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Heliotropium arborescens

[Synonyms : *Heliotropium arborescens* var. *grisellum*, *Heliotropium corymbosum*,
Heliotropium hybridum, *Heliotropium peruvianum*]

HELIOTROPE is an evergreen shrub. Native to Peru it has small, feathery, blue, lavender, purple or white flowers.

It is also known as Cherry pie, Fragrant heliotrope, Garden heliotrope, *Heliotrop* (Swedish), *Heliotropo* (Canary Island), *Heliotropo arbeca* (Esperanto), *Otočník stromovitý* (Czech), Peruvian heliotrope, and Turnsole; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of devotion, eagerness, faithfulness, ‘intoxicated with joy’, and ‘I remain true’.

Warning – has poisoned animals in some countries.

Heliotrope can be confused with common valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) when the plants are in flower.

Arborescens is derived from Latin *arbor* (tree) meaning 'tree-like or tending to be woody'.

Heliotrope is believed to have been introduced to England from Peru in about 1757 via the botanic gardens in Paris, France.

There seem to be several anonymous poems about the flower including one entitled *The Heliotrope* that begins with the lines

Pale flower! the symbol of a faithful love,
Closing your buds, heedless of dew or air,
If he is gone – your heavenly light above
For whom alone you bloom so sweet and fair,
Rest still in hope,

Today heliotrope is used commercially by the perfumery and toiletry industries in soaps and powders.

Medicinally, the plant was used to ease childbirth and was prescribed for the treatment of urinary disorders, sore throats and skin problems. Gout was also said to be eased with an application of the leaves. It is used today in homoeopathic treatments.