

Cascara Sagrada

MEDICINAL: Used in treating chronic constipation, and is a stimulant to the whole digestive system. It is a safe laxative, and is useful for treating intestinal gas, liver and gall bladder complaints, and enlarged liver.

MAGICCAL: Sprinkled around the home before going to court, it will help you to win your case. It is used in money spells and in repelling evil and hexes.

GROWING:Cascara Sagrada is a tree that is native to the Pacific Northwest regions of NorthAmerica.

Also known as

Rhamnus purshiana, Bitter Bark, Buckthorn, California Buckthorn, Cascara Sagrada, Chittem Bark, Dogwood Bark, Purshiana Bark, Rhamni Purshianae Cortex, Sacred Bark, Sagrada Bark, Yellow Bark, Frangula Purshiana.

Introduction

Cascara sagrada, which translates as "sacred bark", is a deciduous shrub of the American Northwest, ranging from northern California to the Alaska panhandle in moist forests below 5,000 feet (1,500 m). It is also found in the Rockies of Idaho and Montana. The herb is harvested in the form of quills and pieces of bark, allowed to age at least a year before use in laxative preparations. Cascara sagrada is never to be used fresh and It must be aged for at least a year to break down its anthrone chemicals. (The Cascara offered by Mountain Rose Herbs is aged) If the bark is not aged it is a purgative and will cause intense intestinal spasms and vomiting. The herb can be artificially aged by heating but some useful constituents may be lost. In recent times, it has been used as an ingredient in sun screen products, as well as a flavoring agent in foods such as candy, frozen dairy deserts, and baked goods.

Constituents

1,8-dihydroxy-anthracene derivatives (in the aged bark), aloe-emodin, frangulin-emodin, flavonoids, and tannins.

Parts Used

Properly aged bark (generally 1 year)

Typical Preparations

Tablets and extracts. Teas are hard to drink but have a gentler laxative action.

Summary

Even conventionally oriented physicians often recommend cascara sagrada to patients suffering constipation after surgery for hemorrhoids. The 1, 8-dihydroxy-anthracenes in cascara sagrada act on the nerves in the intestinal tract, numbing the nerves that hold back stool and stimulating the nerves that propel stool downward. If you experience cramping, you've used too much. An interesting side note: American folk lore tells us that good luck in legal matters can be brought about if one wears a mojo bag filled with cascara sagrada and chews on a root of galangal, spitting the juice on the court room floor. Common logic however, would dictate that spitting on a court room floor is probably not very wise.

Precautions

For occasional use only as it is a bulk forming laxative and should be taken with adequate fluids. You should not use Cascara Sagrada or any other laxative if you have appendicitis, Crohn's disease, or ulcerative colitis. Not recommended for children under 12. Unlike buckthorn, cascara sagrada is not known to be safe for pregnant women and nursing mothers.

BUCKTHORN (CALIFORNIAN)

Botanical: Rhamnus purshianus

Family: N.O. Rhamnaceae

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---Synonyms---Sacred Bark. Cascara Sagrada.

---Part Used---Bark.

The Californian Buckthorn (*Rhamnus purshianus*), known more commonly as Cascara Sagrada, is a nearly-allied shrub growing in the United States, from northern Idaho westward to the Pacific Ocean. The drug prepared from its bark is now more commonly employed than those prepared from the two previously described species.

The bark is collected in spring and early summer, when it is easily peeled from the wood, and is dried in the shade.

Since, as is the case with *R. Frangula*, it is considered that the action of the bark becomes milder and less emetic by keeping, matured bark, three years old, is preferred for pharmaceutical purposes.

---Description---As imported, the drug mostly occurs in quills or incurved pieces of varying lengths and sizes, smooth or nearly so externally, covered with a greyish-white layer, which is usually easily removed, and frequently marked with spots or patches of adherent lichens. Beneath the surface it is violet-brown, reddish-brown or brownish, and internally a pale yellowish-brown and nearly smooth. It has no marked odour, but a nauseous, bitter taste.

It is frequently also imported in flattened packets, consisting of small pieces of the bark compressed into a more or less compact mass.

The fluid extract is made by maceration and percolation with diluted alcohol and evaporation.

---Constituents---The chemical constituents of the bark are but imperfectly known. It has been proved to contain Emodin and an allied substance possibly identical with the Frangula-Emodin of Alder Buckthorn bark. Fat, starch, glucose, a volatile odorous oil, malic and tannic acids are also present. The assertion has been made that the bark contains glucosides which yield on hydrolysis Chrysophanic acid, but the evidence on this point is conflicting.

---Medicinal Action and Uses---Cascara Sagrada is a mild laxative, acting principally on the large intestine. It is considered suitable for delicate and elderly persons, and may with advantage be given in chronic constipation, being generally administered in the form of the fluid extract.

It acts also as a stomachic tonic and bitter, in small doses, promoting gastric digestion and appetite.

---Preparations---

- Fluid extract, B.P., 5 drops to 1 drachm.
- Fluid extract, U.S.P., 15 drops.
- Fluid extract, tasteless, 1/4 to 1 drachm.
- Fluid extract, aromatic, U.S.P., 15 drops.
- Aromatic syrup, B.P., 1/2 to 2 drachms.
- Powder extract, 2 to 10 grains.
- Rhamnins, 2 to 6 grains.

In veterinary practice, Cascara Sagrada is also much used and is probably the best mild purgative remedy for dogs with chronic constipation, as the dose does not require to be increased by repetition and the tone of the bowels is improved by the drug.