

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

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Sceletium tortuosum

Sceletium tortuosum commonly called Kanna is a small succulent groundcover plant from South Africa. As early as 1662 natives would harvest this plant, bury it to ferment it and then dry it. Once dried it was eaten, smoked, made into a tea or snuffed to reap its wonderful mood modifying~mind enhancing effects. Today this herb has been proven to be safe and effective in balancing the brain and nervous system which seems to relieve symptoms of depression.

The mood enhancing properties of *Sceletium* are primarily due to a group of alkaloids, notably mesembrine, mesembrenol and tortuosamine. These compounds interact with receptors in the brain, enhancing the production of dopamine, which is our primary inner pleasure chemical, and prolonging the activity of serotonin, a critically important mood compound. When ingested, *Sceletium* enhances the feeling of tremendous well-being, heightened awareness, mental alertness and a keen-mindedness that is quite pronounced. Any potentially harmful effects of

oxalic acid compounds that are naturally found in the plant are reported to be alleviated by physically crushing the plant, fermenting and drying before use.

These feel good effects and terrific mental stimulation properties appear to make *Sceletium* a first-rate anti-depressant and anti-anxiety aid. People with low mental energy, mild-to-moderate depression and anxiety disorder could potentially be helped by its use. In one study of the effects of *Sceletium* reported in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, the main alkaloids of the plant demonstrated the capacity to extend the activity of serotonin. This activity, known as SSRI, or selective serotonin reuptake inhibition, is essentially how pharmaceutical antidepressant drugs work. The difference with *Sceletium* is that it is a multi-compound plant. It is not chemically based and does not appear to demonstrate comparable hazardous side effects of the pharmaceutical antidepressants. Side effects can include gastrointestinal disorders, loss of sex drive, insomnia and exacerbated depression.



The recommended dosage is to start low then build if needed, one or two capsules a day. My son's girlfriend is weaning from her medication to a more natural way and she is taking one capsule of Sceletium along with 3 capsules of Dr. Christopher's MindTrac formula a day and seeing great results. The herbs should be taken after a meal because Sceletium can cause headaches and nausea if taken on an empty stomach.

In its long history of use, no significant adverse effects of Sceletium have been noted. This makes Sceletium a worthy candidate for consideration in cases of depression and anxiety.

Mishelle Knuteson is certified in Rapid Eye Technology (RET) an emotional release therapy, teaches classes in *The Art of Feminine Presence* and a Master Herbalist ~ graduate of *The School of Natural Healing*. Mishelle currently works as an Educative Master Herbalist (MH) for *The School of Natural Healing* and as Office Manager of *Christopher Publications*.