

Lomatium nudicaule

[Synonyms : *Cogswellia nudicaulis*, *Peucedanum leiocarpum*, *Peucedanum leiocarpum campestre*, *Peucedanum nudicaulis*, *Seseli leiocarpum*, *Smyrniium nudicaule*]

INDIAN CELERY is a perennial. Native to western North America it has pale yellow flowers. It is also known as Barestem biscuitroot, Barestem desert parsley, Cous, Indian consumption plant, Licorice, Pestle lomatium, and Pestle parsnip.

Nudicaule is derived from Latin *nudus* (bare, naked, unclothed) and *caulis* (stalk) components meaning 'bare-stemmed'.

The raw stems and the earlier young leaves have provided food for several North American Indian tribes. The Thompson and Atsugewi Indians have eaten the leaves as a vegetable, but the stems (a bit like celery, *Apium graveolens* var. *dulce*) seem to have been more popular and records show that these were eaten by some of the Okanagan-Colville, by the Atsugewi, the Paiute and the Thompson tribes. Thompson Indians made a tea from the leaves, and they not only used the leaves for flavouring savoury dishes but also preserved them for Winter food.

Superstitious practice is also associated with the plant. Not only were the seeds burnt by Nitinaht Indians for preservation from illness and evil spirits and they were used by Kwakiutl hunters to obtain protection from harm, but they were also burnt to fumigate the homes of Saanich, Cowichan and Songish Indians to repel ghosts.

The plant's scent was valued by some North American tribes. Both the Nitinaht and the Thompson Indians are said to have used it as perfume, and the Nitinaht also used the seeds and leaves to lure their prey when out hunting or fishing.

As a source of medicine the plant seems to have attracted some respect and several North American Indian tribes are said to have used it to treat tuberculosis after they had been exposed to the illness with the arrival of the European settlers.. The Kwakiutl Indians used it to treat stomach upsets, female disorders, coughs, pain generally and headaches – and it was also taken as a laxative. They, the Songish, Nitinaht, Saanich, Thompson, Cowichan and Kwakiutl tribes all chose it for treating colds, and with the exception of the Thompson Indians they also prescribed it for easing sore throats. The Thompson tribe apart from the foregoing used it to cause sweating (when this was necessary) and to ease fever.

Both the raw and cooked root are edible. It has been roasted as a vegetable and also dried and ground for flavouring savoury dishes such as soups and stews. The young leaves and shoots with their celery-like (*Apium graveolens* var. *dulce*) flavour have also provided a cooked vegetable and a soup flavouring, as well as in infusion with the flowers a beverage.

The aromatic seed has been burnt not only as incense in the home but also as a mosquito repellent.