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Nigella damascena

LOVE-IN-A-MIST is an annual. Native to southern Europe and to the Mediterranean (including Damascus) it has small black-spotted, light blue or white flowers.

It is also known as Bird's nest, Black cumin, Blue crown, Blue spiderflower, *Braut im Haar* (German), *Černucha damašská* (Czech), *Černuche damascénská* (Czech), *Černuška damascénská* (Slovak), Chase the devil, *Damaszener Kümmel* (German), Devil-in-a-bush, Fennel flower, Fitch, Gith, *Gretchen im Busch* (German), Jack-in-prison, Jack in the green, *Juffertje in 't groen* (Dutch), *Jungfer im Grünen* (German), *Jungfrun i det gröna* (Swedish), Katherine's flower, Kiss-me-twice-before-I-rise, Lady-in-a-chaise, Lady-in-the-bower, Lady-in-the-green, Love-in-a-puzzle, Love-in-a-tangle, Magnolia seeds, Nigella (English and Italian), *Nigelle* (French), Prick-my-nose, Puzzle love, Ragged lady, St. Catherine's flower, St. Katherine's flower, *Schwarzkümmel* (German), *Sieq il-brimba* (Maltese), Spider flower, *Tarhaneito* (Finnish), *Türkischer Schwarzkümmel* (German); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of embarrassment, and perplexity.

Warning – it can be an intestinal irritant if taken internally in excess. The seeds are slightly poisonous.

Damascena means 'of or from Damascus (Syria)' – the place from which Robert de Brie is supposed by some to have brought this species in 1570 when he returned from the Crusades to his castle in Champagne (north-eastern France) and introduced it to France.

Today the seeds are used commercially by the confectionery and drinks industries as a flavouring.

Medicinally, the seeds have been used in the past by herbalists to treat wind and fluid retention. It is the birthday flower for 13th September.