

# HERBAL/MEDICAL CONTRAINDICATIONS

BY  
MICHAEL MOORE

Synergistic and Iatrogenic Potentials  
when some herbs are used  
concurrent with  
Medical Treatment or  
Medical Health Care



SOUTHWEST SCHOOL OF BOTANICAL MEDICINE  
PO Box 4565. Bisbee, AZ 85603

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**Synergistic and iatrogenic potentials when certain herbs are used concurrent with medical treatment or medical health care.**

## **THE REASON FOR THIS LIST:**

A list of side-effects written by a toxicologist or a pharmacognosist will deal **ONLY** with potential problems that a particular constituent may cause, and seldom treats a plant as a Gestalt.

They don't understand **HERBS**.

A list of side-effects written by most herbalists will deal with side effects from over-dosage or adulteration, and will seldom consider the implications for drug or procedural medicine.

They don't understand **MEDICINE**.

I feel fairly secure in both worlds, so this list of potential synergies and contraindications is meant to honor **BOTH** approaches. I am talking strictly to the working practitioner; these are **PRACTICAL** concerns, not theoretical ones.

## **THE FOCUS OF THIS LIST:**

My intent in this list is to wed both approaches:

- A. What herbs may present overt drug reactions.
- B. What herbs may present synergistic effects to
  - 1. a person undergoing a particular metabolic stress
  - 2. a person undergoing drug therapies
- C. What herbs have side-effects **BUT** that are frequently used without adequate warnings, marketed with an anti-medical bias, or taken unwisely by those that feel **NO** herb can be harmful because it is natural.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

If you are used to viewing biologically active agents as analogs to drugs, you need to suspend those standards when dealing with most

herb preparations. Some of these plants CAN be reduced to the pharmacology of specific constituents, and they are so noted. The majority of potential reactions occur when an herb STIMULATES metabolic processes that are already in an excited state. The usual models of drug toxicology will fail to predict such reactions; these are NOT, strictly speaking, drug reactions, but often predictable idiopathic synergies. Predictable, that is, if you are willing to view most herbs as multi-systemic wholistic medicines, offering a "profile" of effects that can help OR aggravate, depending on the PERSON using them.

Herbs should be free of side effects within their therapeutic window and when used by a person whose constitution is complimented, not antagonized by the herbs. Whether or not you accept any value to Botanical Medicine, this is Conventional Wisdom amongst herbalists. Side effects from herbs are unwanted, both by herbalists wishing to strengthen, not denigrate homeostasis, and by skeptics who doubt any value to herbs except from placebo or accidental drug effects.

On the other hand, a careful evaluation of potential drug therapy starts with the basic understanding that drugs HAVE side effects at the proper dose, and the value must be weighed against the detriment. Most possible problems I have listed will only occur in potentiated states, and may be subtle enough to be ignored by Believers (Don't be so defensive!), magnified totally out of proportion by Skeptics (Don't be so judgmental!). We all tend to be too isolated in our peer groups, always preaching to our particular choir.

Some physicians feel any self-treatment with biologically active agents is dangerous. Many people consider this either professional arrogance or the attempt to stifle competition. I have nearly always observed the attitude to derive from a very real concern; a physician's biochemical tools are drugs. By extension, docs may rightly presume that any agent capable of promoting change probably has similar potential for side effects. Carried to an irrational extreme, some medical folks feel that anything WITHOUT potential side effects is quackery. This, of course, leaves any alternative approach in a Catch-22 bind.

There is little intrinsic danger in using herbs, since few have the potential for DRUG side effects. The side effects are usually

idiosyncratic or idiopathic, and not predictable by drug standards. This brings me back to why I have assembled this list.

### NOTES:

[1] Some of these plants are illegal, not from the pseudo-scientific rationale of law-enforcement (except Cannabis and Lophophora) but for the practical legality that THEY AREN'T SAFE. Nonetheless they still find their way into personal use. I have developed the libertarian attitude that permeated 19th and early 20th century pharmacy: "Let them take what they want to...it's a Free Country. If they don't know any better, let's thin the herd!". We, however, have a generation or two of people that EXPECT a warning label on everything, and that have come to doubt common sense. Of course many dangers in modern life do not warn by taste, smell or appearance...radiation, pollution, etc. Given this, plant drugs like Yohimbe and even Ma Huang should, in my opinion, not be available in the same marketplace as Peppermint and Sarsaparilla. But they are.

[2] Some of these herbs are only encountered in "ethnic" use, but, with most ethnic groups suffering diminished coherence of tradition, a Wise Woman or folk herbalist may not be around to give appropriate advice.

