

Erodium cicutarium

[Synonyms : *Erodium danicum*, *Erodium millefolium*, *Erodium moranense*, *Erodium praecox*, *Geranium cicutarium*]

COMMON STORK'S-BILL is a semi-evergreen annual to perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) and the Mediterranean, it has geranium-like, purple or pink flowers. It is also known as Alfilaria, *Alfileres* (Spanish), Alfileria, Alfilerilla, *Alfileritos* (Spanish), Alfiliria, Alfillarilla, *Bociannik rozpukovitý* (Slovak), California filaree, Clocks, Common crowfoot, Cranesbill, Cutleaf filaree, Filagree, Filaree, Five-leaved grass, *Gemeiner Reiherschnabel* (German), *Gewöhnlicher Reiherschnabel* (German), *Hejrenæb* (Danish), Hemlock geranium, Hemlock stork's-bill, Heron's bill, Nenn's bill, *Piègnes* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Pig y Creyr* (Welsh), *Pig y Crëyr Cegidaidd* (Welsh), Pin clover, Pin grass, Pinkets, Pink needle, Pin weed, Pook-needles, *Pumpava obecná* (Czech), *Pumpava rozpuková* (Czech), Redstem, Red-stem filace, Red-stem filaree, Red-stemmed filarel, Red-stem stork's bill, *Skatnäva* (Swedish), Stork's-bill, and Wild musk. Warning – it can be poisonous for some animals, although there are no official records of poisoning in Britain.

Cicutarium is derived from the genus name *Cicuta* meaning 'like cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*) or plants in the *Cicuta* genus'.

In the Scottish Hebridean Islands the roots used to be dug up for their dye.

It is believed to have been introduced to North America (where it is now naturalized) from the Mediterranean region – probably by the Spaniards. There some of the Navajo North American Indians used it on their ceremonial prayer sticks.

Several North American Indian tribes recognized common stork's-bill as a food. The Costanoan Indians are said to have eaten the raw stems, Hopi children chewed the roots like sweets, and the young leaves provided a vegetable for the Diegueño Indians.

Some of their animals were also fed on it. Records show that parts of the Navajo tribe considered it to be suitable fodder for sheep as general feed, while the Kawaiisu viewed it as forage for cattle, horses and rabbits.

Among one or two North American tribes the plant was also a source of medicine. Some of the Navajo Indians used it as a disinfectant on bites from wild animals, and the Zuni tribe used a chewed root poultice to heal some skin disorders. The latter also took a root infusion for stomach-ache, while the Costanoan Indians used a leaf infusion in their treatment of typhoid fever.

In California in the United States it has been grown as a bee plant, and also on a commercial basis for forage and hay.

Medicinally, the plant has been used in Africa to treat dysentery, and fluid retention.