

Anthoxanthum odoratum

[Synonyms : *Anthoxanthum maderense*, *Anthoxanthum nebrodense*, *Anthoxanthum nitens*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *alpinum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *altissimum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *asperum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *corsicum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *glaberrimum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *glabrescens*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *montanum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* subsp. *odoratum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *pilosum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *sommierianum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *tenerum*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* var. *villosum*, *Anthoxanthum ovatum* var. *montanum*, *Anthoxanthum ovatum* var. *strictum*, *Anthoxanthum ovatum* var. *tenerum*, *Anthoxanthum pauciflorum*, *Anthoxanthum pilosum*, *Anthoxanthum sommierianum*, *Anthoxanthum villosum*, *Phalaris ciliata*, *Xanthoanthos odoratum*, *Xanthoanthos odoratus*]

SWEET VERNAL GRASS is a grass. Native to Asia and Europe it has yellowish-green or purplish flower spikelets.

It is also known as *Anthoxanthe* (French), *Antoksanto odora* (Esperanto), *Antossanto* (Italian), *Chwyth yr Wýdd* (Welsh), *Dušistyj kolosok* (Russian), *Echte Ruchgras* (German), *Flouve odorante* (French), *Gemeines Ruchgras* (German), *Gewöhnliches Ruchgras* (German), *Kokulu Yonca* (Turkish), *Melynwellt y Gwanwyn* (Welsh), *Paleino odoroso* (Italian), Pig grass, *Reukgras* (Dutch), Scented vernal grass, Spring grass, Sweet scented grass, Sweet scented vernal grass, *Tchiândent* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Tomka voňavá* (Slovak), *Tomka vonná* (Czech), *Tomka wonna* (Polish), *Tuoksusimake* (Finnish), *Vårbrodd* (Swedish), *Vellugtende gulaks* (Danish), Vernal grass, and *Wilder Lavendel* (German); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of ‘poor but happy’, submission, and usefulness.

Mature flowers and plant fragments are picked out after haymaking.

Warning – sweet vernal grass can provoke hay fever in humans. A fungus on poorly prepared hay or silage made from the grass is believed to be responsible for the poisoning and death of animals.

Odoratum is derived from Latin *odor* (scent, smell, odour) meaning ‘scented or fragrant’.

Widely naturalized in North America sweet vernal grass provided forage for cattle of the North American Hesquiat Indian tribe.

The grass was used for basket-making by some of the Chippewa Indians, as well as the Abnaki and Potawatomi tribes, and the latter also used the grass fibre for sewing buckskin clothing. Its fragrance was appreciated by some of the Chippewa who for a period, according to records, burnt it as incense during ceremonial rituals.

It is used commercially as forage, hay and silage – and is sometimes grown as an ornamental plant as well and this can be used for dried flower arrangements.

Medicinally, a tincture has long been used for treating hay fever either internally or today as a nasal spray.

It is the birthday flower for 30th April.