

STRUCTURE AND TOTAL SYNTHESIS OF (-)-MALACITANINE.  
AN UNUSUAL PROTOBERBERINE ALKALOID FROM *CERATOCAPNOS HETEROCARPA*

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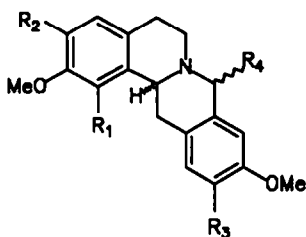
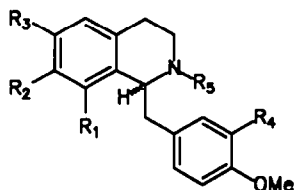
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**Abstract:** The examination of the alkaloids present in *Ceratocarpus heterocarpus* (Papaveraceae) had led to the isolation of the new protoberberine alkaloid, (-)-malacitanine. Characteristic structural features for this alkaloid are the 1,2,10,11-substitution pattern and the hydroxymethyl group at C-8. The synthesis of (±)-malacitanine and its C-8 epimer from the benzyloisoquinoline (±)-norcrassifoline has been developed. Spectroscopic data (pmr, cmr and ir) for several C-8 substituted protoberberine alkaloids are reported in connexion with the quinolizidine conformation.

Substitution at positions 2 and 3 of the protoberberine skeleton is a common feature among those alkaloids derived from the benzyloisoquinoline, reticuline (1).<sup>1</sup> Among the Papaveraceae a less common biosynthetic pathway has been postulated, starting from the benzyloisoquinoline crassifoline (2).<sup>2,3</sup> This pathway leads to a particular type of protoberberine alkaloids which are recognized by 1,2 substitution and are related to the cularine class of isoquinoline alkaloids.<sup>4</sup>

In our search for a suitable plant for studies of biosynthesis of crassifoline-derived alkaloids we examined *Ceratocarpus heterocarpus* (Papaveraceae) because it is the first plant known to contain both cularine and protoberberine alkaloids.<sup>5,6</sup> In the present paper we describe the isolation and structural determination of (-)-malacitanine (3), the first tetrahydroprotoberberine alkaloid to contain a hydroxymethyl substituent at C-8.<sup>7</sup> The total synthesis of racemic 3 and its C-8 epimer (13) is also reported.

Analysis of amorphous (-)-malacitanine (3), indicated a molecular formula of C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>23</sub>NO<sub>5</sub> in agreement with the molecular ion at m/z 358 (MH<sup>+</sup>) observed by CIMS. The UV spectrum showed an absorption band at 284 nm that was red shifted at basic pH. The pmr of 3 contained signals for two methoxyls groups, two para and two ortho orientated aromatic protons, as well as a low field aliphatic proton in an AMX system. These data and the absence of a N-Me group suggested that 3 comprised a tetrahydroprotoberberine skeleton with a 1,2,10,11-substitution pattern.<sup>8</sup> The methoxyl groups were deduced to be located at C-2 and C-10 by their observed coupling

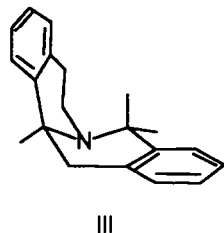
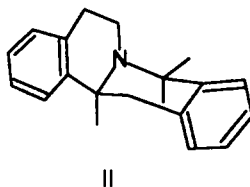
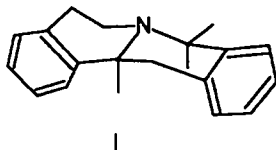


- 1  $R_1 = H$   $R_2 = R_4 = OH$   $R_3 = OMe$   $R_5 = Me$   
 2  $R_1 = R_4 = OH$   $R_2 = OMe$   $R_3 = H$   $R_5 = Me$   
 8  $R_1 = R_5 = H$   $R_2 = R_3 = R_4 = OMe$   
 14  $R_1 = R_4 = OH$   $R_2 = OMe$   $R_3 = R_5 = H$

