

Asplenium scolopendrium

[Synonyms : *Asplenium altajense*, *Phyllitis japonica*, *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, *Scolopendrium officinale*, *Scolopendrium officinarum*, *Scolopendrium phyllitis*, *Scolopendrium scolopendrium*, *Scolopendrium vulgare*]

HART'S-TONGUE is an evergreen fern. Native to Europe it has strap-shaped undulating, glossy, dark green fronds.

It is also known as Buttonhole, Christ's hair, Common hart's tongue, Fern, Fox-tongue, God's hair, Hart's tongue fern, Hind's tongue, *Hirschzunge* (German), *Hirvenkieli* (Finnish), *Hjorttung* (Swedish), Horse tongue, *Ko tani watari* (Japanese), *Langue de boeuf* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Langue-de-cerf* (French), *Scolopendria comune* (Italian), *Skolopendrio* (Esperanto), and Spleen plant.

Scolopendrium means 'millipede-like' with reference to the spores.

In the English West Country at the beginning of the 20th Century children were told a traditional Christian legend that was said to explain the presence of two auburn hairs on the ripe stem. This described how Jesus was supposed to have used the fern as a pillow and left two hairs from his Head there in thanks.

The Japanese Ainu people have smoked the dried fronds which are sometimes mixed with tobacco.

Today it is a familiar commercial ornamental indoor plant.

Medicinally, a decoction of the plant has long been (and can still be) used for some liver and spleen ailments, sometimes homoeopathically. In the past also herbalists used to recommend the plant for the treatment of diarrhoea and dysentery even during the time of the Greek physician, Galen (c.130-c.201), and on the other side of Europe (in more recent times) districts of Scotland and Wales used it in an ointment to heal piles, burns and scalds.