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Sedum telephium

[Synonyms : *Hylotelephium telephium*, *Sedum carpaticum*, *Sedum maximum*, *Sedum purpureum*]

ORPINE is a succulent perennial. Native from eastern Europe to Japan it has small white, yellowish-green, reddish-yellow or reddish-purple flowers.

It is also known as Aaron's rod, Alpine, Arpent-weed, Bagleaves, Bagplant, Balloon purses, *Berwr Taliesin* (Welsh), Blowleaf, Bogleaves, *Breitblattriges Fettkraut* (German), *Cerwr Taliesin* (Welsh), *Erba a calli* (Italian), *Erba di San Giovanni* (Italian), Evergreen, Everlasting, *Fetblad* (Swedish), *Fettkraut* (German), Frog-bit plant, Frog plant, Frog's bladder, Frog's mouth, Frog's stomach, Frog's throat, Garden stonecrop, *Grosse Fetthenne* (German), Harping Johnny, Heal-all, Healing leaf, *Herbe aux charpentiers* (French), *Hierba callera* (Spanish), Houseleek, Jacob's ladder, *Joubarbe des vignes* (French), *Käringkål* (Swedish), *Kärleksört* (Swedish), Leeks, *Leveälehtinen maksaruoho* (Finnish), Life everlasting, Life-of-man, Live for ever, Livelong, Midsummer men, Orphan John, Orpine stonecrop, Orpy leaf, Prick madam, Pudding-bag plant, *Reprise* (French), Solomon's puzzle, Stone hot, Sweetheart, *Telefio commune* (Italian), Toad bellies, Trick madam, Trip madam, Witches' money, and Witches' money-bags.

Warning – the sap can cause redness and blistering.

Telephium is a Greek plant name.

Authorities note that the name Solomon's puzzle was used for the plant by London flower-sellers.

Various superstitions and divination practices are associated with orpine. In England the plant was believed to be able to provide protection from lightning and illness if brought indoors on Midsummer Eve (23rd June). In Germany it seems that the protection could have been limited to the health of those under that roof for as long as the leaves retained their fresh green colouring. In Brittany in northern France it was said that if the picked plant withers before the year end a member of the house would die in the New Year. On Midsummer's Eve as well in that part of France a girl was able to assess her fiancé's fidelity. She had to gather two plants and place them on a wooden plate. The leaves bending to right or left determined whether he was true or false. While in England any lass seeking a lover could position a leaf in an upright position. If the following morning it leant to the right her lover (who would be true) would appear from that direction – but if the leaf leant to the left it would indicate unfaithfulness.

Medicinally, the plant was used by herbalists to treat many different ailments. It seems that its popularity for a particular illness or medical problem in past centuries varied from country to country. In Europe over time orpine has been used in the treatment of diarrhoea, haemorrhages, piles, tonsillitis, cancer, fever, female disorders (referred to in the herbal of the 13th Century Welsh physicians of Myddvai), burns and wounds. One authority notes that Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) who is believed to have died of either stomach cancer or liver disease, is held to have been aware of orpine's alleged healing qualities when he was serving his ultimate banishment on the island of St. Helena.