

Arnica montana

[Synonyms : *Doronicum arnica*]

ARNICA (English, French, Italian) is a perennial. Native to central and northern Europe it has daisy-like, scented gold centred, golden-yellow flowers.

It is also known as Alkanna, *Árnica* (Spanish), Arnica flowers, Arnica root, *Arnika* (German), *Arnika horská* (Czech, Slovak), *Arniko monta* (Esperanto), Bane tobacco, *Bergarnika* (German), *Berg-Wohlverleih* (German), Celtic bane, Common arnica, *Etelänarnikki* (Finnish), European arnica, *Guldblomme* (Danish), *Hästfibbla* (Swedish), *Herbe aux chutes* (French), *Johannisblume* (German), Lamb's skin, Leopardsbane, Mountain alkanet, Mountain arnica, Mountain daisy, Mountain snuff, Mountain tobacco, *Prha arnika* (Czech), *Prha chlumní* (Czech), *Prha horská* (Czech), *Slättergubbe* (Swedish), and Wolf's bane.

Warning – if taken internally it can affect the central nervous system and also cause abnormal heartbeat, enteritis, dizziness, tremor, collapse and death. It must be prescribed by a qualified practitioner for internal use. Externally it can cause skin irritation (dermatitis) with repeated use and should not be applied to broken skin.

Arnica is a protected plant under Swiss law. But the plant can be subject to preservation orders elsewhere as well. Apart from the effects of natural habitat loss, trade demands for it in Europe are also such that it has been the subject of over harvesting and at the end of the 1990s its future survival was being considered to be threatened.

Montana is derived from Latin *mons* (mountain) meaning 'of or from mountains'.

Widely used in 16th Century German folk medicine it only became generally popular among Western doctors in the late 18th Century – but for a very short time only due to over-enthusiastic claims made then by a Viennese physician. It has been used for treating digestive ailments.

Medicinally it is used in homoeopathic treatments for epilepsy, seasickness and hair stimulation and growth, and a tincture is also used to treat bruises when the skin is unbroken. A diluted tincture is applied for easing neuralgia, joint pains, boils and inflamed insect bites. Arnica is an ingredient used today by the pharmaceutical industry.