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Phalaris canariensis

[Synonyms : *Phalaris avicularis*, *Phalaris canariensis* var. *debilis*, *Phalaris canariensis* var. *nigra*, *Phalaris canariensis* var. *subcylindrica*, *Phalaris canariensis* var. *tenuis*, *Phalaris canariensis* subsp. *typica*, *Phalaris canariensis* var. *villosula*, *Phalaris ovata*]

CANARY-GRASS is an annual grass. Native to the western Mediterranean and the Canary Islands it has minute, sometimes violet-tinged, greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as Annual canarygrass, Birdseed grass, *Canârie* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Chrastice kanárská* (Czech), Common canary grass, *Falarido Kanaria* (Esperanto), *Kanarian helpi* (Finnish), *Kanariegräs* (Swedish), *Lesknice kanárská* (Czech), *Pefrwellt Amaethol* (Welsh), and *Skalora* (Maltese); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of perseverance.

Canariensis means ‘of or from the Canary Islands’.

Canary-grass has provided a food for human beings, as well as for cage-birds. (When bought commercially for the latter it is often known as canary seed.)

It is interesting to note that until the English navigator, Captain James Cook (1728-1779) circled New Zealand to chart the coastline canary-grass was unknown in that Country. As he returned home from his first expedition in command on the Endeavour (1768-1771) winged seeds of canary-grass on board ship made their way ashore – ostensibly distributed by the wind. By 1773 canary-grass was well established in that Country.

Ground seeds provide flour for ‘weaver’s glue’ which has been used to size cotton.