

Spice Up Your Love Life

The month of romance is the perfect time to focus on sexual health and connect with your body on a deeper level // BY MICHELE BURKLUND, ND

Physical touch and pleasure are some of the best activities to improve the overall health of your body and mind. And these natural aphrodisiacs will enhance desire, improve enjoyment, and boost sensation. Try them alone or with your partner for maximum results.

For Her

According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 43 percent of women aged 18–59 in the United States report some form of sexual difficulty in their lives. But even though these statistics might be alarming, nature offers many remedies for these common issues. These amazing plants will soon have you embracing your inner Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love.

Enhance desire with ashwagandha:

This wonderful plant is able to elevate libido on many levels due to its adaptogenic

properties, which balance hormones and nourish the reproductive system. This powerful herb has been used for centuries to promote sexual health, and has been referenced in the ancient Indian Hindu book, the *Kama Sutra*, for its ability to increase sexual powers and libido.

The *Journal of Research in Ayurveda* also found ashwagandha, in combination with other Ayurvedic herbs, to be an effective treatment for menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, poor sleep, and erratic mood. Along with its benefits for sexual wellness, ashwagandha has long been used for antiaging, stress relief, and brain health. It can be taken in capsule form or infused in a tea for an instant boost.

Get sensual with shatavari:

Commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine to enhance desire and support fertility, this root is an amazing restorative herb for women. In fact, the name “shatavari” is derived from an Indian word meaning “a woman who has a hundred husbands,” due to its nourishing activity on the female organs. The *Journal of Research in Ayurveda* also calls shatavari a potential treatment for PMS, hormone imbalances, and PCOS. In traditional medicine, it is also said

to enhance feelings of spiritual love and togetherness with one’s surroundings.

Foreplay with fenugreek: Fenugreek was a well-known aphrodisiac in Rome, Greece, and Egypt long before making its way to America. This delightful plant has a sweet yet nutty taste and offers many benefits. It has been used for centuries to decrease menopausal symptoms because of its actions as a phytoestrogen. In fact, a trial published in the *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* revealed that this spice could be an effective alternative to conventional hormone replacement therapy. Use fenugreek when preparing your favorite Indian dish, brew a fenugreek tea, or take in capsule form.

For Him

In today’s medically advanced atmosphere, there are many pharmaceutical options for “improving” men’s sexual abilities and health—most of which have undesirable short- or long-term side effects.

It’s important to remember that for many of these male sexual issues, natural remedies already exist—ones with fewer known side effects (if any). Check out these potent herbs to stimulate blood flow, increase libido, and improve stamina.

Get the blood flowing with yohimbe

root: Often called “the natural Viagra,” this root is originally from Africa but has made its way around the globe because of its ability to stimulate blood flow. A German study found that yohimbe is superior to placebo for the treatment of erectile dysfunction, and offers fewer side effects than most oral drugs. The active component, yohimbine, supports the dilation of blood vessels by blocking alpha-2 receptors while causing smooth muscle relaxation in the penis, which



fenugreek

brings more blood flow to the area. Avoid this herb if you're currently taking antidepressants or MAO inhibitors. Can be taken in capsule or powder form.

Ignite your passion with passionflower: This absolutely stunning flower acquired its name from its sex-enhancing powers. Passionflower contains a well-known chemical called chrysin, which has shown the potential to increase testosterone and boost sex drive. In fact, a 2012 trial involving male rats published in the *Journal of Andrology* revealed that chrysin increased sperm motility, sperm concentration, and serum testosterone levels compared to the control group. Researchers believe that chrysin's ability to increase testosterone levels is due to its aromatase activity, which decreases the conversion of testosterone to estrogen. It is commonly taken in a capsule form or applied topically as a cream.

For Her & Him

A holistic approach to sexual wellness should be multifaceted, combining physical treatments with psychological methods. Try lighting candles, emptying your mind, and engaging with your love on an intimate level. Sit facing your partner, look into each other's eyes, and sync your breathing. Embrace these chilly nights as



damiana



the perfect excuse to cuddle up next to your sweet-heart. And the following pleasure-promoting plants can help rekindle your passion and make your love life sizzle.

Damiana: This plant has been documented as far back as the Mayan and Aztec civilizations as a potent aphrodisiac for both men and women. Damiana offers unique benefits because it increases sexual desire while also helping relax the nerves. Traditional medicine has used this leaf for a variety of conditions, including easing anxiety, supporting mood, and stimulating digestion. A 2009 study published by the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* suggests that the flavonoids present in damiana could be responsible for its prosexual effect. Try it in a tincture or capsule, or brew the leaves in a tea.

Muira puama bark: Otherwise known as "potency wood," this formidable bark has long been used by the native people of the Amazon to promote energy, mental clarity, and relaxation. It's also said to help both men and women improve their sex lives.

A study of women who complained of low sex drive found that 65 percent of those who took muira puama in combination with ginkgo biloba reported significant improvement in the frequency of sexual desire, intercourse, fantasies, and total satisfaction with



passionflower

their sex lives. Try it in a standardized tincture or capsule, or infused into a tea.

Shilajit: Abundant in more than 85 minerals, this plant-based resin is found deep in the Himalayan Mountains and treasured by locals for its healing powers. Shilajit is known to rejuvenate both spiritual and sexual energy as well as for its use as a "Qi tonic" in Chinese medicine, due to its ability to enhance vitality.

A recent double blind, placebo controlled study of males between the ages of 45- and 55-years-old reported that subjects taking shilajit saw significantly increased free and total testosterone levels compared to those given a placebo. A chemical constituent called fulvic acid in this unique resin has also been extensively studied for its antiaging and restorative properties. Shilajit isn't as well known as other natural aphrodisiacs, but this won't last. It's commonly taken in capsule form.