

Actaea alba

[Synonyms : *Actaea americana* var. *alba*, *Actaea pachypoda*, *Actaea prachypetala* var. *alba*, *Actaea spicata*, *Actaea spicata* var. *alba*]

WHITE BANE BERRY is a perennial. Native to North America it has fluffy clusters of small white flowers with many long, white stamens.

It is also known as American herb Christopher, Baneberry, Blue cohosh, Button snakeroot, Chinaberry, Christopher, Christopher's herb, Cohosh, Doll's eyes, False aloe, Necklace weed, Noah's ark, Pearl berry, Rattlesnake herb, Rattlesnake master, Richweed, Snakeberry, Snakeroot, Toad root, White beads, White berry, White berry snakeroot, and White cohosh.

Warning – the plant (particularly the berries and the root) is poisonous. It can cause headaches, dizziness, vomiting, gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, delirium, convulsions and possibly death. It can also cause dermatitis.

Alba means 'white' with reference to the flowers.

White baneberry was chosen by several North American Indian tribes as a medicine. The Blackfoot tribe used the root to treat coughs, colds and convulsions (whether in children or adults), and it was also used by the Chippewa. The root was sometimes prescribed by the Meskwaki during childbirth, and they and the Iroquois tribe used the plant as a remedy for some urinary disorders. Interestingly records show that the Cherokee and Meskwaki tribes both turned to white baneberry as a stimulant to revive a dying patient. Not only did the Cherokee use a root infusion as a gargle but they also employed the plant (it is said with some care) to treat toothache.

Medicinally, white baneberry was once used by European herbalists to treat various ailments including asthma, some heart and lung disorders, whooping cough, fluid retention, muscular rheumatism and skin disease.