

Adonis vernalis

[Synonyms : *Adonanthe vernalis*, *Adonis apennina*, *Adonis davurica*, *Chrysocyathis vernalis*]

FALSE HELLEBORE is a perennial. Native to central and south-eastern Europe and to Siberia it has anemone-like glossy, rich yellow flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as *Adonide gialle* (Italian), *Adonido printempa* (Esperanto), Adonis (English German), *Adonis printanière* (French), *Arontorpsros* (Swedish), Bird's eye, *Frühlings-Adonis* (German), *Frühlings-Adonisröschen* (German), *Goricwiet vesinnij* (Russian), *Hlavaček jarni* (Czech), *Hlavačík jarný* (Slovak), *Kevätruusuleinikki* (Finnish), *Mitek wiosenny* (Polish), Ox-eye, Pheasant's eye, *Ruşcuță de primăvară* (Rumanian), Spring Adonis, Spring pheasant's eye, Sweet vernal, *Våradonis* (Swedish), Winter adonis, and Yellow pheasant's eye; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of patience, and sorrowful remembrance.

The flowers are pollinated by beetles.

Warning – false hellebore is a poisonous plant even in very small amounts. It can cause vomiting, diarrhoea and (if pregnant) abortion. It should only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner.

False hellebore can be subject to preservation orders. At the end of the 1990s it was already extinct in Italy and the Netherlands. At the beginning of the 21st Century it has been recognized as rare in Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland and disappearing in Russia (all due to over harvesting).

Vernalis means 'of Spring' (the time of year when the plant flowers).

The Greeks related false hellebore to Adonis and commemorated his death with a festival which took place after harvest.

Medicinally, herbalists have used the dried plant for treating kidney stones, fluid retention, and urinary ailments, and more recently as a tranquilizer and a heart stimulant. It is also used in homoeopathic treatments. (Collection for the latter uses is responsible for its serious decline today in the wild in Europe – so much so that international trade controls could be introduced.)