

107.1 Introduction

Dahuang, Radix et Rhizoma Rhei, is the dry root and rootstock of *Rheum palmatum* L., *R. tanguticum* Maxim. ex Balf. or *R. officinale* Baill. (Polygonaceae), collected in the late fall, when the aboveground part has withered or in early spring, before sprouting. It is officially listed in the Chinese Pharmacopoeia. The rhubarb root is one of the oldest and best-known Chinese herbal medicines and is used or recommended as a laxative, antiphlogistic, and hemostatic in the treatment of obstipation, gastrointestinal indigestion, diarrhea, and jaundice. Further indications include bleeding of the gastrointestinal tract, menstrual disorders, conjunctivitis, traumatic diseases, carbuncle, and ulcer. It can also be used for treatment of thermal burn by external application. It is utilized as raw material or after processing.

Dahuang Liujiangao, Extractum Rhei liquidum, the fluid extract prepared by percolating the root powder with 60% ethanol, is also officially listed in the Chinese Pharmacopoeia and is mainly used as a laxative and stomachic.

107.2 Chemical Constituents

The most important constituents from rhubarb root are the anthraquinone derivatives. The first anthraquinone, chrysophanol (107-1) [1], was reported about one and half centuries ago. The anthraquinones isolated from *R. palmatum*, *R. officinale*, *R. tanguticum*, and other medicinal *Rheum* species are listed in Table 107.1. The anthraquinone derivatives occur in the rhubarb root mainly as glycosides. Names and structures are given in Table 107.2 together with their plants of origin.