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Polygonum viviparum

[Synonyms : *Bistorta americana*, *Bistorta insularia*, *Bistorta macounii*, *Bistorta vivipara*, *Bistorta vivipara* subsp. *fugax*, *Bistorta vivipara* subsp. *macounii*, *Bistorta vivipara* forma *ramosa*, *Bistorta vivipara* var. *roessleri*, *Colubrina vivipara*, *Persicaria vivipara*, *Polygonum macounii*, *Polygonum viviparum* var. *macounii*]

ALPINE BISTORT is a perennial. Found in northern temperate areas (particularly in Europe and North America) it has tiny white or pinkish flowers.

It is also known as Alpine knotweed, Alpine smartweed, *Anjabar* (Urdu), *Bistort*, *Harerug* (Norwegian), *Knöllchen-Knöterich* (German), *Liten ormrot* (Swedish), *Llys y Neidr Fynyddig* (Welsh), *Maslun* (Kashmiri, Punjabi), *Nurmitatar* (Finnish), *Ormrot* (Swedish), *Rdest zyworodny* (Polish), *Renouée vivipare* (French), *Serpentgrass*, *Viviparous bistort*, *Viviparous polygonum*, and *Weisser Knöterich* (German).

Often below the flowers and in place of them there are minute red or brown bulbils (swollen buds) that drop off the plant.

Warning – its acrid juice can irritate the skin.

Alpine bistort is a protected plant in the Irish Republic under the Flora Protection Order 1987. *Viviparum* is derived from Latin *vivus* (living, alive) meaning ‘bearing live young’.

White grouse are particularly partial to alpine bistort (as are deer), especially the tiny purplish-red bulbils that have dropped off from the bottom of the flower spike.

In North America the roots of this species are eaten by Inuits.

Medicinally, in India the root has been applied to abscesses and has also been used to treat fevers, diarrhoea, oral disorders, some venereal disease and external ulcers.