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Malus baccata

[Synonyms : *Malus baccata* var. *sibirica*, *Malus pallasiana*, *Pyrus baccata*]

CRAB APPLE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to north-eastern Asia it has fragrant pink-tinged, white flowers.

It is also known as *Bärapel* (Swedish), *Jabloň drobnoplodá* (Czech), *Marjaomena* (Finnish), and Siberian crab apple; and in flower language, it is said to be a symbol of ill nature (blossom), and irritability (blossom).

Baccata is derived from Latin *baca* (berry) meaning ‘berry-like or pulpy and juicy’.

Crab apple with chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*), fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare* var. *dulce*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), and wood betony (*Stachys officinalis*) was one of the Nine Sacred Herbs of the Anglo-Saxons who believed these plants could give protection against evil. Crab apple was also used as a strewing herb.

Various customs relied on the crab apple. In England not the least of these was a drink particularly taken on 1st August ie. Lammastide, in which the toasted fruit were combined with various spices. And on 29th September (Michaelmas) country lasses were wont to lay the fruit out on a loft floor in the shape of their boyfriends’ initials . Those still whole on 11th October (Old Michaelmas Day) (if mice and other interested parties had not had a nibble) were supposed to represent the warmest relationship and therefore the most suitable husband.

Crab apple cider vinegar was used as an alternative to vinegar in the times when such dishes as syllabub were made with the latter.

The crab apple is an emblem of the Scottish Lamont clan.

These fruit have long been used as they still are today for making cider.

Medicinally, the fruit’s sour juice was used to treat colds and also applied as a lotion on burns and scalds.