

Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

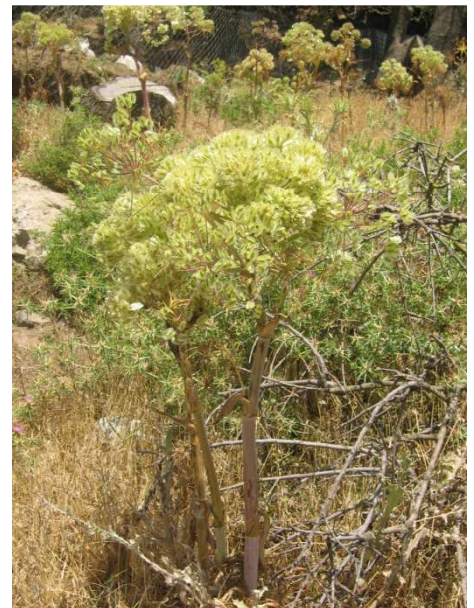
Deadly carrots - *Thapsia garganica* (Today used as medicine)



Thapsia garganica is the name of an already since the antique unpopular plant, which occurs also on Crete. Also the ancient Greeks were it, who gave it the adventurous surname. Already the ingestion of some sheets of these umbellifers can have deadly consequences for the cattle. The poisonous substance of the plant clams an important enzyme within a cell. The medical profession expect now to be able to use „the carrot of death“ for salutary purposes; they want to use the poisonous substance of the plant, in order to proceed against prostate cancer. Here the tumour cells are to be destroyed by the plant toxin.

Thapsia garganica is a plant from the genus *Thapsia*, which covers 3 species (*T. garganica*, *T. silphium* and *T. villosa*) and belongs to the family of the Apiaceae (umbellifers). It was described and named 1753 by CARL LINNAEUS.

The plant forms perennials of 50 to 120 cm height. The leaves are three-way pinnate and arranged alternate. They are formed lineal and have a smooth edge. From July to August it blossoms on Crete with yellow radial arranged pentamerous blooms, which are arranged in twin umbels. The formed seed head consists of single seed indehiscent fruits, the so-called Achinaen. The seeds have four wings and are the most important characteristic of the kind occurring in the Mediterranean (see fig.)



The plant originally originates from North Africa, areas of Turkey and the Balkans. It therefore needs sunny locations with moderately dry soil. Hospitable are above all nutrient and cousin-rich loamy soils.