	$R_1$	$R_2$	$R_3$	$R_4$
3	OH	H	OH	$\text{---CH}_2\text{OH}$
4	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---Me}$
5	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---Me}$
6	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---CH}_2\text{OH}$
7	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---CH}_2\text{OH}$
9	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---CO}_2\text{H}$
10	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---CO}_2\text{H}$
11	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---CO}_2\text{Me}$
12	H	OMe	OMe	$\text{---CO}_2\text{Me}$
13	OH	H	OH	$\text{---CH}_2\text{OH}$

with their *ortho* aromatic protons (2D-COSY). The cmr spectrum showed resonances for 20 carbon atoms, in agreement with the molecular composition. The presence of two aliphatic methines and one low field methylene indicated a hydroxymethyl group as a substituent on the quinolizidine nucleus. Confirmation of the substituent and its attachment at C-8 was deduced by EIMS. No molecular ion was recorded and the expected retro Diels Alder fragmentation pattern characteristic of tetrahydroprotoberberines<sup>9</sup> (usually the base peak) was scarcely observed ( $m/z$  178, 7%). Instead, the easy loss of the substituent ( $M^+ - 31$ , 100%) and the stability of the fragment ( $m/z$  326, 1392,  $C_{19}H_{20}NO_4$ ) strongly suggested its bonding with a benzylic carbon  $\alpha$  to the nitrogen. Substitution at C-14 was excluded in view of the absence of quaternary aliphatic carbon atoms. The relative stereochemistry between C-8 and C-14 and the conformation of the quinolizidine nucleus were the next structural features to be established.

Several naturally occurring and synthetic 8-methyl protoberberines are known; all of them have a 2,3-oxygenation pattern at ring-A.<sup>10,11</sup> Assuming a half-chair conformation for rings B and C in solution, they may exist as an equilibrium mixture of the one B/C *trans*-quinolizidine (I) and two B/C *cis*-quinolizidine (II and III) conformers.<sup>12,13</sup>



In coralydine (**4**), the C-8 methyl group *trans* to the C-14 hydrogen ( $\beta$ -Me) and the *trans*-quinolizidine conformation (I) are associated with a high field H-8 and H-14 (pmr), and a low field C-14 (cmr) together with Bohlmann bands (Table 1). In contrast, the analogous signals of its diastereoisomer, O-methylcorytenchirine (**5**) ( $\alpha$ -Me), indicates a *cis*-quinolizidine conformation (II).<sup>11,14</sup>

Table 1. Relevant spectroscopic data for 8-substituted tetrahydroprotoberberines

	<sup>13</sup> C-NMR					<sup>1</sup> H-NMR		IR	
	C-5	C-6	C-8	C-13	C-14	H-14	J <sub>13a,14</sub>	J <sub>13e,14</sub>	Bohlman bands
<b>3</b>	26.5	45.9	66.2	29.2	45.7	4.51	11.4	4.8	absent
<b>5</b>	29.2*	46.8*	58.8*	35.3*	50.0*	4.24	11.0	4.2	absent
<b>6</b>	28.8	46.2	66.4	31.0	50.4	4.21	11.5	4.9	absent
<b>11</b>	29.3	47.7	66.3	36.1	51.7	4.83	11.1	3.9	absent
<b>13</b>	30.0	42.7	63.7	32.7	55.7	4.20	10.0	3.6	weak
<b>4</b>	29.1*	46.7*	58.9*	36.0*	58.6*	3.71	11.9	3.0	2810, 2754
<b>7</b>	29.7	48.3	65.2	36.4	58.5	3.84	10.9	3.0	2800, 2760
<b>12</b>	29.1	50.4	70.8	36.5	58.1	3.68	11.2	3.1	2820, 2760

\* data from ref. 23.

Comparison of pmr and cmr data for **4**, **5** and (-)-malacitanine (**3**) revealed larger differences than expected (see Table 1), which may be due to the hydroxymethyl group at C-8 and the phenolic hydroxyl at C-1.

