

Alisma plantago-aquatica

[Synonyms : *Alisma brevipes*, *Alisma plantago*, *Alisma plantago* var. *americanum*, *Alisma plantago-aquatica* subsp. *michaletii*, *Alisma subcordatum*, *Alisma triviale*]

WATER-PLANTAIN is a deciduous, aquatic perennial. Native to temperate areas in the northern hemisphere it has small rosy-pink to creamy-white flowers.

It is also known as American waterplantain, *Bisbula ta' l-ilma* (Maltese), Broad-leaved water-plantain, Common water-plantain, Deil's spoons, Devil's spoons, *Dŵr-lyriad* (Welsh), European water plantain, *Gemeiner Froschlöffel* (German), Great thrumwort, Great thunderbolt, Great water plantain, *Kranssvalking* (Swedish), Mad-dog weed, *Ratamosarpio* (Finnish), Scurvy leaves, *Svalting* (Swedish), Thumb-wort, Umbrellas, *Vanlig svalting* (Swedish), *Vejbred-Skeblad* (Danish), and *Žabník jitrocelový* (Czech).

The flowers open after midday.

Warning – the fresh plant is poisonous. The bruised leaves can raise blisters on the skin. Animals can be similarly injured.

Plantago-aquatica means 'water-plantain'.

The Kalmucks in Russia and China have eaten the leaves and roots as a boiled vegetable (boiling destroys the poison). In North America forest runners from the Iroquois Indian tribe drank a tea made from the plant.

Medicinally, the plant has been used by herbalists for treating kidney disorders, cystitis, dysentery, epilepsy and fluid retention, and locally has provided a remedy to heal bruises and swellings. It has played a part in Chinese medicine for at least two thousand years. In Russia it has been used as a treatment for hydrophobia. In North America water-plantain was used to treat rattlesnake bites by some Indian tribes, and the Cherokee tribe are also known to have applied it on sores and wounds. The Iroquois and some of the Cree Indians used various parts of the plant medicinally. The former chose it to treat kidney disorders, some lung ailments, including tuberculosis and some female problems – and their runners applied a leaf infusion to their feet as a liniment. The latter also used the stem in remedies for stomach upsets and some heart problems, and as a laxative for constipation.