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*Mitella diphylla*

[Synonyms : *Mitella oppositifolia*]

**BISHOP'S CAP** is a perennial. Native to eastern North America it has tiny, fringed, white flowers.

It is also known as American bastard sanicle, Coolwort, Crystal flower, Currant leaf, Fairy's cup, False sanicle, Fringe cup, Gem fruit, Mitre flower, Mitre pod, Miterwort, Snowflake, True miterwort, Twoleaf miterwort, Two-leaved bishop's cap, and Two-leaved miterwort. *Diphylla* is derived from Greek *di-* (two, twice) and *phyllo-* (leaf) components meaning 'two-leaved'.

For the Menominee North American Indians the glossy black seeds were recognized as sacred beads that were swallowed during part of a medicine dance.

The plant was of as much importance for Iroquois Indians as they believed it to be a good luck charm. According to records they believed that if they washed themselves – and their rifles – in a plant decoction and/or swallowed the liquid (which would make them sick) this would negate any bad luck.

On a pragmatic note the Iroquois Indians also applied a plant infusion to treat sore eyes.

The flower was eulogised by Henry Longfellow (1807-1882), the American poet in *Voices of the Night*.

Therefore at Pentecost, which brings  
The Spring, clothed like a bride,  
When nestling buds unfold their wings,  
And Bishop's caps have golden rings, –  
Musing upon many things,  
I sought the woodlands wide.

Medicinally, it has been taken locally in a drink to ease fevers.