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*Rauvolfia*

*Apocynaceae*

*Rauvolfia* commemorates a German physician and botanist, Leonhard Rauwolf (1535-1596) who travelled in the Middle East searching for new plants and noting local social, commercial and religious practices. In 1560 he studied under Guillaume Rondelet (1507-1566), the French physician and naturalist whose descriptions of marine animals (especially those of the Mediterranean) are said to have contributed significantly to zoological knowledge of his time. Rauwolf then established his Augsburg medical practice in 1565 and in 1573 set out on a three year tour in the Middle East which took him first to Constantinople, the following year to Baghdad and then in 1575 Jerusalem. Records of this tour were published in 1582 in *Aigentliche beschreibung der Raiss ... inn die Morgenländer*. As examples of the depth of content, authorities believe his descriptions include the first known printed reference in Europe to coffee (*Coffea*) and how that drink was made and consumed; while his observations on opium (*Papaver somniferum*) trading and consumption at that time among Turks, Persians and Moors included the comment *if they leave off somewhat taking it, so that then they feel physically ill* – one which experts note as an example of early recognition of withdrawal symptoms. Additionally he harvested a specimen of maize (*Zea*) in 1574 from the banks of the Euphrates and it is understood this can still be found in Leiden University's herbarium.

Authorities give a warning about the poisonous nature of all species in this genus.