

*Descurainia sophia*

[Synonyms : *Sisymbrium sophia*, *Sisymbrium tripinnatum*, *Sophia sophia*]

**FLIXWEED** is an annual or biennial. Native to Asia, Europe and North Africa, it has tiny, greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Berwr y Fam* (Welsh), *Besenrauke* (German), Fine-leaved hedge mustard, Flaxweed, Fluxweed, Herb Sophia, *Sisymbre sagesse* (French), *Sophienkraut* (German), *Sophienrauke* (German), *Stillfrö* (Swedish), Tansy mustard, and *Úhorník mnohodílný* (Czech).

Flixweed is said to have been so named as at one time it was used as a remedy for dysentery. Occasionally the seeds have been used locally as a substitute for black mustard (*Brassica nigra*).

The plant came to be known to a few North American Indian tribes. Some of the Keresan Indians harnessed fertilizing and fungicidal qualities when they put leaves with stored seed corn or soaked the corn in a plant infusion to enhance ripening.

The Kawaiisu and some of the Paiute Indians both made a drink with the dried seeds – the latter roasted them for this purpose. As food it was a staple for the Paiute tribe who not only made a porridge of the roasted and ground seeds – or ate them mixed with snow, like an ice cream – but also stored them for future use, as did the Kawaiisu. Some of the Navajo Indians also made the ground seeds into little cakes.

Flixweed was fed to sheep by some of the Navajo tribe, and the Paiute Indians applied ground seed poultices to sores on their horses.

Some of the North American Navajo tribe used a plant poultice to ease toothache.

Medicinally, herbalists used to recommend an infusion of the plant for treating asthma, the juice was respected as a remedy for coughs, hoarseness and sore throats, and the seeds were included in a special cure for sciatica.