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Cornflower

Centaurea cyanus



Scientific classification

Kingdom: Plantae
Division: Magnoliophyta
Class: Magnoliopsida
Order: Asterales
Family: Asteraceae
Genus: *Centaurea*
Species: ***C. cyanus***

Binomial name

Centaurea cyanus
L.

The **Cornflower** (*Centaurea cyanus*) also known as **Bachelor's button**, **Basket flower**, and **Boutonniere flower** is a small annual flowering plant in the family Asteraceae, native to Europe.

It is an annual plant growing to 40-90 cm tall, with grey-green branched stems. The leaves are lanceolate, 1-4 cm long. The flowers are most commonly an intense blue colour, produced in flowerheads (capitula) 1.5-3 cm diameter,

with a ring of a few large, spreading ray florets surrounding a central cluster of disc florets. The blue pigment is protocyanin, which in roses is red.^[1]

In the past it often grew as a weed in crop fields. It is now endangered in its native habitat by agricultural intensification, particularly over-use of herbicides, destroying its habitat; in the United Kingdom it has declined from 264 sites to just 3 sites in the last 50 years. It is also however, through introduction as an ornamental plant in gardens and a seed contaminant in crop seeds, now naturalised in many other parts of the world, including North America and parts of Australia.

Cultivation

It is grown as an ornamental plant in gardens, where several cultivars have been selected with varying pastel colours, including pink and purple. It is also occasionally used as a culinary ornament. Cornflowers have been used and prized historically for its blue pigment. Cornflowers are often used as an ingredient in tea and is famous in the Lady Grey blend of Twinings.

Folklore and symbolism



In folklore, cornflowers were worn by young men in love; if the flower faded too quickly, it was taken as a sign that the man's love was unrequited.

In herbalism a decoction of cornflower is effective in treating conjunctivitis, and as a wash for tired eyes.

The Blue Cornflower has been the national flower of Estonia since 1968 and symbolizes daily bread to Estonians. It is also the symbol of the Estonian political party, Rahvaliid, the Finnish political party, National Coalition Party, and the

Swedish political party, Liberal People's Party. The Cornflower is also often seen as an inspiration for the romantic symbol of the Blue Flower.

The Blue Cornflower was the favourite flower of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Because of its ties to royalty, authors such as Theodor Fontane have used it, often sarcastically, to comment the social and political climate of the time.

In Austria it is a political symbol for pan-German and rightist ideas. The Members of the Freedom Party wore it at 2005's Parliament Opening.

The Cornflower is the national flower of Poland.