

Malva moschata

[Synonyms : *Abelmoschus moschatus*, *Bamia abelmoschus*, *Bismalva moschata*, *Gratum moschatum*, *Hibiscus abelmoschus*, *Hibiscus moschatus*, *Malva moschata* var. *rosea*]

MUSK MALLOW is an evergreen shrub (cultivated as an annual or biennial). Native to Egypt, India and the south-eastern Asian islands (particularly the five small islands of the Moluccas), it has large, dark red-centred, white to sulphur yellow flowers with a central column of fused stamens.

It is also known as *Abelmosch* (German), *Abelmosco* (Italian), *Abelmusk*, *Algalia* (Spanish), *Amber seed*, *Ambromalve* (German), *Ambretta* (English, German, Italian), *Ambrette* (French), *Ambrette seed*, *Anbar bûl* (Arabic), *Anber çiç* (Turkish), *Auber çiç* (Turkish), *Bisam-eibisch* (German), *Bisamstrauch* (German), *Búp vàng* (Vietnamese), *Cây bông vàng* (Vietnamese), *Chamot ton* (Thai), *Cheeses*, *Dalupang* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Desmeros* (Swedish), *Egyptian alcée*, *Egyptian target-leaved hibiscus*, *Fior muschiato* (Italian), *Gandapura* (Malay), *Gombo musqué* (French), *Graine de musc* (French), *Habbul-mislek* (Arabic), *Hibiscus*, *Hocysen Fws* (Welsh), *Huang kui* (Chinese), *Hub-ul-mishk* (Arabic), *Ibisco muschiato* (Italian), *Kakapasan* (Sundanese), *Kapasan* (Javanese), *Kapas hantu* (Malay), *Kapas hutan* (Malay), *Kastiokastiokan* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Kastûli* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Kasturi* (Indonesian), *Kattukkasturi* (Tamil), *Ketmie des marais* (French), *Ketmie musquée* (French), *Lata-kastu-rikam* (Sanskrit), *Mahakadaeng* (Thai), *Mallow*, *Mallow musk*, *Malvo moska* (Esperanto), *Mauve musquée* (French), *Mishka-dana* (Indian), *Moschus-Malve* (German), *Moskus-Katost* (Danish), *Mushak-dâna* (Bengali), *Mushk daanaa* (Hindi), *Mushk-danah* (Persian), *Musk ochro*, *Musk okra*, *Musk plant*, *Musk seed plant*, *Musky seeded hibiscus*, *Myskimalva* (Finnish), *Myskmalva* (Swedish), *Ornamental okra*, *Rose mallow*, *Ryûkyû tororo aoi* (Japanese), *Ryuukyuu tororo aoi* (Japanese), *Shan you ma* (Chinese), *Slézovník pižmový* (Czech), *Slez pižmový* (Slovak), *Sléz pižmový* (Czech), *Som chaba* (Thai), *Syrian mallow*, *Target-leaved hibiscus*, *Tropical jewel hibiscus*, *Vông vàng* (Vietnamese), *Water mallow*, *White mallow*, *Ye you ma* (Chinese), and *Zatâkasturikâ* (Sanskrit); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of ‘consumed by love’, persuasion, and weakness.

Musk mallow has larger flowers and a subtle musky fragrance compared with mallow (*Malva sylvestris*).

Essence known as Musk or Ambrette Seed Oil is extracted from the seeds.

Moschata means ‘musk-scented or musky’.

The ancient Greeks used musk mallow to decorate friends’ graves.

In the East Indies bark fibre has provided material for making sails.

Coffee and soup have been flavoured with the musky seeds in Arabia, and the seed pods have been eaten as a cooked vegetable.

The Chinese have extracted a gummy substance from the roots for sizing paper.

In cosmetics the powdered seeds were once added to hair powders to give them fragrance, and in the West Indies they have been grown commercially for the perfumery industry - for both of which they are still used today. The powder has also provided an insect-proof dusting for woollen clothing.

After the plant came to the attention of some of the North American Indian tribes, the Iroquois Indians absorbed it into their medicinal repertoire and took a plant infusion to ease colds and also to act as a stimulant.

Medicinally, musk mallow was once an ingredient in soothing cough syrups and in ointments, and it was also valued as an aphrodisiac. It is believed that the root and leaves have been used in the treatment of venereal diseases, and in Egypt the seeds have been chewed to sweeten the breath. As an emulsion in milk it has also been used to ease itches. In Asia leaves and roots are included in poultices.