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Galega officinalis

[Synonyms : *Galega bicolor*, *Galega persica*, *Galega tricolor*]

GOAT'S-RUE is a perennial. Native to southern Europe and western Asia, it has small pea-like, bluish-purple (sometimes pink or white) flowers.

It is also known as Cheese rennet, Common goat's rue, European goat's rue, *Faux indigo* (French), French honeysuckle, French lilac, Galega, *Galego oficina* (Esperanto), *Geissraute* (German), *Getärt* (Swedish), *Getruta* (Swedish), Italian fitch, *Jestřabina lékařská* (Czech), *Lavanèse* (French), *Pestilenzkraut* (German), and Professor weed; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of reason, and rustic beauty.

Warning – goat's-rue should be used with care. The fresh plant particularly has poisoned and killed livestock.

Officinalis means 'of the shop (usually the apothecary's or herbalist's)'. Certain plants used for medicinal purposes, whether of actual or legendary value, were kept readily available and acquired this name.

Goat's-rue (as shown in tests in France in 1873) is able to stimulate an increased flow of milk in some animals such as cows by as much as 50%, a quality that can be applied similarly to women. It has been shown that the reaction is most effective if an infusion of the fresh plant is used. However it is understood that not only can long usage of the plant instil a pronounced dislike for it but that it has also caused poisoning and death, whether fresh or dried.

Country-folk in the north of England once used the flowers as an alternative to rennet when making cheese.

Medicinally, herbalists used the plant in the past in the treatment of plague, fevers, smallpox, worms and snake bites.