

### *Myrrhis odorata*

**SWEET CICELY** is a perennial. Native to southern Europe it has tiny, creamy white flowers that have a sweet myrrh-like aniseed scent.

It is also known as Anise, Anise chervil, Annaseed, Beaked parsley, British myrrh, *Čechrica voňavá* (Slovak), *Čechřice vonná* (Czech), *Cegiden Bêr* (Welsh), *Cerfeuil* (French), *Cerfeuil musqué* (French), *Cerfolio* (Italian), Cicely, Cow chervil, Cow-weed, European sweet cicely, *Finocchio dei boschi* (Italian), Garden myrrh, Giant sweet chervil, Great chervil, Great sweet chervil, *Kerbel* (German), *Kervel* (Dutch), *Körvel* (Swedish), *Mirride* (Italian), Myrrh, *Myrrhenkerbel* (German), *Perifolio* (Spanish), Roman plant, *Saksankirveli* (Finnish), Seseli, Shepherd's needle, Smooth cicely, Smoother cicely, *Sødskaerm* (Danish), *Spanische Süssdolde* (German), Spanish chervil, *Spansk körvel* (Swedish), *Süssdolde* (German), Sweet bracken, Sweet chervil, Sweet cis, Sweet-cus, Sweet-fern, Sweet humlick, Sweet-humlock, Sweet Mary, Sweet myrrh, Sweets, Sweet scented myrrh, Sweet withy, Switch, and Wild anise; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of sincerity.

Sweet cicely has a similar appearance to hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) but is a fresher green colour.

*Odorata* is derived from Latin *odor* (scent, smell, odour) meaning 'scented or fragrant'.

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century the plant was known as Seseli.

In Europe, especially England and France in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries, it was treated as a pot shrub because its long availability during the year made it extremely useful. Sweet cicely was eaten either in salads (both leaves and root) or the root, leaves and seeds were boiled. It has also been used as a flavouring for fish dishes. Today the roots and seeds can be used to flavour brandy and liqueurs.

Sweet cicely is believed by some to be able to increase the milk yield of cows.

The seeds were once used in polish to scent oak furniture and floors.

Today sweet cicely gives an aniseed (*Pimpinella anisum*) flavouring in brandy and some liqueurs eg. Chartreuse.

Medicinally, herbalists recommended sweet cicely in ointments to ease the pain of gout and to heal wounds, including snake bites and bites from rabid dogs. It was also taken internally as a treatment for tuberculosis, pleurisy and stomach and kidney disorders. It was believed to have been considered as a protection against plague and was also held to be an aphrodisiac. Although rarely used medicinally today the dried root can be recommended for treating coughs and wind and an infusion of the dried plant can be used for treating anaemia, and can be given as a tonic.