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**To: Western Suburbs Weekly**

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Khat trees in Nedlands Backyards**

A local Nedlands resident called the police when he'd finally had enough of people climbing over his fence into his property to rip the leaves from a tree in his garden. The tree is one of the now infamous Khat trees (pronounced Cot), native to Africa and used culturally by Horn of Africa communities. The trees are popular with people looking for the drug-like effect they get from chewing the leaves.

As the resident is a pensioner and unable to afford to have the tree removed, the police on his behalf contacted the Nedlands council for assistance. The City has arranged to have the tree removed at no cost to the resident.

The City and the police are working together to raise the community's awareness of these trees and of the devastating effect they can have on people's health.

The tree is a large shrub that can grow to a large tree; some sources say to 80 feet. In looks they have been likened to the Lilly Pilly in that they have berries, and some have confused them with Moreton Bay fig trees.

**Release ends**

CITY OF NEDLANDS

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Community Development Officer on 9273 3500.

## More information

### Websites:

<http://www.tga.gov.au/import/khatinfo.htm>

<http://www.herbsarespecial.com.au/free-herb-information/khat.html>

<http://www.home-remedies.info/herbal-medicines/khat.htm>

Our tree surgeon contractor forward the following information:

### **Khat (Catha edulis)**

#### **Khat Information**

**Khat (pronounced cot)** also spelled Qat or Kat, is a natural drug that comes from the *Celastrus edulis* plant. Because it contains ephedrine like compounds it is usually grouped into the stimulant category, with chemicals like Amphetamines.

Lewin (1931) gave a brief account of khat and how it was used. Apparently it was taken socially to produce excitation, banish sleep, and promote communication. It was used as a stimulant to dispel feelings of hunger and fatigue.

The natives of Ethiopia chewed young buds and fresh leaves of *Catha edulis* (also called *Celastrus edulis*). This is a large shrub which can grow to tree size.

It originated in Ethiopia and spread until its use covered Kenya, Nyasaland [now Malawi], Uganda, Tanganyika [now Tanzania], Arabia, the Congo, Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe and Zambia], and South Africa. The khat trees are grown interspersed between coffee trees.

**Khat was used in Yemen** even before coffee and it was immensely popular. Lewin described khat markets to which khat was brought in bundles of branches from the mountains.

Khat contains cathine (d-norisoephedrine), cathidine, and cathinine. Cathine is also one of the alkaloids found in *Ephedra vulgaris*. It is fortunate, perhaps, that khat is also very rich in ascorbic acid which is an excellent antidote to amphetamine-type compounds.

In animals, khat produces excitation and increased motor activity. In humans, it is a stimulant producing a feeling of exaltation, a feeling of being liberated from space and time. It may produce extreme loquacity, inane laughing, and eventually semicomatose. It may also be an euphoric and used chronically can lead to a form of delirium tremens.

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**Galkin and Mironychev** (1964) reported that up to 80% of the adult population of Yemen use khat. Upon first chewing khat, the initial effects were unpleasant and included dizziness, lassitude, tachycardia, and sometimes epigastric pain.

Gradually more pleasant feelings replaced these inaugural symptoms. The subjects had feelings of bliss, clarity of thought, and became euphoric and overly energetic.

Sometimes khat produced depression, sleepiness, and then deep sleep. The chronic user tended to be euphoric continually. In rare cases the subjects became aggressive and over excited.

Galkin and his colleague observed 51 subjects who had taken khat. Of these, 27 became excited, 18 became somnolent, and 6 remained unchanged.

The respiratory rate and pulse rate were accelerated and the blood pressure tended to rise. The subjects also had a decrease in the functional capacity of the cardiovascular system.

*---The above info came from Upenn African Studies*

## What Is Khat?

From: Lewin, L. (1931)

[Phantastica, Narcotic and Stimulating Drugs.](#)

(Translation of 1924, German edition.)

Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Author: Weir, Shelagh.

