

Roots and leaves contain *l*-hyoscyamine, (\pm)-hyoscyamine (atropine) and *l*-scopolamine (hyoscine) (roots also include apoatropine, belladonnine, and cuscohygrine), which in overdoses can be fatal in man.¹¹ Tannin is also reported. Pyridine, succinic acid, leucotropic acid, *N*-methylpyrrolidine, asparagin, methylkaempferol, choline, phytosterol, beta-methyl-aesculetin (scopoletin), scopolin, and 7-methylquercetin have also been reported in the leaves, and hellaridine in Greek roots.

Toxicity — Sap of the plant can cause dermatitis. People handling the berries can develop vesiculo-pustular eruptions on the face with disorders of visual accommodation.⁶ Belladonna can be treated with moderate doses of morphine, following evacuation via emetics.

To the physician — Hardin and Arena³⁴ recommend “gastric lavage (4% tannic acid solution) or emesis; pilocarpine or physostigmine for dry mouth and visual disturbance.” Properly classified by the FDA as an unsafe herb.⁶² Children have been fatally poisoned by eating “as many as three fruits”;¹⁷ Hager’s Handbook says 3 to 4 or 10 to 20 berries.³³ Symptoms of poisoning include psychomotor unrest and excitation (sometimes sexual), euphoria, cramps, urge to be active, to dance, intense disturbance, ataxy, ranting and raving, hallucinations, shouting. Rose adds that belladonna poisoning manifests itself within 15 minutes of ingestion by dryness of the mouth, burning throat, dilated pupils, intense thirst, double-vision, giddiness, burning in the stomach, nausea, hallucinations, rambling talk, and a feeble rapid pulse. Her experience may be close to first-hand. “Two friends ate belladonna berries and described feelings of total relaxation, of floating about, of well-being and lightness. One friend hallucinated and stayed high for two hours and the other had to be hospitalized.”⁴⁷