

Rumex obtusifolius

[Synonyms : *Acetosa oblongifolia*, *Lapathum acutum*, *Rumex divaricatus*, *Rumex obtusifolius* var. *agrestis*, *Rumex obtusifolius* var. *sylvestris*]

BROAD-LEAVED DOCK is a perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) it has pink-tinged greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as Batter dock, Bitter dock, Blunt-leaved dock, Broad dock, Broad-leaf dock, Bulmint, Bulwand, Butter dock, Butter docken, Celery seed, Common dock, Common wayside dock, Cushycows, *Dail Tafol* (Welsh), Dock, Dockan, Docken, *Docques* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Doctor's medicine, Donkey's oats, *Grand doque* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Kettle, Kettle dock, Land robber, Monk's rhubarb, Obtuse-leaved rumex, Rantytanty, Redshank, *Ridderzuring* (Dutch), Round-leaved dock, Smari dock, Sour dock, *Šťovík tupolistý* (Czech), *Stumpfblättriger Ampfer* (German), *Tomtskräppa* (Swedish), and *Tomtsyra* (Swedish); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of patience, and shrewdness.

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

Warning – cattle refuse to touch the leaves.

Broad-leaved dock is similar in appearance to monk's-rhubarb (*Rumex alpinus*) when not in bloom.

Obtusifolius is made up of Latin *obtusus* (blunt) and *-folia* (leaved) components.

North American Saanich Indians ate the young stems cooked – but records suggest that among North American tribes this plant was usually associated with medicine. It was used as a contraceptive by the Iroquois tribe who also took it as a tonic. Both Delaware and Iroquois Indians used the roots for treating blood disorders, while the Delaware and Chippewa tribes valued it as a remedy for jaundice, and a root infusion was used in the Chippewa tribe for various skin ailments, particularly among children.

Butter and cheese were wrapped in the leaves to keep them cool, and the leaves were added to the water when boiling meat as it was believed that the water would come to the boil more quickly.

The young leaves themselves have also been cooked as a vegetable (par-boiling removes the bitter taste) particularly in North America where they have accompanied bacon, ham or salt pork.

The presence of the plant which does enjoy cultivated soil is an indicator of poorly drained heavy soil.

Widely known as an antidote for nettle stings (if the fresh leaves are rubbed directly on the affected area) herbalists once used the seeds for the treatment of stomach disorders and tuberculosis, and the root was chosen as a remedy for skin infections.

It is the birthday flower for 26th September.