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Krameria triandra

[Synonyms : *Krameria lappacea*]

RHATANY is a semi-parasitic shrub. Native to Peru it has shining, red flowers

It is also known as *Antacusma* (German), *Echte Ratanhia* (German), *Furfur* (Persian), Krameria root, *Lubanat* (Arabic), *Mapato* (German), *Maradu* (Hindi), Peruvian krameria, Peruvian rhatany, *Raiz para los dientes* (Spanish), *Ratania* (Spanish), Ratany, Red rhatany, and Rhatanhia.

Triandra means ‘with three stamens’.

The common name Rhatany is believed to come from a Peruvian Indian language and is said to describe the plant’s creeping nature.

Rhatany was introduced to Europe in 1796. The red colouring matter extracted from its root (often referred to as Ratanhia-red), seems to be similar to that obtained from tormentil root (*Potentilla erecta*) and today at the turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries was superseding the tormentil extract.

Roughness in Portuguese port wines was sometimes achieved by adding a strong tincture of the roots in brandy.

In past centuries Peruvian women used to chew this root (which would have turned their saliva red) to preserve their teeth and in recent times some commercial tooth powders have included it as an ingredient.

Medicinally, herbalists have used the root to treat diarrhoea, dysentery, and period and urinal problems. It also offered a gargle for various oral disorders. Today it can still be used internally for diarrhoea and haemorrhages, applied externally for chilblains and wounds, and used as a gargle for pharyngitis or as a mouthwash for gingivitis.