

Monotropa uniflora

[Synonyms : *Hypopitys uniflora*, *Monotropa brittonii*, *Monotropa coccinea*, *Monotropa morrisoniana*, *Monotropa morisonii*]

INDIAN PIPE is a perennial. Native to northern and eastern warmer temperate areas of North America, Middle America, Himalayas and Japan, it has small, white (occasionally pink) flower.

It is also known as American ice plant, Beechdrops, Birdnest, Broomrape, Convulsion-root, Convulsion weed, Corpse plant, Dutchman's pipe, *Einblütiger Fichtenspargel* (German), Eyebright, Fairy smoke, Fit plant, Fitsroot, Fitt root plant, Ghost flower, Ghost plant, Ice plant, Indian cup, Nest plant, Nest root, One-flowered wax plant, Ova-ova, Pine sap, Pipe plant, Silver orchid, Tobacco pipe, and Waxplant.

When the flower dies it shrivels to a stiff, inconspicuous twig supporting the fruit. If picked or bruised, and when the fruit ripens, the plant then blackens. Indian pipe feeds on decaying matter eg. rotting wood.

Uniflora is derived from Latin *uni-* (one) and *-flora* (flowered) components meaning 'one-flowered or with solitary flowers'.

At one time botanists believed that Indian pipe lived off decaying or dead organic matter. It has now been shown however that the plant relies for its survival on a fungus associated especially with spruce or pine trees.

Apparently authorities note that North American Thompson Indians were always aware when the woods were teeming with Indian pipe as this usually heralded a good mushroom season.

The plant provided medicine for several North American Indian tribes for a variety of conditions. The Mohican Indians took it to treat fever and colds, the Potawatomi tribe used it for some female disorders, and the Cherokee gave it to children suffering from convulsions or epilepsy. It was also a Cherokee remedy for bunions or warts, and the Thompson Indians applied it to sores. Sore eyes were washed with the diluted juice by Cherokee medicine men and some of the Cree tribe used it to ease toothache.

Medicinally, it has been used in the treatment of lock-jaw, spasms, epilepsy, sore eyes, and convulsions in children.