

310. *SASSAFRAS ALBIDUM* (Nutt.) Nees (LAURACEAE) — Sassafras

Dried leaves constitute the file of file gumbo in Creole cooking. Two or three leaves in a glass of water yield a mucilaginous beverage. Oil of sassafras applied externally as a pediculicide, and to relieve stings and bites. Once used in dentistry to disinfect root canals. Once used to make "Godfrey's Cordial", a mixture of opium and sassafras. Used as a source of artificial heliotrope. Oil also used to flavors dentifrices, masticatories, mouth-washes, soaps, candies, root beers, and "sassaparillas", as well as tobaccos.⁸ Twigs used for cleaning the teeth. Wood and bark furnish a yellow dye.² Pith of sassafras was once official in the U.S. as a mucilaginous demulcent, used for eye inflammation. I enjoy very much a tea made from sassafras roots and sumach berries. My 100-year old grandmother was not apparently frightened by the sassafras-cancer scare. Pioneers boiled sassafras in maple sap. Sassafras is said to be antagonistic to the narcotic effects of alcohol. South Carolina blacks make a soup from young sassafras leaves with *Viola palmata* and *V. septemloba*.⁴⁶ Sassafras extracts show very good activity against *Ancylostoma* and *Strongyloides*.²⁸⁵

Teas, made from the oil or root bark, have been applied to cancer, corns, osteosarcomas, tumors, and wens.⁴ Sassafras tea used in Appalachia as a diaphoretic and diuretic for bronchitis, gastritis, and indigestion, and to slow down the milk of nursing mothers. South Carolina blacks give it to children to "bring out the measles."⁴⁶ Tea also used for arthritis, acne, bronchitis, catarrh, dropsy, dysmenorrhea, dysentery, fever, gleet, gonorrhea, gout, hypertension, kidney trouble, mumps, nephrosis, ophthalmia, pneumonia, respiratory ailments, rheumatism, skin trouble, syphilis, and typhus.^{2,32,46} The herb is alterative, anodyne, antiseptic, aromatic, carminative, depurative, diaphoretic, demulcent, diuretic, emmenagogue, stimulant, and sudorific.^{28,32} Externally, sassafras has been used as a rubefacient on bruises, rheumatism, sprains, and swellings. Lewis and Elvin-Lewis¹¹ cite an interesting cancer "cure", based on a carcinogen, that echos some of the cancer-preventive suggestions recently emanating from congress and the NIH: "Let him drink Sassafras Tea every Morning,