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Santolina chamaecyparissus

[Synonyms : *Santolina ericoides*, *Santolina incana*]

SANTOLINA (English, Italian, Spanish) is an evergreen subshrub. Native from Europe (Spain to Albania) to North Africa, it has small button-like, bright lemon yellow flower heads. It is also known as *Abrótano-femea* (Portuguese), *Abrótano hembra* (Spanish), Cotton lavender, Cypress lavender cotton, French lavender, French lavender cotton, *Grå helgonört* (Swedish), *Guarda-roupa* (Portuguese), Gray santolina, Grey santolina, Ground cypress, *Heiligenkraut* (German), Holy flax, Lavender cotton, *Llwyn Cotymog* (Welsh), *Petit cyprés* (French), *Svatolina cypřišová* (Czech), and *Zypressenkraut* (German).

Essential oil can be extracted from the leaves.

Santolina is a member of the Daisy family (*Compositae*) not the Lavender family (*Labiatae*).

Chamaecyparissus is derived from the genus name *Chamaecyparis* meaning 'like plants in that (cypress) genus'.

Grown in Mediterranean countries for centuries where it has been used to sweeten the air, it was valued in the medieval period particularly for its medicinal properties (although these are rarely used today) and its ability to repel moths for which purpose the twigs were placed among linen. Santolina will also repel wool moths.

It is likely that it was the French Huguenot gardeners fleeing religious persecution on the European mainland in the 16th Century who introduced the plant to Britain. It has been used in the past for the low clipped hedging that defines a formal knot garden.

The essential oil is one of the ingredients used today by the perfumery industry.

Herbalists primarily recommended santolina for treating worms in children, and the Arabs are said to have used its juice for bathing the eyes and as a skin antiseptic.