

*Physalis alkekengi*

[Synonyms : *Physalis bunyardii*, *Physalis franchetti*]

**CHINESE LANTERN** is a perennial (sometimes grown as an annual). Native from western Asia to Japan, and to central and south-eastern Europe, it has yellowish-white flowers. It is also known as *Alkékenge* (French), *Alkekengo* (Esperanto), Bladder cherry, Bladder herb, *Blasenkirsche* (German), Cape gooseberry, Devil's berry, Devil's bladder, Japanese lantern, *Japansk lykta* (Swedish), *Judekors* (Swedish), *Judenkirsche* (German), *Lampionblume* (German), *Lampionpflanze* (German), Love-in-a-cage, *Lyhtykoiso* (Finnish), *Mochyně židovská* (Czech), Night shade, *Physalis*, *Rajaputrika* (Sanskrit), *Rasouli* (Greek), Red nightshade, Strawberry groundcherry, Strawberry tomato, *Suran Godog* (Welsh), *Tulati papi* (Hindi), Winter cherry, and *Židovská třešeň* (Czech).

As soon as the paper-thin 'lanterns' begin to show colour, the fruiting stems can be harvested. Warning – all parts (except the ripe fruit) are poisonous and large amounts can cause constipation and diarrhoea.

*Alkekengi* is derived from an Arabic name *al kakendi* itself a corruption of Greek *halikakabos*. Parts of the round orange-red fruit and the flower yield an edible yellow colouring substance that was once used with butter.

Chinese lantern is familiar in Europe as an ornamental garden plant. The dried fruit are employed quite widely in winter flower arrangements.

Medicinally, it was once believed that gout could be cured if 8 berries were swallowed during a changing moon. More seriously herbalists have recommended it for the treatment of fevers (including malaria), arthritis, gout, kidney disorders, rheumatism, the after-effects of scarlet fever, and for urinary disorders. Today the whole plant is used in some diuretic wines, and it is also used in homoeopathic remedies.