

Lonicera periclymenum

HONEYSUCKLE is a clockwise-twining, deciduous or semi-evergreen, climbing shrub.

Native to North Africa, western Asia and to Europe (including Britain), it has small and fragrant, purplish tinged, creamy white flowers with projecting stamens.

It is also known as Bearbind, Bind, Bindweed, Bindwood, Bugle blooms, Caprifoly, *Chévrefeuille* (French), *Chuchét* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), Common European honeysuckle, Common honeysuckle, Eglantine, English wild honeysuckle, European honeysuckle, Fairy trumpets, Gramophone horns, *Gwyddfïd* (Welsh), Honeybind, Irish vine, *Kamperfoelie* (Dutch), Lady's fingers, Lamps of scent, Lily among thorns, *Madreselva* (Spanish), Pride of the evening, *Ruotsinköynnöskuusama* (Finnish), *Suchets* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), Suckles, Sucklebush, Sucklings, Sweet suckle, Trumpet flower, *Vildkaprifol* (Swedish), *Wald-Geissblatt* (German), Withywind, Woodbind, Woodbine, Woodwind, and *Zimolez ovíjivý* (Czech); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of 'bonds of love', '(the) colour of my fate' (coral), constancy, devotion, domestic happiness, fraternal love, 'I will not answer hastily', love, and 'sweetness of disposition'.

The flowers first open at twilight when they are most fragrant attracting moths (not least long-tongued hawkmoths). The flowers turn orange-brown after pollination and when dried they have a sweet, sticky taste.

Warning – the berries are said to be poisonous. The plant is believed to be able to cause vomiting and diarrhoea. It can also cause dermatitis. (Despite this warning it should be noted that no official records of poisoning exist in Britain.)

Periclymenum is derived from a Greek name for 'honeysuckle' *periklymenon* meaning 'twine around'

For some authorities the name Honeysuckle arose from the old habit of sucking the flowers for the sweet honey-tasting nectar, and for others it came about from the mistaken idea that bees extracted honey instead of nectar from the flowers.

This species is the taller of the two common honeysuckles, both of which can be found in the wild.

In the Scottish Highlands and elsewhere authorities have noted that honeysuckle was widely respected for its protective powers. On May Day (1st May) it was much in evidence, especially in the dairy ie. watching over cows, milk, and butter to ward off any evil influences. But there were those who in contrast believed honeysuckle should never cross the threshold for a variety of reasons including the conviction that it would give one a sore throat, that it would encourage young girls to have lascivious dreams, and that it would bring general misfortune to the household.

Authorities are diligent in identifying the precise use of the name Woodbine in English literature (as hedge bindweed, *Convolvulus sepium*, or honeysuckle). They would appear to lay especial importance on any intimation of the plant's habit, not least the degree to which it clings as the honeysuckle has been known to be so persistent that it leaves furrows in the bark of a tree upon which it has grown. With this in mind it is believed that Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1345-1400), the well-known English poet, wrote in *The Flower and the Leaf*

And tho that weare chaplets on their hede
Of fresh woodbine, be such as never were
To love untrue in word, thought, ne dede,
But aye stedfast; ne for pleasaunce ne fere,
Though that they should their hertes al to-tere,
Would never flit, but ever were stedfast
Till that there lives there asunder brast.

Two centuries later the famous English bard, William Shakespeare (1564-1616), was in his prime and honeysuckle is mentioned several times in his plays and both names are used. In *Much Ado About Nothing* today's familiar honeysuckle is evident.

.....say, that thou overheardst us,
And bid her steal into the pleached bower,
Where honeysuckles, ripen'd by the sun,
Forbid the sun to enter;

Medicinally, the fruit juice was used by herbalists in past centuries to treat various eye ailments, and also as an antidote for snake bites. The bark was used as a treatment for jaundice.

It is the birthday flower for 25th November, and is associated with June.