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Mercurialis annua

ANNUAL MERCURY is an annual. Native to the Mediterranean and Europe it has tiny, greenish flowers.

It is also known as Baron's mercury, *Bažanka ročná* (Slovak), *Bažanka roční* (Czech), *Bingelkruid* (Dutch), Boys and girls, Boy's mercury, *Burikba* (Maltese), *Clais yr Hydd Blynnyddol* (Welsh), *Einjähriges Bingelkraut* (German), *Fouirole* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), French mercurie, French mercury, Garden mercury, *Garten-Bingelkraut* (German), Girl's mercury, *Grenbingel* (Swedish), Herb mercury, *Mercuriale annuelle* (French), Mercury, Mercury herb, *Merkurialo unujara* (Esperanto), *Têtue* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Tuinbingelkruid* (Dutch), and Wild spinach.

Warning – the whole plant is poisonous. Old British records note that it has been the cause of death. Symptoms can include diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain and facial flushing. Annual mercury can only be used under a qualified practitioner's supervision. It is poisonous for animals.

Annual mercury has a similar appearance to dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) but the latter has a round stem and darker leaves.

Annua means 'annual'.

Despite its highly poisonous nature the leaves have been cooked and eaten like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*), particularly in some parts of Germany.

In France the plant has been fed to pigs.

Medicinally, records indicate that its applications used to be similar to those for dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*). In particular the French used to prepare a syrup which was used as a purgative and early herbalists used the juice to remove warts. The plant is still used in homoeopathic remedies.