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Gelsemium sempervirens

[Synonyms : *Anonymos sempervirens*, *Bignonia sempervirens*, *Gelsemium lucidum*, *Gelsemium nitidum*, *Lisianthus sempervirens*]

GELSEMIUM is an evergreen, trailing or counter-clockwise twining climber. Native to Guatemala, Mexico and the southern United States, it has highly fragrant, yellow flowers. It is also known as Carolina jasmine, Carolina jessamine, Carolina wild woodvine, Carolina yellow jasmine, Carolina yellow jessamine, Cow-itch, Evening trumpet flower, *Falscher Jasmin* (German), False jasmine, False jasmine root, False jessamine, False yellow jasmine, *Gelber Jasmin* (German), Gelsemin, *Giftjasmin* (German), Jasmine, Virginia jasmine, Wild jasmine, Wild jessamine, Wild woodbine, Woodbine, Yellow jasmine, Yellow jessamine, and Yellow jessamine root: and in flower language it is said to be a symbol of separation.

The flowers drop quickly.

Warning – all parts of gelsemium are poisonous, as is honey from the flowers. It can cause sweating, severe depression, headache, pain in the eyes, double vision, dilated pupils, convulsions, giddiness, nausea, respiratory failure and death. In Britain this is only available as a prescription only medicine or from a registered pharmacist. It can be poisonous for animals.

Gelsemium should not be confused with either the yellow (Winter) flowering jasmine found in Europe (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) or the true yellow jasmine (*Jasminum odoratissimum*) often grown in the southern United States.

Sempervirens is made up of Latin *semper* (always) and *vivo* (to live, be alive) components meaning ‘evergreen’.

The flowers can be used to make a perfume.

Gelsemium is the State flower of South Carolina in the United States and was adopted there in 1924.

The North American Delaware Indians used gelsemium not only to purify blood but also as an ingredient in a skin lotion.

It appeared on the medicinal scene accidentally when a Mississippi planter drank a tea made from it by mistake in order to treat a bilious fever. It could be found until recently as one of the ingredients in migraine preparations and was also used for the treatment of sick headaches, menstrual pain, neuralgia and rheumatic pains. Today it is rarely used because even very small amounts can be poisonous.