

Amaranthus retroflexus

[Synonyms : *Amaranthus retroflexus* var. *salicifolius*, *Amaranthus tricolor*]

COMMON AMARANTH is an annual. Native to tropical America it has dull greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as Abraham's cabbage, *Ackerfuchsschwanz* (German), *Amarante à racines rouges* (French), *Amarante à tiges velues* (French), *Amarante réfléchie* (French), *Amaranto commune* (Italian), *Amaranto común* (Spanish), *Anampatsa* (Malagasy), *Anampatsamaitso* (Malagasy), *Anampatsamaitsoventy* (Malagasy), *Ao geitou* (Japanese), Beet-root, *Bogen-Fuchsschwanz* (German), Borax, Careless weed, *Caruru-áspero* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Caruru-gigante* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Chuchot* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Chwyn Moch* (Welsh), Common pigweed, Curls, *Dillah* (Arabic), *Dillaq* (Arabic), *Duskamarant* (Norwegian), *Fan zhi xian* (Chinese), *Gekruemmter Fuchsschwanz* (German), Green amaranth, Green pigweed, *Horoz ibiği* (Turkish), *Krummer Fuchsschwanz* (German), *Laskavec ohnutý* (Czech), *Láskavec ohnutý* (Slovak), *Laskavec srstnatý* (Czech), Lighthouses, *Moncos-de-Peru* (Portuguese), *Opret Amarant* (Danish), *Papegaaienkruid* (Dutch), Pig weed, *Rauhhaariger Amarant* (German), *Rauhaariger Fuchsschwanz* (German), Red root, Red root amaranth, Red root pigweed, Reflexed amaranthus, Rough pigweed, *Shchiritsa obyknovennaia* (Russian), *Shchiritsa zaprokinutaia* (Russian), *Srhkodlakavi ščir* (Slovenian), *Svinamarant* (Swedish), *Szarlat szorstki* (Polish), *Teol bi reum* (Korean), *Trachy vlito* (Greek), Tumble weed, *Vihreä revonhätä* (Finnish), Wild beet, Wild beet amaranth, *Yarbuž mufshal* (Hebrew), *Zurückgekrümmter* (German), and *Zurückgekrümmter Fuchsschwanz* (German).

Retroflexus is derived from Latin *retro* (backwards, back, behind) and *flexus* (bending, turning) components meaning 'twisted or turned or bent back'.

According to records the North American Iroquois Indians used common amaranth in their magic spells. A decoction of the plant was applied to a doll which represented the person towards whom this ugly witchcraft was directed. After the ritual the person concerned was supposed to break out in cancerous-like eruptions. In what might be deemed a more positive piece of magic enacted by some of the Navajo tribe, a three inch-long piece of stem assumed the appearance of a snake and absorbed the snake's poison.

The Navajo, as well as some of the Apache and Keresan Indians, ground the seeds for flour which was generally used for meal, dumplings or a porridge. The young plants were also boiled as a vegetable particularly by the Isleta and Jemez pueblos, and the Keresan, Navajo and Mohican Indians too. For the Mendocino Indians records indicate that the seeds were a staple part of their diet, and cooked they were also eaten by the Tewa Indians of New Mexico.

Common amaranth had medicinal value for some Indian tribes. Mohican Indians used a leaf infusion to ease hoarseness, some of the Keresan pueblos took a plant infusion for stomach disorders, and Cherokee Indians used the leaves to treat some period problems.

It was once used as an alternative to soap.