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Euphorbia resinifera

[Synonyms : *Euphorbia mogadorensis*, *Euphorbia officinarum*, *Euphorbia sansalvador*]

EUPHORBIVM is a cactus-like, succulent shrub. It is native to North Africa.

It is also known as *Farfayun* (Urdu), Official spurge, Orbium, Poisonous gum-thistle, *Prustkåda* (Swedish), and Resin spurge.

Warning – euphorbium is extremely poisonous and should neither be tasted nor inhaled. It causes sneezing, followed by skin and nasal passage irritation, vomiting, diarrhoea and death.

Resinifera is derived from Latin *resina* (resin) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components.

Some authorities have noted that this species has held the dubious distinction of being the first succulent plant to be referred to in history. In AD 70 the celebrated Roman natural historian, Pliny the Elder (23-79) is understood to have recorded that King Juba II (c. 50 BC-24AD) of Numidia in North Africa was believed to have found euphorbium in the Atlas mountains and that the plant was the source of a respected medicinal juice.

The poisonous resin (it will exude from a cut stem and it solidifies on contact with the air) has been an ingredient in paints applied to ships' hulls.

Euphorbium was once used in veterinary medicine.

Medicinally, it has been used in the past by herbalists as a drastic purgative, and some authorities note that in India it has been part of treatments for sciatica.