In order to evaluate the effect of the hydroxymethyl group on the ir, pmr and cmr spectra, the related hydroxymethyl derivatives **6** and **7** were synthesized from ( $\pm$ )-norlaudanosine (**8**), following the Mannich approach.<sup>15</sup> In our hands, the more direct route, condensation of **8** with glycolaldehyde required severe reaction conditions and yields were poor. Much better results were obtained in the reaction of **8** with glyoxylic acid to give a mixture 7:3 of acids **9** and **10** (80%) that were then esterified with diazomethane. The methyl esters **11** and **12** were separated by fractional crystallization and each ester reduced to the corresponding alcohol with lithium aluminium hydride. Spectroscopic data for the ester **12** and the alcohol **7** showed a good correlation with those reported for coralydine (**4**). Consequently a  $\beta$ -configuration for the substituent and a B/C *trans* quinolizidine conformation was assigned. Analogous consideration led us to establish for **11** and **6** the  $\alpha$ -configuration at C-8

and a B/C *cis*-quinolizidine conformation (II). The higher field for C-13 in alcohol **6** as compared to O-methylcorytenchirine (**5**) can be attributed to the larger volume of the substituent. Thus, the spectroscopic differences observed between (-)-malacitanine (**3**) and the two epimeric alcohols **6** and **7** must be due to the C-1 substituent.

The effect of substitution at C-1 is well documented and its interaction with C-13 tends to favour the *cis*-II form in the conformational equilibrium with the *trans*-I form. Consequently the Bohlmann bands are weaker or absent<sup>16</sup>, the chemical shift of C-6, C-13 and C-14 moves to high field (cmr)<sup>17</sup>, while the H-14 is deshielded (pmr).<sup>12</sup>

Taking these arguments into consideration seemed likely that (-)-malacitanine would have a  $\alpha$ -hydroxymethyl group in a B/C *cis*-fused protoberberine conformation. To strengthen this conclusion the total synthesis of ( $\pm$ )-malacitanine (**3**) and its epimer **13** was undertaken. ( $\pm$ )-Norcrassifoline (**14**) was prepared by the Reissert approach according to the procedure previously described.<sup>5</sup> As expected, the phenolic activation at the cyclization step allowed a straightforward route. Condensation of **14** with glycolaldehyde under mild conditions gave an excellent yield (94%) of two epimeric alcohols in a 3:2 ratio.<sup>18</sup> The major product was shown to be identical with **3**.

Spectroscopic data for the minor alcohol, epimalacitanine (**13**) agree with a  $\beta$ -CH<sub>2</sub>OH, existing in solution as an equilibrium mixture of the *cis*-(II) and the *trans*-(I) quinolizidine conformations, as suggested by the upfield displacement noted for C-6 due to  $\gamma$ -gauche interactions.

By analogy with related systems<sup>19</sup>, the high field C-5 (cmr) displacement indicates that (-)-malacitanine has the  $\alpha$ -CH<sub>2</sub>OH configuration, in a *cis*-(II)-conformation in equilibrium with the *cis*-(III) conformation.

It is well established that levorotation in protoberberine alkaloids is related to the S configuration at C-14.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, many examples indicate that a second chiral centre does not change the sign of the optical rotation.<sup>10,11b,20,21,22</sup> On these grounds the (8S,14S)- absolute configuration is proposed for (-)-malacitanine (**3**).

From what is known of the biosynthesis of other protoberberines<sup>1</sup>, it is likely that the biosynthesis of (-)-malacitanine is from a 7,8-substituted benzyloquinoline like (S)-norcrassifoline, with the introduction of two carbon atoms on the nitrogen before the cyclization step. This possibility is now being investigated in our laboratory.

