
American Botanical Council

HerbClip

FILE: · Cascara Sagrada
(*Rhamnus purshiana*)
· Stimulant Laxatives

Date: September 3, 1996

HC 9-3-6-1

To: General Distribution

Re: **Cascara Sagrada Monograph**

Anonymous. Cascara. *The Lawrence Review of Natural Products*, May 1996, pp. 1-2.

Cascara (*Rhamnus purshiana*) is used almost exclusively for its laxative effect, although recent studies have investigated other types of pharmacological activity associated with some of cascara's active principles. Cascara's cousin, the European buckthorn (*R. frangula*), is also known for its laxative properties. Cascara trees are found throughout the Northwestern United States and as far north as Southeast British Columbia. The bark of the tree must be dried to be used; the fresh bark contains anthrones and, if consumed, will cause severe vomiting and intestinal cramping.

As with other laxative herbs, the anthraglycosides are primarily responsible for the herb's actions. Cascariosides A and B act upon the large intestine to induce peristalsis and evacuation. The laxative effect is felt within six to eight hours of administration. Although no major side effects are known, chronic use can lead to electrolyte loss, especially of potassium. Potassium deficiency can lead to serious problems if cardiotonic glycosides, such as digitalis, are being used. Cascara is indicated in most cases where easy defecation with soft stool is desired, e.g. in cases of constipation, hemorrhoids, anal fissures, and post rectal-anal surgery. Average dosage is from 20 to 70 mg daily of total hydroxyanthracene derivatives.