[3] A few of these herbs are seldom encountered in the herb trade but rather are wildcrafted and used inappropriately. Some of this may be MY fault, since I write about the use of plants that are low-dosage botanicals and presume that the reader has Common Sense...not always a reality. Many of us distrust ANY authoritative limits...this antiauthoritarianism may be seen in the way some people use even sensible herb books.

[4] Herbal Cure-Alls and thinly-veiled Phytopharmaceuticals are a growing part of the health-food industry. In Europe they are usually dispensed under medical supervision; they have no place in American Standard Practice but instead have entered the alternative health marketplace as "Herbs". They are more concentrated, more refined, have little of the biochemical buffering or "fuzz" that whole plants offer, and are NOT metabolic tonics but substances intended for specific subclinical pathologies ...Little Drugs if you will. Their use is intended for conditions that have been medically diagnosed...not for

self-treatment based upon sometimes inaccurate self-diagnosis. It's one thing to take aspirin for a headache or use a bitter to trigger improved upper digestive function. It's another thing to take proven immunostimulant or anti-oxidant substances (even if derived from plants) if based on "I get sick a lot" or "I bet my liver needs cleansing".

Not only is this an entirely new realm of potential iatrogenesis, but it has a corruptive influence by my way of thinking. It centralizes the **MARKETING** of herbs into the hands of a few, but without offering guidelines for **DIAGNOSIS**. And it seduces folks from the sensible heart of self-treatment...self-knowledge. One-size-fits-all is not self-empowerment

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# **PREGNANCY**

Some of these herbs are relatively harmless, but considering the highly reactive state of pregnancy, and the fact that fetal growth is a template that can manifest pharmacokinetics VERY differently than for an adult, they are mentioned. Others are obviously inappropriate because of endocrine, autonomic or vascular effects.

## **PREGNANCY: TERATOGENIC/MUTAGENIC**

Podophyllum (American Mandrake)

Baptisia (Wild Indigo)...theoretically

## **PREGNANCY: UTERINE VASOCONSTRICTORS**

Arctostaphylos (Uva Ursi, Manzanita, Coralillo) if use is continued for more than 3-4 days

Ephedra vulgaris (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra)

Ustilago (Corn Smut) A feeble ergot analog

Vinca major (Periwinkle) Idiosyncratic vasoconstrictor

Viscum album (European Mistletoe) May incorrectly be American Mistletoe in commerce, a very vasoconstricting plant.

Xanthium (Cadillos, Cocklebur) More than 6-8 burrs a day can cause potential placental separation

## **PREGNANCY: UTERINE VASODILATORS**

Actea rubra (A. arguta, Baneberry)

Aloe (Aloes Socrotine, etc.)

Angelica sinensis (Dong Quai, Tang Kwei)

Apocynum cannabinum (Dogbane, Canadian Hemp)

Aristolochia serpentaria (Virginia Snakeroot)

Aristolochia watsonii (Indian Root, Raiz del Indio)

Arnica (A. montana, A. cordifolia, A. latiflora, etc.)

Artemisia absinthium (Wormwood)

Artemisia tridentata (Sagebrush)

Artemisia vulgaris (Mugwort. California Mugwort)

Asclepias asperula (Immortal, Antelope Horns)

Asclepias tuberosa (Pleurisy Root)

Bryonia (Bryony)

Cacalia decomposita (Maturin. Maturique)

Chamaelirium (Helonias. Unicorn Root )

**Chenopodium ambrosioides** (Epazote. Wormseed)  
**Cimicifuga racemosa** (Black Cohosh)  
**Corynanthe** (Pausinystalia Johimbe. Yohimbe)  
**Crocus** (True Saffron, "Azafran")  
**Daucus carota** (Carrot, Wild Carrot) The seeds.  
**Euonymus** (Wahoo, Burning Bush)  
**Fouquieria splendens** (Ocotillo)  
**Galega** (Goat's Rue)  
**Hedeoma** (American Pennyroyal, Poleo Chino)  
**Iris versicolor, I. missouriensis** (Blue Flag)  
**Juniperus** (Juniper. Sabina, Sabino Macho, "Cedar")  
**Lilium tigrinum** (Tiger Lily)  
**Lophophora** (Peyote. Mescal Buttons)  
**Petroselinum** (Parsley) Fresh leaves in large amounts  
**Podophyllum** (American Mandrake, May Apple)  
**Polygala senega** (Senega Snakeroot, Milkwort)  
**Polymnia uvedalia** (Bearsfoot, Leafcup)  
**Ruta graveolens** (Rue, Ruda)  
**Sanguinaria** (Bloodroot)  
**Spigelia** (Pink Root)  
**Stillingia sylvatica** (Queen's Root)  
**Tanacetum** (Tansy, Ponso, Tanse)  
**Thuja** (Arbor Vitae, Flat, Red or Yellow Cedar)  
**Turnera diffusa** (Damiana)  
**Xanthoxylum** (Prickly Ash)

