

Dictamnus albus

[Synonyms : *Dictamnus dasycarpus*, *Dictamnus fraxinella*, *Dictamnus gymnostylis*, *Fraxinella dictamnus*]

BURNING BUSH is a shrub. Native from central and southern Europe to northern China and the Himalayas, it has fragrant, rose-coloured (occasionally white or red-purple) flowers with purplish, darker veins and long stamens.

It is also known as *Ak girid otu* (Turkish), Bastard dittany, Candle plant, *Dictame* (French), *Dictame blanc* (French), *Diptam* (German, Swedish), *Dittamo bianco* (Italian), Dittany, *Echte Diptam* (German), False dittany, Fire plant, *Flammender Busch* (German), *Fraksinelo* (Esperanto), *Frassinello* (Italian), Fraxinella, Gas plant, *Jasanec biely* (Slovak), *Limonelle dittamo-frassin* (Italian), *Mooseksenpalavapensas* (Finnish), *Moses brinnande buske* (Swedish), Ouzo plant, *Ouzo votano* (Greek), Spit-fire plant, *Třemdava bílá* (Czech), *Vuurwerkplant* (Dutch): *Weissadiptamella* (German), *Weisser Diptam* (German, Swedish), White dittany, and White fraxinella.

All parts, but especially the flowers and subsequent seed pods, emit an inflammable vapour. If the weather is hot or dry and cloudy this plant can be ignited and a flame will flash over it without harm to the plant.

Essence is extracted from the flowers and roots.

Warning – burning bush should only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner.

All parts of the plant, particularly the seed pods, are poisonous and should not be taken internally in large doses – or at all if pregnant. Contact with the plant can sometimes cause dermatitis when the skin is subsequently exposed to sunlight.

Albus means ‘white’ with reference to the flowers.

The young leaves are picked to make a tea in some parts of Siberia.

Authorities note that burning bush was a popular garden plant in 16th Century Britain when Elizabeth 1 (1533-1603) was on the throne.

The shrub’s inflammable nature made it a sacred plant for the Fire Worshippers of India.

Distilled water made from the plant used to be a desirable cosmetic.

At the turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries the perfumery and drinks industries can include this shrub’s essence on a commercial scale among their ingredients.

Medicinally, the plant was recommended by herbalists for treating nervous disorders, intermittent fevers and various skin ailments. It can be used today in homoeopathic treatments.