



# Mandrake

*Mandragora  
officinarum*

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# Mandrake

- Family: *Solanaceae* or the nightshades family. There are approximately 98 genera and 2700 species.
- Genus: *Mandragora*
- Species: *officinarum*
- Common Names: mandrake, mandragora, Satan's apple, testes of the demon, man's plant, witch's drink
- Relatives: potato, tomato, eggplant, belladonna, chili pepper, bell pepper, tobacco plant





# Geography of Cultivation

- Mandrake is native to the Mediterranean, particularly northern Italy, Croatia, and Slovenia.
- The plant remains in this region. Since the plant is not desired by most, cultivation in other regions is due to religious and superstitious reasons.



# Morphological Description

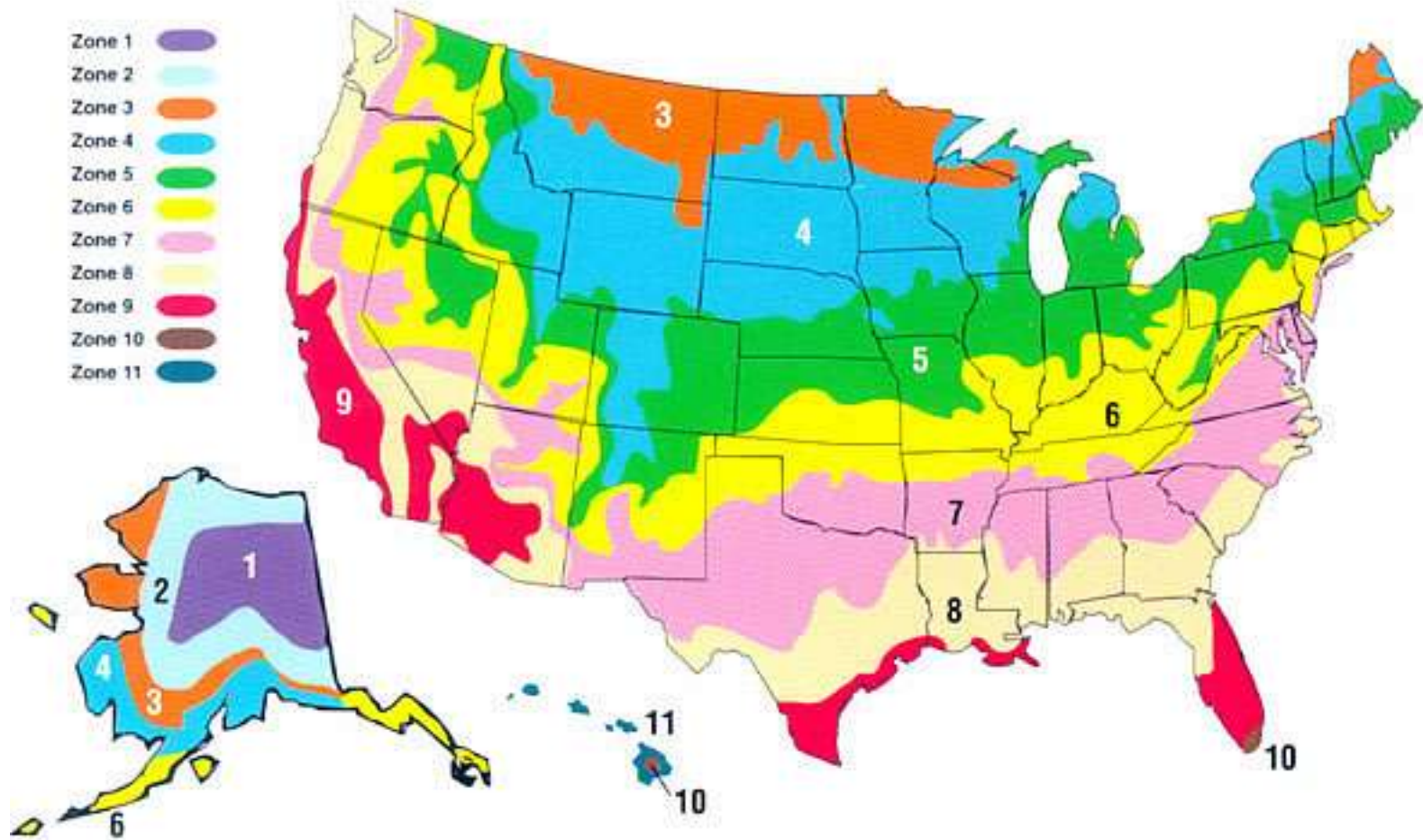
- Mandrake is a variable perennial herbaceous plant with a long thick root, often branched. It has almost no stem, and the elliptical or obovate leaves that vary in length are borne in a basal rosette.
- The flowers appear from autumn to spring. They are greenish white to blue or violet.
- The fruit forms in late autumn to early summer. The berry is yellow or orange and resembles a tomato.
- The mandrake is poisonous, especially the roots and leaves. This is due to tropane alkaloids that are present.



# Features of Cultivation

- Mandrake is hardy in USDA zones 6-8.
- It prefers a deep, rich soil. The roots will rot in poorly drained or clay soil.
- Full sun or partial shade is preferred.
- It takes about two years for the plant to become established and set fruit, and during this time the soil needs to be well-watered.

# USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map



# Plant Uses



- They have been associated with a variety of superstitious practices, such as magic rituals. Modern pagan religions, such as Wicca and Odinism, also use mandrake in their practices.
- Due to its humanlike appearance, the root was often made into an amulet that was believed to bring good fortune and cure sterility.



## Plant Uses, Cont.

- Mandrake also has a long history of medicinal use. The root is hallucinogenic and narcotic.
- Taken in sufficient quantities, it induces a state of oblivion and could be used as an anesthetic for surgery.
- Juice from the grated root was applied externally to relieve rheumatic pains.
- It was also used internally to treat melancholy, convulsions, and mania. Large doses could cause madness and delirium.

# Effects of Consumption

- Due to the poisonous nature of this plant, there are numerous side effects associated with its consumption.
- Vomiting, diarrhea, blurred vision, dilation of the pupils, dryness of the mouth, difficulty urinating, dizziness, headache, tachycardia, hyperactivity, hallucinations, and asphyxiation.



## Use In North America and of Native Americans

- This plant is not native to North America.
- A nonrelated species of wild mandrake, *Podophyllum peltatum*, is used instead in rituals. It is also poisonous.
- The Native Americans used wild mandrake as an emetic, cathartic, and antihelmintic agent. They also boiled the root and drank the water to cure stomach aches.
- It is used topically to treat warts.

# Random Facts



- In one superstition, a person who pulls a mandrake from the ground is condemned to hell. The mandrake would scream as it was pulled from the ground, killing all who heard it.
- People would tie the plant to an animal and have it pull the mandrake out instead.
- The mandrake was fabled to grow under the gallows of murderers.



## Random Facts, Cont.

- In the Bible, mandrake was used by Jacob's infertile second wife, Rachel, to become pregnant.
- In the Harry Potter book series, the Hogwarts greenhouses had mandragora. They, too, were humanlike and the scream was fatal. The mandrake was used to revive those that had



# References

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HERBARIUM SPECIMEN #432B

MANDRAGORA OFFICINARIUM

**MANDRAKE**

[IMMATURE]

 CAUTION 

APPROACH ONLY WITH ADEQUATE EAR PROTECTION!  
SCREAM IS NOT YET LETHAL, BUT MAY CAUSE EXTENDED  
PERIODS OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

PROPERTY OF HOGWARTS SCHOOL  
OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY