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Salsola soda

SALTWORT is an annual. Native to the Mediterranean it has greenish flowers.

It is also known as *Mönchsbart* (German), and Opposite-leaf Russian thistle.

Warning – all parts are poisonous.

Soda is a reference to the use of plant ash as a source of soda for soap and glass-making.

Before the 16th Century saltwort was exported from countries on the Mediterranean to other countries (including the British Isles) as mineral-rich ash for the glass industry. In Britain its place was eventually taken by the locally available glasswort (*Salicornia europaea*), but France and Italy continued to use saltwort and its close relative prickly saltwort (*Salsola kali*, which had been exported under the name of ‘barilla’) until the 19th Century.

Although its primary use was industrial, the plant once had some local medicinal value.