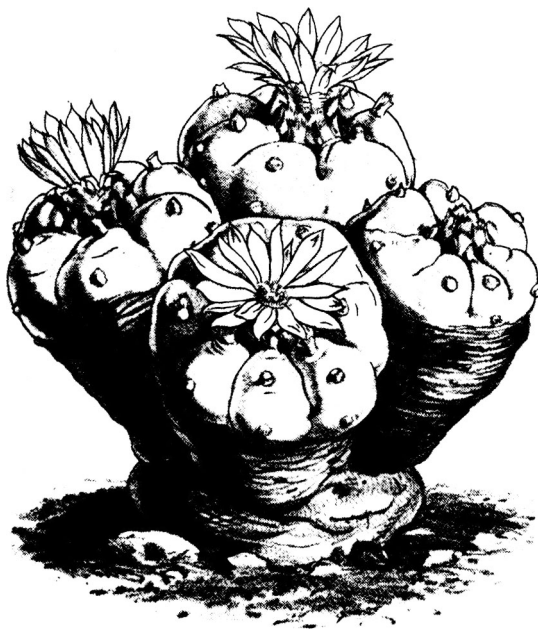


210. *LOPHOPHORA WILLIAMSII* (Lemaire) Coult. (CACTACEAE) — Peyote

For centuries the peyote has been a religious object affording “religious” trips to certain Amerindians who consider that it makes them braver, stronger, and more immune to the pangs of hunger and thirst. One of the sources quoted by Schleiffer says that peyote was sometimes used in infanticide, and to kill off the sickly.<sup>52</sup> On a more pleasant chord, Emboden relates how some North American Indians beat the Supreme Court to establish the native Church of North America with a legal peyote-consuming ritual. Observers have been impressed by the contemplative nature of the participants and the efficacy of the cactus in permitting temporary escape from life’s disenchantments, partially induced by the white man who wished to deprive red man of his peyote.<sup>54</sup> Experimentally hypoglycemic.<sup>11</sup>

Reported to be anodyne, antibiotic, cardiotoxic, hallucinogenic, intoxicant, lactagogue, narcotic, poison, psychedelic, sedative, tonic, peyote is a folk remedy for alcoholism, angina, arthritis, backache, burns, corns, fever, headache, rheumatism, snakebite, sunstroke, tickling throat.<sup>32, 33, 50</sup>

The active principle is the alkaloid mescaline. At least eight other alkaloids have been isolated and may play minor roles in hallucinations.<sup>54</sup> *Hager’s Handbook* lists mescaline ( $C_{11}H_{17}NO_3$ ), *N*-methylethylmescaline ( $C_{12}H_{19}NO_3$ ), *N*-formylethylmescaline ( $C_{12}H_{17}NO_4$ ), *N*-acetylmescaline ( $C_{13}H_{19}NO_4$ ), 3-demethylethylmescaline ( $C_{10}H_{15}NO_3$ ), *N*-formyl-3-demethylethylmescaline ( $C_{11}H_{15}NO_4$ ), *N*-acetyl-3-demethylethylmescaline ( $C_{12}H_{17}NO_4$ ), 3,4-dimethoxyphenethylamine ( $C_{10}H_{15}NO_2$ ), tyramine ( $C_8H_{11}NO$ ), *N*-methyltyramine ( $C_9H_{13}NO$ ), hordenine ( $C_{10}H_{15}NO$ ), candicine ( $C_{11}H_{19}NO_2$ ), anhalamine ( $C_{11}H_{15}NO_3$ ), *N*-formylanhalamine ( $C_{12}H_{15}NO_4$ ), *N*-acetylanhalamine ( $C_{13}H_{17}NO_4$ ), anhalanine ( $C_{12}H_{17}NO_3$ ), etc.<sup>33</sup>

**Toxicity** — There are unconfirmed assumptions by nonpeyote-worshippers that peyote can cause such things as addiction, disease, intoxication, immorality, laziness, mental disease, and teratogenesis; even death. Intoxication may last 2 or 3 days.<sup>50</sup> Listed as a narcotic hallucinogen.<sup>54</sup> Hardin and Arena state: “Although peyote may not cause a physiological addiction, the psychotic reactions and long-range effects are dangerous, and it can be psychologically habit forming.”

**To the physician** — Harden and Arena recommend early gastric lavage or emesis if nature doesn’t provide.<sup>34</sup>