

What's in a name?

This species is closely related to the red and white dead-nettles (*Lamium* sp) which are also known as red or white archangel. This is associated with the fact that the flowers first open on or around St Michael's day (27th April). However, yellow archangel flowers a little later, but shares the name because of many of the similarities between these species.

Botany & Ecology

All three Archangels are European natives and are members of the mint family (Lamiaceae or Labiatae), and are not related to the common stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The dead nettles are so-called because they don't have the ability to sting. Nevertheless, they do share a liking for the same sort of habitat which includes hedges and the edges of damp woodlands. It prefers heavier, clay soils and may appear after coppicing of woodlands. It is recognised as an indicator of ancient woodlands.

**Folklore**

The Celtic communities saw this plant as a guardian against evil spirits and the disease known as elf-shot which affected cattle. It was believed that elves acting on behalf of witches would fire arrows with Neolithic like flint heads at the cattle which would then cause paralysis. This was known as 'elf stroke'. The word 'stroke' is all too familiar in medicine throughout the ages and the definition has remained similar over time.

As with the other dead nettles they have been used in European folk medicine for centuries. The Gypsies of eastern Europe used it as a food as well as medicine. The leaves and flowering tops are edible and are still used to make tisanes or infusions and decoctions as well as tinctures. The yellow dead nettles are used to relieve bladder paralysis and nephritis, as well as kidney problems: a practise which is still used in mainstream medical practises in Rumania.

Herbalists prescribed it to relieve gout, sciatica, and other pains of the joints or sinews. The leaves, when bruised, were also used to draw out splinters and thorns and reduce bruising. Of the three archangels, yellow was preferred when looking to clean and heal persistent sores and to dissolve tumours.

It is still used by modern day herbalists and there is scientific evidence that this species does contain the elements necessary to heal many of the above ailments.

*Please note, readers should take advice from a qualified doctor or herbalist before using plants as a cure for ailments.