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Hypericum

Hypericaceae

[*Guttiferae*]

Hypericum is a corruption of *hypereikon*, a Greek name for the plants derived from Greek *hyper-* (over, above) and *ereike* (heath, heather) or *eikono-* (likeness, picture) components with reference either to its natural habitat or to a past practice for repelling evil spirits for which some of the species were suspended over pictures.

A species in this genus was one of the at least 36 ingredients used by Mithridates (c.132-63 BC), the 1st Century King of Pontus (northern Turkey), in a poison antidote (known as Antidotum Mithradaticum or Theriac) which he took daily to acquire an overall immunity – an important consideration if it is remembered that he gained his position of power by poisoning his opposition