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Gentiana andrewsii

[Synonyms : *Dasystephana andrewsii*, *Pneumonanthe andrewsii*]

CLOSED GENTIAN is a perennial. Native to eastern North America it has nearly closed mouthed, whitish at base, dark blue flowers.

It is also known as Bacral gentian, Barrel gentian, Belmony, Blind gentian, Bottle gentian, Cloistered heart, Closed blue gentian, Closed bottle gentian, Dumb foxglove, Fringe-tip closed gentian, and Sampson's snakeroot.

The flowers barely open and in some areas the temperature inside them can be warmer than the cold morning air. Whitish fringed bands between the petals act as honey guides for the bumble bees that manage to prise the flowers open and these bands fade once the nectar has been taken.

Warning – some authorities recommend that the root is not taken internally if suffering from an internal ulcer.

The flowers are pollinated by bumble bees and butterflies.

Andrewsii commemorates an English botanical artist, engraver and publisher Henry Charles Andrews (1794-1830).

Dried closed gentian root was hung in Iroquois homes to repel witches.

According to records the plant was a source of medicine for one or two North American Indian tribes. While the Meskwaki Indians used the root to treat some female problems and snake bites generally, the Iroquois used it as a remedy for various liver problems and for easing chills, headaches and sore eyes. The latter also included it as an ingredient in a poultice applied to help sore muscles.

The root has been added to apéritifs to enhance appetite and stimulate digestion.