

# Actaea racemosa

**North American Native**

*Actaea* (ak-tee-a) From the Greek word, elder, referring to the similar leaves.

*racemosa* (ray-ce-mo-sa) meaning having racemes (flowers opening along a central stalk from the bottom up) (Syn. *Cimicifuga racemosa*)



**Zones:** 5 - 8 **Flower Color:** White **Height:** 2 – 3' **Spacing:** 18"

## About the Species:



**Common Name:** Snakeroot, Black Cohosh

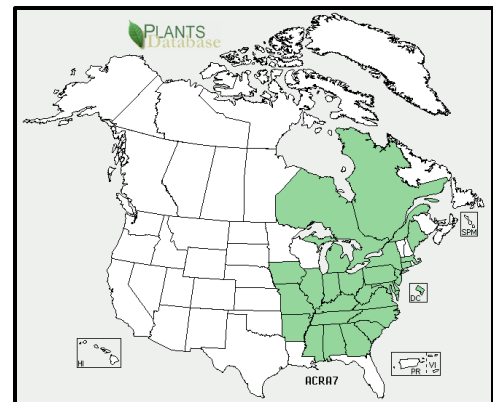
**Family:** Ranunculaceae

This large, ferny green leafed plant will grow to about 30 inches high, with the flowers 2-3 feet above on long branching stems and will spread to 2-4 feet. Blooming in July, the lovely white flowers will lighten up woodland gardens. The flowers are very effective against the dark green foliage found in most shady locations. The fine foliage will add excellent texture throughout the growing season. In moist, hummus rich soil it is long-lived, drought-tolerant, and a vigorous grower. *Actaea* will grow best in partial shade, but will tolerate full sun with adequate moisture. Butterflies and Hummingbirds are attracted to Snakeroot and it is also deer resistant. *Actaea racemosa* is endangered in several states due to excessive commercial harvesting from the wild. *Actaea racemosa* was first described by botanists in 1705. It was introduced in English gardens as a hardy ornamental perennial by 1732.

**Habitat:** You can find these perennials growing in moist, mixed deciduous forests, wooded slopes, ravines, the sides of creeks, thickets, moist meadowlands, edges of forests, and mountainous terrain.

**In the Garden:** Grow *Actaea racemosa* as a cut flower for its lovely blossoms in woodland gardens, dappled shady beds, edges of woods, and along streambeds. *Actaea* will add architectural height to the shaded part of a border or shade garden.

**Other Uses:** Native American Indians were using the root of *Actaea racemosa* to treat the symptoms of menopause as well as other women's ailments long before Europeans landed in America and has been widely used in Western cultures since the early 1800's. This herb is still popular today for a variety of uses. It is also used in the treatment of rheumatism, as a sedative, in the treatment of tinnitus, and high blood pressure, as a tonic, diuretic, and as an anti-inflammatory for arthritis. One of the common names, "Snakeroot", refers to its use in treating snake bites.



USDA Plants Database

### What If?

In the early 1800s, an older pioneer woman named Sally was traveling to the American West with her family. She was suffering from the female ailment menopause. The settlers had been befriended by a friendly band of Native Americans. One of the older Native American women named Shy Fawn was close to the pioneer woman's age. She understood the problem and shared with her the treatment that she and the women of her tribe used. Native Americans had been using *Actaea racemosa* for menopause and other related ailments. The dried root is still popular today for a variety of uses.