

The use of Glycine tomentella Hayata on the islet of Kinmen (Quemoy).—The genus Glycine Wild. is economically important because of the cultigen G. max (L.) Merr., commonly known as the soybean. The annual crop was domesticated in China (7). The leguminous seeds are an important source of protein feed, dietary oil, and soy food products.

Currently, the genus Glycine contains 18 wild perennial species and several undescribed taxa (2, 3, 4). The species are indigenous to Australia-Papua New Guinea and grow under a wide range of climatic conditions. Two species, G. tabacina (Labill.) Benth and G. tomentella Hayata have polyploid cytotypes and are found in the western Pacific region, for example, Fiji, Japan, Marianas, New Caledonia, Philippines, Taiwan, and Tonga. In addition, both species have been reported in Fujian Province, P. R. China (5). The dissemination of the polyploid cytotypes of G. tabacina and G. tomentella is most likely due to migratory shore birds (6). In addition, extensive library research and examination of labels of wild perennial Glycine holdings at many herbaria failed to reveal any ethnobotanical use of the plants by indigenous people.

On September 8 and 9, 1997 we collected seed of G. tabacina and G. tomentella on the islet of Kinmen (Quemoy). Kinmen is a Taiwan-
Fig. 2. Bundles of *Glycine tomentella* roots for sale in a Kinmen market.

Fig. 3. *Glycine tomentella* plants growing in a field.

held islet just off the coast of China facing the port city of Xiamen, just 2.3 km away (7). To our surprise we found that on Kinmen, a private company (Wu-Chi Co.) was selling herbal tea bags and herbal tea capsules produced from the roots of locally grown *G. tomentella* (Fig. 1). The tea is being promoted for good health and carries the message, “Tea quenches your thirst and refreshes your mind.” According to the managing director (Shu-Ching Yang) the company was started in 1995 and the use of *G. tomentella* roots is a traditional product on Kinmen. However, there is no literature available concerning its history or use on Kinmen. In the local market, we found *G. tomentella* roots being sold for home use in bundles of 250 g (Fig. 2). We suspect that some of these roots might be imported from Xiamen and are not produced on Kinmen.

According to the information officer of the Institute of Agriculture, Kinmen, the institute multiplies the seed for the farmers. The seed is planted in sandy soil in May and harvested 16 months later by deep plowing (Fig. 3). The seeding rate recommended by the institute is 5 kg per ha. An examination of several irrigated
fields revealed that the rows were about 50 cm apart, uprooted plants lacked nodules on their roots, and the fields were severely infested with soybean rust, *Phakopsora pachyrhizi* Sydow. Currently 10–12 ha of *Glycine tomentella* is grown under contract on Kinmen and the contract price of freshly harvested roots is about US $35.00 per kg. At present, the company sells its product to the local community, tourists, and in Taiwan. Additional products made from *G. tomentella* roots are being tested.


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