

Mistletoe (*Viscum coloratum*)

Common Names: European mistletoe, mulberry mistletoe, loranthus.

Description: The stem of mistletoe is used medicinally.

Properties: If mistletoe is injected, it has immune-stimulating qualities.

Uses: Use mistletoe to help treat cancer.

Doses: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration states that mistletoe is an "unsafe" herb and should be taken only under professional supervision.

Warnings: Avoid injections of mistletoe if you suffer from Parkinson's disease.

## Mistletoe Herb Profile

### Also known as

Also known as- *Viscum album*, European Mistletoe, Christmas Mistletoe, and Oak Mistletoe.

### Introduction

Mistletoe is an evergreen hemi parasitic plant. It grows on the branches of host deciduous trees and forms clusters or "bushes" from 20 to 60 inches (50-150 cm) in diameter, drawing all its nourishment from the tree on which it grows. Small flowers mature in to sticky, greenish- or yellowish-white berries that remain on the plant throughout the winter. Mistletoe has historically been associated with peace; if enemies met by chance under a tree with mistletoe, they were required to lay down their arms and declare a truce until the next day. Mistletoe was also thought to be the "golden bough" written about in the Aenid by Virgil. Kissing under the mistletoe is a winter tradition that began with the Greek festival of Saturnalia, celebrated in late December. The Druids believed that mistletoe protected its possessors from all misfortunes, and used it as an aphrodisiac, an antidote for poison, and to bestow long life and fertility. In Norse mythology, Balder, the son of Odin, was killed by an arrow made of a mistletoe branch shot by the Norse trickster Loki, who knew that this was the one tree that Balder's mother Frigga had not enchanted to do her son no harm. One strain of Christian myth teaches that the mistletoe was once the tree that was used for the lumber to make the cross; the plant was said to have shriveled in shame and become a parasite.

### Constituents

Amines (acetylcholine, choline, histamine, GABA and tyramine), antioxidant flavonoids (quercetin, chalcone and flavone derivatives), and terpenoids (beta-amyrin, betulinic acid, oleanic acid, beta-sitosterol, stigmasterol, ursolic acid, lupeol and ester combinations), as well as caffeic and myristic acids, mucilage, and tannins.

### Parts Used

The entire plant, dried.

## **Typical Preparations**

Traditionally used as a tea or tincture. The anti-cancer drug Iscadore is derived from mistletoe, but mistletoe teas do not have a documented anti-cancer effect.

## **Summary**

There are actually two types of Mistletoe: *phoradendron flavescens*, which is a decorative that is native to the Eastern seaboard of the North America and is most commonly used in Christmas decorations. The second types, *Viscum album*, is of European origin and are most commonly found on apple trees, and even more rare growing on oak trees, the latter being highly venerated by ancient Celts and Germans, and used as a ceremonial plant. Mistletoe teas slow the pulse and lower blood pressure. They are most appropriate for treating the symptoms of high blood pressure, for example, headaches or dizziness, rather than as a primary treatment for high blood pressure. Traditional herbal medicine also uses mistletoe to treat arthritic pain and snoring.

## **Precautions**

Mistletoe should be avoided during pregnancy. Only to be administered and used by a practitioner experienced in the use of this product.