### **PREGNANCY: CATHARTICS / SACRAL IRRITANTS**

**Aloe** (Aloes Socrotine. etc.)  
**Cassia marilandica** (American Senna)  
**Chenopodium ambrosioides** (Epazote, Wormseed)  
**Heliopsis longipes** (Raiz del Oro, Chilcuan)  
**Iris versicolor, I. missouriensis** (Blue Flag)  
**Leptandra** (Veronicastrum, Culver's Root)  
**Podophyllum** (American Mandrake)  
**Rhamnus californica** (California Buckthorn)  
**Rhamnus Frangula** (Buckthorn)  
**Rhamnus purshiana** (Cascara Sagrada)  
**Rheum** (Chinese or Turkey Rhubarb)



Senna (Cassia angustifolia, Te de Sena )

**PREGNANCY: OXYTOCIN SYNERGISTS**

Asclepias asperula (Immortal, Antelope Horns)

Capsella bursa-pastoris (Shepherd's Purse,)

Caulophyllum (Blue Cohosh)

Gossypium (Cotton, Algodoncillo) Root Bark

Leonurus cardiaca (Motherwort)

Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons)

Scoparius (Cytisus Scoparius, Broom Tops)

Ustilago (Corn Smut)

**PREGNANCY: OVERT DRUG PLANTS (and compounds)**

Aconitum columbianum (Aconite, Monkshood) Aconitine

Apocynum cannabinum (Dogbane. Canadian Hemp)

Feeble digitaloid

Chenopodium ambrosioides (Epazote, Wormseed)

Cinchona (Peruvian Bark. Quinine Bark) Quinines

Convallaria (Lily of the Valley)

Feeble digitaloid

Corynanthe (Pausinystalia Johimbe, Yohimbe)

Yohimbine AND some reserpine relatives..an indole stew

Datura (Jimson Weed. Toloache, Estramonio)

Atropine effects

Ephedra vulgaris (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra)

Ephedrines

Garrya (Silk Tassel, Cuauachichic, Quinine Bush)

Garryine, Cuauachichicine - anti-cholinergics

Gelsemium (Yellow Jasmine)

Gelsemine...an indole alkaloid and CNS irritant

Hyocyamus niger (Henbane)

Atropine effects

Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons)

Nicotiana (Punche, Tobacco)

Peganum harmala (Syrian Rue)

Harmine (indole alkaloid, MAO inhibitor)

Pilocarpus (Jaborandi)

Pilocarpine and other muscarinics  
Scoparius (Cytisus Scoparius, Broom Tops)  
Cytisine, sparteine (simultaneous Hypo-Hypertensives)  
Veratrum (Green, False or American Hellebore)  
Cardiac depressant

### **PREGNANCY: MISCELLANEOUS WIERDNESS**

Aconitum carmichaeli (CURED) (Fu-tse, Fo-tzu)  
Peculiar adrenergic, wrong in TCM, and generally too potent.  
Acorus calamus (Calamus, Sweet Flag)  
Mildly co-carcinogen (Eurasian strain), and may interfere  
with normal PG inter-reactions  
Aesculus californica (California Buckeye) see below  
--Aesculus glabra (Ohio Buckeye) see below  
--Aesculus hippocastanum (Horse Chestnut)  
All stimulate myenteric plexus, with unpredictable effects.  
Amygdalis persica (Peach Tree)  
Cyanogenic, unless prepared perfectly  
Anemone hirsutissima (Pulsatilla) anti-dopimergic  
Baptisia (Wild Indigo Root) CAN mimic Scoparius  
Corydalis aureus (Golden Smoke)  
--Dicentra canadensis (Turkey Corn)  
--Dicentra formosa (Bleeding Heart)  
--Eschscholtzia californica (California Poppy)  
Above four have mixed protopine alkaloids  
Ginkgo biloba (Maidenhair Tree) Many effects, unpredictable  
Glycyrrhiza glabra (Licorice) Minerocorticosteroid effects  
Guaiacum officinale (Lignum Vitae, Guayacan)  
Unpredictable vasodilation, feebly muscarinic  
Helenium hoopesii (Yerba del Lobo) Potential liver irritant  
Hydrastis (Golden Seal) Mucosa stimulant, may age placenta  
Larrea (Chaparral) Quirky anti-oxidant, w/hemolytic potential  
Lomatium dissectum (Leptotaenia) Too bioactive to chance  
Marrubium (Horehound, Marrubio) Can be mildly hypertensive  
Mentha arvensis (Brook Mint, Poleo) Has Pennyroyal effects.  
Oplopanax horridum (Echinopanax, Devil's Club)  
--Panax ginseng (Asian Ginseng)  
--Panax quinquefolium (American Ginseng)

