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Euphorbia

Euphorbiaceae

Euphorbia is supposed classically to commemorate a brother of Antonius Musa (who was physician to Augustus), Euphorbus. Around 24 BC Euphorbus was physician to King Juba II (c. 50 BC-24AD), ruler of both Numidia and Mauretania (ancient North African Berber kingdoms). He was educated in Rome and his wife was the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra. The King is said to have chosen the name for the plant in honour of his physician and also to have written a Paper on the plant's medicinal uses. However there are some authorities who believe the genus name is derived from Greek *eu* (well, good) and *phorbe* (pasture, fodder) meaning 'well fed'.

The acrid milky latex exuded by most of the 1000 species of *Euphorbia* can be extremely poisonous.