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*Asphodelus ramosus*

[Synonyms : *Asphodelus racemosus*]

**ASPHODEL** is a bulbous perennial. Native to Europe it has large white flowers.

It is also known as *Affodill* (German), Asphodel, Asphodele, *Asphodill* (German), Branched asphodel, Daffodil, Day lily, King's spear, Rameux, Royal staff, Silver rod, and White asphodel; and, in flower language is said to be a symbol of memorial sorrow, and 'my regrets follow you to the grave'.

*Ramosus* is Latin (branching) meaning 'branched'.

Many references in ancient Greek poetry allude to the old custom of planting asphodel near tombs as the Greeks believed it provided nourishing food that could be enjoyed by the dead. The Greek philosopher, Theophrastus (c.327-287 BC) notes that in his day the stalk, seeds and root were all eaten. The stalk was fried, the seeds were roasted and the root was cut up and eaten with figs. (Records from the 1<sup>st</sup> World War in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century are said to indicate that this information was recalled and made use of 20-odd centuries later.) In several countries asphodel bread used to be made from the roots which were mixed with grain or potato (*Solanum tuberosum*).

The plant was also said to be a favourite delicacy for the wild boar, while in Spain and some other countries it was used as cattle and sheep fodder.

In Persia (now Iran) the bulb of this species provided a strong glue and today this is still used in Turkey by bookbinders.

Medicinally, the plant was familiar both to the ancient Greeks and to the Romans, and it is said that European herbalists recommended it particularly for treating period problems.