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Achillea ageratum

[Synonyms : *Achillea decolorans*, *Achillea serrata*, *Balsamita faemina*]

SWEET MILFOIL is a perennial. Native to southern Europe (particularly Greece, Spain and Italy) it has tansy-like creamy-yellow flowers.

It is also known as Camphor plant, Garden mace, Iva, Mace, Mace yarrow, Maudeline, Maudlin, Maudlin milfoil, *Muskatkraut* (German), Nutmeg thyme, *Řebříček žlutý* (Czech), Sweet maudlin, Sweet nancy, and Sweet yarrow.

Ageratum is derived from the genus name *Ageratum* meaning ‘like plants in that genus’ with reference to the flowers retaining their colour as they age.

The plant was introduced to Britain in about 1570 from southern Europe. Initially it attracted the same uses as alecost including as a flavouring for soups and stews – and also salads, especially potato salads. Despite its popularity there by the 18th Century it had lapsed into obscurity. The leaves have also provided a tea substitute.

As a pot plant the leaves emit their pungent aroma in warm sunshine (as they also do when crushed).

Medicinally, in Britain until the 1700s it was recommended for treating dysentery, fluid retention, catarrh, headaches and liver and stomach complaints. An infusion of the leaves and stems was also taken as a digestive aid. It still continues to be used in local folk medicine in southern Europe.