

*Rumex crispus*

[Synonyms : *Lapathum crispum*, *Rumex magellanicus*, *Rumex patientia*]

**CURLED DOCK** is a perennial. Native to Asia and Europe it has small green and reddish-pink flowers which turn rusty-yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as *Acedera crespa* (Spanish), *Amla-betasa* (Sanskrit), Bitter dock, Bloodwort, Coffee weed, Curly dock, Dock, Garden dock, Garden patience, *Gelber Ampfer* (German), Herb of patience, *Krauser Ampfer* (German), *Krusskräppa* (Swedish), *Krussyra* (Swedish), Monk's rhubarb, Narrow dock, Narrow-leaved dock, Out sting, Passions, Patience, Patience dock, *Patience frisée* (French), *Patientia* (Swedish), *Pinaattihierakka* (Finnish), *Poimuhierakka* (Finnish), *Romice crespa* (Italian), Rumex, *Shiakipi* (Dakota North American Indian), Sour dock, *Spenatskräppa* (Swedish), *Spenatsyra* (Swedish), Spinach dock, Spurdock, *Šťovík kadeřavý* (Czech), *Svinsyra* (Swedish), *Tafol Crych* (Welsh), *Tafolen Grych* (Welsh), *Vanlig krusskräppa* (Swedish), Winter dock, and Yellow dock.

Warning – very large amounts taken internally can cause nausea. It may be unsuitable for anyone suffering from arthritis, kidney stones or gout. The pollen can cause hay fever and bronchial asthma. Handling the plant can cause dermatitis.

*Crispus* means 'closely curled, finely or irregularly wavy' with reference to the leaves.

It has long been cultivated in Europe as a vegetable (a kind of early greens).

Introduced to North America like Europeans various North American Indian tribes including the Omaha, Isleta, Mendocino Indian, Montana Indian, Cherokee, Costanoan, some of the Tohono O'odham, the Mohave, Iroquois, Havasupai and Mohican tribes ate the boiled leaves as a vegetable. It was a staple food for the Costanoan Indians who like the Montana Indian, some of the Paiute, the Kawaiisu, Mendocino Indian and Cocopa tribes ate the seeds. These were prepared in various ways (especially as a porridge-like mush). Authorities note that the stems specifically provided food for the Kawaiisu, Iroquois and Cheyenne Indians and that in times of famine some of the Paiute tribe ate the cooked roots while the Yavapai relied on roasted stems.

Curled dock was an aphrodisiac for Iroquois Indians – and it was used by some of the Navajo tribe in ceremonial ritual. Records also show that curled dock yielded a yellow dye for several North American tribes. While some of the Tohono O'odham and the Choctaw tribe obtained this from the roots, the Cheyenne used the leaves and stems. In veterinary medicine the plant was used by the Cherokee and Nevada Indian tribes for their horses.

Both this and broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) have been employed medicinally for hundreds of years. It was used by some North American Indian tribes including the Teton Sioux (who applied a poultice of the crushed leaves to boils). In fact records suggest that it was probably viewed by many North American tribes including the Cherokee, Shoshoni, Chippewa, Yavapai, Blackfoot, Zuni, Paiute, Cheyenne, some of the Navajo, the Iroquois and the Yuki tribes as being of especial value for treating various skin disorders. It was applied to burns by the Paiute and Shoshoni Indians, and the Cherokee, some of the Navajo and the Yavapai tribes used it for oral sores. Yavapai Indians used curled dock to ease toothache. It was also a tonic for some of the Navajo, the Paiute, Mohican and Iroquois Indian tribes, and the Navajo Indians valued it as a stimulant. The

plant could provide a laxative or purgative for the Micmac, Shoshoni and Cherokee Indians, and the Iroquois used it to cause vomiting. While it was a remedy for diarrhoea for the Paiute, some of the Chippewa and the Iroquois Indians, the Yuki, the Cherokee tribes relied on it as a remedy for dysentery. Both Cherokee and Iroquois Indians used it to treat some kidney problems, and the Shoshoni turned to it for liver ailments. It was a jaundice cure for the Delaware, and the Iroquois also turned to it for bowel complaints and as a treatment for piles. Costanoan and Micmac Indians used the plant for various urinary disorders, while stomach upsets were treated with it by the Yavapai, Isleta, Iroquois and Paiute Indians. Several tribes including the Shoshoni, Mohican, Paiute, Delaware, Rappahannock, Cherokee and Iroquois used curled dock for blood diseases, and the Cheyenne prescribed it for stemming internal bleeding. Curled dock offered a cough remedy for the Thompson and Yavapai Indians. It was used by the Shoshoni, Paiute, Yavapai and Iroquois for venereal diseases, and the Shoshoni, Iroquois and Paiute tribes also used it to treat rheumatism.

Curled dock leaves are a rich source of Vitamins A and C as well as beta-carotene. It is understood that the American Cancer Society believes that a diet consisting of a high content of plants that contain beta-carotene can assist in reducing the risk of contracting some forms of cancer.

In North America curled dock is not always welcome as it can be invasive.

Medicinally, herbalists used to recommend the root for treating rheumatism as well as its modern applications, and used the seeds for dysentery. It has also been part of treatment for cancer and diphtheria. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century in the United States it was being used for the treatment of difficult skin conditions while similar qualities were being identified in the broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) in Europe. Today it can still be used to treat constipation, jaundice and chronic skin diseases.