

An Analysis of Prepared Formula Modifications to Gan Mai Da Zao Tang

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Gan Mai Da Zao Tang (Licorice, Wheat and Jujube Decoction) is a well-known formula from the *Jin Gui Yao Lue (Pearls from the Golden Cabinet)* by Zhang Zhong-Jing. It consists of three ingredients:

- Gan Cao (Radix Glycyrrhizae uralensis preparata) 9 grams
- (Fu) Xiao Mai (Fructus Triticis levis) 9-15 grams
- Da Zao (Fructus Jujubae) 10-12 pieces

The pathology is *Zang Zao*, or Restless Organ (otherwise known as Visceral Agitation or Dry Organ) disorder. The TCM pathomechanism is Heart Qi (and/or Yin) Deficiency with possible Liver Qi Stagnation and Spleen Qi Deficiency. Another possible interpretation is that the “dry” organ is the uterus, one of the Extraordinary Fu. The classic symptoms are disorientation, frequent bouts of sadness and crying spells, restless sleep, frequent yawning, red tongue with scant coating and a thin, rapid pulse.

The various manufacturers and their formula modifications are laid out in the table below. Where the ingredient percentages are provided by the manufacturer, they are noted in the table. Otherwise, the presence of the ingredient in the formula is noted by an X.

- Of the six brands listed, all include the original ingredients.
- Of the six brands listed, only Kan sticks to the original formula without ingredient modifications.
- The most common addition is He Huan Pi/Hua (Cortex/Flos Albiziae), included in four of the six formulations. Neutral and sweet, He Huan Pi enters the Heart and Liver. It calms the Shen and moves qi and blood, which addresses the possible Liver qi stagnation.
- The next most popular additions are Fu Ling (Poria Cocos), and Bai He (Bulbus Lili), found in three of the six formulations. Fu Ling, neutral, sweet and bland, drains damp, tonifies the Spleen and calms the Shen. It adds a safety mechanism against Gan Cao’s tendency to cause fluid accumulation when taken long term.
- Bai He has its own eponymous disease (*Bai He Bing*) in the *Jin Gui Yao Lue*, with a symptom set very similar to Zang Zao. It is a sort of ghost disease, in which the affected person may feel cold or hot but without chills or fever, and wants to eat, drink, move and lie down but is unable to do so. It is, the *Jin Gui Yao Lue* notes, as if the patient was possessed by a spirit. Presumably its inclusion into some of the GMDZT formulations enables it to treat either Zang Zao or Bai He Bing. Today we often use Bai He as a Lung Yin tonic, as it is slightly cold, slightly bitter, sweet, which moistens and downbears the Lung; but its old indications are still an important part of its functions.

- Other modifications include Suan Zao Ren and Bai Zi Ren (Herbal Times), which strengthen not only the formula’s shen-calming function but its ability to check sweating, especially at night; Ye Jiao Teng (Plum Flower and Bioessence), which nourishes blood and treats excessive dreaming, especially of a sexual nature; and Yuan Zhi (Guang Ci Tang and Three Treasures), which gives the formula some phlegm-resolving and orifice-opening actions.
- Giovanni Maciocia’s Three Treasures formulation is notable in that it contains 11 ingredients, where most of the other modifications contain 5-7. Maciocia’s version contains heat-clearing (Zhi Mu), astringing (Wu Wei Zi), blood-nourishing (Dang Gui) and Qi-moving (Fo Shou), which may make it more comprehensive as a menopause-related formula. It could be surmised that the dosage of the original ingredients is reduced, though Three Treasures does not disclose the percentages of the formula constituents.
- Guang Ci Tang includes Yu Jin, which is used for Liver depression Qi stagnation and also moves blood, which can be advantageous in treating depression.

Andrew Ellis’ Notes From South Mountain gives the following modifications, which can be seen in some of the various formulatons:

- For vexation insomnia add YJT + HHP (found in Plum Flower and Bioessence)
- For sleep disorders from vacuity add WWZ + YZ + SZR (found in Three Treasures)

	FXM	GC	DZ	FL	BH	SZR	BZR	HHP/H	YJT	YZ	WWZ	YJ	ZM	DG	FS
Orig	X	X	X												
PF	15	12	14.9	14.9	14.9			10.2	18.1						
HT	25	12	16.6	12.5		12.5	12.5	8.4							
GCT	X	X	X							X		X			
Kan	X	X	X												
BE	22.72	6.82	6.82	11.38	11.36			18.18	22.72						
3T	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X		X	X	X

Brands

Orig - Original formula

PF - Plum Flower

HT - Herbal Times

GCT - Guang Ci Tang

Kan - Kan Herbs

BE - Bioessence Formulas

3T - Three Treasures

Ingredients

FXM - Fu Xiao Mai

GC - Gan Cao

DZ - Da Zao

FL - Fu Ling

BH - Bai He

SZR - Suan Zao Ren

BZR - Bai Zi Ren

HHP/H - He Huan Pi/He Huan hua

YJ - Yu Jin

YZ - Yuan Zhi

YJT - Ye Jiao Teng

ZM - Zhi Mu

DG - Dang Gui

WWZ - Wu Wei Zi

FS - Fo Shou