

Cuscuta epithymum

[Synonyms : *Cuscuta acutiflora*, *Cuscuta campanulata*, *Cuscuta coriariae*, *Cuscuta epithymiphyta*, *Cuscuta europaea* var. *epithymum*, *Cuscuta hygrogenes*, *Cuscuta muelleri*, *Cuscuta trifolii*, *Cuscuta ulicis*]

DODDER is an anticlockwise twining, parasitic annual or biennial. Native to Europe, it has tiny fragrant, white or pink flowers with protruding stamens.

It is also known as Adder's cotton, Ailweed, Beggarweed, Bride's laces, Clover devil, Clover dodder, Common dodder, *Cuscute du thym* (French), Devil's guts, Devil's net, Devil's thread, Dodder of thyme, Epiphany, Fairy hair, *Klein Dodder* (Afrikaans), Hairweed, Hairy bind, Hellbind, Hellweed, *Herbe d'emeute* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Kokotice povázka* (Czech), *Kuskuto timiana* (Esperanto), Lady's laces, Lesser dodder, *Llindag Lleiaf* (Welsh), Maiden's hair, Mulberry, Red tangle, Scald, Scaldweed, Strangle-tare, Strangleweed, and *Touothelle* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of baseness, and meanness.

Warning – dodder should not be taken internally if suffering from piles. It can be poisonous for animals, particularly horses, although no cases have been officially recorded in Britain.

Epithymum is derived from Greek *epi-* (upon) and the genus name *Thymus* components with reference to parasitic qualities with thyme as the host.

Despite the species name, botanists note that this species is also partial in Europe to clover *Trifolium*, heather *Calluna vulgaris* and gorse *Ulex europaeus* as host.

Certainly the common names like Bride's or Lady's laces are descriptive of the thread-like stems, and Strangle-tare well explains how dodder throttles to death any plants it winds through.

It is likely that the only body that has any appreciation for this throttling plant is that of the physicians'. Of all the different species of dodder this one when it feeds off thyme (*Thymus*) is believed by herbalists to have the greatest benefit medicinally.

Medicinally it was used by herbalists to treat melancholia, fainting, heart complaints, jaundice and kidney ailments. It can be used today for treating liver, urinary and spleen disorders. It can also be used in homoeopathic treatments.