

Equisetum telmateia

[Synonyms : *Equisetum braunii*, *Equisetum eburneum*, *Equisetum fluviatile*, *Equisetum macrostachyon*, *Equisetum majus*, *Equisetum maximum*, *Equisetum telmateia* var. *braunii*]

GREAT HORSETAIL is a perennial. Native to northern temperate regions it has pale green stems with many slender whorled branches.

It is also known as *Elfenbens-Padderok* (Danish), Giant horsetail, Great water horsetail, Ivory horsetail, *Jättefräken* (Swedish), *Praslička obrovská* (Slovak), *Přeslička největší* (Czech), *Přeslička obrovská* (Czech), *Riesen-Schachtelhalm* (German), River horsetail, *Schachtelhalm* (German), *Skrzyp olbrzymi* (Polish), and Water horsetail.

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

Telmateia is derived from Greek *telmato-* (marsh, swamp) component.

Great horsetail is the largest of the species in this genus found in Europe today.

In North America the roots were used by the Swinomish, Cowlitz, Quileute and some of the Salish Indian tribes for basketry, while the leaves or stems provided scouring material for the Skokomish Indians. Both the Yuki and Swinomish tribes polished their arrows with the latter, and some of the Kwakiutl Indian tribe used the stems and leaves on their canoes and other wooden objects.

Great horsetail provided food for quite a few North American Indian tribes. The Klallam, Saanich and Nitinaht Indians all ate the sprouting shoots (fertile and infertile). The roots were eaten by the Swinomish, Cowlitz and Quinault Indian tribes, and the young stems provided food for the Makah and Quileute tribes. Records also mention that it was not unknown in the Nitinaht tribe for one of its members to have to resort to consuming the hollow stems (with the trapped water in their segments) when water was in short supply.

In the Vancouver area in western Canada some Indian tribes used the black fibre for making baskets.

This plant according to authorities served as a source of medicine for several North American tribes. The Thompson Indians took a plant decoction to treat some urinary conditions, and the Yuki tribe prescribed it specifically for fluid retention. It offered a blood tonic for the Saanich Indians, and it was an ingredient in poultices applied by the Kwakiutl Indians to cuts and sores.

As in North America the young shoots of both fertile and infertile stems were eaten raw or boiled by Europeans.

In Europe too stems of great horsetail were used for polishing metal as were those of closely related species.