

*Valerianella locusta*

[Synonyms : *Lactuca agnina*, *Valeriana locusta*, *Valerianella olitoria*]

**COMMON CORNSALAD** is an annual. Native to Europe (including Britain) and to the Mediterranean, it has minute pale lilac or greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as *Ackersalat* (German), Blue-flowered corn salad, *Bourcette* (French), *Bourse* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Canonigo* (Spanish), Corn lettuce, Corn salad, *Doucette* (French), European cornsalad, *Feldsalat* (German), Feticus, Field salad, *Gemeiner Feldsalat* (German), *Gewöhnlicher Feldsalat* (German), *Kozlíček polníček* (Czech), Lamb's lettuce, Lewiston cornsalad, *Llysiau'r Oen* (Welsh), *Loblollie* (French), *Mâche* (French), Mary Magdalen's herb, Milkgrass, *Nüssler* (German), *Nüsslisalat* (German), *Oreille-de-lièvre* (French), Pawnee lettuce, *Pourselle* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Raiponce* (French), *Rapünzchen* (German), *Rapunzel* (German), *Salade de chanoine* (French), *Salade de prêtre* (French), *Valeriana ortense* (Italian), *Valerianella* (Italian), *Valèrianelle potagère* (French), *Vårklynne* (Swedish), *Vårsallat* (Swedish), *Vuonankaali* (Finnish), and White pot herb.

*Locusta* means 'grass spikelet'.

According to various authorities the name Lamb's lettuce arose because either the plant appears during lambing or it is lambs' favourite food. Much eaten in Lent (a period of fasting in the Christian calendar) the French christened it *Salade de prêtre*, while the Dutch certainly around the 16<sup>th</sup> Century called it 'White pot herb'.

Used much in Europe in the past as a Winter salad (the leaves are rarely cooked) John Gerard (1545-1612) the English barber-surgeon and herbalist (the latter as a charlatan for many authorities) suggested however that it only came to be cultivated in England after foreign visitors (probably exiles) collected and ate it in the Country. Common cornsalad has always experienced far greater popularity on the European mainland than in the offshore British Isles.

At some point the plant reached North America and there the Cherokee Indian tribe absorbed it into their diet – they ate the leaves as a cooked vegetable.

Medicinally, the plant used to be taken as a Spring tonic in folk medicine and has been used in homoeopathic treatments.