

History/Traditional Use

Kratom is a tropical evergreen tree native to parts of Southeast Asia, including Thailand. The plant has been used in this part of the world for centuries for medicinal and recreational purposes. People chew fresh leaves during the workday to alleviate fatigue (like coffee). It is also taken in higher doses as an intoxicant, especially by practicing Muslims, since it is not prohibited by their religion. At higher doses, kratom also functions as a natural painkiller. Other medicinal uses are as a local anesthetic, and a treatment for diarrhea, coughs, diabetes, intestinal worms, and heroin addiction.



Legality

In 2016, the DEA announced that it intended to list kratom alkaloids MG and 7-OH-MG as Schedule I controlled substances, making it a criminal offense to possess or distribute it. The backlash against the announcement by the public and Congress led to the DEA withdrawing their proposal. Currently, it is not federally illegal but it is up to each state to determine its legality. Kratom is banned in Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Rhode Island, Vermont and Wisconsin right now.



Plant of the Month

By Hava Waldstreicher, Alkemist Labs

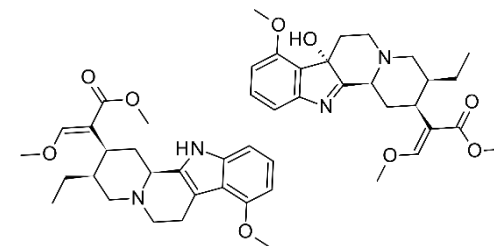


Dutch botanist, Korthals, named the genus *Mitragyna* because he thought the leaves and stigmas of the plants looked like a bishop's mitre.



Pharmacology

Mitragynine (MG) and 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH-MG) (pictured below, respectively) are the main psychoactive compounds found in kratom. They bind to opioid receptors in the brain which activates an analgesic effect. Naloxone, an opioid receptor antagonist, will block the effects of MG and 7-OH-MG. Tolerance to these substances can be built over time, but kratom withdrawal symptoms are relatively mild.



Cultivation/Preparation

People who live where kratom trees grow are able to chew the fresh leaves to feel its effects. Once picked though, the leaves must be processed since they quickly lose their potency. Dried kratom leaves sold in smoke shops or online probably originate from Indonesia, where it is not regulated. The dried leaves are typically made into a tea, with lemon juice added to facilitate extraction of the alkaloids. Low doses of less than 5 grams will have a stimulating effect. High doses of 10-25 grams will produce sedative and analgesic effects.

Kratom

Mitragyna speciosa



Kratom tea

References

1. Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa*) drug profile. European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction website. Available at: www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/drug-profiles/kratom.
2. Kratom Legality 2021: Map, Legal Status, and Ban Updates. Kraoma website. Available at: <https://kraoma.com/kratom-legality-united-states/>
3. The Kratom User's Guide. The *Salvia divinorum* Research and Information Center website. Available at: <http://www.sagewisdom.org/kratomguide.html>
4. Yearsley C. Kratom: Medicine or Menace in: *HerbalGram*. No 112. Austin, TX: The American Botanical Council; Nov 2016-Jan 2017. <http://herbalgram.org/resources/herbalgram/issues/112/table-of-contents/hg112-feat-kratom-med-men/>
5. Yearsley C. Kratom Crackdown: FDA Intensifies Warnings against the Southeast Asian Tree with Inconclusive Data in: *HerbalGram*. No 119. Austin, TX: The American Botanical Council; July-Sept 2018. <http://herbalgram.org/resources/herbalgram/issues/112/table-of-contents/hg112-feat-kratom-med-men/>
6. https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-06/Kratom-2020_0.pdf