

Sanguisorba minor

[Synonyms : *Poterium sanguisorba*, *Sanguisorba gaillardotii*, *Sanguisorba garganica*, *Sanguisorba pimpinella*]

SALAD BURNET is a perennial. Native to Asia and Europe (particularly the Mediterranean) it has small yellow to greenish- or reddish-brown flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as *Bibernelle* (German), Bloodwort, Burnet, Drumsticks, European salad burnet, Garden burnet, *Gwyddlwdn Cyffredin* (Welsh), *Kleiner Wiesenknopf* (German), *Krvavec menší* (Czech. Slovak), Lesser burnet, Old man's pepper, *Petite sanguisorbe* (French), *Pikkuluppio* (Finnish), Pimpernel, *Pimpinela sanguisorba* (Spanish), *Pimpinell* (Swedish), *Pimpinella* (Italian), *Pimprenelle sanguisorbe* (French), Poor man's pepper, Red knobs, *Sanguisorbe* (French), *Sangvisorbo eta* (Esperanto), Small burnet, Toper's plant, *Toten menší* (Czech), and *Tursin il-Ghawl* (Maltese).

Minor means 'smaller or lesser'.

Salad burnet was familiar to the ancient Greeks who used it to flavour drinks.

Cultivated and used as a salad herb since at least 1578 in western Europe salad burnet is still used today for both medicinal and culinary purposes. In the 16th Century people believed that an infusion of the leaves in wine 'quicken the spirit'. Large amounts of salad burnet were also used because of this 'uplifting' factor as a flavouring in beer, wine and brandy – which led to it acquiring the name Toper's plant. In the kitchen it is still added today as a flavouring ingredient in soups and salads, as well as butters and sauces.

In the early 17th Century Francis Bacon (1561-1626) the famous English philosopher and statesman, was writing his *Essays* on many different topics. In *Essay of Gardens* he wrote

Those flowers which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are three - that is burnet, wild thyme, and water mints; therefore you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the pleasure when you walk or tread.

When the Pilgrim Fathers sailed for North America in 1620 they took salad burnet with them and since then the plant has become naturalized on the North American Continent.

Salad burnet was once used as a tanning agent and the source of a black dye.

Today the plant is an ingredient used by the toiletry industry in dental preparations.

Medicinally, herbalists recommended the plant as a protection against plague and as a remedy for diarrhoea. They also believed that it could staunch wounds. In the 17th Century it was taken in wine to ease the pain of gout and rheumatism. Traditionally the plant is believed to be helpful in treating menopausal symptoms but this has never been proved. It is also an ingredient in Chinese medicine which employs the root for treating wounds and burns.