

Cytisus canariensis - Genista

- Leguminosae - Southern Europe, northern Africa, western Asia; Canary Islands, Mexico



GENISTA (*Cytisus canariensis*) is employed as an hallucinogen in the magic practices of Yaqui medicine men in northern Mexico. Native to the Canary Islands, the plant was introduced into Mexico. Rarely does any nonindigenous plant find its way into the religious and magic customs of a people. Known also by the scientific name *Genista canariensis*, this species is the "genista" of florists.

Plants of the genus *Cytisus* are rich in cytisine, an alkaloid of the lupine group. The alkaloid has never been pharmacologically demonstrated to have hallucinogenic activity, but it is known to be toxic and to cause nausea, convulsions, and death through failure of respiration.

About 80 species of *Cytisus*, belonging to the bean family, Leguminosae, are known in the Atlantic islands, Europe, and the Mediterranean area. Some species are highly ornamental; some are poisonous.