Above three are anabolic/hypothalamic  
Phytolacca (Poke) Idiosyncratic muscarinic effects  
Prunus (Wild Cherry) Cyanogenic when gathered incorrectly  
Ptychopetalum (Muirapuama. Raiz del Macho)  
Idiosyncratic motor/sacral stimulant  
Senecio aureus (Life Root) May be toxic relatives  
Silybum marianum (Milk Thistle) May inhibit hepatocytes in  
excess; pregnancy may alter therapeutic window  
Solanum dulcamara (Bittersweet Twigs) Too bioactive.  
Symphytum (Comfrey) Hybrids in commerce contain root PAs  
Tribulus (Puncture Vine, Goat's Head) Ayurvedic Medicine  
advises not to use in pregnancy  
Viscum album (European Mistletoe) May be adulterated with  
American Mistletoe: even if correct, it is too bioactive

### **PREGNANCY: MAY BE PRESENT IN MILK**

Acorus calamus (Calamus. Sweet Flag)  
Ailanthus altissima (Tree of Heaven)  
Allium sativum (Garlic)  
Aloe (Aloes Socrotine, etc.)  
Aristolochia serpentaria (Virginia Snakeroot)  
Aristolochia watsonii (Indian Root, Raiz del Indio)  
Artemisia absinthium (Wormwood, Ajenjo)  
Artemisia tridentata (Sagebrush, Chamiso Hediondo)  
Artemisia vulgaris (Mugwort, Altamisa)  
Cacalia decomposita (Maturin, Maturique)  
Cannabis sativa (Marijuana, Hemp)  
Cassia marilandica (American Senna, Te de Sena)  
Chenopodium ambrosioides (Epazote, Wormseed)  
Commiphora (Myrrh Gum, Mirra)  
Convallaria (Lily of the Valley)  
Daucus carota (Carrot, Wild Carrot) Seeds  
Dracontium (Symplocarpus, Skunk Cabbage)  
Fouquieria splendens (Ocotillo)  
Galega (Goat's Rue)  
Ginkgo biloba (Maidenhair Tree)  
Juniperus (Juniper. Sabina, "Cedar")

Ligusticum porteri (Osha, Chuchupate)  
Pilocarpus (Jaborandi)  
Rheum (Chinese or Turkey Rhubarb)  
Sanguinaria (Bloodroot)  
Senna (Cassia angustifolia, Te de Sena )  
Ruta graveolens (Rue, Ruda)  
Tanacetum (Tansy, Tanse, Ponso, "Altamisa")  
Thuja (Arbor Vitae, Flat, Red or Yellow Cedar)  
Xanthoxylum (Prickly Ash)

## **NEUROENDOCRINE**

### **NEUROENDOCRINE: SYMPATHOMIMETICS** w/Primary constituent

Aconitum carmichaeli (CURED) (Fu-tse, Fo-tzu) ???  
Acorus calamus (Calamus. Sweet Flag) ASARONE  
Coffea arabica (Coffee) CAFFEINE  
Cola nitida (Kola Nut) CAFFEINE  
Corynanthe (Pausinystalia Johimbe. Yohimbe) YOHIMBINE  
Ephedra vulgaris (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra)EPHEDRINE  
Gelsemium (Yellow Jasmine) GELSEMINE  
Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons) MESCALINE  
Peganum harmala (Syrian Rue) HARMINES  
Paullinia (Guarana) CAFFEINE, HYPOXANTHINES  
Ptychopetalum (Muirapuama, Raiz del Macho) ???  
Scoparius (Cytisus Scoparius, Broom) CYTISINE, SPARTEINE

### **NEUROENDOCRINE: PARASYMPATHOMIMETICS**

Aesculus (all)  
Anemone hirsutissima (Pulsatilla, Pasque Flower)  
Apocynum cannabinum (Dogbane, Canadian Hemp)  
Arnica (A. montana, A. cordifolia. A. latiflora. etc.)  
Asclepias asperula (Inmortal, Antelope Horns)  
Asclepias tuberosa (Pleurisy Root)  
Bryonia (Bryony)  
Cacalia decomposita (Maturin, Maturique)  
Corynanthe (Pausinystalia Johimbe, Yohimbe)  
Euonymus (Wahoo, Burning Bush)

Iris versicolor, I. missouriensis (Blue Flag)  
Leptandra (Veronicastrum, Culver's Root)  
Lobelia inflata (Lobelia, Indian Tobacco)  
Phytolacca (Poke)  
Pilocarpus (Jaborandi)  
Piscidia (Jamaica Dogwood, Jabin)  
Polygala senega (Senega Snakeroot, Milkwort)  
Sanguinaria (Bloodroot)  
Solanum dulcamara (Bittersweet Twigs)  
Spigelia (Pink Root)  
Veratrum (Green, False or American Hellebore)

