

# HERBS THAT DRAIN DAMPNESS

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**Sources:**

- Bensky, D. (2004). *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press. pp. 267-319
- Chen, J. and Chen, T. (2004). *Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology*. Art of Medicine Press. pp. 380-431

## Herbs that Drain Dampness

Herbs that Drain Dampness promote water metabolism and urination to leach dampness out of the body. From a biomedical perspective, many of these herbs are diuretics.

The term “dampness” can refer to two different situations:

1. fluid accumulation (edema, thin mucus)
2. dampness combined with heat (damp-heat)

**Water Accumulation:** refers to an obstruction in the normal metabolism of fluids. This can involve the Lung, Spleen, and/or Kidney. These conditions sometime overlap with phlegm. For acute edema, these herbs are combined with herbs that release the exterior. For chronic edema, these herbs are combined with herbs that tonify qi and tonify yang.

**Damp-Heat:** includes conditions such as Lin Syndrome (painful urination), damp sores, and jaundice. These herbs are combined with herbs that clear heat and dry dampness.

## Herbs that Drain Dampness

<b>Taste:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bland</li> <li>• bitter</li> </ul>
<b>Temperature:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neutral to cold</li> </ul>
<b>Channels:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KI, UB, SP</li> </ul>
<b>Cautions &amp; Contraindications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use caution with yin deficiency and depleted fluids</li> </ul>
<b>Main Action:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote urination (edema, lin syndrome, jaundice)</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These herbs may be combined with tonics (for edema due to deficiency) or with Herbs that Clear Heat and Dry Dampness (for lin syndrome and jaundice due to damp-heat)</li> </ul>

## Herbs that Drain Dampness

### Edema

- fú líng
- chì fú líng
- fú líng pí
- fú shén
- zhū líng
- zé xiè
- dōng guā zǐ
- hàn fáng jǐ
- yì yǐ rén
- shēng jiāng pí

### Lin Syndrome

- chē qián zǐ
- huá shí
- mù tōng
- dēng xīn cǎo
- qú mài
- biǎn xù
- dì fū zǐ
- bì xiè
- shí wéi
- dōng kuí zǐ

### Jaundice

- yīn chén

# fú líng

*poria*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** HT, SP, KI, LU  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

1. promotes urination to leach out dampness
  - for edema, diarrhea, difficult urination
2. tonifies Spleen qi
  - for Spleen deficiency with dampness;  
e.g. loss of appetite, diarrhea, distention
3. calms shen
  - for palpitations, insomnia, forgetfulness



茯苓

# chì fú líng

*poria rubra*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** HT, SP, KI, LU  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

1. promotes urination to leach out dampness
  - for edema with **heat signs**
  - for scant, dark, difficult urination



Chi Fu Ling is the portion that grows closer to the skin.  
It is colder than Fu Ling, but does not tonify the Spleen.

赤茯苓

# fú líng pí

*poria cutis*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** HT, SP, KI, LU  
**Dosage:** 15-30 grams

1. promotes urination to leach out dampness
  - for edema, esp. **edema under the skin**

茯苓皮



Fu Ling Pi is the outer portion that includes the skin, so it is said to treat skin edema. It is less tonifying than Fu Ling but better at draining dampness.

# fú shén

*poria sclerotium pararadicus*

**Temp:** neutral  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** HT, SP, KI, LU  
**Dosage:** 6-15 grams

1. promotes urination to leach out dampness
2. **calms shen**
  - for palpitations, insomnia, forgetfulness

茯神



Fu Shen is the section of the fungus that contains the tree root.

# zhū líng

## *polyporus*

**Temp:** slightly cool  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** SP, KI, UB  
**Dosage:** 6-12 grams

猪苓

### 1. promotes urination to leach out dampness

- for edema, diarrhea, vaginal discharge, difficult urination

Zhu Ling differs from Fu Ling in three ways:

1. Zhu Ling does not tonify middle-jiao qi
2. Zhu Ling is colder than Fu Ling
3. Zhu Ling is better at promoting urination



# zé xiè

## *alismatis rhizoma*

**Temp:** cold  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** KI, UB  
**Dosage:** 4.5-9 grams

泽泻

### 1. promotes urination to leach out dampness

- esp. for dampness in the lower jiao

### 2. drains damp-heat from lower jiao

- for lin syndrome, damp-heat diarrhea, spermatorrhea
- settles hyperactive ministerial fire: by draining lower-jiao damp-heat, Ze Xie can be used to treat deficiency heat as well



# dōng guā zǐ

*benincasae semen*

**Temp:** cold

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** LU, ST, LI, SI

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams (crush before decocting)

