

*Scrophularia auriculata*

[Synonyms : *Betonica aquatica*, *Scrophularia aquatica*, *Scrophularia balbisii*]

**WATER FIGWORT** is a perennial. Native to Europe and the Mediterranean it has brownish-purple flowers with greenish undersides.

It is also known as Angler's flower, Babes-in-the-cradle, Bishops' leaves, Brown-net, Brownwort, Brunnet, Cresset, Crowdy kit, Fiddler, Fiddles, Fiddlesticks, Fiddle-strings, Fiddlewood, *Flenört* (Swedish), *Gorneth y Dŵr* (Welsh), Huntsman's cap, Knotted figwort, *Krtičník žláznatý* (Czech), *Orvâle* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Poor man's salve, Rosenoble, Scaw-dower, Shoreline figwort, Squeakers, Stinking Christopher, Stinking Roger, *Syyläruoho* (Finnish), *Vattenflenört* (Swedish), Venus-in-her-car, and Water betony.

Warning – the whole plant is potentially poisonous and must be treated with care. It can be poisonous for animals which normally avoid it because of the unpleasant smell and taste.

*Auriculata* means 'with ear-like lobes' with reference to the leaf shape.

A passing similarity between the leaves of water figwort and those of wood betony (*Stachys officinalis*) led to the name Water betony. The leaf-stripped stalks rubbed together make a sound like that of a bow scraping on violin strings hence the names Fiddler, Fiddlewood and Crowdy kit (the last coming from the English County of Somerset where the word 'kit' meant 'fiddle').

The plant once attracted a name for having cosmetic qualities as it was believed that bathing face and hands in the juice (or distilled water made from the leaves) was beneficial for treating spots and sunburn.

Medicinally, herbalists used to recommend the plant for banishing nightmares and for treating toothache. As an ointment or in a poultice it has been used to heal ulcers, sores, wounds and piles.