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Hypericum calycinum

AARON'S BEARD is an invasive evergreen or deciduous shrub. Native to south-eastern Europe and Asia Minor, it has golden-yellow flowers with many long, orange-yellow stamens.

It is also known as *Grossblütiges Johanniskraut* (German), *Hypericum*, *Immergrünes Johanniskraut* (German), *Prakthyperikum* (Swedish), *Rhosyn Saron* (Welsh), *Rose-of-sharon*, *Sir George Wheler's Tutsan*, *St. John's wort*, *Terrestrial sun*, and *Třezalka kališkatá* (Czech).

The flowers are pollinated by bees.

Calycinum is derived from Latin *calyx* (cup) with reference to the base of the flower structure.

Its common name *Rose-of-sharon* has no connection with its origins as it does not come from the western plains of Israel. Authorities tell how the Reverend Sir George Wheler (1650-1723) discovered the plant in 1675 or 1676 near Istanbul in Turkey and that it was introduced to Britain in the same year. During the following Century it came to be known as 'Sir George Wheler's Tutsan'.

Aaron's beard is the subject of a legend connected specifically (and with some fragility) with Hulne Abbey in Northumberland in the north of England. The Abbey's founder was Sir Ralph Fresborn who was a Crusader and is claimed to have brought the plant back from Palestine because of its medicinal qualities. (Not only is it not native to Palestine – although it may well have been introduced there – but it is also not noted especially for any medicinal advantages unless it is confused with those normally associated with perforate St. John's-wort, *Hypericum perforatum*.)