

# Cactus grandiflora

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**Abstract:** *Cactus grandiflorus*, also known as the Night blooming Cereus, is a remedy with some distinctive and dramatic symptoms. A list of keynotes and characteristic symptoms is listed, along with a short description of the unique and striking behavior of the plant.

**Keywords:** Cactus grandiflorus, Cactaceae, Night Blooming Cereus, caged in wires, constriction, hemorrhage, heart disease

*Cactus grandiflorus* or *Selenicereus grandiflorus*, of the family Cactaceae, is a flowering cactus found in southern Arizona, West Texas, Mexico, Central America and the West Indies. The Night-blooming Cereus, as it is also known, is a member of the Cactus Family that resembles nothing more than an unattractive bush most of the year. It is rarely noticed in the wild because of its inconspicuousness. But for one midsummer's night each year, its exquisitely scented flower—with the fragrance of vanilla—opens as night falls, then closes with the first rays of the morning sun. Consequently it has been referred to as the Queen of the Night. It is cultivated in rock gardens, and as a houseplant.

The accompanying photograph is one which was taken by my father around 1954, in Cedaredge, Colorado, where we were living at the time. He had recently taken the job as the editor of the local weekly paper, and had just purchased his first camera. A friend alerted him that his night blooming cereus—a houseplant—was going to bloom so my father loaded my mother, my older brother and me into the car late at night and we went to witness the appearance of this magnificent blossom. It literally blooms before your eyes, with the maximum fullness around midnight.

From Hering: "We are indebted for this very valuable medicine to the wife of Dr. Rubini in Naples. Admiring the great beauty and sweet odor of the flower,

and knowing its short life, opening at evening, closing and dying before dawn of day, she induced her husband to make a preparation from the young flower, from which is their masterly proving, which will be a boon to suffering humanity to the end of time. In

1864 Rocco Rubini published his monograph, and in 1865 Dr. A. Lippe published the first correct and complete translation of it into English."

Four other provings were conducted subsequently, and Alastair Gray of Australia conducted an additional more contemporary proving, which is accessible through *Encyclopedia Homeopathica* and perhaps *Ex Libris* as well. The tincture is prepared from the fresh stems, as described in the *Homœopathic Pharmacopœia of the U.S.*

The following keynotes are highlights extracted from Lippe's *Textbook of Materia Medica*, T.F. Allen's *Encyclopedia*, and *Primer*

*of Materia Medica*, Hering's *Guiding Symptoms*, and from K.M. Mathur's *Systematic Materia Medica of Homeopathic Remedies*, with one item from Yingling's *Accoucheur's Emergency Manual*.

**Mentals** Sadness and bad humor, taciturnity, melancholy, hypochondriasis. Wants to be alone, is worse from consolation. Fears death, despairs of recovery, screams with the pains; believes her disease is incurable. (Hering mentions cheerfulness and vivacity in a



patient with heart disease) Extraordinary irritability. Dread that something terrible is going to happen to him.

**Head** Pain, like a weight, on the vertex, ameliorated by pressure, and aggravated by talking and noise. Pulsating pain in the right side of the head, with a feeling of weight.

Pain, as if the head were in a vise, or as if it would burst open.

Threatening apoplexy, with red face.

**Eyes** Photophobia (with headache). Vision dim. Circles of red light before the eyes.

**Nose** Profuse epistaxis.

**Face** Bloated and red or pale and deathlike.

**Throat** Constriction of the throat, suffocative. Constriction of the esophagus, which prevents swallowing; or which excites the frequent swallowing of saliva. Cannot tolerate a tight collar. Exophthalmic goiter.

**Stomach** Vomiting blood. Gastroenteritis, with violent pain; sensation of constriction. Nausea in the morning, lasting all day. Acrid acid in the stomach, which rises in the throat and mouth. Burning pulsation or heaviness in the stomach. Constriction or pulsation in the epigastrium.

**Rectum and Stool** Sensation of great weight, and urging to evacuate, as though a large stool would follow, but without result. Profuse hemorrhage from the bowels, or from hemorrhoids. Swollen painful hemorrhoids. Diarrhea aggravated in the forenoon. Stool can be hard and black.

**Urinary Organs** Frequent urging at night, with a copious flow each day.

Irritation in the urethra, as if necessary to urinate constantly. Urine reddish, turbid, profuse. Constriction of the neck of the bladder. Strangury, paralysis of bladder. Urine passes by drops, with much burning. Profuse urine, of a straw color. Urine, on cooling, deposits red sand. Hematuria, clots can interfere with urination.

**Female** Menstruation too early, too scanty, very painful; ceases while lying down. Inflammation of the ovaries, with constriction. Vaginismus, constriction of the vagina preventing coition. Pulsating pain in the uterus and ovaries. Sensation of constriction in the uterine region. Labor suppressed with constriction of uterine os (Yingling).

**Chest and Respiration** Cough, with much viscid expectoration; spasmodic, worse at night; irritable, hacking, seeming to come from the trachea. Expectoration free, yellow or jelly-like; like boiled starch.

Hemoptysis. Breathing difficult; a feeling as if the chest were constricted by an iron band. Periodic suffocation, with fainting, cold sweat and loss of pulse.

