



FENNEL (FOENICULUM VULGARE) SEED TEA

The fennel 'bulb' and the feathery leaves are the more usual parts of this remarkably useful plant. After its tall umbrella shaped bright yellow flowers in summer, the large brown seeds develop. The cooling aniseed flavour of fennel is pleasing to the palate. The cooling effect comes from the anethol oil found in all members of this Umbelliferae family of plants.

One of the many uses of this northern hemisphere plant of disturbed areas is as a tea that has



been used for centuries to sooth red or inflamed eyes. It is most effective for the yellow patches (pterygium) in the white of the eye that can come

from repeated sun and dust irritation. Many people in the country develop pterygia which can be a problem if they interfere with the iris. These dirty yellow spots which can be blood streaked can arise from difficulty in absorbing fats. Bathing with fennel tea can be soothing but is a symptomatic treatment only and not a cure.

Fennel tea can be drunk by those with diabetes to help support a pancreas that is labouring with sugar difficulties. It is also helpful in assuaging the desire for something sweet in those who tend to be pre-diabetic.

The nutritional and therapeutic properties of fennel are complex. They have a high content of potassium and sulphur compounds and anethol oil which helps digest fats. Fennel seeds contain sugar and starch in a balanced form which should neither raise or lower the sugar levels of a diabetic.

Fennel tea can have a mildly laxative effect. But its great support for the pancreas/spleen is especially important for those for those who are great 'worriers'.

Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame

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