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Myosotis sylvatica

[Synonyms : *Myosotis oblongata*, *Myosotis sylvatica* subsp. *vestergrenii*]

WOOD FORGET-ME-NOT is a biennial or perennial. Native to Asia and Europe it has tiny fragrant, blue flowers with a white (occasionally white, or pink) eye.

It is also known as Forget-me-not, Garden forget-me-not, Mouse-ear, *Ne m'oubliez pas* (French), *Nezábudka lesná* (Slovak), *Pomněnka lesní* (Czech), Scorpion grass, *Skogsförgätmigej* (Swedish), *Skov-Forglemmigej* (Danish), *Trädgårdsförgätmigej* (Swedish), Tufted forget-me-not, *Vergissmeinnicht* (German), *Wald-Vergissmeinnicht* (German), Woodland forget-me-not, *Yeux d'la Vièrge* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), and *Ysgorpionllys y Coed* (Welsh); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of constancy, fidelity, 'forget me not', friendship, remembrance, and true love.

The flowers become a translucent white in moonlight.

This is one of 50-odd species of forget-me-not, 41 of which are European natives

Sylvatica means 'wild, of or from woods or forests'.

The old colloquial name for the forget-me-not, Scorpion grass was a description of the way the flower stem curls round. The derivation of wood forget-me-not (and other close relatives) is suggested in a legend which told of a knight who bent to pick the flower growing beside a fast-flowing river. Sadly he overbalanced and fell in the water and as he was carried away in the strong current he threw the flower to his lady-love standing bereft on the bank, and cried out 'Forget me not'.

It was once customary in England to exchange the flower with friends on 29th February and give it to anyone journeying on that day.

The flowers can be found all over the world. Another old legend accounts for this when it describes the plight of an angel who fell in love with a human woman. The angel was banished from heaven with the ruling that he could only return when wood forget-me-nots had been planted in every corner of the world. He and his lover carefully and tirelessly fulfilled this task and as a result St. Peter took pity on them both and let them enter paradise.

Wood forget-me-nots (like the cowslip, *Primula veris* and primrose, *Primula vulgaris*) were believed to have the power to open treasure troves. And more recently it was also believed that steel hardened with wood forget-me-not juice could cut stone.

This is another flower that is closely associated with the House of Plantagenet. During his banishment from England Henry of Lancaster (1050-1106) [before he returned and had himself crowned in 1399 as king to become Henry IV] took the wood forget-me-not as his badge. It also forms the emblem of the Scottish Farquharson clan.

Literature embraces the flower. The English poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) wrote
The blue and bright-eyed floweret of the brook,
Hope's gentle gem, the sweet forget-me-not.

Then another well-known English poet, Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) wrote
The sweet forget-me-nots,
That grow for happy lovers.

Medicinally, the plant was used in the treatment of snake bites and rabies, and in the form of a syrup it was also taken for respiratory ailments.

