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Mercurialis perennis

DOG'S MERCURY is a perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) and Asia it has light green flowers.

It is also known as Adder's meat, *Ausdauerndes Bingelkraut* (German), *Bažanka trváca* (Slovak), *Bažanka vytrvalá* (Czech), Boggard-posy, Boggart-flower, Boggart-posy, *Bresych y Cŵn* (Welsh), *Chou de chien* (French), Dog's cole, Dog flower, Dog's medicine, *Fouorole* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Green waves, Herb mercury, Kentish balsam, *La mercuriale* (French), *Merkurialo plurjara* (Esperanto), Perennial mercury, *Skogsbingel* (Swedish), Snake's bit, Snake's flower, Snake's food, Snake's meat, Snake's victuals, Snakeweed, and *Wald-Bingelkraut* (German).

Warning – all of the fresh plant is poisonous and the poisonous elements are believed to be cumulative. It can cause diarrhoea, vomiting, abdominal pain and facial flushing. It can only be used under a qualified practitioner's supervision. Dog's mercury is poisonous for animals.

Dog's mercury has a similar appearance to annual mercury (*Mercurialis annua*) but dog's mercury has a round stem and darker leaves. In Britain it has also been confused with brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) with very serious results.

Perennis means 'perennial'.

Dog's mercury owes its name to a legend that relates how the Roman god Mercury revealed the plant's medicinal properties to man.

The 'father of medicine' for the Western world, Hippocrates the Greek physician who lived from about 460 to 377 or 359 BC, is believed to have used the plant externally to treat some female disorders. Later herbalists prescribed the poisonous plant internally in treatments for jaundice, and fever, and used it externally as a remedy for treating warts, swellings and sores. Today the plant is used in homoeopathic treatments for stomach disorders and rheumatism.