

Polygonum aviculare

[Synonyms : *Polygonum aequale*, *Polygonum agreste*, *Polygonum aphyllum*, *Polygonum araraticum*, *Polygonum arenastrum*, *Polygonum aviculare* subsp. *aequale*, *Polygonum aviculare* subsp. *aviculare*, *Polygonum aviculare* var. *vegetum*, *Polygonum berteroi*, *Polygonum buxiforme*, *Polygonum heterophyllum*, *Polygonum monspeliense*, *Polygonum retinerve*, *Polygonum striatum*, *Polygonum uruguense*]

KNOTGRASS is an annual or perennial. Native to Europe and Asia it has tiny purple-edged, green and white (or green and pink) flowers.

It is also known as Allseed, Armstrong, 'Assâ er râi (Arabic), *Aviculaire* (French), *Bai jie cao* (Chinese), *Bannalia* (Hindi), *Batbât* (Arabic), Beggarweed, *Bian zhu* (Chinese), *Bian zhu lao* (Chinese), Bindweed, Bird grass, Bird knotgrass, Bird's tongue, Birdweed, *Bistorta centinodio* (Italian), *Bistorte aviculare* (Italian), Blackstrap, *Canclwm* (Welsh), Centinode (English, French), *Centinodia* (Italian), *Chrusták* (Czech), *Chrustavec* (Czech), *Cien nudos* (Argentine), Clutch, *Çoban deghinghi* (Turkish), Common knotgrass, Common knotweed, *Correggiola* (Italian), *Corregüela de los aminos* (Spanish), Cow grass, Crabgrass, Crabweed, Crawlgrass, Craw-weed, *Cristas* (Portuguese), Devil's lingels, Dog tails, Doorgrass, Doorweed, Dooryard grass, Dooryard weed, *Fen jie cao* (Chinese), Goose grass, *Harilik linnurohi* (Estonian), *Herbe à cochon* (French), Hogweed, Iron grass, *Kesru* (Punjabi), *Knöterich* (German), Knotweed, *Lengua de pajaró* (Spanish), *Lewza tar-raba* (Maltese), *Machutie* (Bengali), Man-tie, Matgrass, *Michi yanagi* (Japanese), Nine-joints, Ninety-knot, *Nisomali* (Sanskrit), *Pian xu* (Chinese), Pig grass, Pig-rush, Pigweed, *Pihatatar* (Finnish), Pinkweed, *Poligono degli uccelli* (Italian), Prostrate knotweed, Prostrate knotweed, Prostrate smartweed, *Ptačí rdesno* (Czech), *P'tite s'nile* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Rdesno ptačí* (Czech), *Rdesno truskavec* (Czech), Red legs, Red robin, Redweed, *Renouée des oiseaux* (French), *Sanguinaria mayor* (Spanish), *Sempre-noiva* (Portuguese), *Shabat el ghûl* (Arabic), Sidewalk weed, Snakeweed, *S'nile trainante* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Sparrow tongue, Stonegrass, Stoneweed, Swine's grass, Swynel grass, Tacker-grass, *Traînasse* (French), *Trampgräs* (Swedish), *Trampört* (Swedish), *Truskavec ptačí* (Czech), *Tumah* (Arabic), *Tungras* (Norwegian), *Úpor* (Czech), *Vanlig trampört* (Swedish), *Varkensgras* (Dutch), *Vejpileurt* (Danish), *Verschiedenblättriger Knöterich* (German), *Voëlduisendknoop* (Afrikaans), *Vogelknöterich* (German), Way-grass, Willowgrass, Wire-grass, Wireweed, Yard grass, and Yard knotweed.

Warning – knotgrass can be poisonous. It can cause gastrointestinal inflammation. Its acrid juice can irritate the skin.

Aviculare is derived from Latin *avis* (bird) meaning 'of small birds'.

In the Middle Ages in Europe the plant is said to have had one particularly grotesque use.

Apparently witches added knotgrass to a brew that was given to children in order to stunt their growth. The idea was to provide a supply of dwarves who could be aped at in the travelling fairs and circuses. The English dramatist, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) refers to this in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus, of hindering knot-grass made;

You bead, you acorn.

A more conventional reference to knotgrass appears in *The Eve of St. Agnes* published in 1820 – a celebrated narrative poem by the Englishman, John Keats (1795-1821).

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
.....

Medicinally, herbalists used the juice from knotgrass to stem oral and nasal bleeding, treat worms, and ease diarrhoea and stomach-aches. It was also used for healing fresh cuts and sores. Today it can still be chosen in the treatment of diarrhoea and externally applied to sores and small wounds and it is used in homoeopathic treatments.