

Meconopsis betonicifolia

[Synonyms : *Cathcartia betonicifolia*, *Meconopsis baileyi*]

HIMALAYAN BLUE POPPY is an annual or perennial. Native to China it has silky, mauve-pink to bright blue flowers with a central tuft of yellow stamens.

It is also known as *Blå bergvallmo* (Dutch), *Blauwe papaver* (Dutch), Blue Himalayan poppy, Blue poppy, Tibetan blue poppy, and Tibetan poppy.

The plant contains yellow sap.

Betonicifolia is derived from an old genus name *Betonica* and Latin *-folia* (leaved) meaning ‘with leaves like those of the original *Betonica* genus (now included in the *Stachys* genus) but probably with reference specifically to betony or marsh woundwort, *Stachys palustris*’.

Himalayan blue poppy was first discovered in Yunnan (a province of south-western China, bordering on Myanmar, familiar in the West as Burma, and Indo-China) in the 1880s by a French missionary, Jean Marie Delavay (1838-1895) who authorities believe was the first European botanist in western China. It was then lost and although many attempts were made to re-discover it none were successful – until a Lt.-Col. Bailey came across it by accident in 1913 and returned to England with a pressed flower to prove it (although he did not identify where it had been found). It finally fell to the English plant collector, geographer and author, Frank Kingdon-Ward (1885-1958) to locate the plant in 1924 and take it home to Britain. As a result the Himalayan blue poppy was being cultivated in western Europe by 1926.