

87. *CIMICIFUGA RACEMOSA* (L.) Nutt. (RANUNCULACEAE) — Black Cohosh, Black Snakeroot

Used only as medicine, a small amount is apparently sold in U.S. and Canadian herbal stores. It was one of the main components of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Leaves laid above a room are said to drive bugs away.⁴⁷

Amerindians used the rhizome for general malaise, gynecopathy, kidney ailments, malaria, rheumatism, and sore throat. American colonists used it for amenorrhea, bronchitis, chorea, dropsy, fever, hysteria, itch, lumbago, malaria, nervous disorders, snakebite, uterine disorders, and yellow fever.¹⁸ Small doses are said to be adequate for menstrual cramps. It is said to promote quick delivery and to ease pain during childbirth. Occasionally, it is used to treat the symptoms of menopause, but prolonged use may irritate the uterus. The *Merck Index* (8th ed.) describes the root as an astringent bitter.²⁰ Experimentally antiinflammatory and hypoglycemic. In rats and mice, the drug has a strengthening effect on the female reproductive system and acts as a sedative. A chloroform-soluble resinous fraction is reported to have hypotensive activity in animals and to have peripheral vasodilatory effects on man. Perhaps such data lead to Tierra's statements: "It is an excellent remedy for high blood pressure"^{28?} closely paralleling Kloss' statement: "wonderful remedy for high blood pressure."¹⁴⁴ Root is used in a cataplasm for scirrhus tumors (N.Y. city), or in a tincture or decoction by southern Amerindians.⁴ The root is variously considered alterative, antispasmodic, antidotal, antitussive, aphrodisiac, astringent, diaphoretic, diuretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, narcotic, nervine, sedative, stomachic, and tonic. A tea from the root has been recommended for sore throat and rheumatism. Root is supposed to be specific against rattlesnake bite and St. Vitus' dance (chorea). Given as a syrup in various infantile disorders,² e.g., diarrhea. Said to be effective also for whooping cough, ringing ears, and to ease the paroxysms of chronic coughs.² Homeopathically recommended for stimulating the female system, e.g., in amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, and menopausal difficulties like arthrosis and rheumatism, and in parturition.³³