

# Lady's Slipper

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## Species (Family)

*Cypripedium pubescens* Willd. (Orchidaceae) and other related species

## Synonym(s)

American Valerian, *Cypripedium*, *Cypripedium calceolus* var. *pubescens* R.Br., Nerve Root

Related species also referred to as Lady's Slipper include *Calypso bulbosa* (L.) Oakes (*Cypripedium bulbosum* L.) and *Cypripedium parviflorum* Salish

## Part(s) Used

Rhizome, root

## Pharmacopoeial and Other Monographs

BHP 1983<sup>(G7)</sup>

PDR for Herbal Medicines 2nd edition (Nerve Root)<sup>(G36)</sup>

## Legal Category (Licensed Products)

GSL (*Cypripedium*)<sup>(G37)</sup>

## Constituents<sup>(G22,G48,G64)</sup>

Little chemical information has been documented. Lady's slipper is stated to contain glycosides, resin, tannic and gallic acids (usually associated with hydrolysable tannins), tannins and a volatile oil.

Several quinones have been reported including cypripedin, stated to belong to a group of rare non-terpenoid phenanthraquinones and not previously isolated from natural sources.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Food Use

Lady's slipper is not used in foods.

## Herbal Use

Lady's slipper is stated to possess sedative, mild hypnotic, antispasmodic and thymoleptic properties. Traditionally, it has been used for insomnia, hysteria, emotional tension, anxiety states, and specifically for anxiety states with insomnia.<sup>(G7,G64)</sup>

## Dosage

*Dried rhizome/root* 2–4 g or by infusion three times daily.<sup>(G7)</sup>

*Liquid extract* 2–4 mL (1:1 in 45% alcohol) three times daily.<sup>(G7)</sup>

## Pharmacological Actions

None documented.

## Side-effects, Toxicity

It has been stated that the roots may cause psychedelic reactions and large doses may result in giddiness, restlessness, headache, mental excitement and visual hallucinations.<sup>(G22)</sup> Lady's slipper is stated to be allergenic and contact dermatitis has been documented.<sup>(G51)</sup> The sensitising property of lady's slipper has been attributed to the quinone constituents.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Contra-indications, Warnings

Lady's slipper may cause an allergic reaction in sensitive individuals.

*Pregnancy and lactation* The safety of lady's slipper has not been established. In view of the lack of phytochemical, pharmacological and toxicological information the use of lady's slipper during pregnancy and lactation should be avoided.

## Pharmaceutical Comment

Virtually no phytochemical or pharmacological data are available for lady's slipper to justify its use as a herbal remedy. In view of the lack of toxicity data, excessive use should be avoided.

## References

See also General References G7, G22, G31, G36, G37, G48, G51 and G64.

- 1 Schmale H, Hausen BM. A new sensitizing quinone from lady slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*). *Naturwissenschaften* 1979; 66: 527–528.