## EXPERIMENTAL

All mp's are uncorrected. IR spectra were recorded in chloroform solution with a Perkin-Elmer 883 spectrometer. UV spectra were recorded with a HP-5482A spectrophotometer. Optical rotations were measured at 18-20°C with a Perkin-Elmer mod. 241 polarimeter. Low resolution mass spectra in the electron impact (EIMS) or chemical ionization (CIMS) modes were recorded with a HP-5988; high resolution spectra were obtained with a Kratos MS 50 apparatus. <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C-NMR spectra were recorded using a Bruker WP 200 SY spectrometer. Proton chemical shifts are referenced to the residual chloroform signal ( $\delta$  7.24) and carbon chemical shifts to the solvent (<sup>13</sup>CDCl<sub>3</sub> = 77ppm). The multiplicity of <sup>13</sup>C resonances was determined by INEPT experiments. The 2D NMR and NOE data were analysed using Bruker's microprograms. TLC were performed on silicagel 60 F 254 plates and column chromatography was carried out on silicagel 60 (70-230 mesh).

### (-)-Malacitanine (**3**)

The air-dried and powdered plant (3 Kg) was extracted with hot MeOH. Acid-base fractionation of the

extract gave a crude alkaloid fraction (33.7 g), that was dissolved in  $\text{CHCl}_3$ -MeOH. The soluble portion (27.2 g) was separated by column chromatography (silicagel) and the fraction eluted with  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ -EtOAc 1:5, was further purified by preparative TLC to give (–)-malacitanine (45 mg). Amorphous powder, mp 116–118°C;  $[\alpha]_D^{25}$  -87.3° (c 0.05, MeOH); UV  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  nm MeOH (log  $\epsilon$ ): 206 (4.80), 226sh (4.18), 284 (3.76); +NaOH: 208 (5.05), 242sh (4.12), 288 (3.93); IR  $\nu_{\text{max}}$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  ( $\text{CHCl}_3$ ): 3546 (O-H); CIMS ( $\text{CH}_4$ ) m/z: 358  $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$ ; EIMS m/z (rel.int.): 326.1392  $[\text{M}-31]^+$  (100) (calc. for  $\text{C}_{19}\text{H}_{20}\text{NO}_4$ : 326.13922), 310 (20), 178 (7);  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  ppm: 6.73 (d, 1H, J = 8.5 Hz, H-3), 6.63 (d, 1H, J = 8.5 Hz, H-4), 6.61 (s, 1H, H-9), 6.54 (s, 1H, H-12), 4.51 (dd, 1H, J = 4.8 and 11.4 Hz, H-14), 3.84 (s, 6H, 2xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.77–3.58 (m, 3H, H-8 and CH<sub>2</sub>O), 2.98 (dd, 1H, J = 4.8 and 17 Hz, H-13eq), 2.74 (dd, 1H, J = 11.4 and 17 Hz, H-13ax), 3.26–2.67 (m, 4H, CH<sub>2</sub>-CH<sub>2</sub>);  $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  ppm: 145.3, 144.6, 144.2, 141.8 (C-1, C-2, C-10, C-11), 127.1, 126.9, 125.3, 124.4 (C-4a, C-8a, C-12a, C-14a), 119.7, 114.5, 109.4, 109.1 (C-3, C-4, C-9, C-12), 66.2 (C-8), 63.5 (CH<sub>2</sub>OH), 56.2, 56.0 (2xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 45.9 (C-6), 45.7 (C-14), 29.2 (C-13), 26.5 (C-5); Anal. calc. for  $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{23}\text{NO}_5$ : C, 67.21; H, 6.49; N, 3.92. Found: C, 67.34; H, 6.47; N, 3.71.

### Synthesis of (±)-9 and (±)-10

The hydrochloride of (±)-norlaudanose (8, 3.79 g, 0.01 mol) and 40% glyoxylic acid (35 ml, 0.2 mol) were refluxed for 1 h. The reaction mixture was diluted with water, extracted with  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  and dried over  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ . Solvent elimination afforded a solid residue (2.7 g, 80%) consisting of a mixture of acid 9 and acid 10 in the ratio 7:3 ( $^1\text{H-NMR}$ ). The two products appeared to be inseparable by preparative TLC and flash chromatography.