1. clears heat and drains dampness
  - esp. for vaginal discharge due to damp-heat
2. discharges internal pus
  - for Lung abscess and Large Intestine abscess

冬  
瓜  
子



# hàn fáng jǐ

*stephaniae tetrandrae radix*

**Temp:** cold

**Taste:** bitter, acrid

**Channels:** UB, SP, KI

**Dosage:** 4.5-9 grams

1. promotes urination to treat edema
  - esp. for lower-body edema
  - for damp leg qi (beriberi), gurgling in the intestines, ascites
2. expels wind-damp to treat bi syndrome
  - esp. for hot bi syndrome

漢  
防  
己



# yì yǐ rén

## *coicis semen*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** sweet, bland  
**Channels:** LU, SP, ST, KI  
**Dosage:** 9-30 grams (or use in food therapy)

1. promotes urination and leaches out dampness
  - for edema, diarrhea, difficult urination
2. tonifies Spleen qi
3. treats bi syndrome
  - esp. for joint mobility and spasms
4. clears heat and discharges pus
  - for Lung abscess and Large Intestine abscess

To enhance its ability to strengthen the Spleen, use dry-fried Yi Yi Ren (Shu Yi Yi Ren or Chao Yi Yi Ren).



薏  
苡  
仁

# shēng jiāng pí

## *zingiberis rhizomatis cortex*

**Temp:** cool  
**Taste:** acrid  
**Channels:** LU, SP, ST  
**Dosage:** 1-3 grams

1. promotes sweating to release the exterior
2. harmonizes the middle jiao
3. promotes urination to treat edema
  - esp. for edema just under the skin

Bensky puts this in the category *Warm Acrid Herbs that Release the Exterior* alongside Sheng Jiang. However, Sheng Jiang Pi is perhaps more likely to appear in formulas for draining dampness, such as Wu Pi San.



生  
姜  
皮

# chē qián zǐ

## *plantaginis semen*

**Temp:** cold

**Taste:** sweet

**Channels:** UB, KI, LV, LU

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams (put in bag)

1. promotes urination and clears damp-heat
  - for lin syndrome or edema due to damp-heat
  - promotes urination to solidify stool; for diarrhea due to damp-heat or damp-summerheat
2. clears Liver heat to brighten eyes
3. clears Lung heat
  - for cough with yellow, copious phlegm



车  
前  
子

# huá shí

## *talcum*

**Temp:** cold

**Taste:** sweet, bland

**Channels:** ST, UB

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams (put in bag)

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - important herb for hot lin syndrome
  - also for diarrhea due to damp-heat
2. clears summer heat
3. used topically to treat skin problems
  - absorbs dampness; for eczema, damp sores, summer rash

滑  
石



# mù tōng

## *akebia caulis*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** bitter  
**Channels:** UB, HT, SI  
**Dosage:** 3-6 grams

木  
通

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - for difficult urination due to damp-heat in the lower jiao
2. clears Heart heat
  - for Heart heat pouring into Small Intestine
    - irritability, mouth sores, difficult urination
3. promotes lactation
4. unblocks blood vessels
  - for amenorrhea due to stagnation, damp-heat bi syndrome



# dēng xīn cǎo

## *junci medulla*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** bitter  
**Channels:** HT, LU, SI  
**Dosage:** 1.5-4.5 grams

灯  
心  
草

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - for hot lin syndrome
2. clears Heart heat
  - for Heart heat pouring into Small Intestine
    - esp. for childhood sleep disorders with irritability and dark, scanty urine (night terrors)
    - milder than Mu Tong
  - also for insomnia due to Heart and Kidney not communicating



# qú mài

## *dianthi herba*

**Temp:** cold  
**Taste:** bitter  
**Channels:** UB, HT, SI  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

瞿  
麦

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - for any type of lin syndrome, esp. bloody lin
2. invigorates blood
  - secondary herb for amenorrhea due to blood stasis



Qu Mai and Bain Xu are paired herbs and often used together.

# biǎn xù

## *polygوني avicularis herba*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** bitter  
**Channels:** UB  
**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

扁  
蓄

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - for lin syndrome due to damp-heat
2. kills parasites
  - for intestinal parasites; e.g. tapeworm, hookworm, pinworm
  - used externally for fungal infection; e.g. tinea, damp skin lesions with itching



Qu Mai and Bain Xu are paired herbs and often used together.

