

Grindelia squarrosa

[Synonyms : *Donia squarrosa*, *Grindelia grandiflora*]

GUMWEED is a biennial or perennial. Native to western North America it has sticky, daisy-like heads of yellow flowers with wide, yellow central discs.

It is also known as August flower, *Bakskitits* (Pawnee North American Indian), Broad-leaved gumplant, Californian gum plant, Curlycup grindelia, Curlycup gumweed, Curlytop gumweed, *Grindelia* (Swedish), *Grindelie rozkladitá* (Czech), Gumplant, *Pezhe-wasek* (Omaha and Ponca North American Indian), *Pte-ichi-yuha* (Dakota North American Indian), Resinweed, Rosinweed, Scaly grindelia, Sticky heads, Subalpine gumweed, Tarweed, and *Zaplevanka rozkladitá* (Czech).

The flowers are pollinated by bees, and yield a nectar that is said to make an inferior honey.

The flowering heads and the leaves yield an essential oil known as Grindelol.

Warning – the bitter tasting leaves are generally avoided by cattle.

Squarrosa means ‘with parts horizontally or curved backwards at the ends’.

For both the Pawnee and Flathead North American Indian tribes gumweed offered a horse medicine. The former used it for saddle sores and, of a more dubious nature, the latter rubbed flower heads on the horses’ hooves as a protection against injury.

As a source of human medicine gumweed seems to have been in demand among North American Indian tribes. The Crow, Shoshoni, Paiute and Flathead Indians used it generally for treating various lung problems, and the Flathead, Paiute, Gosiute, Shoshoni and Crow used it for easing coughs. It was a remedy for whooping-cough and asthma among the Flathead and Crow tribes, and pneumonia was treated with it by the Paiute and Flathead Indians. The Ponca and Flathead prescribed it for tuberculosis, and the Flathead and Crow Indians and some of the Dakota tribe all used it to treat colds. For the Shoshoni gumweed provided a remedy for smallpox and measles and it could also be used to cause vomiting, and could be applied to swellings. The Paiute and Shoshoni Indians used the plant to treat some urinary problems, the Cree Indians and some of the Dakota tribe used it for kidney ailments, and the Blackfoot tribe used it in remedies for liver complaints. For the Montana Indian and Shoshoni tribes it also offered a treatment for some venereal diseases. It was a remedy for various stomach upsets for the Shoshoni and Dakota Indians, especially Dakota children, and the latter also received it to ease indigestion. Some of the Dakota tribes used it to stem internal bleeding and the Cree not only took it as a contraceptive but also turned to it for some period disorders. Among the Mahuna it provided a disinfectant which was applied to cuts and the Cheyenne used it for sores and skin diseases. The latter also rubbed it around the eyes to treat snow-blindness.

It was used as a tea substitute and the leaves have been chewed.

Medicinally, in folk medicine, it has been used in the past for whooping-cough, and can still be chosen today in the treatment of chest ailments, dermatitis, ivy poisoning and burns.