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Coptis trifolia

[Synonyms : *Coptis groenlandica*, *Coptis trifolia* subsp. *groenlandica*, *Helleborus pumilus*, *Helleborus trifolius*, *Helleborus trilobus*]

GOLD THREAD is an evergreen perennial. Native to north-eastern Asia (including India, Japan and to Alaska) and also North America (Labrador to Maryland and Tennessee) it has small yellowish-white flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as *Altun ipligi* (Turkish), Cankerroot, *Chynlen* (Chinese), Common gold thread, Coptide, Coptis, *Cottide* (Italian), Gold vegetable, *Mahmira* (Indian), *Mamira* (Indian), *Mishonitita* (Indian), Mouthroot, *Nuang lien* (Chinese), *Savoyarde* (French), *Soulene* (Chinese), Threeleaf goldthread, *Tita* (Assamese), *Uruk* (Arabic), Vegetable gold, and Yellowroot.

Trifolia is made up of Latin *tri-* (three) and *-folia* (leaved) components with reference to the three leaflets that make up the leaf.

The underground stem is the source of a yellow dye, and in Siberia and Canada this was used to dye wool and skins – not least the latter by the Potawatomi and Chippewa North American Indian tribes.

For North American Indian tribes, including the Mohican, Menominee, Chippewa, Malecite, Iroquois, Micmac, Potawatomi and Penobscot the plant seems to have been especially popular as a source of medicine for oral problems, particularly soreness or teething difficulties suffered by babies and children. In addition the Iroquois used it to treat some stomach and venereal problems, jaundice, sore eyes and worms. They also used it not only when it was necessary to cause vomiting (especially in babies) but also to ease vomiting.

Medicinally, the dried plant has been used by herbalists to cure thrush in children, has been given as a remedy for ulcerated mouths and stomach upsets, and has been prescribed in treatments (with other ingredients) to combat alcoholism. Today it is particularly used as a tonic to improve digestion.