

Veronica beccabunga

[Synonyms : *Veronica beccabonga*, *Veronica hjuleri*]

BROOKLIME is a semi-evergreen semi-aquatic, succulent perennial. Native to North Africa, Asia and Europe (including Britain) it has small bright deep blue (occasionally pink) flowers with a white eye.

It is also known as *Bachbunge* (German), *Bachbungen-Ehrenpreis* (German), *Bach-Ehrenpreis* (German), *Bäckgröna* (Swedish), *Bäckveronika* (Swedish), *Becabunga* (Portuguese, Spanish), *Beccabunga* (English, French, Italian), *Becky leaves*, *Beekpunge* (Dutch), *Bekabungo* (Esperanto), *Bêle* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Bird's eye*, *Brooklembe*, *Cow cress*, *Cresson de cheval* (French), *Cressonnière* (French), *Duckweed*, *European brooklime*, *European speedwell*, *Gorferini* (Welsh), *Horse cress*, *Horse wellcress*, *Housewell grass*, *Limewort*, *Limpwort*, *Mouth smart*, *Neckweed*, *Ojatädyke* (Finnish), *Pig's grease*, *Rozrazil potoční* (Czech), *Speedwell*, *Speedwellwort*, *Veronika* (Slovak), *Veronique* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Wall-ink*, *Water bird's eye*, *Water pimpernel*, *Water-pumpy*, *Water purpie*, *Water purple*, *Water purslain*, *Well-ink*, and *Yavsan otu* (Turkish); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of fidelity.

The flowers are pollinated by bees and flies.

Warning – this plant can have a mildly purgative effect when eaten.

In Britain brooklime has been confused with the poisonous dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) with very serious results.

Beccabunga is an old name for brooklime.

The German name *Bachbunge* and common name *Mouth smart* both reflect the extremely bitter taste of the leaves. Whereas the name *Water pimpernel* probably arose because the flower apart from its colour has a similar appearance to the scarlet pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*).

Leaves and young tops of brooklime have been eaten as a salad plant in northern Europe particularly as a scurvy preventative as the plant is rich in Vitamin C. In India the young stems are still eaten as a vegetable.

Like watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*), brooklime is understood to be viewed with pleasure in trout streams (especially by fishermen) as the plants harbour food for the fish.

Medicinally, particularly in 14th Century England herbalists recommended the plant for treating many disorders including gout. It can still be found in folk medicine today and is likely to be used for treating burns, bruises, wounds and some skin infections.