

# AROMATIC HERBS THAT TRANSFORM DAMPNESS

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**Sources:**

- Bensky, D. (2004). *Chinese Herbal Medicine: Materia Medica*. Seattle, WA: Eastland Press. pp. 467-489
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## Aromatic Herbs that Transform Dampness

Aromatic herbs have three properties:

1. They have a strong, fragrant smell
2. They treat middle-jiao dampness
3. They activate middle-jiao function

Theoretically, these herbs should be added during the last five minutes of cooking to preserve their aromatic properties (this is not always done in practice).

These herbs tend to be warm, acrid, and drying. They may cause heat signs or dryness. Use caution in patients with yin deficiency.

**Signs and Symptoms:**

- abdominal fullness, nausea, vomiting
- absence of thirst, poor appetite
- morning lethargy, grogginess, stiffness
- diarrhea, vaginal discharge
- greasy coat; soggy or slippery pulse

## Aromatic Herbs that Transform Dampness

<b>Taste:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• acrid, aromatic</li><li>• bitter (sometimes)</li></ul>
<b>Temperature:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• warm</li></ul>
<b>Channels:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SP/ST</li></ul>
<b>Main Action:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awaken the Spleen to transform dampness</li></ul>
<b>Cautions &amp; Contraindications:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These herbs are warm, acrid and drying. They may exhaust qi or dry up yin.</li></ul>
<b>Other:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add last five minutes (theoretically)</li></ul>

## Aromatic Herbs that Transform Dampness

- hòu pò
- cāng zhú
- huǒ xiāng
- shā rén
- bái dòu kòu
- cǎo dòu kòu
- cǎo guǒ

# cāng zhú

## *atractylodis rhizoma*

苍  
术

**Temp:** warm

**Taste:** bitter, acrid

**Channels:** SP, ST

**Dosage:** 3-9 grams

1. strongly dries dampness and strengthens the Spleen
  - **transforms middle-jiao dampness:** for diarrhea, n/v, fatigue
  - **clears lower-jiao damp-heat:** combine with cold herbs; for vaginal discharge, swollen joints
  - essential herb for dampness; use whenever the tongue coat is thick
2. dispels wind-dampness from the channels and muscles
  - body ache and body heaviness, damp predominant bi syndrome
3. brightens the eyes
  - for night blindness, poor vision, cataracts and glaucoma

Cang Zhu is a Spleen/Stomach guiding herb.

# hòu pò

## *magnolia officinalis cortex*

厚  
朴

**Temp:** warm

**Taste:** bitter, acrid, aromatic

**Channels:** LI, LU, SP, ST

**Dosage:** 3-9 grams

1. moves qi and dries dampness
2. moves middle-jiao qi
  - for qi stagnation or food stagnation
  - moves qi downward
3. transforms phlegm and stops cough
  - for cough and wheezing due to phlegm obstructing the Lung

Due to its downward nature, use caution during pregnancy.

# huǒ xiāng

*pogostemonis/agastaches herba*

藿香

**Temp:** slightly warm

**Taste:** acrid

**Channels:** LU, SP, ST

**Dosage:** 3-9 grams (add last five minutes)

## 1. transforms middle-jiao dampness

- esp. for nausea and vomiting, motions sickness, stomach flu
- also treats summerheat

## 2. harmonizes middle-jiao

- for nausea and vomiting

## 3. releases the exterior

- mild; for wind-cold and summerheat-dampness
- esp. when nausea and vomiting are present

Chief herb in *Huo Xiang Zheng Qi San*; for exterior attack with n/v, such as stomach flu.

# shā rén

*amomi fructus*

砂仁

**Temp:** warm

**Taste:** acrid, aromatic

**Channels:** SP, ST

**Dosage:** 3-6 grams (crush first, add last five minutes)

## 1. transforms middle-jiao dampness and moves qi

## 2. warms middle-jiao

- esp. for **diarrhea** due to cold

## 3. calms restless fetus to prevent miscarriage

Also used in formulas with tonifying herbs to prevent stagnation.

# bái dòu kòu

## *amomi fructus rotundus*

**Temp:** warm  
**Taste:** acrid, aromatic  
**Channels:** LU, SP, ST  
**Dosage:** 3-6 grams (crush first)

1. transforms middle-jiao dampness and moves qi
  - for vomiting and nausea
  - can be used as single herb
2. warms middle-jiao
  - for vomiting due to cold

白  
豆  
蔻

# cǎo dòu kòu

## *alpiniae katsumadai semen*

**Temp:** warm  
**Taste:** acrid, aromatic  
**Channels:** SP, ST  
**Dosage:** 3-6 grams (crush first, add last five minutes)

1. dries dampness and moves qi
2. warms middle-jiao
  - for abdominal fullness and pain, nausea, vomiting due to cold

草  
豆  
蔻

Cao Dou Kou is stronger than Bai Dou Kou and may be overly warm and drying.

# cǎo guǒ

## *tsaoko fructus*

草  
果

**Temp:** warm

**Taste:** acrid

**Channels:** SP, ST

**Dosage:** 3-6 grams

1. strongly transforms dampness and disperses cold
2. transforms phlegm-cold in the Lung
  - treats malaria disorders

Can also be used for food stagnation from overconsumption of meat.

## Summary

**cang zhu**  
*atractylodis rhizoma*

transforms dampness

- treats wind-dampness
- brightens eyes
- guides other herbs to SP/ST

**hou po**  
*magnoliae officinalis rhizoma*

transforms dampness

- downward action to treat rebellious qi
- transforms phlegm and stops cough

**huo xiang**  
*pogostemonis herba*

transforms dampness

- n/v, stomach flu

- summerheat
- releases exterior

**sha ren**  
*amomi fructus*

transforms dampness & warms m-j

- **diarrhea**

- **calms restless fetus**

**bai dou kou**  
*amomi fructus rotundus*

transforms dampness & warms m-j

- **vomiting and nausea**

**cao dou kou**  
*alpine katsumadai semen*

transforms dampness & warms m-j

- stronger than bai dou kou

**cao guo**  
*tsaoko fructus*

strongly transforms dampness & warms m-j

- malaria