

Solanum elaeagnifolium

[Synonyms : *Solanum dealbatum*, *Solanum elaeagnifolium* var. *angustifolium*, *Solanum elaeagnifolium* var. *argyrocroton*, *Solanum elaeagnifolium* var. *grandiflorum*, *Solanum elaeagnifolium* var. *leprosum*, *Solanum elaeagnifolium* var. *obtusifolium*, *Solanum flavidum*, *Solanum leprosum*, *Solanum obtusifolium*, *Solanum saponaceum*, *Solanum texense*]

SILVERLEAF NETTLE is a perennial. Native to south-western North America it has small violet-blue or white flowers.

It is also known as Bull nettle, *Hawatapa* (Zuni North American Indian), *Lilek hlošínolistý* (Czech), Prairie-berry, *Satangsbos* (Afrikaans), Silverleaf bitter apple, Silverleaf nightshade, *Silverskatta* (Swedish), *Silversolanum* (Swedish), Silvery-leaved nightshade, *Silwerblaar Bitterappel* (Afrikaans), Trompillo (English, Spanish), and White horse nettle.

Warning – all parts of the plant are poisonous and can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea and can affect circulation and breathing. It can be poisonous for some animals.

Elaeagnifolium is derived from the genus name *Elaeagnus* and Latin *-folia* (leaved) meaning ‘with leaves like those of that (Russian olive) genus’.

The North American Kiowa Indians mixed the seeds with brain tissue to tan buckskins, while the Hopi are known to have threaded the fruit into necklaces for clowns. Keresan women also wore fruit necklaces.

The Navajo and some of the Tohono O’Odham are believed to have curdled goat’s milk with the seeds for cheese and records indicate that the Zuni particularly enjoyed a drink that they made with goat’s milk curdled with the berries. This beverage was also said to be prepared and drunk with enthusiasm by other tribes such as the Tohono O’Odham and various Middle American tribes.

Some authorities note that silverleaf nettle is unwelcome on irrigated land today as it becomes invasive and is difficult to get rid of.

As a source of medicine the plant was popular with several North American tribes including some of the Apache. The Zuni are thought to have used the root in various ways. It was chewed and put in the cavity of an aching tooth, it was powdered and taken to ease stomach-ache and the fresh or dried root was also chewed before poison was sucked from a snake bite. It provided eye, nose and throat medicine for Navajo Indians, the Keresan valued it for treating some female problems, fruit pods offered a laxative for the Isleta tribe, and some of the Tohono O’Odham Indians used crushed dried berries to ease colds.