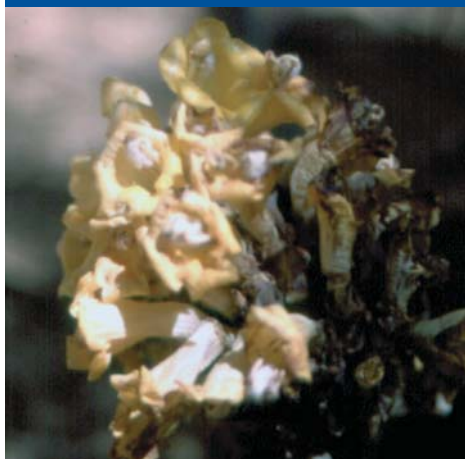


***Cistanche phelypaea* (L.) Coutinho**
Orobanchaceae



Compiled by Dr. Salima Benhouhou

■ **Morphological description**

A perennial parasite, erect and not branched, 0.2 to 1 m. high. Its stem is between 3 and 5 cm. thick. The leaves are lanceolated, reduced to brownish scales. The roots are absent: the plant attaches itself to its host via small tubers. The main host plants are *Tamarix gallica*, *Calligonum comosum* and *Pulicaria sp.*

Its numerous flowers form a dense spike, with yellow petals, shaped like a tube with a 3-4 cm. opening at the top.

Since the plant appears after rain, flowering occurs soon afterwards; this can happen at any time of year in the high mountains of the central Sahara.

Flowering in the more northern zones of the Algerian Sahara is usually in early spring.

■ **Geographical distribution**

Local: Common on the high plateaux and northern Algerian Sahara; rarer in the western and central Sahara.

Regional: North Africa.

Global: North Africa.

■ **Ecology**

This plant occurs in an arid climate with a low rainfall (under 100 mm. per year). *Cistanche phelypaea* favours sandy-loamy soils and is mainly found in

***Cistanche phelypaea* (L.) Coutinho**

Cistanche tinctoria (Desf.) Beck.

Phelypaea lutea Desf.

Phelypaea tinctoria (Forssk.) Brot.

Arabic: danoun, tarathith

Targui: ahléwan

English: broomrape

French: cistanque

large wadi beds and can tolerate moderate amounts of salt.

■ **Status**

According to the IUCN criteria this saharo-mediterranean species falls into the "C" category. So far there is no data on its propagation and conservation.

■ **Part used**

The thick lower part of the stem is collected soon after rain.

It is used as a dried powder, taken by mouth. It is also used as a paste to put on abscesses.

The lower parts of the young shoots are cut in slices and dried to make poultices

■ **Constituents**

Starch and aromatic constituents.

■ **Pharmacological action and toxicity**

No information was found on the pharmacological action of this plant, while a search on its toxicity appears negative.

■ **Pharmacopeias**

Not relevant for this species.

■ **Pharmaceutical products**

Not relevant for this species.

■ **Traditional medicine and local knowledge**

It is used for diarrhoea, diabetes, intestinal troubles, infection (abscesses) and as a diuretic.

Nomads in southern Morocco and Algeria eat the lower part of the broomrape either boiled in water or cooked in ashes and mixed with cereals to make a sort of porridge or a flat bread.

It is also known for its aphrodisiac properties.

The plant is also used for tanning and dyeing skins.

In the Tissint region (Morocco), the powder is applied to wounds as a haemostat.

A preparation made from the dried lower part of the broomrape, honey and leaves of the olive tree is used as a cream for haemorrhoids.

In Egypt, the dried powdered plant mixed with camel's milk is used to poultice contusions.

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