Apium graveolens L.
Apiaceae

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Synonyms

***Apium graveolens* L.:** *Apium integrilobum* Hayata; *Apium vulgare* Bubani; *Carum graveolens* Koso-Pol.; *Celeri graveolens* (L.) Britton; *Selinum graveolens* Krause; *Seseli graveolens* Ledeb.; *Seseli graveolens* Scop.; *Sium apium* Roth.; *Sium graveolens* Vest

Local Names

Bolivia: Apio (Spanish); **Colombia:** Apio, Apio de bebida (Spanish); **Ecuador:** Apio negro (Spanish); **Peru:** Apio Cimarron, Apio (Spanish); **English:** Celery

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Botany and Ecology

Annual or biennial; root fusiform, branching, lignifying in second year, cultivated forms with fleshy, cylindrical-turnip-shaped root; stem erect, 30–100 cm high, furrowed, often hollow, strongly branching, with spreading branches; leaves long-petioled (petioles sometimes fleshy), the lowermost leaves trifid, becoming pinnate, resembling cauline leaves; upper cauline leaves sometimes opposite, subsessile, on short sheaths with white-scarious margins; in lower leaves first-order lobes rounded, obtuse at base, 3-lobate or tripartite, incised-dentate with acute teeth, these of cauline leaves cuneate at base, with acute whitish-cartilaginous teeth. Umbels numerous, small, on short peduncles or subsessile, of 6–12 glabrous rays; involucre and involucels none; petals white, ca. 0.5 mm long; fruit 1.5–2 mm long, nearly as wide. Flowering July–September. Ural, Caucasus, along creeks, often as a weed in wet places, widely cultivated. *Apium* is originally endemic to the Mediterranean region and was already cultivated in ancient times. In Europe, it was known in the Middle Ages, but its widespread cultivation began only in the eighteenth century. Celery occurs wild in Europe, the Mediterranean region, and in Asia west of the Himalayas. The ancient Greeks and Egyptians already cultivated celery. It was probably first grown as a medicinal plant, later for the leaves as flavoring. Celery has a long history in China, dating back to at least the sixth century AD. In Central Europe, cultivated celery was recorded in 1623 in France (Figs. 1 and 2).

Local Medicinal Uses

The fresh or dry plant is commonly used as an appetite promoter, as a digestive, against intestinal gas and colic, and as a relaxant in cases of insomnia. Its use is also recommended as an anti-inflammatory. In popular medicine, the leaves, stems, and roots are used to promote good digestion and as a stimulant. The decoction of the root is used to treat colic and against intestinal gas, and it is also used as a diuretic and stimulant. The extract and tincture of celery are used as antiscorbutic, anti-flatulent, exciting, fever reducing, and diuretic, and are also advised in cases of fluid retention, weakness, and yellowing of the skin (jaundice). The fruits, both dry and mature, are used as a nervous sedative (Fonnegra-Gómez and Villa-Londoño 2011; Fonnegra Gómez et al. 2012; García Barriga 1975; Giraldo Quintero et al. 2015; Martínez Correa and Montes Martínez 2017; Ministerio de Protección Social 2008; Pérez Arbeláez 1996).

Bolivia: The whole fresh plant used to treat anemia and liver problems, for digestion, to lose weight, and as a relaxant (Bussmann et al. 2016; Justo and Moraes 2015). **Colombia:** Stems and leaves are used to treat aphonia, for blood cleansing, colic, diarrhea, fever, flatulence, gallbladder, indigestion, menstrual colics, stomachache, and as stimulant; stems, leaves, and seeds are used as diuretic, for wound healing, inflammation, liver problems, nerves, rheumatism, and sunstroke (Bussmann et al. 2018). **Ecuador:** The whole fresh plant is used to reduce swellings (Béjar et al.

Fig. 1 *Apium graveolens* (Apiaceae), garden, Chicani, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y. Paniagua-Zambrana)

Fig. 2 *Apium graveolens* (Apiaceae), garden, Chicani, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y. Paniagua-Zambrana)

2002; Bussmann and Sharon 2006a, 2007a). **Peru:** The whole fresh plant is used to treat bronchitis, heart problems, nerves, insomnia, anxiety, gases, gastritis, and colic of the stomach (Bussmann and Sharon 2006b, 2007b, 2015a, b; Bussmann et al. 2007a, b, 2009, 2010a, b, 2011a, b; Bussmann and Glenn 2010a, b; Monigatti et al. 2013; Revene et al. 2008). It is very frequently sold in local markets, and an excellent example for syncretism in medicinal plant use in Latin America.

Local Food Uses

The stems and bulbs are often eaten, especially in Eurasia (Bussmann et al. 2014; Bussmann 2017).

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