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Geum rivale

[Synonyms : *Geum nutans*, *Geum pallidum*]

WATER AVENS is a perennial. Native to northern temperate areas (including Canada, northern Europe, Siberia and generally in north-eastern North America), it has small, dark veined, dull purplish or orange-pink flowers.

It is also known as Avens root, *Bach-Nelkenwurz* (German), Bennet, Bill button, Billy's button, Chocolate, Chocolate plant, Chocolate root, Cock and hens, Cure-all, Drooping avens, Egyptian, *Eng-nellikerod* (Danish), Evan's root, Fairies' bath, Granny's bonnet, Granny's cap, Granny's nightcap, *Humbleblomster* (Swedish), *Humbleblomster svalört* (Swedish), Indian chocolate, *Knikkend Nagelkruid* (Dutch), *Kuklik potoční* (Czech), *Kuklik potočný* (Slovak), London basket, Maiden hair, *Mapgoll Glan y Dŵr* (Welsh), *Nelkenwurz* (German), *Niittykellukka* (Finnish), Nodding avens, *Ojakellukka* (Finnish), Old woman's bonnet, Purple avens, Soldier's buttons, Throat root, Throatwort, *Vanligt humleblomster* (Swedish), and Water flower.

The flowers are pollinated by bees.

Warning – it should be used with caution medicinally as excessive doses can have unpleasant side effects, including acute abdominal pain.

Rivale means 'growing by streams'.

Records show that the root was used as medicine by several North American Indian tribes. It was used by the Iroquois for easing diarrhoea and also by the Malecite and Micmac tribes who seem to have especially valued it for treating this problem in children. In fact the latter also appear to have used it for children suffering from coughs, colds or dysentery. Some of the Algonkin took it to stem internal bleeding and the Iroquois also used it to treat fever.

Today water avens is used commercially to make flavoured drinks.

Medicinally, water avens has similar uses to those of wood avens, *Geum urbanum*, (as treatment for stomach upsets, diarrhoea, chest ailments, wind and poisonous bites), and was once popular as a protection from plague. In North America it has been used to treat tuberculosis.