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Veratrum album

[Synonyms : *Veratrum californicum*, *Veratrum lobelianium*, *Veratrum oxysepalum*, *Veratrum viride*]

WHITE HELLEBORE is a perennial. Native to Europe (other than the British Isles) and Asia it has small sometimes white inside, yellowish-green flowers.

It is also known as European white hellebore, False hellebore, False helleborine, *Kutki* (Urdu), *Kýchavica biela* (Slovak), *Kýchavice bílá* (Czech), *Nysrot* (Swedish *Pärskäjuuri* (Finnish), *Valkopärskäjuuri* (Finnish), *Vénaire blanc* (French), *Véatre* (French), *Veratro blanka* (Esperanto), *Vit nysrot* (Swedish), *Vit prustrot* (Swedish), *Weiszer Germer* (German), *Weisze Nieszworzel* (German), White false hellebore, White false helleborine, White helleborine, and White veratrum.

The flowers are pollinated by beetles.

Warning – white hellebore is poisonous for man and cattle (the latter avoid it). It can cause vomiting, violent diarrhoea, a fall in blood pressure, symptoms of intoxication, salivation, burning throat and mouth, profusely running nose, headache, hallucination, depression, spasms, heart disturbances, stupor and death. (It is also highly poisonous for fleas and lice.)

White hellebore has a similar appearance to yellow gentian (*Gentiana lutea*) but white hellebore has leaves in three ranks on the stem and they are downy beneath.

Album means ‘white’ with reference to the flowers.

According to records this was one of the principal poisons used in Europe on arrows and daggers.

Today the powdered roots (known as Hellebore powder) can be an ingredient in insecticide sprays and preparations. Insecticides employing white hellebore are used particularly to protect fur or woollen clothing.

White hellebore has been employed in veterinary medicine.

Medicinally, herbalists used to recommend its roots for treating ailments such as fluid retention, epilepsy and gout as well as some nervous disorders, and in ointment form for scabies or killing lice.