

DAPHNE, MEZEREUM AND GINSENG

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DAPHNE

This attractive shrub belongs to the Spurge group, of which there are about forty species. The name *Daphne* was taken from the ancient Greek name, from the nymph Daphne.

It is a very old remedy and James Thacker in his *New Dispensatory* of 1817 has this to say about it: "Daphne is an indigenous low shrub, growing in woods and shady places, and flowering in the months of February and March. When cultivated in gardens, it attains in a rich soil a height of 16 feet. The fruit is a berry, in which is found a single seed. The leaves are spear-shaped. The whole plant is so corrosive that six of its berries are said to kill a wolf. The bark of the root of this plant is the part used in medicine; its taste when chewed for some time is extremely acrid, exciting an insupportable sensation of burning in the mouth and throat. It is extracted by water and vinegar. It is a stimulating diaphoretic, has been found of service in chronic rheumatism and in cutaneous diseases. It is given in the form of a decoction."

Poisonous Plants of the United States by Walter Muenscher states: "poisonous principle. A bitter glucoside, daphnin, and also a fatty substance are believed to cause the toxic properties. Conditions of poisoning: The bark, leaves and fruit are poisonous. A number of fatalities have occurred among children from eating the bright red 'berries.' Symptoms: Light cases of poisoning cause severe burning of the lips, mouth and throat, followed by inflammation. In severe cases the symptoms are inflammation of the stomach and intestines, colic, vomiting, diarrhoea, passing of blood, inflammation of the kidneys, nervous symptoms, weakness and convulsions."

Daphne ind. was first proved by Dr. G. Bute, whose description of it was: "It is like its relative, *Mezereum*, in affections of muscles, bones and skin. The pains are erratic like electricity. Like *Jambolanum*, has a craving for tobacco. There are red spots on the legs, itching especially in the evening. A

peculiar symptom is the tongue is usually coated only on the right side and with foul-smelling hot ptyalism. In fact, all secretions, breath, sweat, urine, are fetid. Pains are apt to be sudden, stitch-like, in the region of the spleen or suddenly wander to the lower extremities and especially to the right big toe, which is greatly swollen and very painful. In the head there is a swaying sensation when walking or as if various parts of the body were separated, yet they are under complete control of the will."

There are aggravations from alcohol, tobacco, evening and night, also warmth of bed, touch and pressure, lying down and while the moon is on the wane. Insomnia is characteristic with dreams of black cats. It is a prominent remedy in the treatment of gout found in those using a high protein diet. *Bryonia* and *Rhus tox.* are antidotal to its action.

MEZEREUM

In comparing *Mezereum* with *Daphne*, a close relative, there is, in many respects, a great similarity, especially in the character of the pains, but there is more swelling and much more itching. *Mezereum* is the Spurge Olive, while *Daphne* is Spurge Laurel. Allen cites a case of *Mezereum* severity: a pale girl, 14 years old, having been advised to use the leaves to make her fat and rosy, went into the woods, gathered the leaves and applied them freely to her face and arms. Soon burning set in and swelling of the face, nose, eyelids and scalp. Then severe, painful sneezing with dull, unbearable headaches continued.

There is far more skin disturbance in *Mezereum*, like eczema and itching eruptions, also more swelling of the parts. The patient is despondent; indifferent to everything; becoming angry at trifles, but is soon sorry for it, often followed by severe headaches, mostly right sided. There is much distress in the eyes, nose, ears and throat with burning of the parts. Pains are always severe, especially in the long bones, worse at night, or on movement, the least touch and in damp weather. Ulcers are often present in skin affections. They are thick and large, covered with yellowish-white scabs, under which thick, yellow pus collects.

GINSENG

Ginseng (*Panax Quinquefolium*) is not related to either *Daphne* or *Mezereum*, but in some ways has many symptoms like both plants. *Panax* is an ancient Greek term meaning *all healing* and was so considered by the Chinese. The medical dictionaries all state that: "It has no medicinal virtues other than those of a demulcent." However, when applied to the proper symptomatology, it has definite virtues. The name *Ginseng* signifies: "The resemblance of a man" or "man's thigh." The natives along the Ussuri River use it, boiled, for headaches, colds, fevers and stomach pains. J. H. Henry says: "It acts on the lower part of the spinal marrow, causing bruised pains in small of back and thighs, worse on rising. There is great languor with paralytic rheumatic pains in lower limbs. Arthritic swelling of the foot, violent pains in big toe." He considers it specific in lumbago, sciatica and chronic rheumatism with frequent desire to urinate. It is an aromatic stimulant and removes the feeling of fatigue, imparting a joyous sense of vigor.

One special symptom is the Ramsay Hunt syndrome in dark-complexioned people, while *Belladonna* is in light-complexioned. In the extremities there is swelling of the hands, the skin feels tight and burning heat in the tips of the fingers. Also, there is itching eruption on the skin of the neck and chest. This is a right-sided remedy, especially the headache, which is associated with vertigo and the lower extremities.

All of these remedies are indicated in some form of the gouty diathesis, *Daphne* indicated in the true form of gout, *Mezereum* where it is associated with skin disturbances and *Ginseng* where the general metabolism is altered.

So in closing, I would like to quote a few lines from V. M. Kulkarni, the homœopathic poet:

"Thus to aid Nature at all times,
In places all and in all climes,
For ailments all and symptoms all,
Do use an herb or mineral
On law of likes in atoms pure
They can effect a marvellous cure."

—*The Pacific Coast Homœo. Bulletin*, Dec. '60.