

Actaea rubra

[Synonyms : *Actaea arguta*, *Actaea erythrocarpa*, *Actaea rubra* subsp. *arguta*, *Actaea spicata*, *Actaea spicata* var. *rubra*, *Actaea viridiflora*]

RED BANE BERRY is a perennial. Native to northern Europe and North America it has small white flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as *Amerikansk trolldruva* (Swedish), Black cohosh, Coral berry, Grapewort, Herb Christopher, *Kanadensisk trolldruva* (Swedish), *Lännekonnmarja* (Finnish), Necklace weed, Poison-berry, Rattlesnake herb, Red berry, Red cohosh, Snakeberry, Snake root, and Toad root.

As the flowers open their petals drop.

Warning – the plant (particularly the roots and berries) is believed to be poisonous and can cause purging and sickness. Sheep have been poisoned by it.

Rubra is derived from Latin *ruber* (red) with reference to the colour of the fruit.

The North American Cheyenne Indians used red baneberry roots during ceremonial rituals.

The plant was also used in Indian veterinary practice as authorities have noted that the Blackfoot tribe made a root decoction for treating their horses.

Quite a few North American Indian tribes valued the plant as a source of human medicine as well – more so it would seem than its close relative white baneberry (*Actaea alba*) despite the fact that according to records its poisonous nature was widely accepted (even more perhaps than that of white baneberry). The Cheyenne prescribed root decoction to enhance appetite, and the Algonkin and Chippewa tribes used it to treat stomach upsets. For the Thompson tribe a plant decoction was taken for some lung disorders, while the Blackfoot tribe used the root to treat coughs and colds. More commonly red baneberry root was used by several tribes including the Potawatomi, Cree, Chippewa and Cheyenne for some period problems or during childbirth.

Medicinally, apart from its use in the past at the hands of European herbalists for treating such diseases and ailments as whooping cough, asthma, some heart and lung disorders, muscular rheumatism, fluid retention and skin disease, it was also used to ease headaches brought on by eye strain.