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### *Delphinium elatum*

[Synonyms : *Delphinium alpinum*, *Delphinium atropurpureum*, *Delphinium caucasicum*, *Delphinium cultorum*, *Delphinium dasycarpum*, *Delphinium elatum* subsp. *austriacum*, *Delphinium intermedium*, *Delphinium tirolense*]

**DELPHINIUM** is a perennial. Native to Europe it has spurred, brown eyed, blue flowers. It is also known as *Alpen-Rittersporn* (German), Alpine delphinium, Alpine larkspur, Bee larkspur, Candle larkspur, *Dauphinelle élevée* (French), *Isoritarinkannus* (Finnish), *Storriddarsporre* (Swedish),, *Stračia nôžka vysoká* (Slovak), *Stračka vysoká* (Czech), and *Stračka vyvýšená* (Czech); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of lightness.

The flowers are dried and the seeds removed and destroyed.

Warning – the whole plant can contain poisonous substances with a potency that can be variable and cannot be predetermined. These act on the central nervous system and can cause abdominal pain, constipation, nausea, respiratory paralysis and general weakness (due to which vomit may enter the lungs and cause respiratory difficulties). The seeds can be a hazard as they drop out of the plant easily. The plant is poisonous for most animals.

This species is a parent of many of today's varieties.

Delphinium is a protected species in some areas.

*Elatum* means 'tall'.

It is believed to have been introduced to Britain from France during the first Elizabethan era in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

A Royal Horticultural Society show in 1910 has gone down in legend for its display of delphiniums. On the 5<sup>th</sup> July that year visitors to the Show were able to admire a 'Blue Tent' formed with 30,000 cut lengths of delphiniums. (This was exhibited by Amos Perry of a noted Enfield company of that time, Messrs. Perry.)

In Britain it was traditional to use a tincture of the delphinium as a means of getting rid of lice in the hair.