

Rumex hymenosepalus

[Synonyms : *Rumex hymenocallis*, *Rumex hymenosepalus* var. *euhyemenosepalus*, *Rumex hymenosepalus* var. *salinus*]

CANAIGRE is a perennial. Native to south-western North America it has pinkish flowers. It is also known as Canaigre dock, Desert rhubarb, Ganagra, *Kahts-pirakari* (Pawnee North American Indian), Pie dock, Sand dock, Sour dock, Tanner's dock, Wild pie plant, and Wild rhubarb.

Hymenosepalus is derived from Greek *hymen* (membrane) and *sepal* (part of a flower) components meaning 'with membranous sepals'.

Many North American Indian tribes were familiar with canaigre. For some like the Hopi and the Hualapai the roots were an important source of a yellow wool dye – and from long in the past through even to the present day they have also been used in tanning leather, particularly by the Hualapai and Cahuilla Indian tribes. Authorities also note that the Navajo Indians were able to obtain brown, green, orange and red dyes (as well as yellow) from using the roots.

Some of the Navajo North American tribe used canaigre during ceremonial ritual – and they also used it as veterinary medicine for treating their goats.

The plant was a source of food for quite a few local North American tribes. Young girls of some of the Tohono O'Odham tribe chewed the roots like chewing gum. Leaves have been eaten as a vegetable by both the Navajo Indians and some of the Tohono O'Odham, and they and the Kawaiisu ate the seeds – although unlike the other two who made them into a kind of porridge some of the Tohono O'Odham formed them into little roasted cakes. It seems to have been the stems however which were most popular. These were cooked as a vegetable by the Navajo, Cahuilla and Kawaiisu Indians, as well as by some of the Tohono O'Odham (although the latter also prepared them like rhubarb stems (*Rheum x hybridum*) are today as a pudding). Hualapai Indians used the stems to make a beverage.

Canaigre offered medicine for several North American Indian tribes including the Navajo and some of the Tohono O'Odham. Hopi Indians and some of the Tohono O'Odham administered a root decoction for easing colds, while the Pawnee tribe used the root to treat diarrhoea, and some of the Navajo chose it for dealing with some female disorders. Sore throats and coughs were treated with it by both the Mahuna and some of the Tohono O'Odham – and the latter also used it for other oral ailments. It was applied to skin problems by the Paiute, some of the Tohono O'Odham and the Arapaho Indians. The Paiute tribe also applied it to burns, and Hopi Indians used it for wounds.

Canaigre provided food for some of the European settlers on the North American Continent. The leaves have been cooked like greens, and the leaf stems have been prepared as an alternative to rhubarb (*Rheum x hybridum*).