

Aralia nudicaulis

[Synonyms : *Aralia medicalis*, *Aralia nudicaulis*, *Aralia nudicalis*, *Aralia nudicaulis* var. *elongata*, *Aralia nudicaulis* var. *prolifera*, *Smilax sarsaparilla*]

WILD SARSAPARILLA is a perennial. Native to North America it has greenish or yellowish-white flowers.

It is also known as American sarsaparilla, *Aralia bezbronna* (Polish), *Aralia nagolodygowa* (Polish), *Aralia pequeña* (Spanish), *Aralie à tige nue* (French), Bamboo brier, False sarsaparilla, *Luo jing song mu* (Chinese), Rabbit's foot, Rabbit's root, Sarsaparil, Sarsaparilla, Sasafafarilla, Sasafiril, Sasapril, Sassafarilla, Sassafrilla, Saxapril, Shot bush, Small spikenard, Small spikeweed, Spikenard, Sweet root, '*Ushbah barri* (Arabic), Virginia sarsaparilla, Virginia sarsparilla, Wild licorice, and Wild liquorice.

The leaves of wild sarsaparilla have been confused with those of poison ivy (*Rhus radicans*) but unlike those of the latter they are evenly toothed.

Nudicaulis is derived from Latin *nudus* (bare, naked, unclothed) and *caulis* (stalk) components meaning 'bare-stemmed'.

Various North American Indian tribes used the fruit to make wine, including the Montagnais, Algonkin and Iroquois Indians. The Bella Coola and Micmac tribes also made a drink from the plant, for which the former used the roots. Some of the Kwakiutl tribe used the roots in cooking.

Wild sarsaparilla roots were an ingredient in a solution used by the Chippewa for soaking their nets before night fishing trips, and the tribe also used the plant in a veterinary capacity to treat their horses.

The North American Cree Indians are said to have used wild sarsaparilla under the name of rabbit root (rabbits will nibble the roots from inside their burrows) as a remedy for syphilis (and the Iroquois also used it for treating some venereal diseases). It was used as a tonic (apparently particularly good for the blood) by many tribes including some of the Delaware and Okanagan-Colville, the Montana Indian tribe and the Thompson, Abnaki, Mohican and Montagnais Indians. The Algonkin Indians used wild sarsaparilla for ear problems and kidney disorders, while the Iroquois chose it for treating some eye ailments, cancer, colds, diabetes and tuberculosis. They and the Bella Coola tribe are said to have used it for some stomach disorders and, like some of the Cree Indians, the Iroquois used the roots in remedies for various oral problems. (The Cree seem to have favoured wild sarsaparilla especially for children's teething and gum difficulties.) The Micmac, Penobscot, Iroquois and Kwakiutl tribes are said to have used the plant to control coughs, and it was also used by the Chippewa, Meskwaki, Menominee, Iroquois, the Potawatomi and some of the Cree for treating, variously, sores, burns and wounds.

Medicinally, the root has provided an alternative to sarsaparilla (*Smilax aristolochiaefolia*) for North American herbalists and has been used internally in the treatment of lung disorders and externally on ulcers and shingles.