Title: Qat in Yemen: consumption and social change.

London: Published for the Trustees of the British Museum by British Museum Publications, c1985.

Call No. HV 5822 Q3 W34x 1985

Khat (pronounced cot) is a natural stimulant from the *Catha Edulis* plant, found in the flowering evergreen tree or large shrub which grows in East Africa and Southern Arabia. It reaches heights from 10 feet to 20 feet and its scrawny leaves resemble withered basil.

Fresh Khat leaves are crimson-brown and glossy but become yellow - green and leathery as they age. They also emit a strong smell.

The most favored part of the leaves are the young shoots near the top of the plant. However, leaves and stems at the middle and lower sections are also used.

**Khat leaves** contain psychoactive ingredients known as cathinone, which is structurally and chemically similar to d-amphetamine, and cathine, a milder form of cathinone.

Fresh leaves contain both ingredients ; those left unrefrigerated beyond 48 hours would contain only cathine, which explains users preference for fresh leaves.

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Other names by which Khat is known include: Qat, Kat, Chat, Kus-es-Salahin, Mirra, Tohai, Tschat, Catha, Quat, Abyssinian Tea, African Tea, and African Salad.



Picture Of A Bundle Of Khat

## Effects Of Khat

Fresh Khat leaves, which are typically chewed like tobacco, produce a mild cocaine or amphetamine-like euphoria that is much less potent than either substance with no reports of a rush sensation or paranoia indicated.

By filling the mouth to capacity with fresh leaves the user then chews intermittently to release the active components. Chewing Khat leaves produces a strong aroma and generates intense thirst.

Casual users claim Khat lifts spirits, sharpens thinking, and, when its effects wear off, generates mild lapses of depression similar to those observed among cocaine users.

Since there appears to be an absence of physical tolerance, due in part to limitations in how much can be ingested by chewing, there are no reports of physical symptoms accompanying withdrawal.

Advocates of Khat use claim that it eases symptoms of diabetes, asthma, and stomach/intestinal tract disorders, Opponents claim that Khat damages health, suppresses appetite, and prevents sleep.

## Traditional Users Of Khat

Khat has been used since antiquity as a recreational and religious drug by natives of Eastern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and throughout the Middle East.

In the US, Khat use is most popular among immigrants from Yemen and the East African nations of Somalia and Ethiopia.

Traditionally, in those societies that have not evolved cultural or support systems to integrate Khat use into the social fabric, the decreased productivity and diversion of income attributed to its use in a socio-historical context, use is an accepted practice, occurring in environments that give positive reinforcement and meaning to the experience.

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## **Packaging**

Khat is usually packaged in plastic bags or wrapped in banana leaves to retain its moistness and freshness.

It is often sprinkled with water during transport to keep the leaves moist. Khat also may be sold as dried or crushed leaves or in powdered form.

Because Khat in leaf form starts to lose its potency after 48 hours, it is generally shipped to the US on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays for weekend use.

## **Legal Status (2000)**

Until very recently, Khat was classified as a schedule IV substance by the DEA. Cathinone, an ingredient present only in fresh-picked leaves, (within 48 hours of harvest) has now been classified as a schedule I narcotic, the most restrictive category used by the DEA.

Cathine, an ingredient that remains in Khat after 48 hours, is still classified as a schedule IV substance (one that has low potential for abuse and has a current accepted usage in treatment). Law enforcement efforts directed against Khat in the US have been minimal thus far.

There is some doubt as to whether khat will become a popular street drug in this country like crack and other drugs.

However, illegal labs have been discovered using a synthetic form or Khat's most active ingredient (cathinone) which is called Methcathinone, known on the street as Cat.

## **Street Observations**

From the perspective of street users, Khat is not considered to be a street drug with a desirability comparable to heroin, cocaine, crack, marijuana, or pills.

Media attention given to Khat is probably bringing about an interest in its use, and street addicts have been observed by the OASAS Street Studies Unit seeking to purchase Khat.

