Indian Pipe/Corpse Plant in Three Varieties

A friend and I noticed there was a strange flower growing on our lot that at a distance appeared to be some form of mushroom. Upon closer examination, we found that it was a clump of white stemmed, white leafed, white flowers. We decided to look up the plant and soon discovered it was Monotropa uniflora, commonly called Indian Pipe or Corpse Plant. Since we were fairly bored that afternoon, we decided to discover if it had any medicinal (or recreational) value. I researched the plant on the internet extensively and discovered that there is little known about its properties, but it has been used by American Indians as a folk medicine for quite a long time. Its primary uses were as an eye lubricant (for all you natural stoners out there), a calming agent, and a replacement for opiates. We decided to discover for ourselves.

We prepared the plant in three ways. First, we put the stems, flowers, and cleaned root clusters in a pot on the stove and warmed the water for \( \sim 1 \) hour to make a tincture. The plants rapidly became a dark blue, and made the water a very dark shade of purple. We strained the purple concoction, and set it aside to cool, discarded the stems and flowers, and left the roots to dry in the sun.

We proceeded to dip two cigs in the tincture (one for each of us), and poured a few glasses of the purple liquid. The liquid was not very strong, and tasted slightly like dirt and slightly like sweet asparagus. It went down the smoothest when it was still warm. After a glass of the purple concoction, we each felt a noticeable calming effect, not unlike a very mild benzo. After three glasses each, we noticed that we each felt pleasantly sleepy, slightly loopy, and our sense of touch and pain had been noticeably diminished. There were no apparent negative side effects from drinking that quantity of the tincture. The effect is slightly hard to describe, as it’s very subtle, yet it planted our asses on the couch for several hours.

The next morning we rolled a spliff from the dried root material and the remnants of a half smoked cig. The roots did not burn particularly well, but we each noticed a pointed feeling of relaxation and sedation that lasted about an hour. The roots simply wouldn’t burn, and constantly relighting them was annoying.

Two hours later we smoked the cigs that had been dipped and dried. Mid way through the cig,
an intense body relaxation came over each of us. It was as though we had each taken a benzo or a mild opiate. We were each (and still are) high an hour later. The high is hard to describe. Our joints feel very lose, especially those in the head and neck area. There is a slight sense of unreality, although it certainly isn’t “heady” in any way. There is no pleasant opiate high besides a feeling of complete and utter relaxation. It does seem that time has slowed, and sight and feeling are noticeably dulled.

If we were to repeat the experience, I would do two things differently. First, I would allow the tincture to evaporate until it became less watery, and therefore more potent, and second I would only dip cigs as they had the most drastic effects of the three methods.

I wouldn’t seek out the experience, but it was pleasant considering the plants were growing nearby. The plant is difficult to find as it has no chlorophyll, and is hauntingly beautiful.