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Calla palustris

BOG ARUM is a deciduous or semi-evergreen aquatic perennial. Native to northern temperate areas (particularly North America), it has a knob-shaped spike (spadix) of tiny, yellowish-green flowers framed by a large, white-lined, green leaf-like bract (spathe). It is also known as Arum lily, Calla, *D'áblík bahenní* (Czech), *Diablik močiarny* (Slovak), *Drachenwurz* (German), *Kærmysse* (Danish), Marsh calla, *Missne* (Swedish), *Schlängenwurz* (German), *Suovehka* (Finnish), Swamp lily, Water arum, Water dragon, and Wild calla; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of beauty, and maiden modesty.

It is pollinated by water snails.

Warning – can only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. The fresh plant can cause intense burning and irritation in the mouth (usually sufficient to prevent swallowing which could cause violent gastroenteritis and death). Handling the fresh plant can cause blistering.

Palustris is derived from Latin *palus* (bog, marsh) meaning 'of or from bogs, swamps or marshes'.

The calla lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*) belongs to a different genus in the same family. The dried roots, when boiled, are used by Laplanders to make a kind of bread.

According to records it was familiar medicinally to one or two North American Indian tribes although, for instance, some of the Cree who used its aerial stems to treat sore legs well appreciated how carefully it needed to be handled because of its poisonous nature. The Potawatomi tribe applied root poultices to swellings, and the Iroquois used a similar treatment for some snake bites. Root decoctions were taken by the Gitksan Indians for several remedies for treating haemorrhaging, shortness of breath and influenza.