

# Aconitum napellus

## COMMON NAME

Monkshood, European monkshood, tiger's bane, dog's bane

## FAMILY

Ranunculaceae

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Dicotyledonous Herbs other than Composites

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not assessed

## FLOWER COLOURS

Violet/Purple

## ETYMOLOGY

**aconitum:** Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus suggested the name comes from the village of Akonai (which does not exist now) that was part of the land occupied by the Mariandynoi people in Turkey. Another source suggests the Greek word 'akónitos' formed from 'ak', 'pointed' and kônos, 'cone' referring to the pointed leaves. Others say a pointed cone is an arrow and refers to its use as an arrow poison.

**napellus:** From the Latin 'napus', which means 'turnip' and thus means 'like a small turnip' which refers to the shape of the root.

Poisonous plant:

All parts of this popular garden plant are poisonous. It is one of the most poisonous plants in the garden but has a distinctive and unpleasant taste that cases of accidental poisoning are extremely rare though not unknown. The taste is described as initially very bitter followed by a burning sensation and, then, the mouth becomes numb.

The principal alkaloids are aconite and aconitine with the latter aconitine being thought to be the principal toxin. Ingestion of even a small amount can result in severe gastrointestinal upset but it can also cause a slowing of the heart rate which is often the cause of death. The toxin may be administered by absorption through broken skin or open wounds. Florists have been known to become unwell after working with the flowers.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/aconitum-napellus/>



Aconitum napellus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



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