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Ferula galbaniflua

[Synonyms : *Ferula gummosa*, *Ferula gumosa*, *Ferula persica*]

GALBANUM is a perennial. Native to the Middle East (particularly Iran) it has tiny, yellowish white flowers.

It is also known as *Gandabiroza* (Hindi), and *Perisan asafetida*.

The solid stems and root crown ooze a milky white gum resin that hardens.

Oil known as ‘galbanum’ is distilled from the semi-hard, gum resin.

Galbaniflua is derived from Latin *galbanum* (name for the resinous sap) and/or *galbinus* (greenish-yellow) and *fluo* (to flow) components meaning ‘yielding a greenish-yellow sap’.

The medicinal properties of galbanum were known to the Arabs (who referred to it with the term *kinnah*) and also to the ancient Greeks. Galbanum was one of the at least 36 ingredients used by Mithridates (c.132-63 BC), the 1st Century King of Pontus (northern Turkey), in a poison antidote (known as *Antidotum Mithradaticum* or *Theriac*) which he took daily to acquire an overall immunity – an important consideration if it is remembered that he gained his position of power by poisoning his opposition. It was also an ingredient in incense that was burnt in Hebrew temples.

The oil is used commercially today by the toiletry industry.

Medicinally, it has been employed as a stimulating expectorant for chronic bronchitis and in pill form for hysteria. Today it is sometimes one of the ingredients in plasters that can be applied to ulcers.