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Platycodon grandiflorus

[Synonyms : *Campanula glauca*, *Campanula grandiflorus*, *Platycodon autumnalis*, *Platycodon chinensis*, *Platycodon glaucus*, *Platycodon grandiflorus* var. *glaucus*, *Wahlenbergia grandiflora*]

BALLOON FLOWER is a perennial. Native to north-eastern Asia (including Hong Kong) it has balloon-like buds opening to blue flowers.

It is also known as *Ballonblume* (German), Bell flower, *Boubelka velkokvětá* (Czech), *Breiglocke* (German), *Cengáčik velkokvetý* (Slovak), Chinese bellflower, Japanese bellflower, *Kikyō ari-no-hi fuki* (Japanese), *Platycodon*, *Puffglockenblume* (German), *Toraji* (Korean), and *Zvonkovec velkokvětý* (Czech).

Grandiflorus is made up of Latin *grandis* (large) and *-flora* (flowered) components.

Although balloon flower is held to have been introduced to Europe in 1782 it seems that it then vanished. However in 1843 Robert Fortune (1813-1880) the Scottish horticulturist, began his Oriental trip on behalf of the Horticultural Society of London and re-introduced the plant from China among specimens he sent back to Britain that year.

The partially cooked and well-rinsed roots are eaten locally as a vegetable and the dried and rinsed root is used to make pickle. In Japan it is an ingredient in a liqueur often drunk at New Year.

Medicinally, it has long been cultivated in China where the leaves are used in local remedies for stomach chills.