**Acid (±)-9:**  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  ppm: 7.05, 6.56, 6.52, 6.48 (four s, 4H, aromatic protons), 5.20 (m, 1H, H-14), 4.82 (br s, 1H, H-8);  $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  ppm: 171.0 (C=O), 66.7 (C-8), 53.0 (C-14), 45.9 (C-6), 32.7 (C-13), 26.4 (C-5).

**Acid (±)-10:**  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  ppm: 7.12, 6.70, 6.62, 6.52 (four s, 4H, aromatic protons), 4.58 (br s, 1H, H-8), 4.17 (m, 1H, H-14);  $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  ppm: 170.8 (C=O), 70.6 (C-8), 58.3 (C-14), 51.0 (C-6), 34.4 (C-13), 27.6 (C-5).

### Synthesis of (±)-11 and (±)-12

The mixture of acids 9 and 10 (1.3 g) dissolved in methanol was treated with excess of an ethereal solution of diazomethane to give a quantitative yield of methyl esters 11 and 12. Anal. calc. for  $\text{C}_{23}\text{H}_{27}\text{NO}_6$ : C, 66.81; H, 6.53; N, 3.39. Found: C, 66.95; H, 6.69; N, 3.38. The isomers were separated by repeated crystallization from MeOH-ether.

**Ester (±)-11:** Pale yellowish crystals, mp 108°C (MeOH+ether); UV  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  nm MeOH (log  $\epsilon$ ): 206 (4.86), 228sh (4.30), 282 (4.24); IR  $\nu_{\text{max}}$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  ( $\text{CHCl}_3$ ): 1729 (C=O); EIMS m/z (rel.int.): 413 ( $\text{M}^+$ , 0.4), 354 ( $\text{M}^+-59$ , 100);  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  (ppm): 6.75 (s, 1H, H-9), 6.69 (s, 1H, H-1), 6.64 (s, 1H, H-12), 6.59 (s, 1H, H-4), 4.83 (dd, 1H, J = 3.9 and 11.1 Hz, H-14), 4.71 (s, 1H, H-8), 3.86, 3.85, 3.84, 3.83 (4s, 3H each, 4xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.71 (s, 3H, COOCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.16 (dd, 1H, J = 3.9 and 16 Hz, H-13eq), 2.78 (dd, 1H, J = 11.1 and 16 Hz, H-13ax), 3.2–2.7 (m, 4H);  $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  (ppm): 172.3 (CO), 148.8, 147.7, 147.6 (C-2, C-3, C-10 and C-11), 129.9, 127.1, 126.2, 122.9 (C-4a, C-8a, C-12a and C-14a), 111.6, 109.8, 109.2 (C-1, C-4, C-9 and C-12), 66.3 (C-8), 56.1, 55.9 (4xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 52.1 (COOCH<sub>3</sub>), 51.7 (C-14), 47.7 (C-6), 36.1 (C-13), 29.3 (C-5).

**Ester (±)-12:** Yellowish crystals, mp 166°C (MeOH+ether); UV  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  nm MeOH (log  $\epsilon$ ): 206 (4.24), 230sh (3.65), 286 (3.36); IR  $\nu_{\text{max}}$   $\text{cm}^{-1}$  ( $\text{CHCl}_3$ ): 2820 and 2760 (Bolhmann bands), 1727 (C=O); EIMS m/z (rel.int.): 413 ( $\text{M}^+$ , 0.2), 354 ( $\text{M}^+-59$ , 100);  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  (ppm): 6.72 (s, 1H, H-1), 6.67 (s, 2H, H-9 and H-12), 6.58

(s, 1H, H-4), 4.41 (s, 1H, H-8), 3.86, 3.85, 3.84, 3.80 and 3.79 (5s, 3H each, 4xOCH<sub>3</sub>+COOCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.68 (dd, 1H, J= 3.1 and 11.2 Hz, H-14), 3.19 (dd, 1H, J= 3.1 and 15.5 Hz, H-13eq), 3.00 (dd, 1H, J= 11.2 and 15.5 Hz, H-13ax), 3.24-2.57 (m, 4H); <sup>13</sup>C-NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 173.4 (C=O), 148.5, 147.9, 147.8, 147.6 (C-2, C-3, C-10 and C-11), 129.0, 127.3, 126.9, 123.2 (C-4a, C-8a, C-12a and C-14a), 111.7, 111.4, 108.7, 108.3 (C-1, C-4, C-9 and C-12), 70.8 (C-8), 58.1 (C-14), 56.1, 56.0, 55.9 (4xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 52.6 (COOCH<sub>3</sub>), 50.4 (C-6), 36.5 (C-13), 29.1 (C-5).

