

*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*

[Synonyms : *Ambrosia absynthifolia*, *Ambrosia artemisiaefolia*, *Ambrosia artemisiifolia* var. *elator*, *Ambrosia elator*, *Ambrosia heterophylla*, *Ambrosia maritima*, *Ambrosia paniculata*, *Iva monophylla*]

**RAGWEED** (English, German) is an annual. Native to north-eastern North America with tiny yellowish-green flowers.

It is also known as *Alsemambrosia* (Dutch), *Ambrosie annuelle* (French), *Ambrosia* (Dutch, German), *Ambrosie peřenolistá* (Czech), American wormwood, *Amerikanisches Traubenkraut* (German), Annual ragweed, *Aufrechte Ambrosie* (German), *Aufrechtes Traubenkraut* (German), Bastard wormwood, *Beifuss-Ambrosie* (German), *Beifussblättrige Ambrosie* (German), *Beissussblättriges Traubenkraut* (German), Bitterweed, Black weed, Carrot-weed, Common ragweed, Hay-fever weed, Hay weed, Hogbrake, Hogweed, Low ragweed, *Malörtsambrosia* (Swedish), Mayweed, Normal ragweed, Oxtail, Roman ragweed, Roman wormwood, Short ragweed, Stammerwort, Stick weed, Tansy, Tassel weed, Three-lobed weed, *Traubenkraut* (German), *Ürömlevelű parlafű* (Hungarian), Wild tansy, and Wild wormwood.

It is pointed out that the plant appears to have little to recommend it to insects and relies on the wind to distribute its pollen that is produced in prolific amounts.

Warning – the leaves, stem and pollen can be poisonous. They can cause dermatitis. Also ragweed and goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*) enjoy a similar habitat. Hay fever and asthma sufferers in their vicinity tend to name goldenrod as the reason for their distress but authorities explain that ragweed will be the culprit. Eaten by dairy cattle (usually in the absence of sufficient forage) the plant will impart a bitter taste and bad smell to milk.

*Artemisiifolia* is made up of the genus name *Artemisia* and Latin *-folia* (leaved) components meaning ‘with leaves like those of that genus’.

In Winter both game-birds and songbirds enjoy the seeds for their oil.

It seems that the plant has been under consideration on occasions even relatively recently as a source of edible oil.

Despite its poisonous nature ragweed according to various records was used medicinally by several North American Indian tribes. For example the Iroquois and Dakota tribes used it to ease both diarrhoea and vomiting. (Perhaps surprisingly in view of the latter the Luiseño tribe of California prescribed the plant to cause vomiting.) The Cherokee applied crushed leaves to insect stings, while the Mahuna Indians washed skin disorders with a plant infusion. A leaf infusion was taken by the Cherokee tribe to ease fever and they also used an infusion to treat pneumonia. For the Houma Indian tribe a root decoction was useful for period problems, and the Iroquois used a root infusion for treating stroke victims.