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*Dorema ammoniacum*

[Synonyms : *Diserneston gummiferum*]

**GUM AMMONIAC** is a perennial. Native from Iran to India it has small, white flowers.

It is also known as Ammoniacum, and Persian ammoniacum.

A milky resin exudes naturally from the stems through holes made by beetles. Either tears of this dry where they emerge or they fall to the ground mixing with stones, etc. It is collected both from the stems and the ground beneath the plant and is referred to as Gum ammoniac.

*Ammoniacum* is derived from the name of the place from which the plant's resin was collected hundreds of years ago, the Temple of Jupiter Ammon in the Libyan Desert.

This species is the principal source of gum ammoniac but there are other plants from which it is also obtained and these grow throughout the Middle East and as far north as northern Russia.. Much is exported by India from Mumbai (known for a long time in the West as Bombay) in the form of pale yellow tear ammoniac, or lump or block ammoniac. The latter will most likely have been collected from the ground and is not normally used for medicinal purposes, certainly in Britain.

It was familiar to the ancient Greek civilization and was used in incense. Mention of it appears in the writings of the celebrated Greek physician, Dioscorides (1<sup>st</sup> Century AD).

Today the resin is used commercially by the perfumery industry and for making incense.

Medicinally, the resin's use goes back for hundreds of years. Primarily herbalists have recommended it for treating respiratory conditions for which it is still employed today. It is also a commercial ingredient used by the pharmaceutical industry.