### NEUROENDOCRINE: ANTICHOLINERGIC

Datura (Jimson Weed, Toloache, Estramonio)  
Garrya (Silk Tassel, Cuauchichic, Quinine Bush)  
Hyocyamus niger (Henbane)  
Solanum dulcamara (Bittersweet Twigs)

### NEUROENDOCRINE: VASOPRESSOMIMETIC

Corynanthe (Pausinystalia Johimbe, Yohimbe)  
Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons)  
Tribulus terrestris (Puncture Vine, Goat's Head)

### NEUROENDOCRINE: PITUITARY/LIMBIC "POTENTIATING"

Centella asiatica (Hydrocotyle asiatica, Gotu Kola)  
Oplopanax horridum (Echinopanax, Devil's Club)  
Panax ginseng (Asian Ginseng)  
Panax quinquefolium (American Ginseng)

### NEUROENDOCRINE: THYROID STIMULATING

Aconitum carmichaeli (CURED) (Fu-tse, Fo-tzu)  
Centella asiatica (Hydrocotyle asiatica, Gotu Kola)  
Corynanthe (Pausinystalia Johimbe, Yohimbe)  
Ephedra vulgaris (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra)

## NEUROENDOCRINE: THYROID DEPRESSING

Chlorophyllin (Sodium Copper Chlorophyllin, Chlorophyll "JJ")  
Leonurus cardiaca (Motherwort)  
Lycopus (Bugleweed)

## NEUROENDOCRINE: ALDOSTERONE SYNERGISTS

Glycyrrhiza glabra (Licorice)  
Marrubium (Horehound, Marrubio)

## NEUROENDOCRINE: FLAVIN-MAO-INHIBITING

Aconitum carmichaeli (CURED) (Fu-tse, Fo-tzu)  
Corynanthe (Pausinystalia Johimbe, Yohimbe)  
Hypericum (St. Johns Wort)  
Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons)  
Peganum harmala (Syrian Rue)

## **METABOLIC**

### METABOLIC: "ANABOLIC"

Angelica sinensis (Dong Quai, Tang Kwei)  
Oplapanax horridum (Echinopanax. Devil's Club)  
Panax ginseng (Asian Ginseng)  
Panax quinquefolium (American Ginseng)  
Ptychopetalum (Muirapuama, Raiz del Macho)  
Smilax (Sarsaparilla)

### METABOLIC: ANTICOAGULANT, "BLOOD THINNING"

Betula (Birch)  
Ceanothus (Red Root, New Jersey Tea)  
Chrysanthemum parthenium (Feverfew)  
Ginkgo biloba (Maidenhair Tree)  
Leucanthemum (Chrysanthemum leucanthemum, Oxe-Eye Daisy)  
Melilotus (Sweet Clover)  
Populus tremuloides (Aspen)  
Salix (Willow)

## **METABOLIC: CYANOGENIC POTENTIAL**

*Amygdalis persica* (Peach Tree)

*Prunus* (Wild Cherry, Choke Cherry)

## **METABOLIC: ALLERGIC/ATOPIC POTENTIAL**

*Allium sativum* (Garlic)

*Asafetida* (*Ferula asafetida*, Devil's Dung, Stinkasant)

*Aspidium* (*Dryopteris filix-mas*, Male Fern)

*Coffea arabica* (Coffee)

*Linum* (Flaxseed)

*Panax ginseng* (Asian Ginseng)

Propolis (Beehive scrapings, gathered from trees)

*Solanum dulcamara* (Bittersweet Twigs)

*Yucca* (Amole, Spanish Bayonet)

## **METABOLIC: HYPO-HYPERGLYCEMIC (REACTIVE)**

*Aconitum carmichaeli* (CURED) (Fu-tse. Fo-tzu)

*Berberis* (Barberry)

*Corynanthe* (*Pausinystalia* *Johimbe*, *Yohimbe*)

*Hydrastis* (Golden Seal)

*Mahonia* (Oregon Grape, *Berberis aquifolium*)

*Peganum harmala* (Syrian Rue)

## **CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM**

### **CVS: CARDIOGLYCOSIDE POTENTIATING**

*Apocynum cannabinum* (Dogbane, Canadian Hemp)

*Asclepias asperula* (Immortal, Antelope Horns)

*Aspidosperma* (Quebracho Bark)

*Convallaria* (Lily of the Valley)

*Scoparius* (*Cytisus Scoparius*, Broom Tops)

*Veratrum* (Green, False or American Hellebore)

### **CVS: BRADYCARDIC/HYPOTENSIVE**

*Aconitum columbianum* (Aconite, Monkshood)

*Actea rubra* (Baneberry, Yerba del Peco)

