

Stramonium for Extending the Anesthetic Duration of Nitrous Oxide



In 1676, English colonists observed the sedative and hallucinogenic effects of *Datura stramonium* on soldiers at Jamestown, Virginia, who had ingested what was later popularized as Jamestown Weed or Jimsonweed (*left*). Other nicknames followed based on this nightshade's night-blooming ("Moon Flower"), funnel-shaped flowers ("Hell's Bells" or "Devil's Trumpet"), each of which, once moth pollinated, are replaced by a spiny ovoid fruit ("Thornapple," "Pricklyburr," or "Devil's Cucumber"). Frustrated in the mid-1880s with nitrous oxide's brief anesthetic duration, some clinicians supplemented laughing gas anesthesia with herbal sedatives, such as *D. stramonium*. As enthusiasm waned for herbally supplemented nitrous oxide, physicians continued prescribing stramonium leaves (*right*)—a perilous anticholinergic slurry of scopolamine, hyoscyamine, and atropine—as an anodyne and an antispasmodic, especially for asthmatic patients. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists' Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., *Honorary Curator and Laureate of the History of Anesthesia, Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.*