

***Pituranthos scoparius* (Coss. & Dur.) Benth. & Hook.**  
Apiaceae



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■ **Morphological description**

*Pituranthos scoparius* is an aphyllous (or almost) perennial plant; the upper leaves are reduced to their sheath, ending in a point. The stems are erect, 40-80 cm. high, and form dense clumps that send out laterally short stiff branches. The flowers, with an often short peduncle, white petals and narrow veins, are bunched in lateral umbels that are fairly spread out, with 4-8 spindly spokes. The fruit is a 1.3 mm.-long globular mericarp.

Flowering occurs from February to October.

■ **Geographical distribution**

**Local:** Widespread in Tunisia: the Medjerda valley, the dorsal ridge, central and southern Tunisia.

**Regional:** From Tripolitania to Morocco.

**Global:** An endemic species of North Africa; from Tripolitania to Morocco, and southwards to the central Sahara.

■ **Ecology**

*Pituranthos scoparius* is one of the Umbelliferae with a wide distribution area, sometimes river

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*Pituranthos virgatus* Coss.

**Arabic:** guezzah

**French:** pithuranthos à balai

banks. It is also a feature of the *Rosmarinus officinalis* and *Pituranthos scoparius* association that develops in pre-Saharan Tunisia.

■ **Status, conservation and culture**

The species grows wild in Tunisia and is picked wild.

■ **Part used**

The aerial part.

■ **Constituents**

The root contains mannitol and isocoumarines. The seeds and stems contain an essential oil.

■ **Traditional medicine**

For headaches: mix equal amounts of the aerial part of *Pituranthos scoparius* and *Teucrium polium*, and of the leaves of *Artemisia campestris* and *Plantago albicans*, all reduced to a powder, with water; apply locally to the crown of the head overnight. Diarrhoea: decoct 3 kilos of the aerial part of *Pituranthos scoparius* in three litres of water and boil it down to one litre; one cup to be taken a day on an empty stomach. Eczema: decoct 5 kilos of the aerial part of *Pituranthos scoparius* in five litres of water and boil it down to one litre; swab three times a day until a cure results.

■ **Pharmacological action and toxicity**

The isocoumarines increase the antitumoral activity of radiotherapy. The plant causes allergic reactions in animals.

■ **References**

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