

Smyrniium olusatrum

[Synonyms : *Smyrniium maritimum*, *Smyrniium vulgare*]

ALEXANDERS is a biennial or perennial. Native to western Europe and the Mediterranean it has small aromatic, yellowish-green flowers.

It is also known as *Aleksanterinputku* (Finnish), Alick, Alisanders, *Alisandre* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Alisante* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Alshinder, Black lovage, Black parsley, Black pot-herb, *Dulys* (Welsh), *Esmirnio* (Spanish), *Gelbdolde* (German), Giant Macedonian parsley, *Gulkörvel* (Swedish), Hell root, Horse parsley, *Karfus il-hmir* (Maltese), Maceron (English, French), *Macerone* (Italian), Megweed, *Ombrelle jaune* (French), Perennial alexanders, *Pferdeappich* (German), Skeet, Skit, *Smirnio* (Italian), *Smyrnerkraut* (German), Wild celery, and *Yaban kereviz* (Turkish).

Olusatrum is derived from Latin *holus* (potherb) and *ater* (black, dark) components meaning ‘black herb’ with reference to the black seeds, and is the Latin name.

One medieval English name (familiar there when alexanders was being cultivated in monastery gardens) *petroselinum alexandrium* or ‘rock parsley of Alexandria’ led to today’s common name Alexanders.

Although appreciated as a medicinal plant for over 2,000 years (in more relatively recent times it was one of the plants carried on board ship to prevent scurvy) its importance has rested most firmly throughout on its culinary uses even though these have been subject to the whims of fashion. Both the young shoots and the leaves have been cooked at various times as vegetables and the stems have been eaten like celery (*Apium graveolens* var. *dulce*) (especially in Medieval times when the celery tasted more bitter than today’s developed varieties). The ground seeds used like pepper (*Piper nigrum*) are sometimes a culinary ingredient today.

Medicinally, herbalists have used the seeds in treatments for asthma.