

Epigaea repens

[Synonyms : *Epigaea repens* var. *glabrifolia*]

MOSS BEAUTY is an evergreen shrub. Native to central, northern and eastern North America, it has small fragrant, pink and deep-rose (occasionally white) flowers.

It is also known as American ground laurel, Arbutus, Crocus, Gravel pink, Gravel plant, Gravel weed, Ground laurel, Ground sweet, May flower, Mountain pink, New England mayflower, Our beauties, Real mayflower, Rough leaf, Shadflower, Trailing arbutus, Water pink, and Winter pink: and in flower language it is said to be a symbol of perseverance, and token.

Repens means 'creeping'.

In modern North American tradition the plant name May flower is said to have been chosen by the Pilgrim Fathers who christened it to commemorate the ship that had brought them to the New Land – and it has been adopted as an emblem by Massachusetts in the United States.

Authorities have noted that for members of the Potawatomi North American Indian tribe moss beauty was sacred and a tribal flower.

The Cherokee Indians used a plant infusion to treat diarrhoea in children, while a plant decoction that caused vomiting was used to counter abdominal pain. They, the Iroquois and some of the Algonkin Indians prescribed it for some kidney disorders, and the Iroquois also used it to treat various female problems and rheumatism. Both Cherokee and Iroquois Indians also took it for indigestion.

Moss beauty was introduced to Britain in 1736 but it was found to be a difficult plant to cultivate there.

The flower became a state emblem for Massachusetts in the United States in 1918.

Although some believed it to be an effective remedy for bladder stones, prostate and urinal problems, it is rarely used in folk medicine today.