

Caulophyllum thalictroides

[Synonyms : *Leontice thalictroides*]

BLUE COHOSH is a perennial. Native to North America it has small yellowish-green (occasionally purple) flowers.

It is also known as Beechdrops, *Blauer Hahnenfuss* (German), Blueberry, Blueberry cohosh, Blueberry root, Blue ginseng, Caulophyllum, Cohosh, Columbine-leaved leontice, False cohosh, Green vivian, Herbaceous blueberry, Lion's foot, Meadow-rue leontice, Pappoose root, Pappoose-root, Poppoose root, Squaw root, Umbrella leaf, Yellow ginseng, and *Zhu-nakada-tanga-maka* (Omaha and Ponca North American Indian).

Warning – use of the powdered root or underground stem can cause pain in the fingers and toes, and can also aggravate mucous membranes. The plant should not be taken internally during pregnancy unless prescribed by a qualified practitioner. The fruit can poison children. Handling the plant can cause dermatitis.

Thalictroides is made up of the genus name *Thalictrum* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning 'like plants in that genus'.

Some authorities report that the seeds have provided a coffee substitute.

Although now restricted to folk medicine in North America, 80 years ago the plant was included in the United States Pharmacopoeia. It had been noted that for two weeks before childbirth North American Indian women of tribes living where blue cohosh grew used to drink an infusion of the dried powdered root and would usually experience a relatively painless childbirth – and it was also used by various tribes, particularly the Cherokee and Potawatomi for some problems experienced during childbirth. In addition it was chosen by the Menominee tribe (as well as the Chippewa, Meskwaki and Potawatomi) for treating period disorders. Some Indian tribes such as the Cherokee used the root in slightly different ways including as a sedative for anything ranging from hysteria to toothache. The Omaha, Iroquois and Ponca tribes held it in considerable regard for easing fevers, and the Iroquois also included the root in treatments for rheumatism (as did the Cherokee). When a patient needed to vomit blue cohosh was sometimes used by the Chippewa and Iroquois Indians, and the plant was also employed variously by the Mohican tribe for some kidney disorders, by the Chippewa Indians for treating different lung problems and by the Iroquois for various liver ailments.

Today it is not used often but it can be found in some treatments for rheumatism and various female ailments.