

COLCHICUM

Synonyms

Autumn Crocus, Cigdem, Colquico, Meadow Saffron, Naked Boys, European Colchicum Seed.

Biological Source

Colchicum consists of dried ripe seeds and corms of *Colchicum autumnale* Linn., belonging to family Liliaceae.

Chemical Constituents

The active principle is said to be an alkaline substance of a very poisonous nature called Colchicine. Besides colchicine, demecolcine and other alkaloids are present. They also contain resin, called colchicoresin, fixed oil, glucose and starch.

Chemical Test

Colchicum corm with sulphuric acid (70%) or conc. HCl produces yellow colour due to the presence of colchicines.

Uses

Both the corm and the seeds are analgesic, antirheumatic, cathartic and emetic. They are used mainly in the treatment of gout and rheumatic complaints, usually accompanied with an alkaline diuretic. Leukaemia has been successfully treated with autumn crocus, and the plant has also been used with some success to treat Bechet's syndrome, a chronic disease marked by recurring ulcers and leukaemia. A very toxic plant, it should not be prescribed for pregnant women or patients with kidney disease, and should only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner.

Marketed Products

It is one of the ingredients of the preparation known as Aujai capsules (Crown Pharma Exports).

VINCA

Synonyms

Vinca rosea, Catharanthus, Madagascar periwinkle.

Barmasi.

Biological Source

Vinca is the dried entire plant of *Catharanthus roseus* Linn., belonging to family Apocynaceae.

Chemical Constituents

Alkaloids are present in entire shrub but leaves and roots contain more alkaloids. About 90 alkaloids have been isolated from Vinca from which some like Ajmalicine, Serpentine and Tetrahydroalstonine are known and are present in other species of Apocynaceae. The important alkaloids in *Catharanthus* are the dimer indole indoline alkaloids Vinblastine and Vincristine and they possess definite anticancer activity. Vindoline and Catharanthine are indole monomeric alkaloids. It also contains monoterpenes, sesquiterpene, indole and indoline glycoside.

Uses

Vinblastin is an antitumour alkaloid used in the treatment of Hodgkin's disease. Vincristine is a cytotoxic compound and used to treat leukaemia in children. Vinca is used in herbal practice for its astringent and tonic properties in menorrhagia and in haemorrhages generally. In cases of scurvy and for relaxed sore throat and inflamed tonsils, it may also be used as a gargle. For bleeding piles, it may be applied externally, as well as taken internally. It is also used in the treatment of diabetes.

The flowers of the Periwinkle are gently purgative, but lose their effect on drying. If gathered in the spring and made into a syrup, they impart all their virtues, and this, it is stated, is excellent as a gentle laxative for children and also for overcoming chronic constipation in grown persons.

Marketed Products

It is one of the ingredients of the preparation known as Cytocristin (Cipla).