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*Usnea barbata*

[Synonyms : *Usnea dasypoga*]

**OLD MAN'S BEARD** is a lichen. Found in Europe and North America it has spiny greyish-green to yellowish-green (occasionally brownish-red or greyish-red) stems.

It is also known as *Bartflechte* (German), Bearded usnea, *Cha wiziye* (Dakota North American Indian), *Flechte* (German), *Grå skägglav* (Swedish), Lichen, and *Naava* (Finnish).

*Barbata* is Latin (beard) meaning 'bearded (with long weak hairs)'.

It was familiar to the ancient Greeks who are believed to have used it medicinally, possibly for treating dysentery and diarrhoea, and it is this latter application that is suspected to have reached the Arabs in time.

This was one of the lichens that the Dakota North American Indian tribe used to dye porcupine quills yellow.

Medicinally, in Portugal it is still used today in folk medicine to treat slow-healing wounds and bruises. Apparently it is also an ingredient used by the Scandinavian pharmaceutical industry.