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Saxifraga granulata

[Synonyms : *Saxifraga castellana*, *Saxifraga glaucescens*, *Saxifraga rouyana*]

MEADOW SAXIFRAGE is a bulbous biennial or perennial. Native to Europe (including Britain) it has small white flowers.

It is also known as Breakstone, Bulbous saxifrage, *Casse-pierre* (French), Cuckoo flower, Dry cuckoo, Fair maids, Fair maids of France, First of May, *Knöllchen-Steinbrech* (German), *Knollen-Steinbrech* (German), *Körnersteinbrech* (German), *Kornet Stenbræk* (Danish), Lady's featherbeds, *Lomikámen zrnatý* (Czech), *Lomikameň zrnitý* (Slovak), *Mandelblomma* (Swedish), Mountain rocket, Pretty maids, *Quaresmas* (Portuguese), *Sassifrax*, *Saxifraga blanca* (Spanish), *Saxifrage granulée* (French), Snow-on-the-mountains, *Steinbrech* (German), and *Tormaen Gwyn* (Welsh).

Meadow saxifrage is a protected plant in the Irish Republic under the Flora Protection Order 1987.

Granulata is derived from Latin *granum* (grain, seed) meaning 'granular or with grain-like knobs' with reference to the small grain-like root tubers.

The double variety of this flower which is found in Britain is said to be the 'pretty maids' referred to in the old nursery rhyme,

Mary, Mary quite contrary
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells and cockleshells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

In the Netherlands, particularly in the area just south of Haarlem, meadow saxifrage is said to have been introduced there on the boots of Belgian soldiers.

The shape of the tubers suggested to those in the early 16th Century for whom the Doctrine of Signatures held sway that the roots could dissolve stones. Medicinally therefore meadow saxifrage would have been prescribed by herbalists for treating kidney stones, and it was also used as a tonic for the lungs and stomach.