# dì fū zǐ

## *kochiae fructus*

**Temp:** cold

**Taste:** sweet, bitter

**Channels:** UB, KI

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

### 1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome

- for lin syndrome due to damp-heat

### 2. clears damp-heat

- used internally and externally for skin problems due to damp-heat with itching; e.g. eczema, scabies, fungal infections, genital itching



地  
肤  
子

# bì xiè

## *discoreae hypoglauciae rhizoma*

**Temp:** neutral

**Taste:** bitter

**Channels:** UB, LV, ST

**Dosage:** 9-15 grams

### 1. drains damp turbidity to treat gao lin (cloudy lin)

- for cloudy urine (excess or deficiency) and vaginal discharge

### 2. treats bi syndrome

- expels wind-damp, relaxes the the channels
- mild

### 3. treats damp-heat skin problems

- for eczema, pustular sores



萆  
解

# dōng kuí zǐ (dōng kuí guǒ)

*malvae fructus*

**Temp:** cold  
**Taste:** sweet  
**Channels:** UB, LI, SI  
**Dosage:** 3-9 grams

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - for hot lin, bloody lin, or stone lin
  - also for edema
2. benefits breasts
  - for insufficient lactation (due to stagnation), painful swollen breasts, early stage breast abscess
3. moistens Large Intestine to relieve constipation

Use caution during pregnancy.

冬  
葵  
子



# shí wéi

*pyrrosiae folium*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** bitter, sweet  
**Channels:** UB, LV, ST  
**Dosage:** 6-9 grams

1. promotes urination to treat lin syndrome
  - for hot lin, bloody lin, or stone lin due to damp-heat
2. clears heat and stops bleeding
  - for vomiting blood, uterine bleeding, bloody lin
3. clears Lung heat
  - for cough, wheezing, and phlegm

石  
葎



jīn qián cǎo  
*lysimachiae herba*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** sweet, salty  
**Channels:** UB, LV, ST  
**Dosage:** 15-30 grams

1. promotes urination and expels stones
  - for various types of lin, but especially for urinary tract stones
  - can be taken alone as tea
2. clears LV/GB damp-heat and expels stones
  - for gallstones
3. used externally to treat skin infection

Jin Qian Cao means “gold coin herb.”  
There are three herbs that treat stones with “gold” in the name: Jin Qian Cao, Hai Jin Sha, Ji Nei Jin

金  
钱  
草

yīn chén (yīn chén hāo)  
*artemisiae scopariae herba*

**Temp:** slightly cold  
**Taste:** bitter  
**Channels:** LV, SP, GB, ST  
**Dosage:** 9-30 grams

1. resolves dampness to treat jaundice
  - for jaundice due to damp-heat or damp-cold
  - best herb for treating jaundice
2. used externally to treat damp-related skin problems



茵  
陈  
蒿

# Summary

<b>fu ling</b> <i>poria</i>	drains damp	• tonifies SP qi
<b>chi fu ling</b> <i>poria rubra</i>	drains damp • for edema with heat signs	
<b>fu ling pi</b> <i>poria cutis</i>	drains damp • for edema under the skin	
<b>fu shen</b> <i>poria sclerotium peraradicus</i>	drains damp	• calms shen
<b>zhu ling</b> <i>polyporus</i>	drains damp	
<b>ze xie</b> <i>alismatis rhizoma</i>	drains damp • for damp and damp-heat in lower jiao	
<b>dong gua zi</b> <i>benincasiae semen</i>	drains damp • for vaginal discharge	• discharges internal pus (LU and LI abscess)
<b>han fang ji</b> <i>stephaniae tetrandrae radix</i>	drains damp • for lower body edema	• treats hot bi
<b>yi yi ren</b> <i>coicis semen</i>	drains damp	• tonifies SP qi • treats bi syndrome

<b>che qian zi</b> <i>plantaginis semen</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • lin syndrome, edema, diarrhea	• clears LV heat to brighten eyes • clears LU heat
<b>hua shi</b> <i>talcum</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • hot lin, diarrhea	• clears summer heat • treats damp skin problems
<b>mu tong</b> <i>akebiae caulis</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • drains damp-heat, clears HT heat	• promotes lactation • treat bi syndrome
<b>deng xin cao</b> <i>junci medulla</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • hot lin, clears HT heat	
<b>qu mai</b> <i>dianthi herba</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • bloody lin	• invigorates blood
<b>bian xu</b> <i>polygoni avicularis herba</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome	• kills parasites (worms and fungus)
<b>di fu zi</b> <i>kochiae fructus</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome	• damp-heat skin problems
<b>bi xie</b> <i>discoriae hypoglauciae rhizoma</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • gao lin	• treats bi syndrome • skin problems
<b>shi wei</b> <i>pyrosae folium</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome • stone lin	• clears heat to stop bleeding • clears LU heat
<b>dong kui zi</b> <i>malvae fructus</i>	promotes urination to treat lin syndrome	• benefits breasts • moistens LI
<b>yin chen</b> <i>artemisiae scopariae herba</i>	relieves jaundice • yin and yang type jaundice	