

Angelica atropurpurea

[Synonyms : *Angelica atropurpurea* var. *occidentalis*, *Angelica triquinata*, *Archangelica atropurpurea*, *Imperatoria lucida*]

AMERICAN ANGELICA is a perennial. Native of Canada and the north-eastern United States it has small white flowers.

It is also known as Alexanders, American masterwort, Angelica, Archangel, Aunt Jerichos, Bellyache root, Common angelica, Dead nettle, Great angelica, Great high-angelica, High angelica, Hunting root, Masterwort, Masterwort aromatic, Purple angelica, Purple-stemmed angelica, and Wild archangel.

Warning – in the past it has been alleged that the juice is poisonous.

Apart from its purplish roots American angelica is similar in appearance to garden angelica. (*Angelica archangelica*)

Atropurpurea is derived from Latin *atro-* (black, dark) and *purpureo-* (purple) components meaning ‘dark purple’.

North American Indians called the plant Hunting root and records describe how Indians would travel hundreds of miles to find it. When eventually discovered, the plant was dug up, the top of the root was removed and the remains (as it was believed to be so precious) were replanted. Apparently if the hunters placed themselves some way downwind of a grazing deer and remained still while they rubbed the root between their hands, the deer would raise its head and sniff the air then progress undisturbed in the direction of the scent as it fed – until it was within easy range of the hunter who could make the kill with ease.

The Iroquois North American Indians not only had faith in the root’s ability to banish ghosts but also believed that the plant was effective in punishing evil people.

In more pragmatic vein the Delaware tribe sometimes added the seeds to tobacco mixtures.

The Menominee North American Indian tribe used American angelica root as a significant ingredient in a hot plaster which was claimed to be able to ease any pain in the body. They applied the plaster opposite the site of the pain as they believed it would be drawn to the surface where it could escape. Apart from this both the Cherokee and Iroquois tribes used the root for treating colds and fevers. The Cherokee prescribed it too for wind, and the Iroquois used it for some stomach disorders, and for pneumonia and rheumatism. The Delaware tribe included the root in a remedy for some female problems.

From the time of the arrival of the first settlers the peeled young stems and leaf stalks of American angelica have been added to salads and the young shoots have been boiled as a vegetable.

Today although American angelica is considered to be inferior to garden angelica (*Angelica archangelica*) it too can be used commercially for making liqueurs, spirits, bitters and cordials.

The perfumery industry also employs the oil commercially, and the cigarette industry can use it as a flavouring.

Medicinally, American angelica’s uses for North American herbalists included remedies for various lung disorders, as well as for rheumatism and gout. The plant’s essential oil can be a commercial ingredient in dental preparations.