#### Synthesis of (±)-6

A solution of ester **11** (413 mg, 1 mmol) in dried THF (20 ml) was added to a stirred solution of lithium aluminium hydride (3 mmol) in THF (25 ml) at room temperature. After 4h the reaction was quenched by the addition of water (0.2 ml), 15% KOH (0.2 ml) and water (0.6 ml). The solid was filtered and washed with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The combined filtrates were dried (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>), and the solvent evaporated. Alcohol **6** (72%), was obtained as pale yellowish crystals, mp 92°C (MeOH); UV λ<sub>max</sub> nm MeOH (log ε): 206 (4.88), 228sh (4.32), 286 (3.96). IR ν<sub>max</sub> cm<sup>-1</sup> (CHCl<sub>3</sub>): 3440 (O-H); EIMS m/z (rel.int.): 354 (M<sup>+</sup>-31, 100); <sup>1</sup>H-NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 6.63 (s, 1H, H-4), 6.58 (s, 2H, H-1 and H-9), 6.55 (s, 1H, H-12), 4.21 (dd, 1H, J= 11.5 and 4.9 Hz, H-14), 3.85 (s, 9H, 3xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.83 (dd, 1H, J= 10.8 and 5.0 Hz, H-8), 3.82 (s, 3H, OCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.68 (dd, 1H, J= 10.8 and 5.0 Hz, CH<sub>2</sub>O), 3.54 (t, 1H, J= 10.8 Hz, CH<sub>2</sub>O), 2.98 (dd, 1H, J= 11.5 y 17.0 Hz, H-13ax), 2.70 (dd, 1H, J= 4.9 and 17.0 Hz, H-13eq), 3.35-2.6 (m, 4H, CH<sub>2</sub>-CH<sub>2</sub>); <sup>13</sup>C-NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 148.4, 148.2, 148.1, 147.6 (C-2, C-3, C-10 and C-11), 129.7, 125.1, 124.4 (C-4a, C-8a, C-12a and C-14a), 111.9, 111.5, 109.8 (C-1, C-4, C-9 and C-12), 66.4 (C-8), 63.7 (CH<sub>2</sub>OH), 56.1, 55.9 (4xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 50.4 (C-14), 46.2 (C-6), 31.0 (C-13), 28.8 (C-5).

Anal. calc. for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>27</sub>NO<sub>5</sub>: C, 68.55; H, 7.06; N, 3.63. Found: C, 68.56; H, 7.20; N, 3.57.

#### Synthesis of (±)-7

Alcohol **7** was prepared from **12** using the procedure described above. Amorphous powder, mp 80°C. UV λ<sub>max</sub> nm MeOH (log ε): 206 (4.85), 228sh (4.35), 286 (4.07). IR ν<sub>max</sub> cm<sup>-1</sup> (CHCl<sub>3</sub>): 3450 (O-H), 2800 and 2760 (Bolhmann bands). EIMS m/z (rel.int.): 354 (M<sup>+</sup>-31, 100). <sup>1</sup>H-NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 6.77 (s, 1H), 6.67 (s, 1H, H-12), 6.64 (s, 1H), 6.62 (s, 1H), 4.13 (dd, 1H, J= 3.0 y 10.6 Hz, CH<sub>2</sub>O), 3.88, 3.86, 3.85, 3.84 (4s, 3H each, 4xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.84 (m, 1H, J= 3.0 y 10.9 Hz, H-14), 3.83 (m, 1H, H-8), 3.79 (m, 1H, CH<sub>2</sub>O), 3.45-3.38 (m, 1H, H-6), 3.16 (dd, 1H, J= 3.0 y 15.3 Hz, H-13eq), 3.10 (m, 1H), 2.84 (dd, 1H, J= 10.9 y 15.3 Hz, H-13ax), 2.75-2.60 (m, 2H); <sup>13</sup>C-NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ (ppm): 148.2-147.7 (C-2, C-3, C-10 and C-11), 129.3, 128.2, 126.8, 126.7 (C-4a, C-8a, C-12a and C-14a), 111.6, 111.4, 109.4, 109.1 (C-1, C-4, C-9 and C-12), 65.2 (C-8), 64.2 (CH<sub>2</sub>OH), 58.5 (C-14), 56.2-55.9 (4xOCH<sub>3</sub>), 48.3 (C-6), 36.4 (C-13), 29.7 (C-5).

