

MEDICINAL PLANTS-3

Atropa belladonna
Solanaceae

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Atropa belladonna

Deadly Nightshade
Family Solanaceae

Deadly nightshade as the name indicates, is a poisonous or intoxicating plant belonging to potato family. Its native range is Europe, North Africa, and Western Asia being a colder area plant. In India, it has been recorded in the states of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh (Western Himalayas), but not common.

Atropa belladonna

Morphological Features

Perennial herb or sub-shrub with tuberous roots, stem up to 2 m high, branches many. Leaves alternate, ovate, undulate. Flowers bell-shaped, axillary, dull purple, green streaked, mildly scented. The most important and medicinally significant are berries, which ripe to shining black, look attractive and tempting, thus consumed by animals, but actually have toxic alkaloids.



Atropa belladonna

Medicinal Properties

Fruit is like tomato, but is very toxic, especially fatal for children. Belladonna is one of the most toxic plants. All parts of the plant contain tropane alkaloids, the prominent ones atropine, hyoscine (scopolamine), and hyoscyamine. The fruits being sweet are often consumed by children, as well as cattle, but they prove fatal. Although roots are most toxic part of the plant, still poisoning by berries is most common. The symptoms from consumption are highly unpredictable. Consumption of berries usually results in dilated pupils, blurred vision to loss of senses etc. depending upon quantity consumed. The name "belladonna" translates into beautiful lady, due to its traditional use by ladies to enhance the face value by dilating pupils, when used as eye drops.

Atropa belladonna

Cultivation and Uses

Not commercially in India, but in Europe and America, it is cultivated on well drained, calcareous soils. The seeds germination is very slow, and take many months. Stem and root cuttings may also be used for propagation.

Leaves and roots are most significant sources of alkaloids.

Most common use is in eye drops, also used as a pain relieving lotion for sciatica, neuralgia, gout and rheumatism.

Small dose cure cardiac palpitations, it is a powerful antispasmodic, also given to cure soar throat, pneumonia, whooping cough, typhoid and other fevers. It is effective against peptic ulcers and is also used as homoeopathic medicine for curing headache. It is also effective in relieving physical symptoms of Parkinson's disease.



THANKS A LOT!!