

Chamaelirium luteum (L.) A. Gray

False Unicorn Rhizome and Root

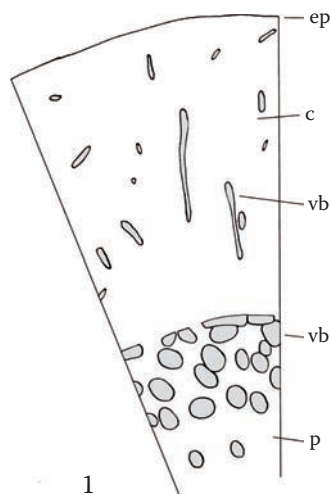
Rhizoma et Radix Chamaelirii lutei

Liliaceae

False unicorn is one of the primary botanicals used in Western herbal medicine for its putative ability to promote female fertility and as a uterine tonic. It is reported by some to be relatively scarce and has been known to be subject to adulteration with a different species of plant known as aletris (aka true unicorn or stargrass, *Aletris farinosa*). Aletris is much less expensive and different in its action than false unicorn. The two species are readily distinguished from one another and care should be taken to differentiate between them (see *Aletris*).

A. Rhizome

Transverse section: Epidermis of polygonal cells; stele with irregularly scattered collateral bundles oriented in various directions, often in longitudinal view toward the exterior; inconspicuous endodermis, with crowded vascular bundles along its interior; in most vascular bundles, xylem is more abundant than phloem; very narrow scalariform vessels are arranged in a crescent wrapping around the phloem; fibers are absent; pith parenchyma cells are more or less spherical toward the exterior, polygonal toward the interior; triangular intercellular spaces are



frequent and, adjacent to them, cell walls are thickened; idioblasts containing bundles of acicular raphides of calcium oxalate are abundant in the pith, individual crystals are 15–35 μm long; bundles do not disaggregate when cells are damaged.

Starch: Abundant in the pith, except in idioblasts containing acicular raphide bundles; granules are simple or in small groups, subspherical, 3–8 μm diameter.

B. Root

Transverse section: Cortical parenchyma is absent in most very thin roots; thickened endodermis; polyarch vascular bundle; in older roots, parenchyma between vessels is replaced by fibers; calcium oxalate is absent.

Powder: Fragments of parenchyma with intercellular spaces and acicular raphide bundles; scalariform vessels; starch.

