

Equisetum sylvaticum

[Synonyms : *Equisetum capillare*, *Equisetum sylvaticum* var. *multiramosum*, *Equisetum sylvaticum* var. *pauciramosum*]

WOOD HORSETAIL is a perennial. Native to northern temperate areas (particularly in Europe and North America) it has drooping green fronds of pencil-like strands.

It is also known as Fairy larch, Forest horsetail, *Praslička lesná* (Slovak), *Přeslička lesní* (Czech), *Schachtelhalm* (German), *Skogsfräken* (Swedish), *Skov-padderok* (Danish), *Wald-Schachtelhalm* (German), Woodland horsetail, and Wood rush.

Warning – this species can be poisonous for animals and they normally avoid it, fresh, when grazing.

Sylvaticum means ‘wild, of or from woods or forests’.

Although the 18th Century Swedish naturalist and physician, Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778), recorded that wood horsetail was considered excellent food for horses in some parts of Sweden where it formed their principal food, it has since been shown that most horsetails can be extremely poisonous for them. Although it is less harmful for cattle they tend, naturally, to avoid it.

Across the Atlantic wood horsetails are said to have been used medicinally by North American Indian tribes. The Kiowa are believed to have administered a tea made from the stems in treatments for fluid retention (as did some of the Chippewa tribe and also the Menominee), and poultices of pulverized stem are said to have been used by the Kiowa and Menominee Indians to stem external bleeding. Some of the Alaskan Inuits prescribed a tea to stop internal haemorrhages.