



How to outsmart the sneaky **mozzie**

By Sabine Schmitz

Mosquitos are crafty insects that stalk from behind, especially at night, and then strike. The unsuspecting human is overwhelmed and wakes up in the morning plagued by itchy bites.

DEPENDING ON THE year, I have the feeling mosquito bites are either extremely bad or rather harmless. This year seems bad! Hot and humid summers are ideal for mosquitos. This is quite different for humans, who are often bothered

with problems like heat rash, sunstroke and of course insect bites during the hot season. If one doesn't like to use chemicals, people may need medicated herbs to ward off these summer complaints, insect bites in particular.

I cannot say that I count mosquitos among my best friends. This year in China the mosquito plague seemed to be bad, as I experienced in May and June. Thus I was particularly grateful when a Chinese friend told me about a herbal formula produced at a hospital in China. This formula is used to repel insects, especially mosquitos.

Some practitioners believe that this formula can also prevent the growth of many germs (bacterial and viral) and reduce the risk of catching a cold. It is composed of the following ingredients:

Fang Feng	5g	Saposhnikoviae Radix
Shi Chang Pu	10g	Acori tatarinowii Rhizoma
Bo He	15g	Menthae haplocalycis Herba
Ai Ye	20g	Artemisiae argyi Folium
Gui Zhi	10g	Cinnamomi Ramulus
Xiao Hui Xiang	3g	Foeniculi Fructus
Bing Pian	1g	Borneolum
Bai Zhi	10g	Angelicae dahuricae Radix
Huo Xiang	20g	Pogostemonis/Agastaches Herba
Ding Xiang	5g	Caryophylli Flos
Rou Gui	2g	Cinnamomi Cortex

In China the herbs are powdered and offered in small, beautifully crafted bags. They are usually available in traditional pharmacies. The formula can vary slightly but the majority of ingredients are the same.

In order to test the smell and the effect of this composition, I ordered each single herb of the formula and let the pharmacy grind them for me. And lo and behold, the herbs smelt incredibly good and were most aromatic.

Moreover, the formula had a pleasant refreshing effect. But note, the formula should be not cooked. It is for external use only and works due to the aromatic scent of the herbs.

So let's take a deeper look at the individual plants.

What makes this formula effective?

Except for *Fang Feng* (Saposhnikoviae Radix), all of the herbs are characterised by an acrid flavour and a rich fragrance. The combination of acrid and aromatic is well known to be disliked by mosquitos. Since mosquitos are attracted to body odour, it helps to cover this odour with other smells, such as essential oils or medicinal plants, preferably with a scent that mosquitos do not like, such as *Bo He* (Menthae haplocalycis Herba) or *Ding Xiang* (Caryophylli Flos).

Various species of the mint family can repel mosquitos more effectively than many commercial insect repellents, which are chemically based. Catmint (*Nepeta cataria* Herba) is one example. The oil isolated from the plant by steam distillation is used as a repellent against insects. The main constituent of the plant's essential oil, nepetalactone, is more repulsive to insects than an artificial product. It repels mosquitos

up to 10 times more effectively than popular commercial insect repellent DEET.

Another species of mint is horsemint (*Mentha longifolia* Herba), also known as wild mint. Horsemint repels mosquitos much the same as citronella, one of the most common natural ingredients used in naturally based repellents. I always buy citronella while I am staying in Thailand. The citronella sprays sold in Thailand are reasonably priced and good quality. However, horsemint as a plant not only repels mosquitos, it also can be dried and used to make herbal tea.

Cinnamon, anise and cloves are also popular to help repel insects. Naturally grown in the home and garden, they are harmless to humans but their powerful aroma masks our body odour and confuses our enemy, the mosquito.

Ding Xiang has always been known to help against mosquitos. Besides the use of mint (*Bo He*), cinnamon (*Gui Zhi*, *Rou Gui*), cloves (*Ding Xiang*), patchouli (*Huo Xiang*) and borneol (*Bing Pian*) in medicine, the plants are often used in other ways as well, particularly in the manufacture of perfumes and other scented products. This is because of their rich and clear aroma and their acrid flavour. In my opinion, natural products smell much better than synthetic products – and are kinder to our bodies.

As I mentioned, the herbs have a pleasant, refreshing effect. As you smell the composition, you immediately notice that your mind is refreshed. Herbs like *Shi Chang Pu* (Acori tatarinowii Rhizoma) and *Bing Pian* (Borneolum) belong to the aromatic category, which can open the orifices. They are able to mobilise, pierce, and awaken the spirit. From this perspective, the formula can refresh the body and mind.

After grinding the herbs, I put them in a small bowl next to my bed. I have been testing this for two weeks now and the result has been amazing. Since then I have had no more mosquito bites. I have heard the whirring of one flying mosquito but it didn't bite.

I do recommend renewing the herbs next to your bed on a three-weekly or monthly basis. By doing this, the herbs remain fresh and aromatic and able to repel insects. Just give this simple formula a try and you will find out for yourself.

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■ Sabine Schmitz practises Chinese medicine in Cologne.