

# Honeybush tea - the sweet facts!

Honeybush, also known as "heuningbos" in Afrikaans, is part of the fynbos biome (*Cyclopia spp*), meaning "fine bush". With easily recognizable, sweetly scented, yellow, pea flowers, the first documented medicinal use of Honeybush was by the early colonists of the Cape as a restorative in 1830. Scientific research looking at its chemical composition began in 1881. It is mainly used to make herbal tea, using the leaves and stems, and has a pleasant, mild sweet, honey-like taste and aroma.

## Why is Honeybush tea good for us? It:

- ◆ Contains no caffeine;
- ◆ Has a lower tannin content than oriental teas; and
- ◆ Contains antioxidants.

All current evidence suggests that regular drinking of Honeybush tea is beneficial in preventing disease and slowing the ageing process, making it a potentially valuable addition to the daily diet of health conscious consumers.



Current research is underway to provide scientific evidence to substantiate the numerous health benefits claimed, including:

**Antioxidant effects:** Antioxidants help to prevent cells from being damaged by "free radicals" and also help fight various other human diseases, including heart disease and specific types of eye degeneration.

**Anticancer effects:** Honeybush extracts have also been found to interrupt cancer development in animal models and may have an important role to play in human cancer prevention.

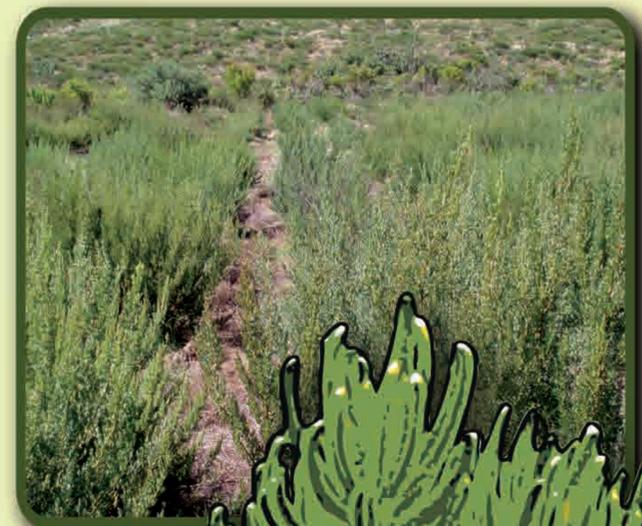
**Phyto-oestrogenic effects:** Plant oestrogens (*phyto-oestrogens*) contained within Honeybush, can imitate the effects of human oestrogen and could potentially provide an alternative treatment to Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) for women suffering from menopausal symptoms. They could also potentially protect postmenopausal women against cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis, without the increased risk of breast cancer associated with the long-term use of HRT.

## Future directions

The difference in the active ingredients varies greatly between the species, and so no blanket claims for proven benefits can be made for all species and formulations of Honeybush tea products currently on the market. Ongoing research aims to optimize the different uses of honeybush to obtain maximum benefit. The manner and extent in which the beneficial substances within Honeybush are absorbed and used by the body are also being researched currently, as there is still some uncertainty. These outcomes will be critical to gain a better understanding of Honeybush's health promoting properties.



For more information about Honeybush tea – its history, production process and potential health benefits, contact Lizette Joubert on 021 809 3444 or email her at [joubertL@arc.agric.za](mailto:joubertL@arc.agric.za), or visit the website of the Honeybush Research Programme of the Agricultural Research Council at <http://www.arc.agric.za/home.asp?pid=4045> [www.sahoneybush.co.za](http://www.sahoneybush.co.za)



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