

Clematis vitalba

[Synonyms : *Clematis virginiana*]

TRAVELLER'S-JOY is a deciduous climbing or trailing shrub. Native to southern Europe, Asia and North Africa, it has slightly sickly-fragrant, greenish-white flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as Baccy plant, *Barbe d'vièr bouonhomme* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Bedwind, Bedwine, Bellywind, Bethwind, Bind-with, Blind-man's-buff, *Bosrank* (Dutch), Boys bacca, Bullbine, Bushy beard, *Clématite des haies* (French), Climbers, *Cudd y Coed* (Welsh), Daddy's beard, Daddy's whiskers, Devil's guts, Devil's twister, Evergreen clematis, Father Christmas, Father time, *Gemeine Waldrebe* (German), *Gewöhnliche Waldrebe* (German), Gipsy's bacca, Grandfather's whiskers, Grandfy's beard, Greybeard, Gypsy's bacca, Hag rope, Halfwood, Hedge feathers, Hedge-vine, Honesty, Ladies' bower, Lady's bower, Love vine, Maiden's hair, Old man, Old man's beard, Old man's woozard, *Plamének plotní* (Czech), *Plamienok plotný* (Slovak), Poor man's friend, *Saksankärhø* (Finnish), Shepherd's delight, *Sipó-do-reino* (Portuguese), Skipping ropes, *Skogsklematis* (Swedish), Smokewood, Smoking cane, Snow in harvest, Tom bacca, Traveler's joy, Tuzzy-muzzy, *Vide-branca* (Portuguese), *Vigne blanche* (French), Virgin's bower, *Vitalba* (Italian), *Waldrebe* (German), White vine, Wild clematis, *Wilde clematis* (Dutch), Wild vine, Willowwind, Withywind, and Woodbine; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of safety.

The flowers are pollinated by bees and hover-flies.

Warning – the whole plant, not least the leaves, is potentially poisonous and should not be taken internally. It can cause severe abdominal pain, purging, gastro-intestinal irritation and death. The sap from the bruised plant can cause blistering, inflammation and sores. Because of its acrid taste animals (for which it can also be fatal) rarely eat it.

Vitalba is made up of Latin *vitis* (vine) and *alba* (white) components meaning 'white vine'. Although traveller's-joy was thought to be poisonous, and most of the plant is now confirmed to be so, the dried plant has been used as cattle fodder.

The hollow stems were (and in some parts of Europe still are) cut into tiny pieces and smoked in pipes like tobacco, and little boys cut off small pieces of wood to smoke them like cigars. Beggars used to wound themselves on the plant intentionally, causing sores, in order to incite pity in towns and villages. They have also been used to make baskets.

People in some European areas still eat the young bitter tasting shoots.

Medicinally, this has sometimes been used in homoeopathic treatments as an alternative to upright Virgin's bower (*Clematis recta*).