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Gentiana

Gentianaceae

Dioscorides the 1st Century Greek physician claimed that the medicinal properties of the *Gentiana* species were identified by Gentius (who was the last king of Illyria and was defeated by the Romans in 165 BC) from whom they take their name. However in recent times the excavation of a tomb in Thebes revealed an Egyptian papyrus predating Gentius by about 1,000 years that records descriptions of medicines in which members of the gentian family were ingredients.

In 1832 a volume of poems was published by the American poet William Bryant (1794-1878) and they included *To the Fringed Gentian* which opens with the lines

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,
And coloured with the heaven's own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night.

.....

The flowers of most species in this genus open in the morning and close in the afternoon.