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Jiaogulan

Gynostemma pentaphyllum

The secret of the centenarian

Worth Knowing: Chinese explores, in search of a new natural sweetener, first found the Jiaogulan in remote villages in the mountain area of the province Guizhou. The locals referred to it as the herb of immortality; and the percentage of people over 100 years of age in these villages was by far higher than the population average, which led back to the consumption of the *Gynostemma pentaphyllum*. After analyzing the contents, it was found out that the plant has - similar to the Ginseng - a high concentration of saponins. The herb is believed to have a soothing effect on stress, sleep disturbances and high blood pressure, and also reduces the blood sugar level. The delicate leaves of the plant strike with its fresh-green colour and a light sweet, licorice-like taste, and can be cooked like spinach or eaten raw as salad. With fresh or dried leaves you can also prepare an aromatic, sweetish herbal tea.

Natural Location: The natural habitat of the Jiaogulan is in China, India, Japan, Korea and Taiwan, where it grows in heights of up to 3200 meters.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. To increase the germinability, you should place the seeds over night in a bowl with lukewarm water for priming. After that, plant the seeds about 0,5 cm deep into moist potting compost and cover the seed container with clear film to prevent the earth from drying out. Don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm with a temperature between 20° and 25° Celsius and keep the earth moist, but not wet. Usually it takes four to six weeks until germination.

Place: The herbal plant can be cultivated either outdoors in the garden or as pot or tub plant. Either way, it needs a sunny place and a climbing aid.

Care: The Jiaogulan grows in standard garden soil. Ideally, you plant the herb out in spring, so it can grow nicely through the summer. Especially in tub plants the earth should not dry out, so water the plant regularly, but avoid waterlogging.

During the winter: The Jiaogulan is frost-hard up to -15° Celsius. In outdoor plants the aerial parts die off and can be cut at ground level in late winter. The plant hibernates subterraneously with its tuberous roots and sprouts again in spring. To be save, you should protect the root area during the first winter with a thick layer of foliage against heavy frost. Tub plants can be kept in a bright place indoors, where they stay evergreen and provide you continuously with fresh leaves.