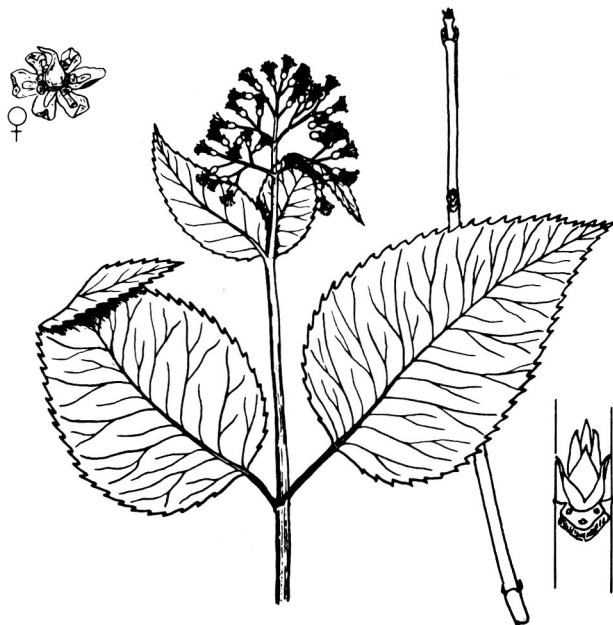


174. *HYDRANGEA ARBORESCENS* L. (SAXIFRAGACEAE) — Seven Barks, Smooth Hydrangea

Ornamental shrub, the pithy stalks sometimes used for pipe stems. Tyler³⁷ notes a renewed interest in *Hydrangea*, unfortunately, due to the trend for some people to smoke some hydrangea leaves as a euphoric of dubious efficacy.

The fluid extract is reported to have “cured” cancer of the tongue and metastasis in axillary glands following breast amputation.⁴ Rutin is said to inhibit tumor formation²⁹ and protect against x-ray irradiation.²⁹ Roots said to be cathartic, diuretic, laxative, and tonic, removing calculus and gravel. Use of seven bark has resulted in expulsion of 120 calculi from one person alone.² Fluid extract used for alkaline urine, chronic gleet, and mucous irritations of the bladder in aged persons. Leaves said to be alterative, bactericide, cathartic, diaphoretic, diuretic, laxative, narcotic, nephritic, purgative, sialogogue, stomachic, and tonic.³² Amerindians gave the root decoction to women experiencing unusual dreams during their menstrual period. Said to relieve backache caused by kidney, rheumatism, scurvy, and dropsy.³⁰ Cherokee introduced it to the early settlers as a remedy for kidney stones.³⁷ American settlers used the roots to treat dyspepsia. Homeopaths prescribe the young-shoot tincture for bladderstone, catarrh, diabetes, gravel, incontinence, and prostatic ailments.³⁰ Tyler concludes, perhaps with a bit of hyperbole, “As a drug of use or abuse, the roots or leaves of any *Hydrangea* species have no merit.”³⁷

Devoid of tannin, the root contains two resins, gum, kaempferol, quercetin, rutin, saponin, sugar, starch, albumen, soda, lime, potassium, magnesia, sulphuric and phosphoric acids, a protosalt of iron, and the cyanogenic glycoside hydrangein (glycoside $C_{34}H_{25}O_{11}$), plus fixed and volatile oils.^{2,33}

Toxicity — Classified by the FDA as an Herb of Undefined Safety: “Contains hydrangin. Overdose is said to cause vertigo and feeling of oppression of the chest.”⁶² Hydrangin may cause gastroenteritis.¹¹

To the physician — Hardin and Arena³⁴ recommend gastric lavage or emesis and treatment for cyanide poisoning in poisoning cases. In Florida a family was poisoned when children tossed hydrangea buds in a tossed salad.¹⁴ Wood said to be injurious to woodworkers.⁶