

Euphorbia helioscopia

[Synonyms : *Galarhoeus helioscopius*, *Tithymalus helioscopius*]

SUN SPURGE is an annual. Native to Europe it has greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as Cat's milk, Churn staff, Devil apple tree, Devil's churnstaff, Devil's kirnstaff, Devil's milk, *Erba calenzola* (Italian), *Euphorbe réveil-matin* (French), Fairy dell, *Fouriole* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Ganda buti* (Punjabi), *Ghalatsidha* (Greek), *Hèrbe à véthues* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Hirruseeah* (Hindi), Kirnstaff, *Kroonkruid* (Dutch), *Kroontjeskruid* (Dutch), Little goodie, Little guid, *Llaeth Ysgyfarnog* (Welsh), Mad woman's milk, Mamma's milk, Mare's milk, Milkweed, Milkwort, *Mliečnik kolovratec* (Slovak), Mousemilk, Potatoes-in-the-dish, *Pryšec kolovratec* (Czech), *Réveil-matin* (French), *Revormstörel* (Swedish), Saturday night's pepper, Saturday's pepper, Seven sisters, *Son Euphorbia* (Afrikaans), *Sonnenwendwolfsmilch* (German), Sun euphorbia, *Tenghud raddiena* (Maltese), Virgin Mary's nipple, Wartgrass, Wart spurge, Wartweed, Wartwort, Wetweed, Whitlow-grass, *Wilczomlecz obrotny* (Polish), Wolf's milk, and Wretweed.

Warning – all parts of sun spurge are potentially poisonous and may have a drastic purgative effect and cause a burning sensation in the mouth, delirium, paleness, dizziness, gastric upset, irregular pulse and collapse. The sap is an irritant.

Helioscopia is derived from Greek *helio-* (sun) and *scopein* (to look) components with reference to the way in which the plant moves towards the sun.

On the Isle of Man sun spurge juice is alleged to have been used as a sexual aid, particularly by local fishermen. Apparently the penis swells immediately it is massaged with this juice and any extreme discomfort is said to be eased with milk (preferably sour).

Sun spurge came to be known by a few of the North American Indian tribes – and the Iroquois added it to their medicine chest. They used it for babies suffering from tummy aches.

Medicinally, like other closely related plants it has been used in the past to treat some venereal disease, warts and even sore eyelids. In India the seeds combined with roasted pepper have been used to treat cholera.