

You are viewing one of thousands of biographies – click below for more, including Search box and access to Plant associated organisations.

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Asphodelus aestivus

[Synonyms : *Asphodelus microcarpus*]

BRANCHED ASPHODEL is a bulbous perennial. Native to the Mediterranean it has reddish-brown veined, white flowers.

It is also known as Asphodel, *Asphodèle* (French), *Asphódylos* (Greek), *Berwieq* (Maltese), Common asphodel, *Gamona* (Canary Island), *Gewone affodil* (Dutch), *Kleinfrüchtiger Affodill* (German), Small-fruited asphodel, and *Spherdoúkla* (Greek).

Aestivus means ‘flowering, ripening or developing in Summer or of Summer’.

Branched asphodel is a common sight today in the Greek countryside and in ancient times there the Greeks viewed it as a symbol of death and often planted it around graves to provide nourishment for the dead.

Theophrastus (c.372-c.287) the acclaimed Greek philosopher, noted that tubers, stalks and seeds were eaten. Today (although these are said to be unpalatable) the tubers are still viewed as a famine food and there are records of them being cooked and eaten locally during the First World War.

Locally, in ancient Egypt particularly, the bulbs have been used as a source of a yellow carpet dye – while the Turks are known to have extracted a glue used by both bookbinders and shoemakers.