Anal. calc. for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>27</sub>NO<sub>5</sub>·½H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 66.93; H, 7.15; N, 3.55. Found: C, 66.70; H, 6.90; N, 3.48.

#### Synthesis of (±)-malacitanine (3) and (±)-13

A mixture of norcrassifoline<sup>5</sup> (200 mg), glycolaldehyde (600 mg) and 2.5M HCl (16 ml), was stirred at 60 °C under argon, for 2 hours. The mixture was then basified (NH<sub>4</sub>OH), extracted with CHCl<sub>3</sub> and dried (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>). Solvent evaporation afforded a solid residue (213 mg, 94%) consisting of a mixture of the two alcohols **3** and **13** in the ratio 3:2 (<sup>1</sup>H-NMR), which were separated by preparative TLC (CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>-MeOH, 20:1). The major isomer (faster moving on TLC) was identified as (±)-malacitanine (**3**). The minor isomer (±)-epimalacitanine (**13**). Yellowish amorphous powder mp 114°C. UV λ<sub>max</sub> nm MeOH (log ε): 206 (4.75), 228sh (4.06), 286 (3.56). IR ν<sub>max</sub> cm<sup>-1</sup> (CHCl<sub>3</sub>): 3544 (O-H), 2818 and 2760 (Bolhmann bands). EIMS m/e (%): 326 (M<sup>+</sup>-31, 100). <sup>1</sup>H-NMR

(CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  (ppm): 6.73 (d, 1H, J = 8.3 Hz, H-3), 6.65 (s, 1H, H-12), 6.63 (d, 1H, J = 8.3 Hz, H-4), 6.59 (s, 1H, H-9), 4.24 (dd, 1H, J = 3.8 and 10.5 Hz, CH<sub>2</sub>O), 4.20 (dd, 1H, J = 3.6 and 10 Hz, H-14), 4.08 (dd, 1H, J = 3.8 and 4.1 Hz, H-8), 3.83 (dd, 1H, J = 4.1 and 10.5 Hz, CH<sub>2</sub>O), 3.86 (s, 3H, OCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.85 (s, 3H, OCH<sub>3</sub>), 3.60 (dd, 1H, J = 3.6 and 16 Hz, H-13eq), 2.67 (dd, 1H, J = 10 and 16 Hz, H-13ax), 3.20-2.58 (m, 4H); <sup>13</sup>C-NMR (CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  (ppm): 145.4, 144.5, 144.4, 142.6 (C-1, C-2, C-10 and C-11), 129.9, 128.3, 125.7, 124.8 (C-4a, C-8a, C-12a and C-14a), 119.4, 114.5, 109.2, 107.9 (C-3, C-4, C-9 and C-12), 63.7 (C-8), 62.7 (CH<sub>2</sub>OH), 56.3, 56.1 (2 OCH<sub>3</sub>), 55.7 (C-14), 42.7 (C-6), 32.7 (C-13), 30.0 (C-5).

Anal. calc. for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>23</sub>NO<sub>5</sub>·½H<sub>2</sub>O: C, 65.50; H, 6.60; N, 3.82. Found: C, 65.54; H, 6.30; N, 3.74.

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