

Laburnum anagyroides

[Synonyms : *Cytisus laburnum*, *Laburnum alschingeri*, *Laburnum vulgare*]

LABURNUM is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to central and southern Europe it has pea-like slightly fragrant, golden yellow flowers.

It is also known as Bean trefoil, Common laburnum, False ebony, *Gemeiner Goldregen* (German), *Gewöhnlicher Goldregen* (German), Golden chain, Golden chain tree, Golden rain, *Goldregen* (German), *Gouden regen* (Dutch), *Gullregn* (Swedish), *Lé plieuthant des chabots* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Pea tree, *Štedrec ovisnutý* (Slovak), *Štědrěnec odvislý* (Czech), *Sydgullregn* (Swedish), *Tresi Aur* (Welsh), Watch and chain, and Yellow laburnum; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of forsaken, pensive beauty, and pensive thought.

The flowers are pollinated by bees.

Warning – the whole plant is poisonous (especially the roots, wood, bark and seeds). It can cause abdominal pain, headaches, vomiting, irregular pulse, breathing difficulties, loss of balance, muscular spasms, hallucinations, delirium, convulsions, coma and death. Poison can be absorbed through the skin. It is poisonous for many animals.

Anagyroides is made up of the genus name *Anagyris* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning ‘with backward curving pods like those in the *Anagyris* genus’.

It was introduced to Britain in 1596.

Like that of alpine laburnum (*Laburnum alpinum*) this dark wood (which will accept a high polish) is used too for making musical instruments and high quality furniture. In earlier days it is said to have been used for making archers’ bows and today it is also chosen for garden furniture and barrel hoops

Although laburnum is poisonous for some animals, for rabbits the bark is reputed to be a delicacy.

Laburnum is mentioned in reminiscence in one of the poems of the Englishman, Thomas Hood (1799-1845). The poem is called *Past and Present* and the passage runs

The lilacs where the robin built
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday, -
The tree is living yet.

Medicinally, laburnum has been used in the past in the treatment of asthma and whooping-cough.

It is the birthday flower for 8th January.