

194. *LACHNANTHES TINCTORIA* ELL. (HAEMADORACEAE) — Redroot

Formerly source of a red dye. Apparently, the plant was used as a hallucinogen by the Seminoles, to cause brilliancy and fluency of speech.² Millspaugh¹⁹ said, "The root was esteemed as an invigorating tonic by the Aborigines, especially the Seminoles, in whom it is said to cause brilliancy and fearless expression of the eye and countenance, a boldness of fluency of speech, and other symptoms of heroic being, with, of course, the natural opposite after-effects."

Reported to be cardiotoxic, hypnotic, poison, and stimulant, redroot is a folk remedy for cerebrosis, cough, fever, laryngitis, neck ailments, pneumonia, rheumatism, typhoid, typhus.^{32,33} The root contains 4-hydroxy-3-methoxy-5-phenyl-1,8-naphthaline-anhydride ($C_{18}H_{12}O_5$) as well as di-, tri-, and tetra-methoxyphenylnaphthalides, lachnanthoside, lachnanthofluoren, and lachnanthocarpone ($C_{19}H_{12}O_3$), which also occurs in the fruit, with alpha-carotene, tristearin, and chelidonic acid.³³

Toxicity — Grieve reiterates the interesting story that white pigs die but not black pigs, from eating the redroot, the bones turning pink and the hoofs falling off.²¹ Narcotic,² the unidentified compound produces a peculiar form of cerebral stimulation or narcosis. A few drops of the tincture may cause mental exhilaration, followed by ill-humor, vertigo, and headache (as Duke suggests, the usual hangover that follows whatever kind of "intoxication"¹⁸⁶).