

The Screaming Plant - Mandrake (*Mandragora officinarum*)

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SUMMARY

Mandrake is perhaps the most famous medicinal plant in western culture since biblical times and throughout written history. This view has been clearly expressed by several authors, with statements such as: "Of all the medicinal herbs used in the ancient and medieval world, none was regarded with as much fear or wonder as the mandrake"; Silberman noted that "Of all the plant illustrations (in medieval herbals) representing mythological beliefs, superstition, or witchcraft, the one that comes uppermost to mind is the mandragora or mandrake."

INTRODUCTION

Mandragora officinarum is the type species of the plant genus mandragora in the nightshade family solanaceae. Also known as satans apple, katal jati, deyyapu kaya, putrada, mad apple and devils testicles. It is a perennial herbaceous plant with ovate leaves arranged in a rosette, a thick uproot root, often branched and bell-shaped flowers followed by yellow or orange berries. For centuries, it was believed that the mandrake herb, known for its medicinal and psychoactive properties, is a magical plant which shrieks when it is uprooted. While the scream sound i.e., dog sneezing sound is apparently observed. Scientists have now discovered that plants do indeed emit screams when they cut or are dehydrated.

Medicinal Uses:

It is used to treat travel sickness. fresh or dried root contains highly poisonous alkaloids and is cathartic, strongly emetic, hallucinogenic and narcotic. In sufficient quantities it induces a state of oblivion and was used as an anaesthetic for operations in early surgery. It was much used in the past for its anodyne and soporific properties. In the past, juice from the finely grated root was applied externally to relieve rheumatic pains, ulcers and scrofulous tumors. It was also used internally to treat melancholy, convulsions and mania. It is a wonderful remedy for constipation and stomach ulcers. The root is also useful to reduce pain including arthritis-related pain. Dehydrated bark of the plants root was also given to patients as a forceful emetic. The herb was also used internally to cure depression, spasms as well as obsession.



Mandrake plant



Flower

