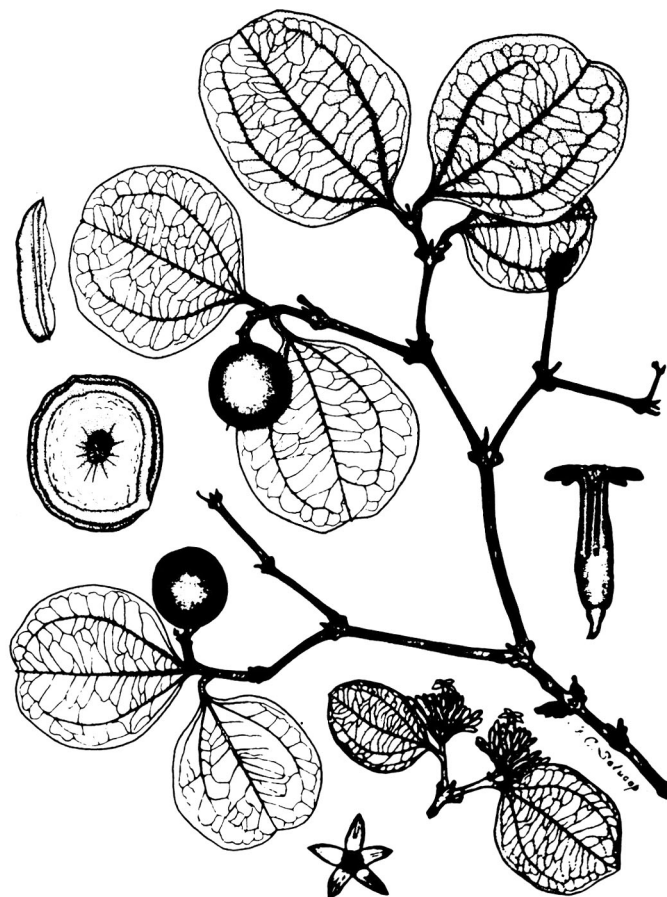


332. *STRYCHNOS NUX-VOMICA* L. (LOGANIACEAE) — Nux-Vomica, Strychnine

Brucine has been used to denature alcohol for cosmetics and perfumery. Nux-vomica is important as a source of the medicinal alkaloids brucine and strychnine. "Strychnine causes the sense organs to become more sensitive, it stimulates the visceral organs and the urogenital tract, it is ingested to treat neurasthenia and as an aphrodisiac."¹⁶ Strychnine increases the reflex excitability of the spinal cord and the medullary centers; therapeutic doses produce a tonic effect on the alimentary canal, and a limited amount of respiratory and vasomotor stimulation. In spite of its toxicity, strychnine or nux-vomica finds its way into at least two "aphrodisiacs" on the market, one with yohimbine hydrochloride and methyl-testosterone, the other with caffeine and theophylline.¹¹ Back in 1927, after a long battle with predators like badgers, coyotes, skunks, snakes, and weasles, Californians had really cut down on them. Coupled with bumper crops, the lack of predators led to a mouse explosion, seemingly unprecedented, slickening the highways, infesting bed covers. The U.S. Biological Survey's Pied Piper, S. E. Piper, set to work with 40 tons of strychnine-laced alfalfa. "Within a month, the mouse population had plummeted, and human beings had once more subdued the animal kingdom."³⁰⁴ Had the mice known about the 5.4% methyl eugenol in California bay oil, they could have saved themselves; it prevents the death of mice treated with lethal convulsant doses of strychnine.²⁹ One avant garde publication states that the seeds "have occasionally been ingested in minute quantities for their stimulating effect upon the spinal cord and cerebrum" . . . "It has been found to enhance the learning process."⁵¹ Wood is used for agricultural tools.