

Drosera rotundifolia

[Synonyms : *Drosera corsica*, *Robella rotundifolia*]

ROUND-LEAVED SUNDEW is an insectivorous perennial (occasionally annual). Found in Asia, Europe and North America, it has white or pinkish flowers.

It is also known as Bedrot, Common sundew, *Daggört* (Swedish), Dew grass, Dew plant, *Drosera à feuilles rondes* (French), *Drozero rondfolia* (Esperanto), Eyebright, Flycatcher, Flycatch plant, Fly-trap, *Gwlithlys* (Welsh), Iles, *Kihokki* (Finnish), Lustwort, Moon grass, Moonwort, Moor-gloom, Moor grass, *Mucholapka* (Czech), Oil plant, Red-rot, *Rorella* (Spanish), *Rosa solis*, *Rosée du soleil* (French), *Rosička* (Czech), *Rosička okružhlostá* (Slovak), *Rosnatka okrouhlostá* (Czech), *Rosník* (Czech), *Rosolida* (Italian), Roundleaf sundew, *Rundbladet soldug* (Danish), *Rundblättriger Sonnentau* (German), *Rundsileshår* (Swedish), *Sileshår* (Swedish), Sin-dew, *Sluneční bylina* (Czech), *Sonnetau* (German), Stickybacks, Sundew, Youthroot, and Youthwort; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of ‘a serenade’.

The quantity of dewdrop-like sweetish fluid on the leaves, that attracts and ensnares insects, is greatest at the sun’s height. This fluid excreted by the leaf glands is digestive and dissolves all of the insect that can be absorbed by the plant – the rest dries and blows away. (The glandular excretion does not occur if inorganic matter is ‘trapped’.)

Warning – round-leaved sundew must be used in small quantities only as it contains an irritant substance. It can cause dermatitis. It can cause photosensitization in some animals.

Trade demands for round-leaved sundew in Europe are such that it has been the subject of over harvesting and at the end of the 1990s its future survival was being considered to be threatened in Europe.

Rotundifolia is Latin *rotunda* (round, circular) and *-folia* (leaved) components meaning ‘rounded-leaved’.

Sheep farmers must have been in two minds over their views on the desirability of round-leaved sundew on any grazing land. On the one hand it was alleged that any sheep feeding on it would develop liver rot, and on the other that they would race to the ram. These somewhat conflicting old wives’ tales accounted for such common names as ‘red-rot’ and ‘lustwort’.

In Britain in the past the plant was used cosmetically for the treatment of freckles and sunburn. Perhaps of even greater interest than these practices which were likely to have been common in many countries, some of the European countries (France and Italy especially) used round-leaved sundew to make a medicine for easing pain – a medicine that was to develop into a popular liqueur called *Rossolis* and *Rosoglio* respectively (of which neither are now available). In England they made *Rosa Solis* for which records include at least one 16th Century recipe. The leaves were also employed like rennet, to curdle milk.

In North America this plant was a source of medicine for at least one Indian tribe. Records tell us that the Kwakiutl Indians, apart from being convinced that it held aphrodisiacal qualities, used the plant to treat bunions, corns and warts.

Medicinally, herbalists have recommended this plant for the treatment of various respiratory ailments (Irish children suffering from whooping-cough would be given a potion made from the leaves boiled in asses’ milk), and its juice was used for treating corns and warts.

In North America at the beginning of the 20th Century some authorities believed it could be a rejuvenating treatment for 'old age' and a vegetable extract was sometimes given in the treatment of arteriosclerosis. Today it can be used for treating gastric disorders, asthma or whooping-cough - and it is used in homoeopathic treatments.