

Veronicastrum virginicum

[Synonyms : *Leptandra virginica*, *Paederota virginica*, *Veronica purpurea*, *Veronica sibirica*, *Veronica virginica*]

CULVER'S ROOT is a perennial. Native to eastern North America it has tiny white (or blue or pink) flowers with protruding stamens.

It is also known as Beaumont root, Black root, Bourman's root, Bowman's boot, Bowman's root, Brinton root, Cubeno physic, Cubenoroot, Cubeun's root, Cubuno physic, Culvers physic, Hini, *Kransveronika* (Swedish), Laptandra root, Leptandra, *Leptandraehrenpreis* (German), Leptandra-wurzel, Oxadaddy, Oxadoddy, Physic root, Purple leptandra, Quitch, Quitel, Tall speedwell, Tall veronica, Virginian hini, and Whorlywort.

Warning – culver's root must not be used fresh or in large doses when dried. It ought only to be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. It can cause drastic purging and vomiting.

Virginicum means 'of or from Virginia (United States)' which itself was named after the English 'Virgin Queen' Elizabeth I (1533-1603).

The North American Seneca Indian tribe root once used the root to cause vomiting in connection with their rituals (as did the Cherokee). But Seneca Indians used the plant medicinally as well. For some tribes such as the Menominee however the root was part of a sorcerer's repertoire as an antidote for evil medicines and they also believed it was able to purify any living thing or object that had come into contact with anyone recently bereaved.

The North American Delaware, the Missouri, Iroquois, Menominee, Chippewa, Meskwaki, Cherokee and Osage Indian tribes (and in due course early European settlers) all knew the plant as a drastic purgative. Cherokee Indians valued it for treating backache, while the Chippewa used it as a remedy for blood problems and tuberculosis. For the Cherokee tribe it also served as a tonic and a disinfectant – and they used it to cause sweating as well. It provided a stimulant for the Meskwaki tribe, and the Menominee and Iroquois Indians both used it to cause vomiting. The Meskwaki turned to the plant for a remedy for kidney problems and convulsions, and they turned to it during childbirth too. In contrast it was used by the Iroquois as a treatment for heart ailments, lung disorders, diarrhoea, coughs and rheumatism.

Now although originally formally recognized in the United States the root is put to little medicinal use in Western medicine. Herbalists used to recommend it for treating chronic constipation, diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera.