Hallucinogenic Plants Encyclopedia Article

Hallucinogenic Plants

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Hallucinogenic Plants

Literally hundreds of hallucinogenic substances are found in many species of plants. For example, a variety of mushrooms contain indole-type HALLUCINOGENS, the most publicized being the Mexican or "magic" mushroom, *Psilocybe mexicana*, which contains both the hallucinogenic compounds PSILOCYBIN and psilocin, as do some of the other *Psilocybe* and *Conocybe* species. The PEYOTE cactus (*Lophophra williamsii* or *Anhalonium lewinii*), which is found in the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, contains MESCALINE. The seeds of the MORNING GLORY, *Ipomoea*, contain hallucinogenic LYSERGIC ACID derivatives, particularly lysergic acid amide. Many of these plants and plant by-products were and are used during religious ceremonies by Native Americans and other ethnic groups.

Some plant substances may contain prodrugs, that is to say, compounds that are chemically altered in the body to produce PSYCHOACTIVE substances. For example, NUTMEG contains elemicin and myristicin, whose structures have some similarities to the hallucinogen mescaline as well as the psychostimulant AMPHETAMINE. It has been hypothesized that elemicin and myristicin might be metabolized in the body to form amphetamine-and/or mescaline-like compounds, but this has not been proven. The fact that hallucinogenic substances are found in nature does not mean that they are safer or purer than compounds that have been synthesized in the laboratory. Some common edible mushrooms that can be purchased in any supermarket may be sprinkled with LSD or other hallucinogens to be misrepresented as magic mushrooms. In addition, serious problems—even death—may occur when species of hallucinogenic plants are misidentified and people mistakenly ingest highly toxic plants, such as poisonous mushrooms.

See Also

Ayahuasca; Ibogaine; Jimsonweed; Plants, Drugs From)

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