

*Hesperis matronalis*

[Synonyms : *Hesperis caucasica*, *Hesperis sibirica*]

**DAME'S-VIOLET** is an evergreen biennial or perennial. Native to central and southern Europe it has small, mauve, pink or white flowers.

It is also known as *Aftonviol* (Swedish), *Antoniana* (Italian), *Buyuk frenk benefsesi* (Turkish), Closed sciences, *Crucchia sativa* (Italian), Damask, Damask rocket, Damask violet, *Damastbloem* (Dutch), Dame's rocket, Dame's wort, Double rocket, *Esperide del giardini* (Italian), Eveweed, *Frauennachtrirole* (German), Garden rocket, *Gewöhnliche Nachtviole* (German), *Girade* (French), *Giranda* (Italian), *Giuliana* (Italian), *Hesperis* (Swedish), *Illakko* (Finnish), *Jaramago* (Spanish), *Juliana* (Spanish), *Julienne* (French), *Julienne cassolette* (French), *Matronal* (Spanish), *Matrouenviole* (German), Melancholy gentleman, *Mensur* (Turkish), Mother-of-the-evening, *Nachtviole* (German), *Nattviol* (Swedish), Night-odorous stock, Night rocket, Night-scented gilliflower, Night-scented stocks, Night-scented violet, Night-smelling rocket, Night violet, Purple rocket, Queen's gillifers, Queen's gillyflower, Rocket, Rockset, Rogue's gillifers, Rogue's gillyflower, *Roquette* (French), *Ruckbette* (German), Summer lilac, Sweet rocket, *Trädgårdsnattviol* (Swedish), *Večernica voňavá* (Slovak), *Večernice vonná* (Czech), Vesper flower, *Viola delle dame* (Italian), White rocket, and Winter gillyflower; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of coquetry, deceit, and watchfulness.

Towards evening the flowers have a sweet, clove-like addition to their violet-like daytime scent. The flowers are especially attractive to butterflies.

Oil can be extracted from the seeds.

Warning – large doses can cause vomiting.

*Matronalis* is Latin (matronly, of a married woman) meaning 'dame or matron' with reference to 1<sup>st</sup> March when the Romans celebrated a festival for married ladies.

Some of the other names arise because this sweet scented flower's fragrance is greatest in the evening.

The scent was so enjoyed by the 16<sup>th</sup> Century English Elizabethans that the flowers could be found gracing their apartments and bedchambers. Today the seed oil is a commercial ingredient used by the perfumery industry.

Dame's-violet should not be confused with garden rocket (*Eruca vesicaria*) – although particularly in Germany the leaves (picked before flowering) have been eaten in salads like garden cress (*Lepidium sativum*).

Medicinally, in the past the plant was recommended by herbalists for various ailments but it is not used today.