

Allium vineale

[Synonyms : *Allium affine*, *Allium arenarium*, *Allium assimile*, *Allium compactum*, *Allium kochii*, *Allium nitens*, *Allium rilaense*]

CROW GARLIC is an invasive, bulbous perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) it has greenish or purplish flowers often with protruding stamens and often mixed with swollen buds.

It is also known as Aaron's beard, *Aglio delle vigne* (Italian), *Ail des vignes* (French), *Ail sauvage* (French), *Ajo cimarrón* (Spanish), *Ajo de las viñas* (Spanish), *As sauvage* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Balučka* (Serbian), *Cebola selvagem* (Portuguese), *Cebolla silvestre* (Spanish), *Cesnak pol'ny* (Slovak), *Česnek viničný* (Czech), *Cipolla selvatica* (Italian), *Crow onion*, *Czosnek winnicowy* (Polish), *Divlji luk* (Serbian), *Divlji žbun* (Serbian), *False garlic*, *Field garlic*, *Garlic*, *Garleg Gwyllt* (Welsh), *Hietalaukka* (Finnish), *Hundslauch* (German), *Jamestown grass*, *Kraailook* (Dutch), *Kuifhyacint-knol* (Dutch), *Luk vinogradarski* (Croatian), *Oignon sauvage* (French), *Pravi lučac* (Serbian), *Puerrillo silvestre* (Spanish), *Puerro de viña* (Spanish), *Pupa* (Serbian), *Rush leek*, *Sandlök* (Swedish), *Scallion*, *Sirmo* (Turkish), *Stag's garlic*, *Strandlauk* (Norwegian), *Vildt løg* (Danish), *Vineyard onion*, *Vinogradarski luk* (Croatian), *Vinograjski luk* (Slovak), *Weinbergs-Lauch* (German), *Wild allium*, *Wild garlic*, *Wild onion*, and *Wildzwiebel* (German).

Warning – crow garlic can be poisonous for some animals (although no cases of poisoning have been recorded in Britain). It passes on a rank taste to milk and butter if it is eaten (or even sniffed) by a cow and it can also contaminate grain if harvested with the crop.

Vineale is derived from Latin *vinea* (vineyard) meaning 'of vines or of or from vineyards'.

According to English country-folk in days gone by this plant's aroma would have been sufficient to stupefy any crow that ate it. Yet in North America (where crow garlic was introduced) the celebrated American botanist, John Bartram (1699-1777) who amongst other things traversed that Continent in search of plants which he then sold to European botanists, wrote in 1758 how horses, cattle (to the disgust of anybody eating the subsequent milk, butter or cheese), and sheep there all enjoyed eating crow garlic.

Although it has been eaten as food or used as flavouring its bulbs are so tiny that it is disproportionately time-consuming to gather.

In North America various Indian tribes have found medicinal uses for crow garlic but records seem to show few tribes who viewed it as food. Certainly the Hopi Indians ate the bulb. While the Rappahannock, Cherokee and Mahuna tribes used it to treat varying disorders including for the former shortness of breath and high blood pressure. Cherokee Indians valued it for treating scurvy, asthma and fluid retention, and in their children croup, wind and worms. The Mahuna tribe viewed it as a tarantula, lizard, scorpion and general insect repellent.