

*Teucrium chamaedrys*

[Synonyms : *Chamaedrys officinalis*, *Teucrium x lucidrys*, *Teucrium officinale*, *Teucrium stevenianum*]

**WALL GERMANDER** is a semi-evergreen perennial. Native to south-western Asia and to Europe (possibly including Britain) it has small purple or rose (occasionally white) flowers with projecting stamens.

It is also known as *Ädelgamander* (Swedish), *Camedrio* (Italian), *Camedrios* (Spanish), *Carvalhinha* (Portuguese), *Chamaedrys germander*, *Chasse fièvre* (French), *Chwerwlys y Mur* (Welsh), *Common germander*, *Echter Gamander* (German), *Gamander* (Swedish), *Germander*, *Golden poly*, *Ground oak*, *Horse chire*, *Kamazariyins* (Arabic), *Mercury*, *Ožanka kalamandra* (Czech), and *Petit chêne* (French).

A yellow essence with a distinctive odour can be extracted.

In Britain wall germander is considered to be endangered in the wild.

*Chamaedrys* is derived from Greek *chamae-* (dwarf, on the ground, low-growing) and *drys* (oak) components with reference to the shape of the leaves.

This shape is also reflected in the French names *Chasse fièvre* and *Petit chêne*.

Its history prior to the Middle Ages is uncertain as its precise identification in ancient Greek records would appear to be open to debate, although the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Greek physician, Dioscorides includes its use as an ingredient in cough remedies in his writings.

In Britain it was not only used medicinally but was also grown as an edging plant in formal knot gardens. Charles V (1500-1558), who was also Charles I of Spain, at the age of 19 became Holy Roman Emperor. He suffered from gout particularly badly at one stage in his life. For sixty consecutive days he is said to have taken a decoction of wall germander after which he was said to be cured (although historians tend to suggest this may have been a temporary remedy). Then in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century one of the Dukes of Portland was also supposed to have been cured of gout with a potion that came to be lauded and known as Portland Powders. This was eventually manufactured and was still being sold well into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A significant ingredient in this nostrum was wall germander – and it also included yellow bugle (*Ajuga chamaepitys*) and common centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*).

Today wall germander is little used apart from being an ingredient in tonic wines, vermouths and liqueurs.

Medicinally, a decoction of wall germander was not only a remedy for gout but it was also used for other pains in the limbs such as rheumatism. Herbalists also considered it to be a stimulating tonic and helpful in the treatment of fluid retention, as well as intermittent fevers, coughs and asthma. The powdered seeds would have been given for jaundice and the flowering tops were believed useful in treating worms.