

Helichrysum italicum

[Synonyms : *Helichrysum angustifolium*, *Helichrysum aware*, *Helichrysum microcephalum*, *Helichrysum microphyllum*]

EVERLASTING FLOWER is an evergreen perennial or subshrub. Found in the Mediterranean it has small, scaly yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Currykraut* (German), Curry plant, Curry seal, *Elicriso* (Italian), *Eternellart* (Swedish), *Helichrysum* (English, German), *Hélichrysum* (French), *Immortelle* (French), *Mittelmeer-Strohblume* (German), *Olkikukkalaji* (Finnish), *Smil italský* (Czech), and *Strohblume* (German).

A yellow essential oil which smells of roses can be extracted from the young shoots and the flowers by distillation.

Italicum means ‘of or from Italy’.

In Roman times the plant used to be grown indoors to keep moths at bay, and they also used the downy leaves to stuff their pillows and mattresses. According to Pliny (23-79) the Roman natural historian, the flowers were also used by the Romans in remedies for mumps and oral abscesses.

Everlasting flower is a familiar sight in French graveyards –because apparently it needs little tending and can be relied upon to give a splash of golden colour in Winter.

The oil is a commercial ingredient today for the cosmetics industry, and it is also used by the pharmaceutical industry in preparations for respiratory problems and allergies.

Medicinally, everlasting flower is still used homoeopathic treatments. It has been used to treat respiratory problems, rheumatism, liver ailments and gall bladder disorders.