

*Chenopodium ambrosioides*

[Synonyms : *Ambrina ambrosioides*, *Ambrina parvula*, *Ambrina spathulata*, *Atriplex ambrosioides*, *Blitum ambrosioides*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *angustifolium*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *anthelminticum*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *costei*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *dentata*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *euambrosioides*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *genuinum*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *integrifolium*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *obovata*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *pinnatifidum*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *suffruticosum*, *Chenopodium ambrosioides* var. *typicum*, *Chenopodium anthelminticum*, *Chenopodium integrifolium*, *Chenopodium spathulatum*, *Chenopodium suffruticosum*, *Chenopodium suffruticosum* subsp. *remotum*, *Dysphania ambrosioides*, *Teloxys ambrosioides*]

**AMERICAN WORMSEED** is an annual, biennial or perennial. Native to tropical America (particularly Mexico) it has tiny greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Alapasotes* (Guam, Spanish), *Apasotes* (Guam, Spanish), *Alpasótis* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Ambrosia* (English, Italian), *Ambrósia* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Ambrósia-do-México* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Ambrosia-like chenopodium*, *Amerikaanse wormzaad* (Dutch), *Ambrosie du Mexique* (French), *Anserina-vermifuga* (Portuguese), *Ansérine du Mexique* (French), *Ansérine vermifuge* (French), *Apazote* (Spanish), *Aposote* (Spanish), *Apozote* (Mexican, Spanish), *Bean herb*, *Bitter weed*, *Blueblush*, *Botrice* (French, Mauritian), *Chénopode fausse-ambrosie* (French), *Chenopodium to ambrosioides* (Greek), *Chenopodium*, *Chou xing* (Chinese), *Citrönmålla* (Swedish), *Dišeča metlika* (Slovenian), *Echter Erdbeerspinat* (German), *Epasote* (Mexican, Spanish), *Epazot* (Russian), *Epazote* (Spanish), *Épazote* (French), *Ereva-mata-pulga* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Erva-das-lombrigas* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Erva-de-bicho* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Erva-de-Santa-Maria* (Portuguese), *Erva-formigueira* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Farinello aromatico* (Italian), *Feather geranium*, *Fishweed*, *Ghobbejra tfuh te falz* (Maltese), *Goosefoot*, *Henopoji* (Japanese), *Herbe à puces* (French), *Herbe à vers* (West Indian), *Herb Sancti Mariae*, *Hierba hormiguera* (Spanish), *Huacatay* (Spanish), *Indian goosefoot*, *Indian wormseed*, *Ipazote* (Spanish), *Jerusalem oak*, *Jerusalem tea*, *Jesuitentee* (German), *Jesuit tea*, *Kaf-avaz reichanit* (Hebrew), *Katu ayamoddakam* (Malayalam), *Ke aritasou* (Japanese), *Kruiehondebossie* (Afrikaans), *Mar' ambrozievidnaia* (Russian), *Maskmålla* (Swedish), *Mastruço* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Meksika çayı* (Turkish), *Meksikansk gåsefod* (Danish), *Menstruço* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Merlík* (Czech), *Merlík vonný* (Czech), *Měsíček lékařský* (Czech), *Méxicanischer Tee* (German), *Méxicanischer Traubentee* (German), *Méxicanisches Teekraut* (German), *Mexican tea*, *Mexikanskt te* (Swedish), *Mirhafû* (Hungarian), *Muiganjo* (Kikuyu), *Paico* (Chilean, Peruvian, Spanish), *Paico macho* (Spanish), *Pazote* (Guatemalan, Spanish), *Pigweed*, *Quenopódio* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Saitruunasavikka* (Finnish), *Semen contra* (Creole), *Sitronmelde* (Norwegian), *Sitruunasavikka* (Finnish), *Sowbane*, *Spanish tea*, *Stinking weed*, *Stinkweed*, *Sweet pigweed*, *Te del messico* (Italian), *Temålla* (Swedish), *Thé du Mexique* (French), *Vellugtende gåsefod* (Danish), *Welriekende ganzenvoet* (Dutch), *Wild wormseed*, *Wohlriechender Gänsefuss* (German),

Worm oil tree, Wormseed, Wormseed goosefoot, Worm weed, Wormwood, and *Wurmsamen Gänsefuss* (German).

Oil of *Chenopodium* or Oil of Wormseed can be extracted from the flowering plant by steam distillation.

Warning – the whole plant can be poisonous. It should only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. Large doses can cause abdominal pain, convulsions, deafness, diarrhoea, dizziness, severe gastroenteritis, headaches, incontinence, jaundice, vomiting, paralysis, sweating and/or vertigo, coma and death. In Britain it is only available through a registered pharmacist. Handling the plant, particularly in excess, can not only cause dermatitis but also dizziness from the fumes from the essential oil. It is poisonous for some animals that normally avoid it.

*Ambrosioides* is made up of the genus name *Ambrosia* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning ‘like plants in that genus’.

North American Indian tribes such as the Mahuna used the plant for easing painful periods. It was a fairly common remedy among many North American Indian tribes, including the Rappahannock, Koasati, Houma, Natchez and Seminole for worms – although the part of the plant favoured for this purpose varied from tribe to tribe. Both the Creek and Natchez Indians believed in American wormseed’s ability to ease fever, and the Seminole tribe used a root bark infusion as a remedy for some stomach disorders. It was one of the medicines chosen by the Houma tribe for easing headaches, and the Miwok Indians turned to the plant for a remedy for some venereal diseases, and for easing toothache and rheumatism.

Throughout the West Indies American wormseed was used to treat worms – it was taken in milk by children, and in Barbados it was prescribed in rum for adults. The Barbadians also added it to a ritual bath taken after childbirth. In some parts of the Caribbean, particularly Martinique, the effectiveness of this remedy was only assured if it was carried out on a waning moon.

In Mexico the leaves were used to make tea. This was also being made in Germany by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century. The plant’s seeds have also provided a seasoning for rice (*Oryza*) or beans.

This poisonous plant, the seeds of which used to be recognized in the United States pharmacopoeia, was brought to Europe in 1732. Now its following is only found in American folk medicine primarily as a treatment for worms (in both humans and animals) and also, it is purported, to ease the pain of childbirth and stimulate milk flow.

Medicinally, Oil of *Chenopodium* has been used in many countries to treat worms (particularly hookworm) and was first isolated in 1895 by a German pharmacist who was living in Brazil.