

Lupinus albus

[Synonyms : *Lupinus sativus*, *Lupinus termis*]

LUPIN (English, French) is an annual. Native to the Mediterranean it has white or pale blue-flushed white flowers.

It is also known as Egyptian lupin, Field lupine, *Lupina bílá* (Czech), *Lupine* (German), *Lupino* (Italian), *Tirmis* (Arabic), *Turmas* (Hindi, Urdu), *Turmuz* (Bengali), *Vitlupin* (Swedish), *Vlčí bob bílý* (Czech), *Weisslupine* (German), White lupin, White lupine, Wolf bean, *Wolfsbohne* (German), and *Yabani turmus* (Turkish); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of always happy (white), fancifulness (red), and voraciousness.

The seeds are edible when they have been processed. They yield an edible oil.

Albus means ‘white’.

Lupin was used by the ancient Egyptians for flavouring beer. The plant was also grown by the ancient Greeks and the Romans for food, both for human and animal consumption. It is alleged that the 5th Century Greek painter, Protogenes who had a home on the Island of Rhodes, lived on lupin seeds and water (the former supposedly for imaginative inspiration) when he was painting a hunting scene. During festivals in ancient Rome cooked lupin was distributed free to the poor. The use of lupins in the kitchen spread to some other European countries but had lost favour by about the 12th or 13th Centuries. The seeds have provided a coffee substitute.

In England the London herbalist, John Parkinson (1567-1650), wrote that the fumes from burning lupin seeds (probably at that time those of white lupin) would repel gnats.

An unusual botanical function took place in Hamburg in 1917 – a ‘Lupin’ banquet. It was addressed by a Dr. Thoms, a German professor who gave a Paper on the lupin’s many possible uses. Some of these were then illustrated at the meeting at which lupin soup was served from a table covered with a cloth made from lupin fibre. The soup was followed by lupin beefsteak which had been roasted in lupin oil, and it was accompanied by lupin bread (with lupin margarine and cheese made using lupin albumen). The lecture and ‘feast’ were then brought to a conclusion with lupin coffee and lupin liqueur. Finally delegates were offered lupin soap with which they could wash their hands, and paper and envelopes made from lupin fibre (the latter carrying lupin adhesive for the envelope’s closure) in the event that they wished to express their appreciation.

Today outside their natural habitat lupins attract little interest beyond their ornamental value. However in the East and in Italy a very large seed of one of the species of lupin is preserved in brine and offered as a cocktail snack.

Cosmetically the seeds were also included as an ingredient in Western beauty preparations up to about the 18th Century. Today their use has been revived and the seeds, as lupin flour, are used by the cosmetics industry in face masks.

Modern interest in the plant has been centred on the possibility that it could assist in the absorption of radiation.

Lupin is sometimes cultivated today for fodder.

Medicinally, lupin seeds were recommended by herbalists for treating ulcers and various skin disorders.

It is the birthday flower for 8th November.

