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Harpagophytum procumbens

[Synonyms : *Pterodiscus aurantiacus*, *Pterodiscus procumbens*]

DEVIL'S CLAW is a trailing perennial. Native to southern and eastern Africa (particularly the Kalahari Desert and Namibia), it has thorny green tendrils and reddish-violet flowers.

It is also known as *Afrikanische Teufelskralle* (German), *Djävulsklo* (Swedish), Grapple plant, Grappleweed, *Harpagojuuri* (Finnish), *Leeudoring* (Afrikaans), and Wool spider.

Warning – devil's claw should not be taken internally during pregnancy.

Procumbens means 'prostrate or low-growing'.

The common name Devil's claw refers to the large claw-like fruit that have been known to ensnare wild animals and livestock in their vicinity, crippling them – often to the point of death. The spines attach themselves to passing feet (causing lameness) or to the bodies of animals such as antelope (which are said to be particularly vulnerable) or to the jaws of grazing cattle (causing starvation).

In Madagascar the fruit provide the bait for mousetraps.

Medicinally, devil's claw has long been respected by South African Bushmen, Ngunis, Hottentots and Europeans. Research at the end of the 20th Century in France and Germany indicates reason for this. It has been found beneficial in the form of an infusion of the powdered root, particularly in the treatment of fevers, arthritis and other painful inflammatory problems.