

Anemone nobilis

[Synonyms : *Anemone hepatica*, *Hepatica hepatica*, *Hepatica nobilis*, *Hepatica trifolia*, *Hepatica triloba*]

KIDNEYWORT is a semi-evergreen perennial. Native to northern temperate areas (particularly Europe but excluding Britain), it has small, anemone-like, light blue (occasionally reddish-blue or white) flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as American liverwort, *BlåAnemone* (Danish), *Blåsippa* (Swedish), Blue anemone, Choisy, Common hepatica, Common liverleaf, Common liverwort, Crystalwort, *Dreilappiges Leberblümchen* (German), Early anemone, Edellebere, Golden trefoil, Heartleaf, Heartleaf liverwort, Heart liverleaf, Heart liverwort, Hepatica, Herb trinity, Ivy flower, *Jaterník podléška* (Czech), *Jaterník trojlaločný* (Czech), Kidney liverleaf, *Leberblümchen* (German), Liver balsam, Liverleaf, Liver moss, Liverweed, Liverwort, May flower, Mouse-ear, Noble liverwort, Paas blumes, *Pečeňovník trojlaločný* (Slovak), Red coonroot, Round-leaved hepatica, Round-lobed hepatica, Round-lobed liverleaf, Sharp-lobed liverwort, *Sinivuokko* (Finnish), Spring beauty, Squirrel cup, Three-leaf liverwort, and Trefoil; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of confidence.

The flowers are pollinated by bees and flies.

Warning – kidneywort is poisonous in large doses. The fresh plant can irritate the skin. It should be used, even externally, under the supervision of a qualified practitioner only.

Kidneywort is a protected species in Germany and Switzerland.

Nobilis is Latin (known) meaning ‘notable, famous or excellent’.

Kidneywort’s flowers will only last on the plant about 1 week but during that time they can double in length. The seeds are distributed primarily by ants which view the oily swelling at the base of the ripe fruit as an especial delicacy. The plant’s dependence on the ants means that it spreads at about only 15-30 feet in a year in directions unimpeded by any obstacles such as fast-flowing rivers.

Records indicate a noticeable demand for kidneywort for medicinal use in North America in the late 19th Century – to the extent that not only did those areas where it grew have to suffer invasions of circulars discouraging its collection in the wild but plants had also to be imported from Germany to meet the high demand. It is believed that to this point North American Indians had largely discounted kidneywort as having any significant advantages but the Cherokee at least decided to take advantage of the craze which sprang up in the 1880s and harvested and traded the plants.

A distillation of the plant was once used as a treatment for freckles.

Medicinally, European herbalists recommended the plant for treating indigestion, liver diseases, tuberculosis, coughs and some chest ailments. It has also been used in remedies for skin diseases and for healing wounds.