However, street addicts and other non-African/Arab seekers of khat are being turned away by sellers.

Discreet inquiries by field staff of African/Arab sellers of Khat indicate they are not selling it as a drug and therefore do not seek outsiders who would bring additional attention to them.

Researchers have not observed street sales of Khat. However, a member of the Street Studies Unit was told by an Arab Teenager, standing in close proximity to an Arab restaurant, that he was waiting to buy a bundle of Khat for \$28 when the shipment arrived after five.

Street researchers have been informed that Khat is being sold for \$300-\$400 a kilo, with a bundle of leaves selling for \$28-\$50.

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From the standpoint of their cultural norms, the African/Arab sellers and users observed by the OASAS Street Studies Unit do not consider Khat to be illegal and often openly advertise its availability on signs in restaurants and grocery stores much as they would any other food product.

## **Treatment For Khat Dependence**

Khat is a sympathomimetic and its pharmacological effects are believed to parallel those of amphetamine. Psychiatric manifestations induced by Khat are similar to the effects of other known stimulants.

Giannini Miller, and Turner (1992) described a recent, successful attempt to treat 2 cases of Khat dependency using protocols similar to those developed for cocaine.

Both patients presented for treatment with psychiatric manifestations and were screened for stimulant and depressant drug addiction since substances other than Khat were involved in each case.

Specific procedures for treatment entailed an inpatient detox phase of 1-2 weeks followed by long-term attendance at outpatient recovery programs.

Successful inpatient detox was facilitated with the use of bromocriptine (ranging in dose from 0.625 mg. qid in one case to 1.25 mg. qid in the second case, and tapered off over a period of 5-12 days.)

Continued craving for stimulants by one patient resulted in the use of desipramine (200 mg. a day) for up to 6 months post-detox with dose levels gradually tapered downward.

Previous attempts to treat Khat-induced psychosis have employed thioridazine (300 mg. a day) for 1 week without reoccurrence symptoms.

The above was published 2/93 by OASAS.

I have noticed an increase in use of Khat in the upstate NY area This is probably due to the return of the drug from Somalia. Military personal that have returned to the Fort Drum and Surrounding areas were introduced to Khat and seek to continue the use of it.

From: Ben.Parker@unep.no

Subject: Everything you ever wanted to know about Qat - Hornet

Date: Mon, 13 Feb 95 08:38:54 GMT

Message-Id: [9502130838.3633C4@extern02.unep.no]

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## **Books**

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**Eating the Flowers of Paradise:  
A Journey Through the Drug Fields  
of Ethiopia and Yemen**

Kevin Rushby set out to travel the old Qat Road from the highlands of Ethiopia to Yemen. It was to prove a fascinating and dangerous journey.

His travels are not just in pursuit of the history and culture of qat, for he quickly learns that the pleasure of the plant is in the companionship of using it.

--Kirkus Reviews

[Eating the Flowers \(softcover\)](#)

[Eating the Flowers \(hardcover\)](#)

**Phantastica:  
A Classic Survey on the Use  
and Abuse of Mind-Altering Plants**

Long out of print, this is a landmark study on narcotic and psychedelic substances by a world-renowned pharmacologist and toxicologist. The first book to bring non-judgmental scientific insights to the use of drugs around the world.

Provides detailed information on all major drugs of the time, including qat, opium, cocaine, heroin, cannabis, peyote, fly agaric, henbane, datura, alcohol, kava, betel, coffee, tea, cocoa, and tobacco. A book credited with starting an era of ethnobotany.

[Phantastica](#)

**The Flower of Paradise:  
The Institutionalized Use of  
the Drug Qat in North Yemen**

The book explores the centuries old ritual of using Qat in North Yemen. Interesting and informative, it gives the reader a glimpse into a society that most are not aware of.

[The Flower of Paradise \(softcover\)](#)

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