

Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

Evergreen Birthwort (*Aristolochia sempervirens*)
Cretan Amaranth (*Amaranthus graecizans*) [2nd page]



Evergreen Birthwort (*Aristolochia sempervirens*)

The Evergreen Birthwort is one out of 3 kinds of the birthwort family occurring on Crete. It has been described and named in 1799 by CARL LINNAEUS. For information about another endemic species on Crete see our leaflet No. 289-09/E at our webpage's at: http://www.kreta-umweltforum.de/Merkblaetter_en/289-09E.pdf

The at the base woody climber reach's growth heights of up to 5 meters. The foliage leaves are egg-shaped spear-leaved, leathery and bald. They are deeply cordiform at the base. The blooms are yellow with purple strips and 2 to 5 cm long. The tube is u-shaped. The blossom is from March to July. The fruit cap is egg-shaped. The seeds are heart-, egg-shaped, about a half cm long, curved, from dark-brown colour. It grows on shady, damp locations. It is not a „pitcher plant“ and also not carnivorous. It belongs to „the kettle traps“; it catches insects into the calyx, which then act as pollinator and become released later again.



In the Greek antique the birthwort was used also as remedy for the bite of poisonous animals. In today's phytotherapy it is used for baths, fomentation or ointments, in particular with festering wounds.

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Cretan Amaranth (*Amaranthus graecizans*)

The word “Amaranth“ is descended from the Greek Αμάραντος or Amarantos in German phonetic transcription. It is compound from 2 words, the prefix A (a) = un- and the verb μαραίνω (maraino) = elapse. Which is to say, “the one, which does not pass away / blooms eternally“. In the Greek mythology Amarantos is an eternally blooming flower, well hidden by the Gods. According to the mythology, he who succeeds in finding this flower becomes immortal.

The genus covers about 60 - 70 species, which occur on all continents (except the Antarctic). There are usually one year, rarely perennials herbaceous plants and usually brachiate. The alternate foliage leaves are perdiculated. The inflorescences are polyanthus. Amaranth demands no standards on the soil. It gets along with relatively sparse water, escaped easy and is considered also as ornamental plant.



The seeds of the garden and blood amaranth (*A. caudatus*) as well as of *A. graecizans* can be used similarly as grain. Biological seen Amaranth is a pseudo grain. It looks like grain, however it is not, since it does not belong to the grass family; see fig.: Comparison Amaranth (left) and wheat (right). Amaranth is gluten-free. This makes it an adequate and compatible grain replacement. In addition the sheets of all Amaranth species are eaten as vegetables.

Amaranth has a higher content of protein and mineral than most types of grains. The ingredients are combined in a relationship favorable for the human nutrition.

However Amaranth also contains certain tanning agents, which inhibit the assimilation and digestion of vitamins, proteins as well as of trace elements. Therefore for infants and babies untreated Amaranth is not recommended.

