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Legousia hybrida

[Synonyms : *Campanula hybrida*, *Specularia hybrida*]

VENUS’S-LOOKING-GLASS is an annual. Native from Europe to North Africa it has small, yellowish-green centred, purple flowers.

It is also known as Corn violet, *Drych Gwener* (Welsh), *Dvärgspegel* (Swedish); *Miroir de Vénus* (French), *Venusspegel* (Swedish), and *Zrcadlovka různobarvá* (Czech); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of flattery.

Hybrida means ‘hybrid or mixed’.

Roman mythology is said to account for the plant’s appearance on earth. When Venus mislaid her mirror (which always reflected beauty) it was discovered in the hands of a shepherd. But the poor man was so captivated by his own reflection that he was reluctant to return the glass and Cupid had to go and retrieve it. In attempting to take the mirror from the shepherd it fell to the ground and as Cupid watched it shatter in pieces this flower emerged and bloomed in its place.

The English barber-surgeon and herbalist (the latter as a charlatan for many authorities), John Gerard (1545-1612), found the plant in the wild and grew it from seed in his garden. At that time he classified it as one of the gentian family. In the following Century however Jean François Durande (1732-1794) described the plant and it was reclassified in a different group.