

Vitis labrusca

[Synonyms : *Cissus labrusca*, *Vitis labrusca* var. *subedentata*, *Vitis vinifera* var. *labrusca*]

FOX GRAPE is a deciduous climbing vine. Native to eastern North America it has small greenish flowers with a mignonette-like fragrance.

It is also known as American grape, *Labrusko* (Esperanto), Northern fox grape, Northern grape, Plum grape, Red grape, *Réva americká* (Czech), *Réva liščí* (Czech), Skunk grape, Wild grape, and Wild vine.

The seeds are used to make cream of tartar.

Labrusca is Latin (the wild vine).

American authorities suspect that the name Fox grape was bestowed by early European settlers who used the word 'fox' meaning 'wild'.

This species is resistant to the dreaded phylloxera root louse. After the serious attack of phylloxera on European and south-western Asian vines in 1867 this was one of the main species introduced from North America for use as resistant stock.

Varieties or hybrids formed from a cross between this, other North American species and the European grape are successfully cultivated for wine in vineyards around the Great Lakes region of North America.

Obviously the vine was familiar to local North American Indian tribes and records show that the Cherokee Indians ate the purplish-black (sometimes reddish-brown or amber-green) fruit raw or cooked (often as dumplings). They also used the grapes as an ingredient in a non-alcoholic beverage.

The North American Iroquois gave their horses a root decoction as an aphrodisiac.

Some Indian tribes value medicinal qualities in the plant. Mohican Indians seem to have used it primarily in poultices applied for pain generally and for headaches as well as fever. The Cherokee on the other hand viewed it as a remedy for stomach upsets, liver ailments, urinary problems, blood disorders and diarrhoea. The Cherokee also turned to it for childbirth difficulties and employed it as an ingredient in a wash for children suffering with oral ailments – and they took it as a tonic.

Its fruit can be eaten raw or used in cooking.