

Orobanche ramosa

[Synonyms : *Kopsia ramosa*, *Phelipanche ramosa*, *Phelypaea ramosa*]

HEMP BROOMRAPE is an invasive parasitic annual or perennial. Native to southern and central Europe it has yellow or bluish-grey stems and snapdragon-like, bluish-purple tinged, cream to yellow and dull purple (rarely completely white) flowers.

It is also known as *Ästige Sommerwurz* (German), Branched broomrape, *Budebbus qasir* (Maltese), *Erva-toira-ramosa* (Portuguese), *Grenig snyltrot* (Swedish), *Hampsnyltrot* (Swedish), *Jopo* (Spanish), *Mordovka větevnatá* (Czech), *Orobanche rameuse* (French), Purple broomrape, *Succiamele ramoso* (Italian), *Vertakte Besemraap* (Afrikaans), and *Zárazka větevnatá* (Czech).

Hemp broomrape prefers hemp (*Cannabis*) and tobacco (*Nicotiana*) as host plants. One plant of hemp broomrape can produce 50,000 or more minute black seeds which can be dispersed by water and of that 50,000 a relatively small proportion sprout each year thereafter. The seeds can remain dormant in the soil for ten years or more.

Ramosa is Latin (branching) meaning 'branched'.

Hemp broomrape (together with three or four more in the same genus) is viewed as a serious threat to crops (it kills or in effect sterilises them) wherever it grows if they are suitable as a host. Some authorities note that 'unsuitable crops' seem to be primarily orchard crops and vines. Although many countries do not allow them to be introduced this is actually easier said than done as unwittingly (the seeds are so tiny) they can be carried by livestock, on clothing, machinery or produce, as well as in contaminated soil.