



The Herb Society of America

Promising Plants Profiles

Orthosiphon aristatus

syn. *O. stamineus*, *O. spicatus*

Genus: *Orthosiphon*

Specific Epithet: *aristatus*

Common Names: Java tea, cat's whiskers

Family: Lamiaceae

Flower Color: white or purple

Form: perennial but grown as an annual below zone 9

Hardiness Zone: 9+

Height: 1-2' (grown as an annual)

Soil: moist garden soil

Sun: full sun; will grow in light shade in warm climates

Uses: medicinal, ornamental

Parts Used: leaves, stem tips



“Cat’s whiskers is one of the most elegant garden annuals I have grown. It is also an easy to grow plant that deserves more attention. Native to tropical Southeast Asia, it is only hardy to zones 9 and higher. It grows to be about 1 to 2 feet tall and has a very open branching habit with 1-inch dark green, ovate leaves with serrated margins. At the end of the branches are racemes of flowers. When the flowers open, the stamens and pistil extend out far beyond the petals, creating the “cat’s whiskers” effect. The flowers are most commonly white, but they can also occur in shades of purple. *Orthosiphon* prefers full sun and a moist garden soil for best growth and flowers. However, it grows perfectly well in light shade in warmer climates.

It is easy to take cuttings of cat’s whiskers in late summer, as it roots easily, and over-winter small plants indoors.

Cat’s whiskers is used as a medicinal plant in its native range. Its diuretic effect makes it a treatment for kidney and bladder problems. It is also reported to have antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties and possible anticancer effects.” – James R. Adams, Curator of the National Herb Garden, Promising Plants Presentation, 2005

Plant Source: Singing Springs Nursery, Cedar Grove, NC

Photo by James R. Adams

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Disclaimer: Profiles are intended to provide a brief introduction to each herb. For additional information on uses, including medicinal contraindications, see the References list. The Herb Society of America can not advise, recommend, or prescribe herbs for medicinal use. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments. Inclusion of vendor information does not indicate an endorsement by The Herb Society of America, and HSA can not guarantee availability of seeds/plants.