*Anemone hirsutissima* (*Pulsatilla*, Pasque Flower)

Arnica (*A. montana*, *A. cordifolia*, *A. latiflora*. etc.)  
Asclepias asperula (Immortal, Antelope Horns)  
Asclepias tuberosa (Pleurisy Root)  
Bryonia (Bryony)  
Capsella bursa-pastoris (Shepherd's Purse)  
Cereus grandiflorus (Selenicereus, Night-Blooming Cereus)  
Cimicifuga racemosa (Macrotys, Black Cohosh)  
Crataegus (Hawthorn)  
Eschscholtzia californica (California Poppy)  
Garrya (Silk Tassel, Cuauchichic, Quinine Bush)  
Lobelia inflata (Lobelia, Indian Tobacco)  
Pilocarpus (Jaborandi)  
Prunus (Wild Cherry, Choke Cherry)  
Veratrum (Green, False or American Hellebore)  
Vinca major (Periwinkle)  
Viscum album (European Mistletoe)

### CVS: TACHYCARDIC

Aconitum carmichaeli (CURED) (Fu-tse. Fo-tzu)  
Cola nitida (Kola Nut)  
Corynanthe (Pausinystalia) Yohimbe. Yohimbe)  
Ephedra vulgaris (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra)  
Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons)  
Nicotiana (Punche, Tobacco)  
Panax ginseng (Cured or Red Chinese, Korean)  
Scoparius (Cytisus Scoparius, Broom Tops)

### CVS: HYPERTENSIVE POTENTIAL

Aconitum carmichaeli (CURED) (Fu-tse. Fo-tzu)  
Aspidosperma (Quebracho Bark)  
Cinchona (Peruvian Bark, Quinine Bark)  
Cola nitida (Kola Nut)  
Corynanthe (Pausinystalia) Yohimbe. Yohimbe)  
Ephedra vulgaris (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra)  
Glycyrrhiza glabra (Licorice)  
Hydrastis (Golden Seal)  
Lophophora (Peyote, Mescal Buttons)  
Nicotiana (Punche. Tobacco)



Ptychopetalum (Muirapuama, Raiz del Macho)  
Scoparius (Cytisus Scoparius, Broom Tops)

## **PHARMACOKINETICS (PhKs)**

### **PhKs: HERBS ALTERING LIVER DRUG METABOLISM**

Aristolochia serpentaria (Virginia Snakeroot)  
Aristolochia watsonii (Indian Root, Raiz del Indio)  
Artemisia tridentata (Sagebrush)  
Berberis vulgaris (Common Barberry)  
Cephalanthus (Button Bush)  
Chelidonium (Greater Celandine)  
Chelone (Balmony, Turtlehead)  
Chionanthus (Fringetree)  
Euonymus (Wahoo, Burning Bush)  
Hydrastis (Golden Seal)  
Iris versicolor, I. missouriensis (Blue Flag)  
Leptandra (Veronicastrum, Culver's Root)  
Mahonia (Oregon Grape, Algerita)  
Podophyllum. (American Mandrake)

### **PhKs: HERBS THAT CAN ALTER GI ABSORPTION**

Aesculus (all)  
Aloe (Aloes Socrotine, etc.)  
Arctostaphylos (Uva Ursi, Manzanita, Bearberry)  
Capsicum (Cayenne, African Bird Peppers)  
Chlorophyllin (Sodium Copper Chlorophyllin, Chlorophyll "JJ")  
Ephedra viridis (Mormon Tea, Am. Ephedra, Canutillo)  
Frangula (Rhamnus Frangula, Buckthorn)  
Mirabilis multiflorum (Maravilla)  
Ptelea (Wafer Ash, Hop Tree)  
Rhamnus californica (California Buckthorn)  
Rhamnus Frangula (Buckthorn)  
Rhamnus purshiana (Cascara Sagrada)  
Senna (Cassia angustifolia, Te de Sena )  
Yucca (Amole, Spanish Bayonet)

## PhKs: IMMUNOSTIMULANTS THAT CAN RAISE WBC COUNT

Aristolochia serpentaria (Virginia Snakeroot)  
Aristolochia watsonii (Indian Root, Raiz del Indio)  
Baptisia (Wild Indigo Root)  
Commiphora (Myrrh Gum)  
Guaiacum officinale (Lignum Vitae, Guayacan)  
Polymnia uvedalia (Bearsfoot, Leafcup)

## HEPATIC

### HEPATIC: HERBS THAT MAY ALTER SGOT/SGPT READINGS

Anagallis (Scarlet Pimpernel)  
Euonymus (Wahoo, Burning Bush)  
Linaria (Toad Flax. Butter-and-Eggs)  
Mahonia (Oregon Grape, Algerita)  
Silybum marianum (Milk Thistle)

