

Aegopodium podagraria

[Synonyms : *Aegopodium podagraria* var. *variegatum*]

GROUND-ELDER is an invasive perennial. Native to Europe it has tiny white (occasionally pink) flowers.

It is also known as Ache weed, Aise weed, Ash weed, Ax seed, Bishop's elder, Bishops goutweed, Bishops-weed, Bishopswort, *Bršlice kozi noha* (Czech), Devil's guts, Dog elder, Dog eller, Dutch elder, Dwarf ash, Dwarf elder, Edgeweed, Eltroot, English masterwort, Farmer's plague, Garden plague, *Geissfuss* (German), Gerard, *Giersch* (German), Goat herb, Goat's foot, Goatweed, Goatwort, Goutweed, Goutwort, Ground ash, Ground eller, Housemaid's knee, Herb Gerard, Herb William, Jack-jump-about, Jump-about, *Kers* (Swedish), Kesh, *Kirskål* (Swedish), *Kozia noha hostcová* (Slovak), *Kozonha hostcová* (Slovak), *Llysiau Gymalwst* (Welsh), *Llys y Gymalwst* (Welsh), Pigweed, *Podagraire* (French), Pot-ash, St. Gerard's herb, Seven-toed Jack, *Skvallerkål* (Swedish), *Vuohenputki* (Finnish), Weyl ash, White ash, White ash herb, Wild elder, Wild esh, Wild masterwort, and *Zevenblad* (Dutch).

When the fruit are ripe they become detached and are nudged a distance by the wind thus distributing the seeds.

Podagraria is derived from Latin *podagra* (gout in the feet).

Ground-elder was dedicated to St. Gerard (died 1755), the saint who used to be invoked as a cure for gout.

While some authorities suggest that the plant was introduced to Britain by the Romans, others propose that it appeared there in the Middle Ages (probably brought in by the monks who cultivated it in monastery gardens on the European mainland primarily for medicinal use) and was grown as a vegetable. The fresh young leaves and shoots (picked before flowering) were cooked like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*), and employed as a flavouring in stews or added to salad. The Swedes and Swiss in particular cooked ground-elder as a green vegetable, and it was added to soups too, especially by country-folk in north-western Germany.

Medicinally, herbalists recommended internal use of ground-elder to reduce the pain of gout, and externally as a hot poultice of the boiled root and leaf to be applied to painful joints. An essence is used commercially today in homoeopathic treatments.