

361. *VINCA MINOR* L. (APOCYNACEAE) — Periwinkle

Often planted in the temperate zone as an evergreen ornamental ground cover. Sometimes used in garlands and Christmas wreaths. Of interest as a temperate source of drugs. The alkaloid vincamine is used clinically in eastern Europe for treating arterial hypertension, and as a sedative (perhaps due to the reserpine content). It is said to be effective against headache, migraine, and neurogenic tachycardia. Once used in magic, a favorite flower for making charms and love philters. It was believed to exorcize evil spirits.

In old herbals, periwinkle was used for tumors of the uvula. Reserpine shows anticancer activity in the CA, SA, and WA tumor systems; beta-sitosterol in the CA, LL, and WA systems; ursolic acid in the PS system.<sup>10</sup> Acid, astringent, bactericide, carminative, collyrium, depurative, diuretic, emetic, hemostat, lactagogue, sedative, spasmolytic, and tonic, the periwinkle is used for bleeding, catarrh, diarrhea, dysentery, eczema, fits, hypertension, hysteria, menorrhagia, nervous disorders, phthisis, piles, tumors, and nightmares.<sup>32,33</sup> Periwinkle used to be tied around cramped limbs as a remedy. Bruised leaves with lard used for piles. Used homeopathically for hemorrhagia. Flowers said to be purgative when fresh. Bruised leaves are stuffed into the nostrils to stop nose bleed.<sup>2</sup> Leaves are a bitter astringent used against dysentery and hemorrhoids.<sup>11</sup> Aqueous extracts injected in cats are hypotensive. Given orally, the plant lowers arterial hypertension. Vincamine has a weak antagonistic action on the pressor activity of adrenaline. Infusion of the herb used as a gargle and mouthwash and the extract as a vermifuge.<sup>1</sup> The plant is applied to scalp ailments. While the literature available to me suggests that this plant is lactagogue, Parvati suggests its usage to control overabundant milk and to dry up milk when weaning. She recommends it for vaginal hemorrhage, with motherwort for bloated congestion with a late period, and as a douche with chaparral, oatstraw, and slippery elm for trichomoniasis.<sup>48</sup>