

*Oxytropis halleri*

[Synonyms : *Astragalus sericeus*, *Astragalus velutinus*, *Oxytropis sericea*, *Oxytropis uralensis*, *Oxytropis velutina*]

**PURPLE-BEAKED MILK VETCH** is a perennial. Native to the European Alps and Pyrenees, and the Scottish Carpathians it has pea-like, bluish-purple flowers.

It is also known as *Ostropysk hallerov* (Slovak), Purple oxytropis, Silvery oxytrope, and *Vlnice hallerova* (Czech).

Purple-beaked milk-vetch is considered to be threatened in the wild in Britain.

*Halleri* commemorates a Swiss physiologist and botanist, Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777) who was professor of medicine, anatomy (several anatomical structures have been named after him), surgery and botany at the University of Göttingen from 1736-1753. While at Göttingen, apart from continuing his scientific research and writing numerous books and papers and the demands of his professorship, he also organised various institutions including a botanic garden, a museum and an obstetrical school. He also managed a monthly journal (*Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*) to which he contributed numerous articles, he wrote poetry and he involved himself in religious issues including the establishment of the Reformed Church there. Then in 1753 he resigned from the University and devoted the rest of his life to research, writing (academic works, poetry and philosophical novels) and a medical practice in Bern – as well as taking on official roles in Bern's administration and, from 1758-1764, fulfilling the post of Director of the Bern saltworks. He first collected plants in the European Alps in 1728, developed a herbarium over his lifetime and wrote the first Swiss flora. In addition to his university disciplines he also made significant contributions to philosophy, scientific bibliography, ancient languages and poetry. Troubled by ill health for a large part of his life illness became even more intrusive during his later years and he took opium to ease some of the symptoms, a course of action which authorities believe may have contributed to his eventual death. He was a Fellow of The Royal Society, member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences and a founder and first president of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences. He published hundreds of works and they include *Gedichte* (poetry), *Primae Lineae Physiologiae*, *Disputationes anatomicae selectiores*, and *Disputationum chirurg. collectio* (medical), *Enumeratio methodica stirpium Helveticarum* (botanical), *Briefe zur Vertheidigung der Offenbarung* (theological), *Bibliothecae Medicinae Practicae* (bibliography) and *Fabius and Cato* (fiction).

The stems formed part of the head dresses worn by children of the North American Blackfoot tribe in a special dance.

Blackfoot Indians also used a leaf infusion to treat ear disorders and skin sores.