8. *ACONITUM NAPELLUS* L. (RANUNCULACEAE) — Aconite, Monkshood, Blue Rocket

Aconite roots are relatively unimportant in the U.S., but are cultivated in Europe. Aconite was formerly used internally as a febrifuge and gastric anesthetic, and veterinarily to lower blood pressure and slow the circulation.[20] Once used for its anesthetic and irritant effects in gastralgia and neuralgia.[17] Certain species have antitumor activity in lab animals.[29]

The plant juices were folk remedies for cancer and scirrhous tumors.[4] Aconite liniment is used externally for rheumatism and neuralgia, or as a counterirritant.[1] The principal alkaloid aconitine, stimulates and then depresses the central and peripheral nervous system. It is considered anodyne, febrifuge, and sedative, and has been used as a depressant in high blood pressure of cardiac origin. Tincture of aconite is used internally as a sedative and analgesic. Dried roots are used as an analgesic. In ancient times a decoction of this toxic herb was given to criminals. A black mass is extracted from the roots of Russian aconite after boiling. A tincture of this black mass, known as "parpi", is used in folk medicine to cure cancer and other maladies. Anticarcinogenic properties of these plants are recognized by Russian botanists and cancer specialists according to an unpublished typescript by the USDA's late E. E. Leppik.[74] These are the cancer roots from Solzhenitsyn's "Cancer World". Solzhenitsyn started with low concentration, one drop from the alcoholic extract to a glass of water on the first day. On the next day, he added two drops, the next, three, and so on until he could drink 10 drops a day. After a week of use, he gradually reduced the concentration again. He repeated this procedure several times.[74]

Total alkaloidal content of the roots is 0.2 to 1.5%. The alkaloids reported include aconine, aconitine, benzaconine, ephedrine, hypoconitine, mesaconitine, napelline, napellonine, neoline, neopelline, picraconatine, pseudaconitine, and sparteine. Aconitic, caffeic, chlorogenic, citric, glyceric, itaconic, isocitric, malic, malonic, oxalic, pyrrolidoncarbonic, quinic, and succinic acids are reported, along with resins, mannite, mannitol, fructose, maltose, and melibiose.