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Sherardia arvensis

FIELD MADDER is an annual. Native to western Asia, Europe and the Mediterranean it has tiny pale lilac (sometimes white) flowers.

It is also known as *Ackerröte* (German), *Åkermadd* (Swedish), *Blåmadra* (Swedish), Blue field madder, *Bračka rolní* (Czech), *Drapuľa roľná* (Slovak), *Garance* (French), *Harxajja tal-ghelieqi* (Maltese), Herb sherard, *Mandon las yr Yd* (Welsh), Sourwort, and Spurwort; in flower language it is said to be a symbol of backbiting, calumny, and talkativeness.

Arvensis means ‘of or growing in cultivated fields or land’.

Although field madder yields a rose-coloured dye this is not the plant that was noted for the brilliant red permanent dye of the Middle Ages – that came from madder (*Rubia tinctorum*).

At some point field madder was introduced to the North American Continent and Cherokee Indians used it to obtain the red dye.

Medicinally, the roots were used by European herbalists to treat jaundice, sciatica, palsy (muscular paralysis) and bruising and (with the leaves) they were recommended as a treatment for freckles and dandruff.

It is the birthday flower for 8th September.