

*Stellaria holostea*

[Synonyms : *Alsine holostea*]

**GREATER STITCHWORT** is a perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) and to the Mediterranean, it has small white flowers.

It is also known as Adder's meat, Adder's spit, Ag flower, All bones, Baalam's smite, Bachelor's buttons, Billy buttons, Billy white's buttons, Bird's eye, Bird's tongue, Brandy snap, Brassy buttons, Break bones, Break jack, *Buskstjärnblomma* (Swedish), *Collerette de la Vierge* (French), Cuckoo-flower, Cuckoo's meat, Cuckoo's victuals, Daddy's-shirt-buttons, Dead man's bones, Devil's corn, Devil's eyes, Devil's eye snappers, Devil's flower, Devil's nightcap, Devil's skirt buttons, Easter bell, Easter flower, Eyebright, Granny's nightcap, Greater starwort, *Grootbloem-muur* (Dutch), *Grosse Sternmiere* (German), Hagworm flower, Headache, *Hviezdica veľkokvetá* (Slovak), Jack-in-the-box, Jack-in-the-lantern, Jack snaps, Lady's buttons, Lady's chemise, Lady's lint, Lady's needlework, Lady's smock, Lady's white petticoats, Little john, Mayflower, May grass, Milk cans, Milkmaids, Milkpans, Miller's star, Moonflower, Moonwort, Morning stars, Mother shimble's snick-needles, Mother's thimble, Nancy, Nightingale, Old lad's corn, Old man's shirt, One o'clock, Pickpocket, *Pihatähtimö* (Finnish), Pisgie flower, Pixie, Poor-man's-buttonhole, Pop-guns, Pop jack, Poppers, Poppy, Pretty nancy, *Ptačinec veľkokvetý* (Czech), Sailor buttons, Satinflower, Scurvygrass, *Serenllys Mawr* (Welsh), Shepherd's weatherglass, Shimmies, Shimmies and shirts, Shirt buttons, Smock-frocks, Smocks, Snakeflower, Snake grass, Snakeweed, Snapcrackers, Snapdragon, Snapjacks, Snappers, Snaps, Snapstalks, Snapwort, Snow, Snowflake, Snow on the mountain, Star flower, Stargrass, Star-of-Bethlehem, Star-of-the-wood, Starwort, Stepmothers, Stinkwort, Stitchwort, Sweethearts, Sweet nance, Thunderbolts, Thunderflower, Twinkle star, *Våtarv* (Swedish), *Vogelmiere* (German), Watches, Wedding cakes, Wedding flowers, White bird's eye, White bobby's eye, Whiteflower, White-flowered grass, White Sunday, and Wild pink.

The flowers are pollinated by many insects including bees, beetles, butterflies and moths.

*Holostea* is derived from Greek *holo-* (all, entire) and *osteo-* (bone) components with reference to its past use for healing fractures.

Superstition held that greater stitchwort was unlucky as it was supposed to form part of the Fairy Garland and that you would be 'pixy-led' if you picked it. Cornish children are said to have believed that adder bites were the reward for picking the plant.

In contrast as some of the common names indicate greater stitchwort was also associated in the Christian religion with the Star that led the Wise Men to Bethlehem and with Whit Sunday celebrations.

Medicinally, stitchwort was used to ease the discomfort of 'stitch' (pain in the side) after over-exertion and to cure boils.