Oppressed breathing, as from a weight on the chest. Feeling as if the chest were bound by a tight cord, or

as if bound by an iron band. Chronic bronchitis, with rattling of mucus.

**Heart and Pulse** A feeling of constriction at the heart, as from an iron hand or from an iron band around it. Acute pain in the heart, with stitches, causing loud cries, with difficult breathing. Heart's action rapid, short, irregular, especially on rapid motion, with feeling of pressure and heaviness. Palpitation from the least excitement, or from thinking, with need of deep breathing, worse from walking and at night, when lying on the left side.

**Neck and Back** Pain under left scapula. Coldness of the back, with icy-cold hands.

**Extremities** Tearing pains in the various joints. Numbness of the left arm at night, with prickling in the little finger. Edema of the hands, especially of the left hand. Edema of the feet, extending to the knee; the skin is shining; pressure with the fingers leaves an indentation.

**Fever and Chill** Slight chilliness towards 10 A.M. Chilliness, with chattering of the teeth. Intermittent fever (quotidian) recurring every day at the same hour. Fever at 11 A.M.

**Overview** The most pervasive symptom, the *sense of terrible constriction, as if by an iron band or as if caged in wires*, affects many different systems: head, throat, esophagus, chest, heart, bladder, rectum, uterus, ovaries, vagina. Also important is the *tendency to hemorrhages*: from nose, lungs, rectum, bladder and stomach, as well as the implication of cerebral hemorrhage. Aggravation in the forenoon and at 11 P.M. Great affinity for the heart and its pathology, coronary artery disease, valvular disease, endocarditis, myocarditis, with many symptoms related to the heart and arrhythmias, experienced as palpitations and abnormalities of the pulse. See T.F. Allen's *Encyclopedia* and Hering's *Guiding Symptoms* for a full exposition of the symptoms of *Cactus grandiflorus*. Dudgeon, Vithoulkas and others relate clinical results from the prescription of this remedy. Below are two cases from my practice, not brilliant or forever-after cures, but illustrations of activity of the remedy.

### Case One

A 65 year-old woman who, the year before she came to see me in July of 2008, fell and fractured her T-12 vertebra, was in the hospital, developed pneumonia and then severe shortness of breath and was diagnosed as having interstitial lung disease requiring continuous oxygen therapy. She had been treated with prednisone (for 7 months) and Imuran (for 3 months) at the time of her first visit, and was frankly Cushingoid. Her most striking symptom was a feeling of chest constriction "like a barrel stave around my chest." She had had a chronic cough over the four years before seeing me, re-

curing cyclically, but with minimal dyspnea until her hospitalization. The only other symptoms supporting the prescription of *Cactus grandiflorus* were a desire to be alone and aggravation from consolation. She had an episode of atrial fibrillation the year before. Given the nature of her pathology and the clear similarity to the keynote symptom of the remedy, I started with it and prescribed five doses over a period of ten months. Each prescription was followed by a favorable general response of increased feeling of vitality and less requirement for oxygen during the day when at home and diminution of severity of her cough. Over the course of the first five weeks of treatment the symptom of chest constriction—which had been a major source of discomfort for her—totally resolved and has remained gone. She discontinued treatment after ten months, but acknowledged that she had experienced a 50% lasting improvement in her symptoms.

### Case Two

A 35 year-old man, diagnosed as having non-cardiac chest pain by his cardiologist, with chest pain extending to his left arm, restless lower limbs, sensitivity of his external throat to the touch of clothing; chilliness, pain in wrists extending to his fingers, irritability with himself and others, and feeling generally worse at 10-11 P.M. He described the sensation in his left arm as a constriction, as if squeezed by a cord around it. *Cactus grandiflorus* 200C was prescribed. In the ensuing 4-5 months he initially became more sad, in addressing the state of his unhappy marriage. His chest pain disappeared entirely and his overall vitality improved. In the midst of his sadness, he said, "It's as if I've been asleep and now I'm awake." He described his feelings as being more in his consciousness and less in his body. He and his wife subsequently divorced.

Night time is the time of the unconscious—personal and collective—and the autonomic nervous system (related to the heart and to all smooth muscle systems)

is likewise connected to the unconscious/involuntary parts of ourselves. It is the time we dream, and visit that other world that exists within and outside us. When we consider the vital nature of the heart, the blood and those internal systems not governed by voluntary control, and the effect that *Cactus grandiflorus* can have, symptoms agreeing, when such dramatic befallments occur, we can appreciate the symbolic meaning of a visit from the usually quiescent, rarely appearing Queen of the Night.

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*About the author: Dr. Nossaman graduated from the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1968; he served in the Indian Health Service 1969-1971 on the Navajo Reservation, Crownpoint, New Mexico. He has practiced homeopathic medicine since 1976 in Denver, Colorado. He is a past President of the National Center for Homeopathy, former board member and past President of the American Institute of Homeopathy, and has been a member of the Rhus Tox study group of Homeopatia Internationalis for over 20 years. Other interests include Jungian psychology, photography, watercolor, golf, pantomime and poetry. He has taught courses for beginners and more advanced prescribers, and has written numerous articles for various homeopathic journals.*     AŦH

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