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NEUROLOGICAL STAMP

Atropa belladonna (deadly nightshade)

Atropa belladonna is a member of the nightshade family solanaceae. Its botanical name is derived from Atropos who, in Greek mythology, cut the thread of life. The red sap enlarges the pupils of the eye. The plant was named at the time of the Italian Renaissance in the days of the infamous Borgia family, when the ready availability of poison was popular. The ladies of the court used one of these poisons, belladonna, not to kill their rivals but to beautify and enlarge their pupils.

The solanaceous alkaloids are among the earliest effective treatments for parkinsonism. Belladonna contains atropine, scopolamine, and hyoscyamine. The ripe berries are sweet tasting and poisonous and attractive to children.

A medicinal plant series published and produced by Yugoslavia in 1965 shows the belladonna flower (Stanley Gibbons 1161, Scott 775).

L F HAAS

