

*Chenopodium capitatum*

[Synonyms : *Blitum capitatum*, *Blitum hastatum*, *Blitum tataricum*]

**STRAWBERRY BLITE** is an annual. Native to Europe it has tiny greenish flowers.

It is also known as *Aardbeispinazie* (Dutch), *Ähriger Erdbeerspinat* (German), *Arroche fraise* (French), *Beetberry*, *Berrinches* (Spanish), *Bledo* (Spanish), *Bledomera* (Spanish), *Bledonera* (Spanish), *Blero* (Spanish), *Blette capitée* (French), *Blite goosefoot*, *Blito* (Esperanto), *Bredo* (Spanish), *Chénopode capitée* (French, French-Canadian), *Eye hurt*, *Farinello capitato* (Italian), *Garden strawberry*, *Indian ink*, *Indian paint*, *Indian strawberry*, *Jordbærmelde* (Norwegian), *Jordbærspinat* (Danish), *Komosa glówkowata* (Polish), *Kopf-Gänsefuss* (German), *Kopfiger Erdbeerspinat* (German), *Mar‘ golovčataja* (Russian), *Mar‘ golovchatoi* (Russian), *Merlík hlavatý* (Czech), *Mykeröpää-muro* (Finnish), *Mykerösavikka* (Finnish), *Pseudoblito to kefaloto* (Greek), *Purpurrod*, *Jordbærspinat* (Danish), *Smultronmålla* (Swedish), *Spinaccio moro* (Italian), *Spinacio moro* (Italian), *Squaw paint*, *Strawberry goosefoot*, *Strawberry spinach*, *Sutoroberii buraito* (Japanese), *Sutoroberii supinacchi* (Japanese), and *Topp-bärmålla* (Swedish).

The flowers are pollinated by wind.

*Capitatum* is derived from Latin *capito* (man with a large head) meaning ‘having a dense head’.

Records suggest that in Alaska the young leaves have been eaten as a cooked vegetable or added raw to salads – while far to the south the North American Gosiute Indians ate the seeds.

The small strawberry-like, red fruit were a source of colour for several tribes. The Thompson tribe are said to have mixed the plant tops with water for writing ink, whereas the Carrier Indians and children of the Tanana tribe in Alaska used the berries to give a red paint. For the Potawatomi the fruit yielded a rouge not only applied as a cosmetic but also a skin paint for tribal markings.

It seems that the Potawatomi also discovered medicinal attributes in strawberry blite as they took it internally for some lung disorders. Records indicate that some of the Navajo tribe however applied it externally to treat black eyes and bruises on the head.

Young leaves have not only been added raw in small quantities to salads but they have also been prepared like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*) as a cooked vegetable. The seeds, previously steeped in water and rinsed, can be cooked for food as well or ground as a flour supplement. The insipid-tasting but nutritious strawberry-like little fruit are eaten locally and the leaves have been used for flavouring stews.

The whole plant is the source of both yellow and green dyes – and the fruit yield an edible red dye which has not only been used in cookery but, as illustrated by some North American Indian tribes, has been suitable for cosmetics and even skin paint.