

*Lycopodium clavatum*

[Synonyms : *Lepidotis clavata*, *Lycopodium aristatum*, *Lycopodium aristatum* var. *desvauxianum*, *Lycopodium aristatum* var. *incurvum*, *Lycopodium aristatum* var. *robustius*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *aristatum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *desvauxianum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *equisetoides*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *eristachys*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *jamaicense*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *laurentianum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *minarum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *piliferum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *preslianum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *raddianum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *subremotum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *trichophyllum*, *Lycopodium clavatum* var. *tristachyum*, *Lycopodium eristachys*, *Lycopodium integrifolium*, *Lycopodium piliferum*, *Lycopodium preslii*, *Lycopodium serpens*, *Lycopodium trichiatum* var. *desvauxianum*, *Lycopodium trichophyllum*, *Lycopodium tristachyum*, *Muscus clavatus lycopodium*, *Muscus terrestris repens*]

**STAG'S-HORN CLUBMOSS** is an evergreen perennial. Native to northern temperate areas (including central and northern Europe, and North America), it has creeping stems covered in tiny needle-like green leaves and yellowish cone-like fruit.

It is also known as *Almindelig ulvefod* (Danish), *Bärlapp* (German), Buck grass, Buck horn, Clubfoot moss, Clubmoss, Common clubmoss, Creeping bur, Creeping clubmoss, Cypress moss, *Druidenfuss* (German), *Erdmoos* (German), Foxtail, Ground pine, Hog's bed, *Katinlieko* (Finnish), *Keulenbärlapp* (German), Lamb's tail, Lycopod, *Lycopode* (French), Lycopodium seed, *Matthummer* (Swedish), *Mech* (Czech), *Plavúň obyčejný* (Slovak), *Plavúň vidlačka* (Czech), Powder bush, Running clubmoss, Running ground pine, Running pine, Snake moss, Staghorn, Stags-horn moss, Trailing clubmoss, Vegetable brimstone, Vegetable sulfur, Vegetable sulfur moss, Vegetable sulphur, *Vidlačky* (Czech), *Vlčí chvost* (Czech), *Vlčí noha* (Czech), Walking fern, Witches' meal, Wolf claw, Wolf's claw, and *Zaječí opratě* (Czech).

Warning – the whole plant is poisonous and can affect the central nervous system. The yellow powder is not normally poisonous and can be taken internally. However experiments have shown that the 'powder' can affect blood sugar levels. It can be set alight explosively if placed near a flame.

*Clavatum* is derived from Latin *clava* (club, nail, key) meaning 'club-shaped'.

Clubmoss is derived from the suggested club-shaped appearance of the cones. The name Vegetable sulphur on the other hand reflects the fact that the spores in the cones will burn as brightly as powdered sulphur. This quality has been used as a theatre prop for making explosions (according to some in Germany especially) and also for fireworks. [It has been suggested that the fireworks for which Persia (now Iran) were once said to be famed depended to a large extent on the use of stag's-horn clubmoss too.]

Poorer people in Sweden used to refer to this clubmoss as 'matted grass' as they used the stems to weave doormats.

In North America a few Indian tribes, such as the Thompson and Hesquiat, have used it for Christmas decorations. The Bella Coola made the plant into wreaths, the Oweekeno Indians wore it as a decorative necklace at tribal festivities, and the Hanaksiala tribe sported it as a belt for their blankets.

This moss and other closely related species, such as fir clubmoss (*Huperzia selago*), were used in continental Europe and North America particularly North America in human medicine. The Potawatomi Indians applied the very fine and resinous, yellow spore powder to wounds to stem bleeding. It was a cure for headaches among Indians in some of the Carrier tribe, the Montagnais Indians used it to treat fever, and the Aleut tribe turned to it for easing some types of pain.

East across the Atlantic in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century the German apothecaries introduced the species for treating wounds, and it has also been used as a remedy for bladder, and kidney and liver disorders, as well as incontinence. The powder was (and can still be) an ingredient in the coating of pills to prevent them sticking together when they were/are stored (especially in Poland and Russia). It was the basis of medicinal snuff and it was also a vehicle for other powdered plants used in the nose and ears.

On a commercial basis today the cosmetics industry uses the yellow spore powder as an ingredient in face powders, and the pharmaceutical industry employs (apart from a tablet coating) as a flavouring in proprietary medicines.

Medicinally, today apart from external application the powder is rarely used other than in homoeopathic remedies.