

Fringe Tree Bark Profile

Also known as

Chionanthus virginica, Old Man's beard, Snowdrop tree, Grancy Gray Beard, Greybeard tree.

Introduction

Fringe tree is small tree or shrub that is native to the North American continent, but is predominantly found in the eastern United States from Tennessee to Pennsylvania, bearing white flowers with fringe-like petals in June, giving the plant its name. It is considered one of the continents most beautiful native plants. The white fringe of the flowers looks like ethereal cotton or white clouds. It has large leaves like those of the magnolia. The almost-odorless root bark is gathered, washed, and dried for medicinal use. It has all but eluded modern horticulturists in growing it on a commercial scale, either by cutting or grafting. Most plants seen in gardens are from seeds which require over two years to germinate, if at all.

Constituents

Bitters, saponins, phyllyrin, chionanthin.

Parts Used

Dried bark.

Typical Preparations

Traditionally used as a tea or fluid extract. May be combined with barberry, dioscorea, or euonymous for treating liver diseases.

Summary

Fringe tree bark was used in frontier medicine to treat gallbladder ailments and liver diseases of all kinds. By stimulating release of bile, it acts as a gentle and effective laxative. It stimulates the appetite and increases gastric secretion. Native Americans used it as a poultice for healing wounds.

Precautions

Avoid during gallstone attacks, as the herb will increase release of bile and pressure against the stones.

Botanical: Chionanthus virginica (LINN.)

Family: N.O. Oleaceae

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---**Synonyms**---Old Man's Beard. Fringe Tree Bark. Chionathus. Snowdrop Tree. Poison Ash.

---**Part Used**---The dried bark of the root.

---**Habitat**---The United States, from Pennsylvania to Tennessee.

---**Description**---A small tree, bearing in June white flowers like snowdrops, and with large leaves like those of Magnolia, it presents a charming appearance. The root-bark is found in single, transversely-curved pieces, often heavy enough (though small) to sink in water. The outside is reddish or greyish-brown, with root scars and whiter patches. The inner surface is a yellowishbrown. The fracture is short, coarsely granular, and yellowish-white. It is almost odourless, but very bitter in taste. The powder is light brown in colour.

---**Constituents**---It is said that both saponin and a glucoside have been found, but neither appears to have been officially confirmed.

---**Medicinal Action and Uses**---Aperient, diuretic. Some authorities regard it as tonic and slightly narcotic. It is used in typhoid, intermittent, or bilious fevers, and externally, as a poultice, for inflammations or wounds. Is useful in liver complaints.

---**Dosage**---Of fluid extract, 1/2 to 1 fluid drachm two or three times a day. Of infusion, 1/2 to 2 fluid ounces two or three times a day. Chiomanthin, 1 to 3 grains.