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Butomus umbellatus

FLOWERING-RUSH is a deciduous aquatic perennial. Native to temperate Asia, and Europe (including Britain) it has saucer-like, rose-pink flowers which smell of bitter almonds. It is also known as *Blomvass* (Swedish), *Brudelys* (Danish), *Engraff* (Welsh), Grassie rush, *Okrasa okolikatá* (Slovak), Pride of the Thames, Raxen, Rush, *Sarjarimpi* (Finnish), *Schwabenblume* (German), *Šmel okoličnatý* (Czech), Water gladiole, and *Zwanebloem* (Dutch): and in flower language is said to be a symbol of complaisance (bundle of flowering reeds), and music (bundle of flowering reeds).

Warning - the leaves are sharp enough to be able to cut the mouths of cattle.

Umbellatus is derived from Latin *umbella* (parasol) meaning ‘bearing flattish-heads of flowers with stalks arising from one place’.

It is said that when there was more waterlogged farmland in Britain and the flowering-rush was prolific, cattle used to cut their mouths when eating the sharp-sided leaves.

For some authorities these are the ‘reeds’ mentioned in the Book of Job in the Bible.

At some point flowering-rush crossed the Atlantic and the North American Iroquois Indians are recorded as having used a plant decoction as an ingredient in a potion for worms that was given to their cows and horses.

Medicinally, herbalists used to recommend the seeds for their alleged relaxing effect before sleep.