### HEPATIC: PYRROLIZIDINE ALKALOID HERBS

Cacalia decomposita (Maturin, Maturique)  
Cnicus benedictus (Blessed or Holy Thistle) (if adulterated)  
Cynoglossum officinalis (Hound's Tongue)  
Helenium hoopesii (Yerba del Lobo, Orange Sneezeweed)  
Senecio aureus (Life Root, Squaw Weed) (if adulterated)  
Symphytum (Comfrey) (certain hybrids)

## HERB-SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

### HERBS WITH MISCONCEPTIONS

Aletris farinosa (Star Grass, "True" Unicorn Root) Confused with Helonias (Chamaelirium), an HCG agonist and reproductive stimulant. Aletris is only a digestive stimulant  
Angelica sinensis (Dong Quai, Tang Kwei) NOT a source of exogenous estrogen, it instead increases utilization of ENDOGENOUS estrogens  
Arnica (A. montana. A. cordifolia, A. latiflora. etc.) Unsafe for internal use, it can be confused with HETEROTHECA (Mexican Arnica)

**Capsicum** (Cayenne, African Bird Peppers) It acts as a peripheral vasodilator, increasing blood supply to the skin and mucosa. It is NOT appropriate for active inflammation.

**Cereus grandiflorus** (Selenicereus, Peniocereus, Night-Blooming Cereus) NOT a digitalis-like cardioactive, it moderates SA-AV depolarization and lessens adrenergic or drug tachycardia. NOT for organic disease

**Corynanthe** (Pausinystalia Johimbe, Yohimbe) An especially pernicious herb with simultaneous sympathetic AND parasympathetic actions. It will mimic vasopressin and can irritate the kidneys; it increases pelvic blood supply and can aggravate reproductive, GU, and descending colon irritations; it can irritate arterial endothelium and contribute to or cause vasculitis. Lousy for the prostate, it CAN trigger a few and relatively useless erections, followed by rebound re-flaccidity.

**Dioscorea villosa** (Wild Yam) It has NO PROGESTERONE, or any other steroid hormone. The first generation of synthetic steroids was made using diosgenin (from MEXICAN Yam) and the Marker Degradation Method. By the mid-1950's stigmasterol (a soy-derived lipid) took its place, and other methods are now used. It contains NO "precursors"...the only true human steroid precursor is low-density cholesterol OR some other steroid hormone. Wild Yam creams usually contain synthetic Natural Progesterone.

**Ephedra vulgaris** (Ma Huang, Chinese Ephedra) Although a useful and less edgy source of ephedrine, it is almost totally used these days as an "anorectic" or "safe" stimulant. Most people view CNS stimulants by comparison with caffeine sources...a 3-4 hour buzz. Ephedrine lasts 7-8 hours, is more adrenergic, and it is easy to overlap the doses without being aware of the vascular and pulmonary stress. In addition, with extended serum levels, tolerance to CNS effects can be quick (although other effects stay somewhat level) and an individual can quickly creep up in dosage. Dangerous in this context.

**Ginkgo biloba** (Maidenhair Tree) A peripheral and cerebral vasodilator, it helps those with impaired circulation. It is often sold, however, as an aid to "intelligence" and is often used by students when cramming for tests, etc. Under these misguided uses it causes many headaches

**Hypericum** (St. John's Wort) Several preliminary tests implicated it as

an anti-viral for HIV. These were overturned in subsequent tests but the reputation still lingers. It IS useful for helping some of the CNS symptoms of AIDS, but because of its antidepressant effects, NOT because it is antiviral.

*Larrea* (Chaparral, Gobernadora, Creosote Bush) It should not be considered as a liver irritant, despite several inexplicable cases. It IS an hepatic depressant (excessive antioxidant activities) and CAN cause hemolytic-type responses if it is used well above its therapeutic window.

*Lobelia inflata* (*Lobelia*, Indian Tobacco) Fresh preparations of this herb show broad, many-layered stimulus of adrenergic-suppressed parasympathetic functions. Dry, but unheated *Lobelia* retains some of this function. By the time it is used for tea ONLY the emetic alkaloids are still intact, and it has little other value.

*Phytolacca* (Poke) Although useful (with a skillful touch) in depressed metabolism and edematous adipose tissues (the "Pillsbury Dough Person" syndrome), it has NO fat-reducing effects, is easily toxic, and its reputation comes from being used for hypothyroid, goitrous conditions 100 years ago...in the Goiter Belt.

