

Anthemis cotula

[Synonyms : *Anthemis foetida*, *Chamaemelum cotula*, *Cotula maruta foetida*, *Maruta cotula*, *Maruta foetida*]

STINKING CHAMOMILE is an annual. Native to Asia and Europe (including Britain), it has daisy-like white flowers with dome-shaped, yellow centres.

It is also known as *Anthémis puant* (French), *Anthémis puante* (French), Balders, *Balders braa* (Danish), Balder's brae, Bald-eye grow, *Camomilla fetida* (Italian), *Camomilla mezzana* (Italian), *Camomille bâtarde* (French), *Camomille des chiens* (French), *Camomille puante* (French), Camovyne, *Camri'r Cŵn* (Welsh), Chamomile, Chigger weed, Chiggy weed, *Chou chun huang ju* (Chinese), *Chou gan ju* (Chinese), Cotula, Devil daisy, Dillweed, Dilly, Dog banner, Dog binder, Dog chamomile, Dog daisy, Dog-fennel, Dog finkle, Dog's fennel, Dog stinks, Dog stinkers, Fetid chamomile, Fetid chamomile, Fieldweed, Fieldwort, Flake, Foetid chamomile, Foetid mayweed, *Haisusauramo* (Finnish), Hay-fennel, Hog fennel, Horse daisy, *Hundskamille* (German), Jay weed, Johnny-appleseed's weed, *Kamomillkulla* (Swedish), *Macela-fetida* (Portuguese), Madder-mayweed, Madders, Maidweed, Maise, Maithen, Maithes, Maitheweed, *Manzanilla hedionda* (Spanish), Marg, Mathers, Mathor, Mauthern, Mavin, Mawthen, Mawther, Mayd weed, May-flower, Maythic, Mayweed, Mayweed chamomile, Mayweed dogfennel, Mazes, Meaden, Moithern, Morgan, Morgan's weed, *M'roque* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Murg, Northern dogfennel, *Oeil de vache* (French), Ox-eye chamomile, Pathweed, Pig's cress, Pig's daisies, Pig's flower, Pig-sty daisy, Poison daisy, *Pupavka sobach'ia* (Russian), *Rmen smrdutý* (Czech), *Ruman* (Slovak), *Stinkende gåseurt* (Danish), *Stinkende Hundskamille* (German), *Stinkende kamille* (Dutch), Stinking chamomile, Stinking daisy, Stinking mayweed, *Stink Kamille* (Afrikaans), Stink mayweed, Stinkweed, *Surkulla* (Swedish), *Tappgåseblom* (Norwegian), Wild chamomile, and Wild chamomile.

The plant has an acrid juice, and a fetid smell that is attractive to flies.

The flowers will blacken during drying if they are gathered when wet.

Warning – the plant is poisonous. A strong dose can cause allergic reactions including sweating and vomiting. Its juice can cause skin blistering. Milk and other dairy products of cattle grazing the plants can be contaminated and have a disagreeable taste.

Cotula means 'like plants in the *Cotula* genus'.

Stinking chamomile received a dubious honour in its mention in the 1573 enlarged edition of *Five Hundredth Pointes of Good Husbandrie*. This celebrated work by the Englishman, Thomas Tusser (c.1520-c.1580) who wrote on agriculture, draws attention to the extreme discomfort and pain that could be experienced by men working in the fields from the blistering raised by stinking chamomile leaves, seeds and juice – to such a degree in some cases that they were unable to work for many days.

Some authorities say that stinking chamomile is both a mouse and a flea repellent.

It was introduced to North America by the early settlers and records show that one or two North American Indian tribes adopted the plant for various medicinal purposes. For instance the Cherokee and Iroquois Indians used it to cause vomiting and also as a sedative, and the Cherokee and Mendocino Indian tribes both prescribed the plant for

easing colds and rheumatism. It was used by the Cherokees for epilepsy, and some lung and kidney disorders, and both the Cherokee and Mohican Indians used it to treat fever. The Karok tribe employed it for easing some pregnancy problems, and the Iroquois in addition to that mentioned also chose stinking chamomile as a remedy for diarrhoea, vomiting, some venereal diseases, and toothache. Quite strikingly records show in stark contrast that the Yuki tribe believed stinking chamomile was a poisonous plant. Medicinally, European herbalists have used the plant to treat colds, chronic rheumatism, headaches and convalescence following fevers. It has also been employed externally to treat bee stings by rubbing fresh leaves on the affected area.