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Ophrys apifera

[Synonyms : *Arachnites apifera*, *Ophrys chlorantha*, *Ophrys insectifera* var. *andrachnites*, *Ophrys rostrata*, *Ophrys trollii*]

BEE ORCHID is a perennial orchid. Native from Europe (including Britain) to North Africa it has pink flowers each with a greenish-brown lip bearing two yellow spots and a yellow pattern surrounding a red-brown patch.

It is also known as *Abejera* (Spanish), Bee flower, Bee orchis, *Bienen-Ragwurz* (German), *Bijenorchis* (Dutch), *Erva-aranha* (Portuguese), Fly orchid, Honey bee flower, *Nahla* (Maltese), *Ofrio abela* (Esperanto), *Ophrys abeille* (French), Orchid, Spider orchid, *Tegeirian Gwenynen* (Welsh), *Tořič včelonosný* (Czech), and *Vesparia* (Italian); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of error, and industry.

Although the flowers will self-pollinate if no suitable agent appears, they can be pollinated by wasps and a particular species of bee.

It is protected in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Apifera is derived from Latin *api-* (bee) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components meaning ‘bee-bearing’ with reference to the flower’s contended bee-like appearance that is said to attract drones.

According to the noted Roman, Pliny the Elder (23-79) who wrote on natural history, ladies were known then to use the plant to darken their eyebrows.