*Senecio aureus* (Life Root, Squaw Weed) This native Eastern United States wildflower seems to be beneficial for functional hypoestrogenic states, and has a reliable place, at least in herbal therapy. It is also fairly unique as a *Senecio*: it is devoid of toxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids. MOST of the herb on the market, however, is either *S. vulgaris* or a similar *Senecio*. I don't know how the confusion came about. They are not particularly similar in appearance, but many otherwise reliable texts consider them interchangeable. In fact they are VERY dissimilar in constituents. The OTHER *Senecios* are VERY high in the toxic group. Know the plant or the picker, otherwise avoid this remedy and stick with something like Dong Quai.

*Silybum marianum* (Milk Thistle) There are HUNDREDS of reliable biologic and medical studies that support this plant's seeds' value for *Amanita* mushroom poisoning, lessening the toxicity of heavy metals (if taken soon enough) and quickening CNS and hepatic regeneration in solvent or alcohol detox. Like Ginkgo, however, you NEED a problem to get benefit. Without an ongoing stress, using *Silybum* or its extracted silymarins on general principle can actually depress normal

liver function

*Viscum album* (European Mistletoe) Without attempting to comment on the European use (from the Rudolph Steiner hospitals) of Mistletoe (I don't know enough), the fact is that the dried herb is SOMETIMES not European but American Mistletoe (*Phoradendron* spp), a VERY different plant altogether (at least pharmacologically), with almost pernicious vaso-constrictive effects.

## HERBS WITH HIDDEN or THRESHOLD EFFECTS

*Cannabis sativa* (Marijuana. Hemp) It can be a strong estrogen-synergist, shortening the estrus cycle in women, antagonizing testosterone in men (or being synergistic with adipose estradiols)...bad for any prostate condition.

*Daucus carota* (Carrot, Wild Carrot) Sometimes used as a contraceptive, it contains aromatics that, in large enough quantities, can exaggerate uterine inflammation.

*Equisetum arvense* (Horsetail) If growing in areas downstream of commercial farming, inorganic nitrates are metabolized into abnormal nicotine-like alkaloids.

*Hydrastis* (Golden Seal) A mucus-membrane stimulant, useful for congested and subacute stages, it can CAUSE inflammation if not needed, can prematurely age the placenta, and, since it is threatened in the wild and cultivation is still marginal, its use is rarely moral.

*Valeriana* (Valerian) The dried plant, used consistently for a period of time, can induce "Valerianism", a state of emotional lability similar to what was formerly encountered with bromide abuse. The condition reverses quickly if the Valerian is stopped.

## HERBS LACKING ANY SOCIALLY REDEEMING VALUE (at least as herbal medicines)

*Artemisia absinthium* (Wormwood)

*Cinchona* (Peruvian Bark. Quinine Bark)

*Corynanthe* (*Pausinystalia* *Johimbe*, *Yohimbe*)

*Ephedra vulgaris* (Ma Huang. Chinese Ephedra)

except when used as a bronchodilator.

Galega (Goat's Rue)  
Ruta graveolens (Rue, Ruda)  
Tanacetum (Tansy)

## HERBAL FRAUDS

"AMERICAN RED DESERT GINSENG", Also called American Wild Red Ginseng, etc., even *Hymenosepalus Ginseng*. Except for a Chinese Ginseng grower in Marathon County, Wisconsin, who actually CURES roots, all such products are the tubers of *Canaigre (Rumex hymenosepalus)* whose only value is its tannins.

"HYDROCOTYLE ASIATICA MINOR" (Fo-ti-tieng) There is no such variety or plant. If your lucky, it's Gotu Kola

**POST NOTE:** These opinions are mine; they reflect my experiences with these plants, as a merchant, wildcrafter, author and teacher. They are not exhaustive, many are disagreed with by other herbalists, naturopaths and those in pharmacy...I have enemies in ALL the camps.

Crudely put, there is no better method to "Brown Nose" a group of medical professionals than by offering long lists of "Side Effects", thereby confirming their worst fears about what herbs do. The major medical journals (*NEJofM* and *Lancet* excluded) jerk the chains of readers by offering ill-researched, anecdotal and slanderous "exposes" of herbs and natural healing, using the shoddiest of peer-review procedures. Not only are there frequent REAL mistakes (wrong botany, pharmacy, etc.), but the normally fastidious standards of medical reporting are completely ignored in many of these articles. It is as if the MEANS are unimportant, as long as the RESULTS meet political-medical preconceptions.

Politics be damned; there are potential dangers mixing herbs and medicine. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, they often have little relationship to those that could be expected from purely chemical causes. I am trying to be practical and realistic. Although, as an herbalist, it is obvious where my heart lies, I am making NO attempt to slant my list towards either end of the Wholistic vs Medical dialectic.

I am concerned about the patients.

**January, 1995**  
**Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**INTERNET ACCESS:**

**Michael Moore (hrbmoore@mindspring.com)**

**[www.swsbm.com](http://www.swsbm.com)**

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