

**PHCOG MAG.: NEWS COLUMN
AMERICAN BOTANICAL COUNCIL**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News Release

**Mistletoe - Long History of Folk
Medicine, Sealed with a Kiss**

**Modern Research Shows Potential
New Uses**

(Austin, TX. December 21, 2005)

The time-honored herb mistletoe, so prevalent in homes and offices during the winter holidays, has a history that goes back to ancient Druids in northern Europe as well as old Roman culture.

The Christmas tradition of hanging mistletoe for kisses dates back several thousand years to a time when boughs of mistletoe were hung to protect against evil spirits, and to promote fertility. Some of these ancient cultures considered the oak to be the most sacred of trees; the parasitic mistletoe often grew on this revered tree and was thus believed to have come directly from God.

Mistletoe was used as a folk medicine for female complaints, particularly menstrual problems, probably owing to its association in ancient fertility rites, although few modern researchers have investigated this traditional use. Various species of this parasitic plant were used during ancient Roman times for treating epilepsy and other neurological disorders. The Romans also used mistletoe as a remedy for tumors and cancers.

In Europe, modern mistletoe extracts are being investigated for their potential effects on the immune system and as potential adjunct therapies in the treatment of certain types of cancers. There is a growing body of scientific research that suggests potential benefits of various mistletoe preparations in these areas, but more research is needed and mistletoe has not been accepted by modern medicine for any clinical use.

An extensive article on the history, folklore, and modern medicinal research on mistletoe has just been published in *HerbalGram*, the quarterly journal of the nonprofit American Botanical Council (www.herbalgram.org/herbalgram).

The peer-reviewed article contains over 6000 words and is based on 73 references to the historical, scientific, and medical literature. Its author, Juanita Evans, is currently a student at the University of North Carolina School Of Medicine.

**About the American Botanical
Council**

Established in 1988, the American Botanical Council (ABC) is the leading nonprofit, member-based international organization working to educate consumers, healthcare professionals, researchers, educators, industry, and the media on the safe and effective use of herbs and medicinal plants products. ABC is located on a 2.5 acre site in Austin, Texas where it publishes *HerbalGram*, a peer-reviewed quarterly journal. ABC is also the publisher of *The ABC Clinical Guide to Herbs*, a continuing education and reference book, which contains extensive monographs on the safety and efficacy of 29 popular herbs. More information is available at <http://www.herbalgram.org/>.
