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Gentiana verna

[Synonyms : *Blackstonia verna*, *Calathiana verna*, *Gentiana arctica*, *Gentiana tergestina*, *Hippion vernum*]

SPRING GENTIAN is a perennial. Native to Ireland, Britain and central Europe to the Asian mountains and Japan, it has white throated, intensely blue flowers.

It is also known as Blue violet, *Frühlingsenzian* (German), Gentian, *Gentiane printanière* (French), *Horcovník jarný* (Slovak), *Hořec jarní* (Czech), *Horec jarný* (Slovak), *Hořepník jarní* (Czech), Lucy of Teesdale, Snow gentian, Spring violet, Star gentian, and Vernal gentian.

The flowers are pollinated by bees and butterflies.

In Britain (and other areas) spring gentian is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 (it may not be picked, uprooted or destroyed).

Verna means 'of Spring' (the time of year when the plant flowers).

It is understood that pollen evidence suggests this species survived the glacial period in Britain. The English author, Arthur Christopher Benson (1862-1925), one of whose poems was *Land of Hope and Glory*, described this flower as

the pure radiance of the untroubled heaven.

Spring gentian does attract some superstition. In Germany it is still believed in some areas that a thunder-storm will materialize if anyone picks the flower.