlegm
2. generates body fluids
    - a.k.a. tonifies Lung and Stomach yin
    - stronger than Tian Hua Fen
3. promotes urination to treat Lin syndrome
    - for urgent, scanty, dark, painful urination

juē míng zǐ

cassiae semen

决明子

Temp: slightly cold
Taste: bitter, sweet, salty
Channels: LV, LI, KI
Dosage: 9-15 grams

1. clears Liver heat to brighten eyes
    - for eye problems, headache, dizziness
2. moistens Large Intestine
3. lowers high blood pressure and cholesterol

Jue Ming Zi is named after abalone shell (Shi Jue Ming) because of its strong action of brightening the eyes.
It is mainly for eye problems due to Liver yang rising, but it can be used with other herbs for eye problems due to wind-heat or yin deficiency (hence its sweet nature).

lián zǐ xīn

plumula nelumbinis

连子心

Temp: cold
Taste: bitter
Channels: HT, PC
Dosage: 1.5-3 grams

1. clears Heart heat
    - for shen problems, confusion, delirium, irritability, insomnia
    - for sores on the mouth and tongue
2. stops bleeding and secures essence
    - for vomiting blood or spermathorrhea

Lian Zi Xin can be taken as a single herb for insomnia due to Heart heat. It is used as a folk remedy for childhood insomnia by making it into a pillow.

Summary

shi gao *gypsum fibrosum*	clears heat and drains fire • Qi-level heat • Lung and Stomach heat	
zhi mu *anemarrhenae rhizoma*	clears heat and drains fire • Qi-level heat	• clears deficiency heat • tonifies KI yin
zhi zi *gardeniae fructus*	clears heat and drains fire • all three jiao • for shen disturbance	• clears damp-heat (lin syndrome and jaundice)
dan zhu ye *lophatheri herba*	clears heat and drains fire • clears Heart heat	• promotes urination
xia ku cao *prunellae spica*	clears heat and drains fire • clears Liver heat to brighten eyes	• dissipates nodules • lowers high blood pressure
xi gua *citrulli fructus*	clears heat and drains fire • clears summerheat	• generates body fluid • promotes urination
tian hua fen *trichosanthis radix*	clears heat and drains fire • clears heat from Lung and Stomach	• moistens Lung; generates body fluids • treats skin infection (sores with pus)
lu gen *phragmitis rhizoma*	clears heat and drains fire • clears heat from Lung and Stomach	• Moistens Lung; generates body fluids • promotes urination
jue ming zi *cassiae semen*	clears heat and drains fire • clears Liver heat to brighten eyes	• moistens Large Instestine • lowers high blood pressure and cholesterol