

109. *CYPRIPEDIUM* Sp. (ORCHIDACEAE) — Yellow Ladyslipper

Popular wild ornamental, becoming quite rare in some of its old haunts. Formerly a sedative.<sup>20</sup> In Appalachia, the tea made from the root is taken for headache and nervousness.<sup>18</sup> Powdered root (in sugar water) regarded as an anodyne, antispasmodic, aphrodisiac, nervine, sedative, stimulant, soporific, and tonic.<sup>18</sup> Once ladyslippers were thought to be very effective nerve sedatives, widely used for hysteria and neuralgia.<sup>11</sup> Cherokee used the root decoction for worms in children.<sup>45</sup> Acting like valerian, though less powerful, as an antispasmodic, the ladyslipper was called American valerian in Europe. Used also in epilepsy, fever, hemicrania, and tremors.<sup>19</sup> Hutchens<sup>30</sup> describes ladyslipper as of special value in reflex functional disorders or chorea, hysteria, headache, insomnia, low fevers, nervous unrest, hypochondria, and nervous depression accompanying stomach disorders. It relieves pain and restores calm and tranquility so rapidly that some suspect it contains narcotics.<sup>30</sup> Homeopaths use the tincture of autumn-gathered roots of *Cypripedium* for brain affections, chorea, convulsions, debility, delirium tremens, ecstasy, epilepsy, erythemia, insomnia, mental despondency, nervous debility, neuralgia, odontitis, sleeplessness, spermatorrhea, and styes.<sup>30,33</sup> According to *Hager's Handbook*, used for nervous hyperesthesia, particularly in morbid sensitivity of the eyes. Also, used to calm coffee and tea jitters and nervous stomach.<sup>33</sup>

Cyripedin is a complex resinoid substance obtained from the rhizome.<sup>2</sup> Tannic and gallic acids are also reported, along with volatile oils, glycosides, and resins.

**Toxicity** — According to Rose,<sup>47</sup> the oil is thought to paralyze the brain. The roots can cause psychedelic reactions and, in large doses, giddiness, restlessness, headache, mental excitement, and visual hallucinations.<sup>47</sup>