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**FILE: ■Noni (*Morinda citrifolia*)
■Ethnobotany
■Polynesian Complimentary Medicine**

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RE: Ethnobotany of Noni – Traditional and Modern Uses

Etkin NL, McMillen HL. The ethnobotany of noni (*Morinda citrifolia* L. Rubiaceae): Dwelling in the land between La'au Lapa'au and testimonials. In: CTAHR Proceedings, S.C. Nelson ed., College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources, University of Hawai'i, Honolulu, 2003; p11-16.

Noni (*Morinda citrifolia* L. Rubiaceae) is a traditional Polynesian medicine that has become a popular complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) worldwide. Because CAM is most often used along with biomedicine, its use generally does not delay people from seeking conventional medical treatment. CAM use has increased as people become dissatisfied with biomedicine and seek out means of self care. CAM use has also grown due to an increase in advertising by the industry and the fact that people perceive botanicals as being natural and safe.

The traditional uses of noni in Hawaii were topical for ailments such as sprains, swelling, bruises, and wounds. In Polynesia and Southeast Asia, it was also used for cough, colds, pain, liver disease, malaria, hypertension, and intestinal worms. Many traditional noni users thought that the terrible taste and smell would drive away spirits, gods, and other agents that caused the illness. Contemporary uses of noni are much more diverse, and there are claims that it can help with attention deficit disorder (ADD), jet lag, diabetes, allergies, arthritis, chronic fatigue, infection, polio, digestive problems, and severed fingers, to name a few. The authors believe that it is illogical for noni to have such a diversity of uses, that scientific research has not corroborated any of these claims, and that much of noni's popularity is due to user testimonials which have built up consumer's confidence.

Continuing education and specific university/medical school programs that focus on CAM will help to disseminate accurate information about noni in the future. The University of Hawaii recently started a Department of CAM which will enhance the medical school

curriculum by teaching research-based evidence of CAMs. Research on noni is being conducted at numerous other research centers as well. The authors believe that the research will not corroborate the multiplicity of claims made by noni users today.

—*Heather S. Oliff, Ph.D.*

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