Menyanthes Trifoliata – The Water Clover

Related ingredient: *HYDROFILTRAT MENYANTHES*

Water Clover is called thus because of its leaf composed of three leaflets, as the Clover leaf, but they are absolutely not related. Its scientific name comes from the Greek *Minyanthes triphyllon*, from *minuthô* meaning “reduce” and *anthos* meaning “flower”, as the flower comes out quickly; *triphyllon* alludes to the three leaflets.

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BOTANY

Perennial plant of 30 cm high, for a length from 20 to 50 cm.

The stems: thick, plump, scaly, they are either flattened in the water or floating (creeping), with rootlets to the nodes, or with a prolific flowerer erected from 20 to 40 cm, and emerging at the armpit of a creeping stem scale.

The leaves emerge atop the creeping stem. They are lengthily sheathed, with a long and rounded petiole, with three oval leaflets, from 3 to 5 cm long. They are erected above the water.

The flowers emerge atop the stem with a prolific flowerer. From 1.5 to 2 cm tall, they are gathered together in clusters. The dorsal side of the five star shape petals is pinkish, and the internal side is whitish and lined with long white lashes. The flowering is ephemeral (the flowers fade quickly).

The fruits are spherical and rounded capsules. Their two valves partially open. They contain yellow and smooth seeds.

BIOTOPE

This is a semi-aquatic plant which prefers swamp, peat bogs, ditches, humid meadows and banks of lakes. It likes shaded places, but develops as well in hot sun as completely in the shade. Excessively hot summers (with important periods during which the temperature exceeds 30-35° C) are unfavourable to its flowering. We find it from seaside to altitudes up to 2500 m. *Water Clover* is part of the Helophytes, which take root at the bottom of the water and subsist to the winter thanks to their submerged buds. The stem with prolific flowerer only stands up straight at the spring for the flowering (April-May), and in order to ease the dispersal of the seeds. The pollinated flower develops a dried fruit which opens in two or three valves and releases brown-orange seeds, quite heavy, which disperse floating on the water.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

We commonly find this plant in shallow waters and swamp, below altitudes of 1800m, in Europe, Asia and North America. Thanks to its important resistance to face the harshest winters, we can find this plant as far as medium-altitude mountains.

Water Clover is present in almost the whole of France, but rare in the Mediterranean region. This plant may be considered, where it can still be found, as a post-glacial relic. Widely spread in Quebec along the Saint Laurent, but also in the Labrador (Newfoundland), in Ontario, in the New Brunswick, on Prince Edouard island. It is also present in Saint-Pierre and Miquelon island chain, particularly in Miquelon isthmus: one of the most beautiful colonies is located in Lamanthe swamp.

MEDICINAL USES

Ancient authors have given *Water Clover* many medicinal properties, rediscovered during the 17th Century. The plant was used during this century against all kinds of ulcerations. Using this plant was also suggested to treat Catarrh infections and dropsy. Emmenagogue, the plant is a great help for gynaecological disorders. Later, research showed that *Water Clover* enables to stimulate hepato-biliary functions. Chlorogenic and caffeic acids, components of *Water Clover* leaves, seem to spark off this favourable action to the digestion. It is also strongly advised to treat disorders as cholecystitis, constipation or irritable bowel syndrome. Gastrointestinal spasms favourably answer to treatments with this plant. *Water Clover* contains other active principles which can explain its medicinal properties. Indeed, we notably list resin, saponin, tannins and fatty oils. Finally, the plant is reputed for its anti-scorbutic effects, which are confirmed by modern pharmacology. *Water Clover* also appears in the list of febrifuges and natural tonics recommended during convalescence. Essential oil extracted from *Water Clover* can be used for the treatment of rheumatic and dermatologic disorders.

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