

# The April 2020 Newsletter of The GP-TCM Research Association



## Monthly Chinese Materia Medica Highlights

Moutan (*Paeonia suffruticosa*, Paeoniaceae, 牡丹, left) and peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*, Paeoniaceae, 芍药, right)



Elegant and beautiful moutan and peony are cultivated for ornamental (worldwide) and medicinal (mainly in China) purposes. In Chinese materia medica, the dried root bark of *Paeonia suffruticosa* (moutan cortex) clears heat, cools the blood, promotes blood circulation, and removes blood stasis. However, superb moutan cortex in commerce (produced in Anhui, Hunan, and Sichuan provinces) originates from *Paeonia ostii* (a small shrub with white flowers). The dried **de-barked root of cultivated** *Paeonia lactiflora* (paeoniae radix alba) nourishes the blood, regulates menstruation, pacifies the liver, relieves pain, preserves yin, and stops sweating. The dried **intact root of wild** *Paeonia lactiflora* (paeoniae radix rubra) has similar functions to that of moutan cortex.

The taxonomic treatment of plants in the genus of *Paeonia* has not yet been well established. Neither has the pharmacological mechanism of Chinese medicinals from this genus. Nevertheless, being a suffruticose (woody in the lower part of the stem) plant native to China, moutan is obviously different from peony. Peony is herbaceous (composed of non-woody tissue) and native to China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Far East Russia.

### 牡丹

园中漫步费思量  
何必花前论短长  
月有圆缺栖玉兔  
来时国色与天香

### 芍药

晨间早起勤梳妆  
院树烟笼国色旁  
本是家珍香四溢  
今人何故论圆方

The above colour photographs, English texts and Chinese poems are contributed by Prof **Hubiao Chen** (Hong Kong), Dr **Ping Guo** (Hong Kong) and Prof **Jiqing Liu** (Shenzhen), respectively. This column is advised by Prof **Zhongzhen Zhao** (Hong Kong).