

Philadelphus coronarius

[Synonyms : *Philadelphus pallidus*]

MOCK ORANGE is a deciduous shrub. Native to southern Europe and south-western Asia it has small creamy-white flowers that have many stamens and a strong penetrating, orange-blossom-scent.

It is also known as *Aufrechter Pfeifenstrauch* (German), *Bauernjasmin* (German), *Doftschersmin* (Swedish), *Duftjasmin* (German), *Falscher Jasmin* (German), Garden mock orange, *Gartenjasmin* (German), *Jeringa* (Spanish), *Luktschersmin* (Swedish), *Pajazmín vencový* (Slovak), *Philadelphus*, *Pfeifenstrauch* (German), *Pihajasmike* (Finnish), *Pustoryl věncový* (Czech), *Pustoryl vonný* (Czech), *Schersmin* (Swedish), Sweet mock orange, *Syringa*, White pipe, and White pipe tree; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of counterfeit, fraternal love, loveliness, memory, purity, remember me, and ‘you shall be happy yet’.

Warning – when the plant is flowering it can sometimes be the cause of hay fever.

Coronarius is derived from Latin *corona* (crown) meaning ‘of garlands or an ingredient in garlands, or crowned’.

Mock orange (regrettably in the view of many people) is often called ‘syringa’ – and syringa is in actual fact lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*).

In India Hindu cremations take place within hours of death, not least because of the effect of heat on a corpse. During the few hours needed to arrange the ceremony the body is often covered in mock orange – but at the height of the hottest season the glorious, penetrating scent of the flowers can be corrupted by the stench of decay, even in this short period.

The Turks once used the hollow stems to make pan-pipes.

Among the plants introduced to Europe in the 16th Century by the Flemish diplomat and humanist, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq (1522-1592), were not only lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) and tulip (*Tulipa*) but also mock orange. Mock orange made its appearance there in 1562.

Two hundred years later Captain Cook’s crew drank the not particularly palatable infusion made from the shrub, known as ‘syringa tea’, during their voyage to Australia – most probably because it was considered to be a reliable remedy for scurvy.

It is the birthday flower for 16th May.