

# Wonders of the Tiger Milk Mushroom

By TEE LIN DEE

**N**OT many have heard of the Tiger Milk Mushroom, and that is a pity, as this wonderful mushroom comes with a host of healing properties.

According to folklore, Tiger Milk Mushroom is a type of fungus that grows at the very spot where the tigress drops her milk while breastfeeding. Hence its name – "Tiger Milk Mushroom".

This mushroom has 400 years of history and was quoted in *The Diary of John Everlyn* in 1664.

At that time, the Tiger Milk Mushroom was given by the indigenous people of South-East Asia to the Europeans who sailed there. In 1890, the Father of Malaysian Rubber Industry Henry Ridley also cited it as an important medicinal mushroom used by the local people.

In the 1950s and 60s, many Chinese households kept the Tiger Milk Mushroom handy. When a cough or cold came around, mum or dad would

grind the mushroom and mix the powder with water. Drinking it did wonders for the body. The Chinese used it to help with asthma, coughs, as protection for the lung and respiratory system and as a general tonic.

The Malay bomohs kept this mushroom as well, mainly for more serious illnesses like breast cancer as well as joint pains. While there has been no real evidence on the mushroom's ability to help fight cancer, the mushroom certainly was highly regarded for its healing properties.

In the 1970s, when Western medicine came about, the mushroom slowly lost its popularity. It didn't help that this mushroom was elusive. It is only available in tropical forests in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, South China, the Philippines and Papua New Guinea.

It isn't easy to find. The orang asli, when asked about its whereabouts, could not pinpoint its exact locations. The mushroom

grows solitary.

The Tiger Milk Mushroom consists of a cap, stem and sclerotium. The sclerotium is the part with medicinal value. It contains white tissue and appears and tastes like milk when ground and mixed with water. This has led some people to think of it as real "Tiger's milk".

This wonderful Tiger Milk Mushroom grows in Malaysia and is hailed as our national treasure. In fact, the first specimen used for scientific taxonomical description was a species found in Penang.

The orang asli have long been using it for their health and well-being. In fact, there is a belief among them that when one holds a Tiger Milk Mushroom when out hunting, one will never be lost.

In an International Convention on Biotechnology, 2002, Malaysia's former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir, a Western-trained doctor, gave an opening speech. In his speech, he told of



The Tiger Milk Mushroom's sclerotium (white area) is the part which contains medicinal value. Top: The elusive Tiger Milk Mushroom grows wild in South-East Asian jungles. It is hailed as Malaysia's national treasure.

how he was unable to find any drugs to cure his chronic cough. It was only when a friend persuaded him to take the Tiger Milk Mushroom that his chronic cough stopped. He then challenged the audience to discover more about this mushroom.

In 2003, the biggest medicinal mushroom producer, China, named the Tiger Milk Mushroom as the top 10 mushroom with the most potential.

A local company, Ligno & Us, studied and conducted research on this marvellous mushroom. Its studies offered positive results on a few health areas.

#### Key benefits

• **Anti-inflammatory**  
It helps with inflammation and repairs inflamed tissues. With this, it helps improve the respiratory functions. Those with joint pain, swelling, chronic cough, sinus, respiratory allergies, asthma or who are constantly exposed to a polluted environment will benefit.

• **It is also advisable for smokers, the elderly and those who smoke.**

> **Immuno-modulating**

It works as a general tonic to strengthen a weak constitution.

> **Anti-cancer, anti-tumour**

It can help as an aid for cancers although there is no scientific evidence to prove it can help cure cancers.

#### Lung and respiratory health

> Relieves asthmatic symptoms, reduces inhaler usage and shortens recovery period

> Relieves cough

> Relieves respiratory allergy

> Relieves nasal and sinus conditions

> Improves breathing, especially for smokers

#### Joint health

> Helps those with joint pain caused by injuries

> Helps elderly folks who have joint pains

> Relieves joint pain caused by dengue fever and chikungunya

#### Skin allergy

> Relieves skin allergy, eczema

> Helps rashes from alcohol

allergy to subside

> Helps with wound healing

■ The Tiger Milk Mushroom is a natural and effective herbal remedy that has been substantiated by scientific evidence. This article is contributed by Ligno & Us Sdn Bhd.