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Heuchera americana

[Synonyms : *Heuchera glauca*]

COMMON ALUM ROOT is an evergreen perennial. Native to eastern North America it has many tiny, inconspicuous greenish-white or purplish flowers with protruding stamens. It is also known as Alum-root, American alumroot, American sanicle, Cliffweed, Crag-jangle, Ground maple, Mapleleaf, Rock geranium, and Split rock.

Warning – excessive use medicinally can cause gastroenteritis and liver and kidney problems. The flowers are pollinated by bees.

Americana means ‘of or from America (North or South)’.

Several North American Indian tribes viewed the plant as a source of medicine. Unlike the Meskwaki Indians who used the leaves to treat various skin disorders the Chickasaw, Cherokee, Creek and Choctaw Indians all preferred to apply the root. The Cherokee also took the root for some bowel disorders, dysentery and piles, while the Menominee prescribed it for various stomach problems. It was taken as a tonic by the Choctaw, Creek and Chickasaw tribes.

The root (it contains tannin) can provide an alternative to alum for fixing dyes.

At the end of the 18th Century European settlers are said to have been using common alum root to cure cancer and in the following Century they turned to a root decoction for easing sore throats.