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Chelone glabra

[Synonyms : *Chelone chlorantha*, *Chelone glabra* var. *chlorantha*, *Chelone glabra* var. *dilatata*, *Chelone glabra* var. *elatior*, *Chelone glabra* var. *elongata*, *Chelone glabra* var. *linifolia*, *Chelone glabra* var. *ochroleuca*, *Chelone glabra* var. *typica*, *Chelone montana*, *Chelone obliqua*, *Chelone obliqua* var. *alba*]

TURTLE-HEAD is a perennial. Native to eastern North America (from Newfoundland to Florida and Texas) it has purple- or rose-tinged, white or cream flowers.

It is also known as Balmony, Bammany, Bitter herb, Bitter weed, *Chélone* (French), *Chelone oblique*, Cod-head, Fishhead, Fishmouth, *Galana spicata* (Italian), *Galane* (French), Glatte, Humming-bird tree, *Kahler fünffaden* (German), *Konnanyrtti* (Finnish), Rheumatism root, Saltrheum weed, *Schildblume* (German), Shellflower, *Sköldpaddsort* (Swedish), Smooth snakehead, Snakehead, Snakemouth, *Tosbagi çiç* (Turkish), Turtlebloom, *Vit sköldpaddsort* (Swedish), White chelone, and White turtle-head.

Glabra is Latin (hairless, bald) meaning ‘hairless or smooth’.

For the North American Cherokee Indians turtle-head leaves and young shoots provided a boiled or fried vegetable.

Iroquois Indians had a less pragmatic use for the roots. They were infused and taken to provide a protection from witchcraft.

The Iroquois also used a root decoction as a remedy for some liver problems. Both the Micmac and Malecite tribes on the other hand believed in the effectiveness of an infusion of the plant as a contraceptive. Some of the Algonkin included turtle-head as an ingredient in one of their mixtures, the Cherokee valued the plant for the internal treatment of fever and worms and an external remedy for curing some skin disorders. For some of the Indian tribes in North America the plant provided a tonic and laxative as well.

Although this perennial has not been examined scientifically it has been a popular folk medicine on both sides of the Atlantic for a very long time. In the past it has been recommended for such disorders as consumption, jaundice and liver complaints in adults, and worms in children. It has also been used externally for treating inflammation, ulcers and piles.