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Aristolochia is said to be made up of Greek *aristo-* (best) and *lochia* (childbirth) components. According to the dogma of the Doctrine of Signatures (subscribed to by many in the early 16th Century in Europe) the curved shape of the flower of plants in this genus (especially birthwort, *Aristolochia clematitis*) suggested the shape of a human foetus in the correct position for birth and at that time this strengthened faith in its use during childbirth. The shape of the roots of the plants were also considered to be reminiscent of snakes thus they were often viewed as a suitable antidote for snake bites. Some plants subjected to this dogma (as can be seen in other entries) were by chance actually of possible benefit while others served no purpose or even did harm.