



VM/SAC **PET** practice

Figure 1—The balsam pear plant.

Acute Poisoning in a Puppy Caused by the Balsam Pear (*Momordica charantia*)

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IN JUNE 1975, a 12-week-old male Beagle weighing 6 lb (2.7 kg) was brought to the clinic. The puppy had been seen convulsing. A profound depression followed the seizure. The owner thought the animal might have been exposed to the poisonous Bufo toad (*Bufo marinus*) which is prevalent in our area. En route to the clinic the pup was stricken with a second convulsive seizure.

When examined, the puppy was depressed and nonconvulsive. Pale mucous membranes and decreased capillary perfusion time indicated shock. Body temperature was 101F (38.3C), pulse was 140/min, and respirations were 45/min. The abdomen was tender; palpation produced cramping. The puppy had not vomited, and there was ingesta in the stomach.

Breath odor was of no diagnostic value. Some unidentifiable macerated plant ma-

terial was evident between the incisors. Salivation was negligible. Fecal examination revealed roundworms. Fundic examination was normal.

As the physical examination was being concluded, the puppy had a severe convulsion, lying in lateral recumbency and paddling vigorously. This seizure was followed by extensor rigidity. Widespread tonic contraction occurred in the major back and leg muscles, as well as minor twitching of muscles in the head and neck. The puppy went into an opisthotonus position and lost all perception of surroundings. The convulsion lasted 40 seconds and left the puppy deeper in shock.

Treatment was begun midway through